

Indians sweat unnecessarily

Sports Reporter

India made heavy weather of an apparently undemanding winning target before carving a four-wicket victory over traditional rivals Pakistan in yesterday's crucial match of the four-nation SAARC cricket tournament at the Dhaka Stadium.

Appallingly inconsistent wicket plus inexplicable tentativeness of the upper order led to moments of worry in the Indian camp, but the theoretically most balanced outfit in the fray steered home in 33 overs, posting 123 for the loss of six wickets to overhaul the paltry Pakistani total of 120 in 47 overs, three short of the regulation quota of 50 overs.

Yesterday's win, India's second after a facile 44-run triumph over Sri Lanka on December 23, virtually assured Praveen Amre's men of a final slot in this quadrangular series. On the other hand, Pakistan will now have to beat the Lankans by a handsome margin to avert a premature elimination from the week-long tourney.

If hosts Bangladesh beat India by an emphatic margin, hypothetically improbable the proposition might sound to many, though possible for the puritans who believe cricket is a game of glorious uncertainty. Rameez Raja's men would have nothing to do but rue their low-scoring habits.

Pakistan's aggregate in the previous two matches, 288 runs, is the lowest compared to India's 305. Bangladesh's 335 and Sri Lanka's 305. Already the hosts enjoy an edge over the Pakistanis and if the biggest upset takes place, the representatives of the world champions in the instant version of the game will have little choice but to improve their scoring records in the last league match.

For the Indians, who have been battered by the Pakistanis everywhere for the last few years at international level, it was some sort of a reprieve, not to mention their unbeaten record at the Dhaka Stadium spanning the last four encounters.

In the morning, Test-discard Sajil Ankola rightaway vindicated his skipper's decision to bat first, striking very early in the Pakistani innings when the right-arm seamer castled opener Raja, who flopped for the second successive match, for nought with the scoreboard reading nine.

Prashant Vaidya made things even worse for the first users of the painfully under-prepared wicket, sending back Ghulam Ali nine runs later for four.

When Ankola struck again, inducing an edge from opening bat Sajid Ali, Pakistan were precariously placed at three for 29. From then on the fate of the match was quite perceptible with the batsmen coming and going at regular interval.

Although Zahid Fazal, Ijaz Ahmed (jr) and Naeem Ashraf tried to initiate some sort of a fightback, a paltry Pakistani total was an unavoidable reality.

A 32-run partnership for the fourth wicket between Fazal and Ahmed plus a gritty 32 from left-hander Ashraf spared the second national Pakistan selection from closing their campaign well short of one hundred.

Fazal, who produced a superlative 98 against India at Sharjah a few years back, made a chancy 20 while Ahmed was sent back for 22.

Indian wicketkeeper Vijay Yadav, who was later named the man-of-the-match by the Bangladesh Cricket Control

Board (BCCB), had a happy hunting time behind the stumps, effecting three dismissals plus playing his role in a run out.

Prashant Vaidya had the best analysis of three for 23 in nine overs while Utpal Chatterjee made the most of the pressure applied by the seamer earlier to mop the tail, claiming three for 28 in his nine-over spell.

Ankola picked two and vice-captain Rajesh Chauhan one but unfortunately the most

Skipper Amre didn't quite justify his claim for a recall in the Indian Test squad when the right-hander, in a rather amateurish fashion, went after a Naem Ashraf delivery that moved away from the off stump only to present a regulation catch to Sajid Ali at backward point.

Atul Bedade, reputed for his bullish batsmanship, couldn't get a chance to deliver his

target — 123 for six in 31.3 overs.

Nadeem Khan left-arm that kept low. Rathore sent the ball to the fence on three occasions in his 58-ball 33.

Scoreboard of the Pakistan-India match in the four-national SAARC cricket tournament at the Dhaka Stadium:

PAKISTAN:

Rameez Raja b Ankola	0
Sajid Ali c Yadav b Vaidya	8
Ghulam Ali c Yadav b Ankola	4
Zahid Fazal c Ankola	20
Chatterjee	20
Ijaz Ahmed c Yadav b Vaidya	22
Naeem Ashraf lbw Chauhan	32
Rifaqat Ali c Bedade b Chatterjee	1
Saqain Mushtaque run out	14
Nadeem Khan b Vaidya	1
Moshin Kamal c Amre	
Chatterjee	2
Aamir Nazir not out	0
Extras: (lb-7, nb-4, w-5)	16
Total : (47 overs)	120

Fall of wickets: 1-9; 2-18; 3-29; 4-61; 5-69; 6-70; 7-99; 8-110; 9-118.

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Prasad	9	2	13	0
Ankola	10	2	25	2
Vaidya	9	2	23	3
Chatterjee	9	0	27	3
Chauhan	10	1	25	1

INDIA:

Rathore b Nadeem Khan	38
Arun Kumar c Rifaqat	7
b Aamir Nazir	7
Dravid lbw Mushtaque	16
Amre f Sajid Ali b Ashraf	5
Bedade run out	1
Yadav not out	31
Chauhan lbw Kamal	0
Chatterjee not out	0
Extras: (b-12, lb-2, nb-9, w-7)	30
Total: (for six wickets 33 overs)	123

Fall of wickets: 1-37; 2-61; 3-77; 4-78; 5-108; 6-109.

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Aamir Nazir	9	0	29	1
Moshin Kamal	4	0	15	1
Naeem Ashraf	10	0	30	1
Nadeem Khan	6	2	14	1
Saqain Mushtaque	4	1	21	1

Result: India won by four wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Vijay Yadav (India).

TODAY'S MATCH

Bangladesh vs India

Culprit trio comes clean

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 25 : Three of 51 soccer players detained in a huge corruption investigation have confessed to fixing matches in Malaysia's professional league, the Sun Newspaper reported today, reports Reuter.

The Sun quoted a senior police officer as saying the trio, from the Selangor team, made the confession on Thursday.

But the police officer said investigations are continuing as the confession might not be enough to charge the soccer players in court.

They are among five Selangor team players detained after the side was bundled out in the semifinals of the Malaysia Cup tournament three weeks ago.

The Sunday Star newspaper said police were now extending their investigations abroad as several foreign players in the 16-team league could be involved in match-fixing.

The Sunday Star said police were investigating the Pahang side in the match-fixing allegations.

Police picked up two Pahang players after the team lost 4-0 to Singapore in the Malaysia Cup tournament final last weekend. Police sources said several more are expected to be detained by the end of this year.

Football officials were not available for comment.

Police accelerated their crackdown on match-fixing towards the close of the Malaysia Cup tournament and made almost daily arrests of players throughout the country.

They also arrested a third bookmaker, nicknamed the Southern King, last Wednesday and are investigating his connections with betting syndicates outside Malaysia.

Another two bookmakers arrested in October were banished to remote districts for two years under Malaysia's emergency laws.

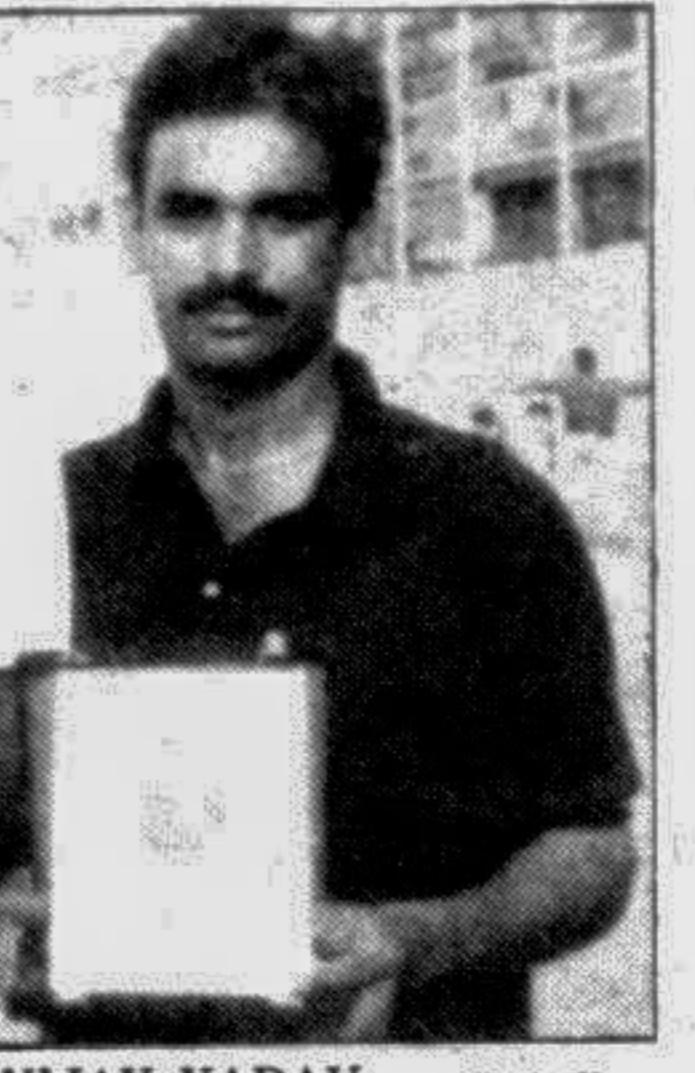
Police sources said previously that close to 100 players may be arrested and detained for questioning by the end of the investigations.

The Bribery scandal in Malaysia and Singapore blew up after Singapore anti-corruption officials arrested Czech striker Michael Vana and a Singaporean referee in August on charges of fixing six matches in Malaysia's 16-team professional league. Vana returned to his home country while on bail.

TEAMS

SOUTH AFRICA: (from) Andrew Hudson, Gary Kirsten, Hansie Cronje (captain), Darryl Cullinan, Jonty Rhodes, John Commins, Brian McMillan, Dave Richardson, Craig Matthews, Fanie de Villiers, Steven Jack, Clive Eksteen, Pat Symcox.

NEW ZEALAND: Bryan Young, Darren Murray, Stephen Fleming, Martin Crowe, Ken Rutherford (captain), Shane Thomson, Adam Parore, Matthew Hart, Simon Doull, Chris Pringle or Richard de Groot, Danny Morrison.



VIJAY YADAV ... m-o-m

economical bowler of the team, Venkatesh Prasad, who conceded only 13 runs in his nine overs, returned empty-handed.

A modest target ahead and plenty of overs in hand, India were given a sound start by the openers and the first wicket fell at 37 when Arun Kumar misjudged an Aamir Nazir delivery that moved fractionally away from him and offered a rather simple catch for the man behind the stumps, Rifaqat Ali. Kumar made seven.

When the diminutive Indian wicketkeeper-cum-batsman returned to pavilion after an well-made 31, the Indians were well past the winning

mark six down at 109, managed only one.

With six down at 109, man-of-the-match Yadav took over and alongwith Chatterjee at the other end, steered India home with no further damage. Yadav danced down the wicket and heaved Mushtaque over the mid-wicket for a huge six that landed in the stands to end the chase.

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