

Good, could have been better

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh took the local cricket buffs on the merry go round of expectations and exhilaration as they conceded a 62-run defeat to visiting Pakistan in the first of the two friendly one-day matches of the Gold Leaf one-day series at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

Chasing a theoretical victory target of 273 for an outright win against one of the top cricket teams and the current world champions of limited over cricket, Bangladesh, an associate member of the ICC had eventually a fairly honorable collection of 210 for five wickets from their quota of 45 overs.

On a wicket, which, despite some apprehensions of organizers Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB), turned out to be a perfect batting strip, batsmen of both teams revelled with varying degree of success and importance.

Salim Malik, the newly-appointed Pakistani captain, had his plan of giving some batting practice to his men for the upcoming tour of New Zealand fallen into the place when his counterpart Faruque Ahmed called wrongly in the spin of the coin.

A real leather-hunt was the daunting prospect, looming large over the Bangladeshi bowlers and though the two left-handers — Aamir Sohail and Saeed Anwar — had their moments of initial uncertainty, particularly against left-arm new ball bowler Golam Nowsher Prince, the Pakistani innings took the speculated chart slowly but surely.

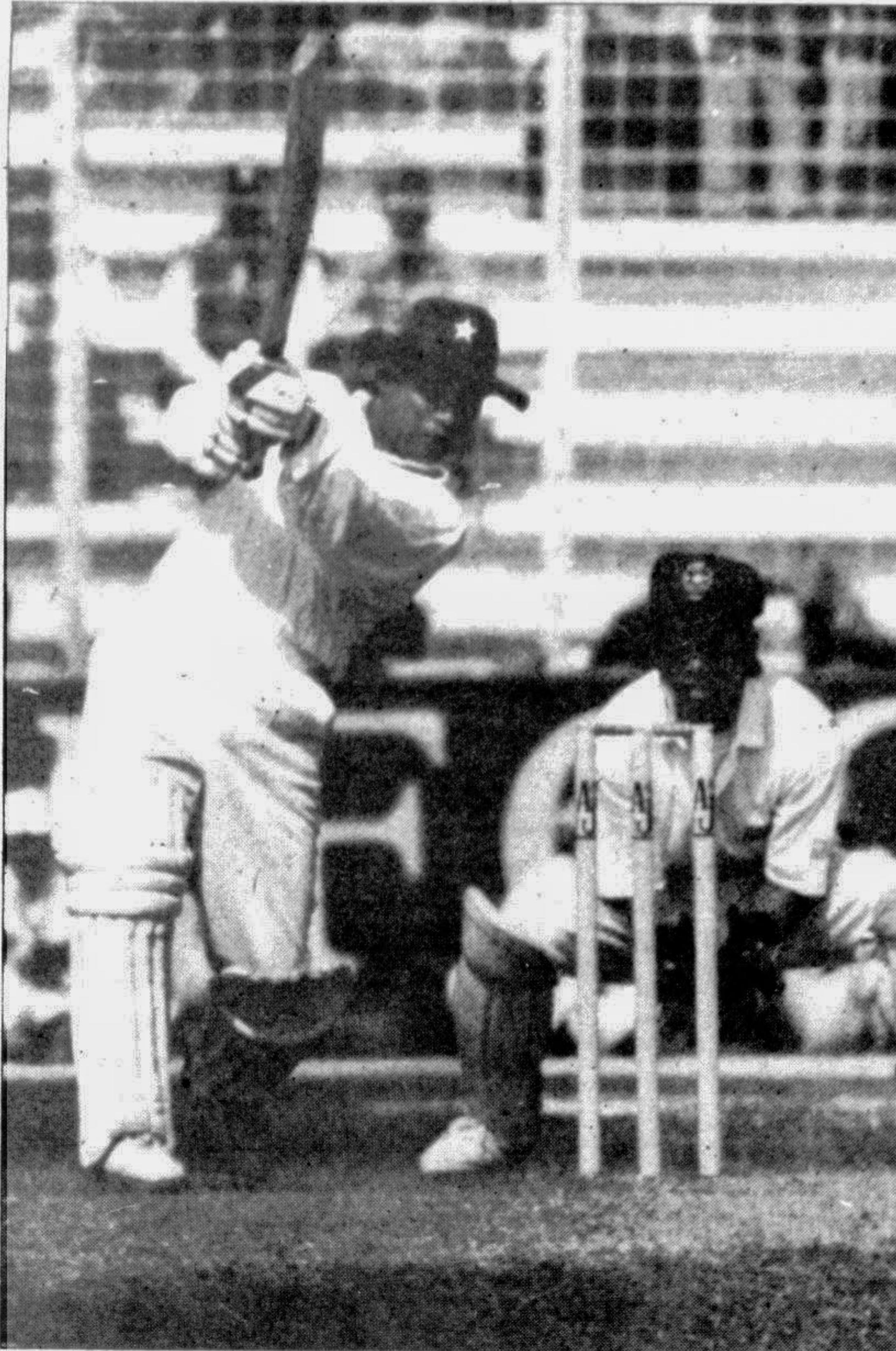
A disdainful down the wicket lofted overhead hit for a sixer off a naive and a bit unfortunate Saiful, Prince's young partner, was the quiet announcement of visitors' intentions.

Although Sohail parted with Anwar's company with the score on 102 in 21.2 overs, adjudged leg before for 35 by umpire Mullick, Anwar displayed his tremendous onside prowess with clean timely hitting. Eager to cement his position in Pakistan's Test composition, Anwar who struck three successive centuries in a recently-held meet in Sharjah, was finally bored out by the persistent Minhzul Abedin Nannu for a punitive 88-ball 92 that contained four massive sixes and eight fours. Anwar who pocketed BCCB's cash award of Taka ten thousand for the man of the match as well as the memento of a similar award by the Bangladesh Sports Journalists' Association (BSJA), lofted the non-descript but nagging Nannu in the deep and Aminul Islam Bulbul nullified the momentary fears of a suicide spill by clasping the ball without fuss.

The baby-faced giant Inzamam, one of the stars of the last World Cup held Down Under in 1992, did not last long, going for an almighty heave at slow left-armor Enamul Huq Moni, who fore-saw the sudden rush of blood in the batsman and cleverly dropped the ball short and Jahangir, who was uninspiring behind the stumps, did one of the easiest stumping.

Although Malik underlined his reputation as a gifted timer of the ball with some classy un hurried one-side strokes off the toes and his deputy Asif Mujtaba hit splendidly in the arc of cover and long off to justify the little left-hander's emergence as one of the buttresses of Pakistan's batting, it was the stocky Basit Ali who stole the eye.

A dashing right-hander with immense hitting potentials as epitomised in a murderous ton against the mighty West Indies in a recent desert duel, Basit, who had toured Bangladesh with a young Pakistan team in the abandoned SAARC cricket in 1992-93, tourney yesterday showed glimpses of his quality. He took eighteen stroked runs from the 37th over of the innings bowled by Saiful. He shuffled across, exposing his stumps in the process a la Munday, to hit three absolutely thrilling fours in the arc of backward square and fine leg and then completed the mayhem of the young Bangladeshi paceman with a



Asif Mujtaba, the vice-captain of the Pakistan team, follows through a cover drive during his unbeaten knock of 29 with Bangladeshi stumper Jahangir Alam looking anything but amused. Pakistan totalled 272 for four to beat Bangladesh by 62 runs at the Dhaka Stadium.

—Star photo

six, slammed over the head.

Faruque Ahmed, who in his post-match reaction called for improvement in the bowling and fielding department, himself left a few tricks up his sleeves unused. Despite having two right arm off-spinners at his disposal, Faruque never bothered to turn to either of them against side that contained three left-handers out of the six batsmen who appeared at the crease.

Although ground fielding of the local team was more or less satisfactory with Shahed showing remarkable agility, catching left a lot to be desired. Prince dropped the easiest of the offerings made by the run-hungry Pakistanis when he badly bungled the flight of an aired, wonky hit by Basit.

Galvanised by the adrenalin pumping ambience, most inescapably characterised in the drone and din of the flag-waving partisan crowd, Bangladeshi openers — Athar Ali and Jahangir Alam — gave a dream of a start.

The tall, compact Athar set the stadium ablaze when he gloriously punched Waqar Younis, arguably the fastest bowler of the world, to the long-on fence and then followed it up with a clipped four past square-leg.

Hot under his collar, Waqar paid home with a real Waqar over but the crippling rules of instant cricket in league with an unkind pitch made a pathetic caricature of the power and reverence associated with a fast bowler.

So the march went on with Jahangir joining Athar in playing some really pleasing shots against Ataur Rehman, who



Jahangir then had Shahed caught by Malik off the very next ball. Shahed should blame himself for hitting at the leg-spinner without making room for the shot.

Skipper Faruque played positively to top score with 41. The stocky right-hander played 55 balls and hit four exquisite boundaries. But once Faruque left, stumped by Latif off Mushtaq, the rest of the Bangladeshi batsmen gave up their audacious adventurism.

Nannu, who had to retire hurt with a calf muscle injury, scored 37 followed by burly Akram who made 38 and the nimble Bulbul on 24 not out but none of these three really took on the bowlers.

Although Bangladesh amassed the highest total, albeit unofficially, against any Test-playing country, the batsmen,



Bangladesh national cricket captain Faruque Ahmed (R) and his Pakistan counterpart Salim Malik (L) walk back to the pavilion after the toss in the first match of the Gold Leaf one-day series at the Dhaka Stadium yesterday.

—Star photo

Reception

Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Kemal last night hosted a reception in honour of the Pakistan cricket team at the Chancery in Dhaka, reports

Partex b'ball

Sports Reporter
Angels and Eagles registered contrasting victories in the Partex First Division basketball league at the Outer Stadium wooden-floor gymnasium yesterday.

Angels rolled over Kurmitola Boys Club 180-40 after leading the first session 61-16 while Dhumketu never let up the pressure on Eagles before bowing down 61-71.

Sport

Shet-e-Bangla Cup soccer results

Sports Reporter

Six more teams — Netrakona, Comilla, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Sirajganj and Lalmonirhat — made it to the zonal finals of the 18th Shet-e-Bangla Cup national football championship yesterday.

Netrakona were stretched to tie-breaker by Gazipur in their semifinal encounter after the regulation period ended one all. Netrakona, who will take on the winners of the other semifinal between Tangail and the hosts on Wednesday, finally had the match wrapped up 4-3.

Comilla also struggled before eliminating Chandpur by a solitary goal, thanks to Shamsuddin, who netted the winner in the 78th minute. The other semifinal between Sunamganj and hosts Sylhet will be played today. The final will be held on Wednesday.

At Bagerhat, the hosts with goals from Alamgir and Bayazid knocked Pirojpur out 2-0 for a place in the final where they will meet the victors of the other semifinal between Barisal and Bholia.

Satkhira and Jessor had their semifinals carried over to penalty shoots-out before, the former finally prevailed 5-4. Satkhira meet either hosts Jhenaidh or Kushtha.

Sirajganj and Lalmonirhat registered similar margin wins over Pabna and Nilphamari in their respective zonal semifinal matches. The scoreline in both matches was 2-0.

Sirajganj go up against the winners of the second Bogra Zone semifinal between the hosts and Naogaon, while Lalmonirhat have to get rid of Nilphamari for a place in the final.

Maradona at the end of road?

BUENOS AIRES, Jan 23:

Diego Maradona, back in the fold after a six-week lay-off with hamstring trouble, returned to the treatment table on Friday after limping off in a friendly for Newell's Old Boys against Brazilian side Vasco Da Gama, reports Reuter.

With 20 minutes remaining of a scoreless draw, Maradona left the field clutching his right leg. Reports say he had aggravated an old injury by slipping in the tunnel moments before the match started.

A bystander for much of the match as the Brazilians kept possession, Maradona laboured and looked uncomfortable with the ball at his feet.

"I see the young lads running around and the only one that cannot run is me," a dejected Maradona told reporters after the game.

Yet a lack of fitness is not Maradona's only problem — it now seems the legend of the magical midfielder is wearing thin.

"Are these injuries solely in his mind?" asked City Daily La Nacion, a remark tantamount to blasphemy in the once fiercely pro-Maradona local press.

A string of injuries since returning to Argentine soccer in October has made the 33-year-old national captain doubt whether he has the strength to play in this year's World Cup.

"My World Cup is with Newell's," Maradona said after the game. "If I cannot give them what they want from me, what chance do I have with the national team."

Talk of imminent retirement will come as no surprise to local soccer fans, who have frequently heard the star pondering an end to his illustrious career.

Yet this time it seems the writing could be on the wall for the man who led the country to its second World Cup title in 1986.

A batch of promising youngsters, instrumental in beating world champions Germany in Miami in December, have designs on the sacred number 10 shirt and some say Maradona is losing his grip.

"Diego always seems to be making a comeback," City Daily Clarin said before Friday's match. "But we all know that this is his last chance. There will be no more."

It continued: "This match could be the springboard for an appearance in the World Cup or perhaps the end of Argentina's greatest ever footballer."

WC beckons Milla

YAOUNDE, Jan 23: Roger Milla, one of the stars of the 1990 World Cup finals, is making another comeback at the age of 42, reports Reuter.

He announced he was rejoining his old club Tonnerre Yaounde, raising the possibility that he could be considered for Cameroon's World Cup squad for the finals in the United States later this year.

Milla told a local newspaper recently that the American organisers were putting a lot of pressure on both himself and the Cameroonian authorities to play in the World Cup.



Man-of-the-match Saeed Anwar, the hard-hitting Pakistani opener who topscored in the first match of the Gold Leaf One Day series between Bangladesh and Pakistan with 92, receiving the crest from Foreign Minister and BCCB president A S M Mostafizur Rahman. — Star photo

Give others a chance too

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

The Bangladesh national cricket team started its reply to Pakistan in an electrifying pace at the Dhaka yesterday. The mammoth total of 272 runs, piled up in 45 overs, was awe-inspiring for the local boys, who had not too happy an experience in their recent tour of Pakistan, having lost six matches out of 10 against teams most of which can not be rated highly even by Pakistan standards.

The intention of the Pakistanis was very clear: They stumped their side with batsmen to gain practice before they fly on to New Zealand for a full tour. In recent years internece quarrels and top order politics have sapped the morale of the team and their low-scoring matches against the babes of ICC, Zimbabwe, were eye openers for all.

Against a top class batting order, the task of the Bangladeshi bowlers became all the more weighty. The Pakistanis, after a sedate start, got the feel of the wicket and also a measure of the bowling and tore it into shreds.

The pick of the Pakistani batsmen were Saeed Anwar, the diminutive left hander whom pundits call an ideal one-day opener and the ruthless Basit Ali, possibly the most brilliant Pakistani find in their tour of West Indies in 1993 since the majestic Saeed Ahmad in the 1957-58 tour of Aamir Sohail and Salim Shahed.

As the slog overs approached Bangladesh did neither had the batsmen nor the appetite to go for runs. The result was obvious. Aminul Islam Bulbul, without whom the home team is incomplete, could have shown a little more aggression, after all, he had nothing to lose.

In all fairness it must be said that Bangladesh were defeated not disgraced. To match the world champions, in whatever shape they might be, it takes a lot of courage and guts and our boys showed it in no uncertain terms.

To achieve a favourable result against the world champions it is well nigh impossible, if I am permitted to say so, for a team like ours. But that should not deter our selectors to give a chance to the boys who could not don the flannel yesterday. Let it not be said that everyone of the 16-member squad for the ICC trophy did not have their share of glory in playing against the world champions — a dream for every cricketer. Who knows what surprise they can produce.

Let the lovers of the game, who are the heart and soul of cricket, see what we are sending to Kenya.

Mark Waugh sparkles with a superb ton as

Australians square score

SYDNEY, Jan 23: Gary, who scored 112 in the opening match of the finals, won by South Africa by 28 runs, was next out after making 42, caught at mid-on by Boon off May with the total on 74.

Warne, struck in three successive overs, having captain Hansie Cronje (28) stumped, Daryl Cullinan (3) caught, and Brian McMillan leg before for nothing.

His spell saw South Africa slump from 102 for two to 107

overs: 50.

SOUTH AFRICA: P Kirsten run out 42; G Kirsten c Boon b May 42; H Cronje st Healy b Warne 28; J Rhodes b McDermott 52; D Cullinan c S Waugh b Warne 3; B McMillan lbw b Warne 0; D Richardson b Border 16; R Snell b McDermott 6; P Symcox run out 12; F de Villiers not out 0; A Donald c and b McDermott 0; Extras (lb-7, nb-1) 8; Total (45.5 overs) 178.

Australians: Fall of wickets: 1-50; 2-74; 3-102; 4-106; 5-107; 6-156; 7-176; 8-178; 9-178.

Bowling: O M R W McDermott 8.5 0 30 3 Reiffel 8 0 23 0 S Waugh 5 0 11 0 May 10 1 35 1 Warne 10 0 42 3 Border 4 0 21 1

Result: Australia won by 60 runs.

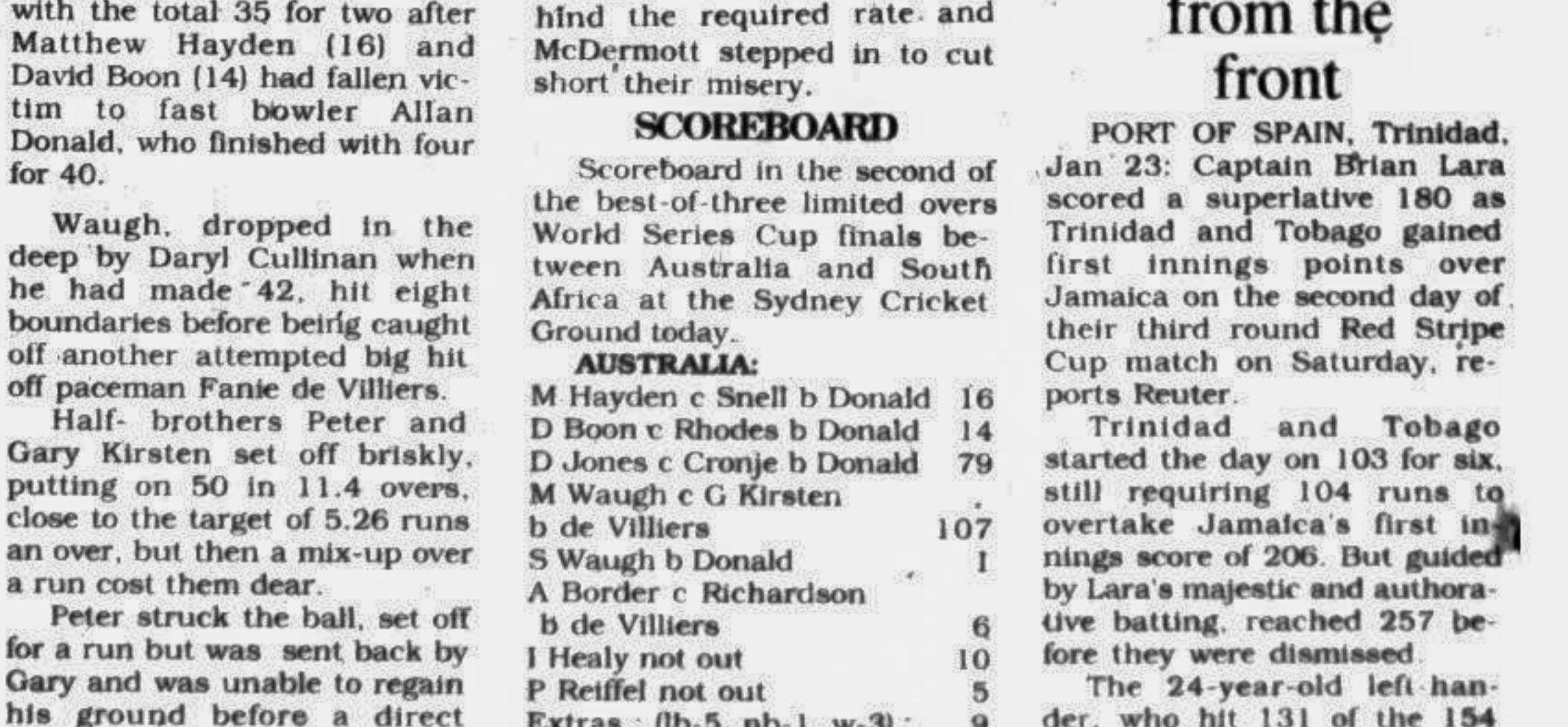
South Africa won the first final in Melbourne by 28 runs. The third and deciding final will be in Sydney on Tuesday.

Lara leads from the front

PORTE OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Jan 23: Captain Brian Lara scored a superlative 180 as Trinidad and Tobago gained first innings points over Jamaica on the second day of their third round Red Stripe Cup match on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Trinidad and Tobago started the day on 103 for six, still requiring 104 runs to overtake Jamaica's first innings score of 206. But guided by Lara's majestic and authoritative batting, reached 257 before they were dismissed.

The 24-year-old left-hander, who hit 131 of the 154 runs scored by the Trinidadians on Saturday,



MARK WAUGH ... 107 for five.

Jonty Rhodes showed some resistance, pulling Warne for a six as he hit a brave 52.

But by then the South Africans were hopelessly behind the required rate and McDermott stepped in to cut short their misery.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the second of the best-of-three limited overs World Series Cup finals between Australia and South Africa at the Sydney Cricket Ground today.

AUSTRALIA: M Hayden c Snell b Donald 16; D Boon c Rhodes b Donald 14; D Jones c G Kirsten 79; M Waugh c G Kirsten 107; S Waugh b Donald 1; A Border c Richardson 6; B de Villiers 1; I Healy not out 10; P Reiffel not out 5; Extras (lb-5, nb-1, w-3) 9; Total (for six wickets) 247; Did not bat: S Warne, C

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