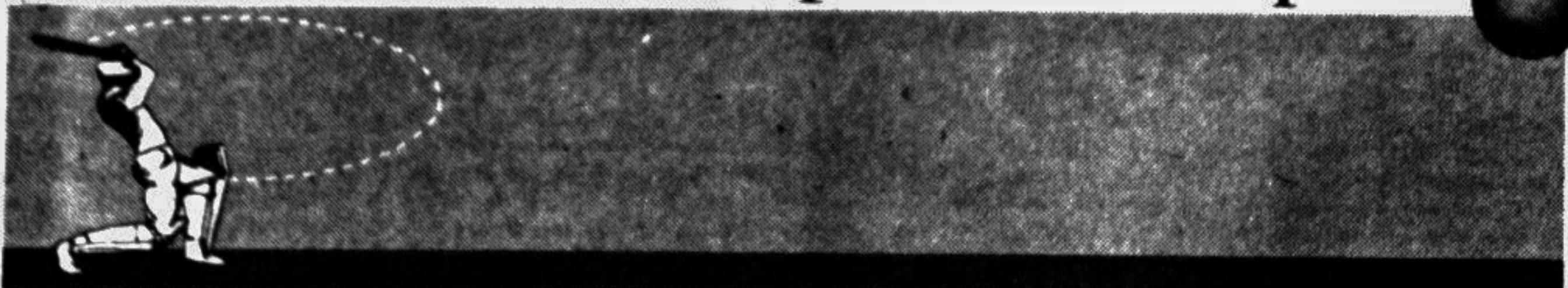


Sport

The World Cup with Philips



Not just live. Alive.

Intikhab won't face India without Wasim

BANGALORE, India, Mar 7: Pakistan are prepared to risk captain Wasim Akram in their crunch quarterfinal with India even if he has not fully recovered from a strained side he suffered against New Zealand on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Akram was absent as his colleagues had their first practice session on Indian soil, but coach Intikhab Alam said the key all-rounder was undergoing treatment and was likely to play on Saturday.

"We can't afford not to play him. This is make or break," said Intikhab. "He had an injection after the game on Wednesday and he should be okay. I think he will play."

Pakistan have not played a Test in India since early 1987, but have been encouraged by their initial reception following their arrival in Bangalore via Delhi.

Both Intikhab and Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin said they hoped the game would open the way to a resumption of Test competition between the two countries.

"I think coming here will definitely help. It's good for cricketers and it's good for our countries," said Intikhab.

"For us, it is the final of the World Cup. Whenever we play, the two sides are keyed up. People expect a great deal of their cricketers."

"But we don't expect any problems. From what we have seen the people have been very good."

A former leg-spinner himself, the Pakistan coach is convinced the pitch at the Chinnaswamy Stadium will turn and hinted that off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq might be drafted in, although the final team will not be announced until match-day.

Holding mends his ways

NEW DELHI, Mar 7: Former cricket great Michael Holding called on the West Indies World Cup team to unite behind outgoing skipper Richie Richardson and give him the perfect send-off — even if they dislike him, reports AFP.

"The boys may want to ensure that the captain goes out on the best note possible, a winning one," he argued the Indian Express today.

"When he was appointed captain after Viv Richards' retirement, he was not entirely a popular choice. Desmond Haynes had also been in the picture and since he had been Richards' vice-captain, was the favourite.

The antagonism towards Richardson started at the very beginning of his tenure and continued almost unabated right up to his remote an-

Holding argued Richardson had done well to last as long as he did considering the antagonism towards him.

Those who know the full story behind his tenure as West Indies captain could not be blamed in thinking that he lasted a long time considering his trials and tribulations, he wrote.

The former fast bowler said Richardson's decision to retire had been due to that lack of support.

It is difficult to accept that it is purely cricketing reasons why Richie has decided to call it a day," he said.

The man is a batsman aged 34 and that is certainly not old to be playing international cricket. His match-winning innings of 93 against Australia on Monday strengthens my argument."

TCCB's search for a solution

LONDON, Mar 7: A full probe into how the England cricket team is selected and managed was announced on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Representatives of England's county clubs, gathered at Lord's for the Test and County Cricket Board's Spring meeting, decided to set up a special working party under David Asfeld.

England, soundly beaten on their recent South African tour, are going through a disastrous spell and have only just managed to qualify for the World Cup quarterfinals where bookmakers expect them to succumb to Sri Lanka.

Afleck, chairman of the TCCB's cricket committee and also chairman of Essex, has been given a wide brief to review all aspects relating to the administration, selection and management of England teams at home and abroad.

Alan Smith, the TCCB chief executive, said: "This will be an all-encompassing review that will look at all areas that have a bearing on the performance of our national teams."

"If you like, this will be a brain-storming process and I think the formation of this working party is only good business practice. Things should be continually reviewed."

Expected teams on top

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

WHE results of the first round of the World Cup cricket '96 do not reflect the 'glorious uncertainties' of cricket, rather they strongly indicate the expected results.

Kenya produced the most unexpected result of the Tournament by pulling down their heroes the mighty West Indians. Perhaps this will remain the most unusual match of the century surpassing Zimbabwe's victory over Australia in the 1983 and England in the 1992 World Cups.

That the young African lions are capable of bringing about one or two surprises has once again been exhibited in their last match against Sri Lanka at Kandy on Wednesday.

True, they lost the match but not before they ran short of overs with a few wickets intact.

There has been hardly any upsetting result in the tournament so far. And, as expected, the top eight teams have reached the quarter-final stage.

Out of the 28 group matches, we have had the opportunity of enjoying 'live' about 25 of them.

Two teams have so far remained unbeaten — Sri Lanka in Group A and South Africa in Group B. Other countries have tasted defeats. From now on, it is sudden death.

But, in such a world class tournament and when the game is 'cricket', anything can happen. A strong South Africa may find West Indies a difficult proposition. The injury-prone England may cause a few eyebrows to frown as they take on mighty Sri Lanka. Favourites Australia can not take any chances against neighbours.

PAUL ADAMS

hardly anything to ask for. Their batsmen are scoring runs and bowlers taking wickets. They are fielding extremely well. So, they can expect marginal improvement in their game.

On the other hand, West

Indies have just started to find their touch. Lara, Adams, Holder, Richardson should be among runs because their bad spell appears to be over. And, if that happens, then Cronje and his men will have a match on their hands. Remember Pakistan's achievements in 1992?

Australia have lot of talents in their side. They take the field with four regular bowlers. But look at their bowling strength. Every player, except Taylor and Healy, can bowl and they are no ordinary bowlers like Astle, Twose or Kennedy. Their fielding is also top-class.

Unless New Zealand can post a big total, they will find themselves in real trouble.

England, finalists of three World Cups, are almost forgotten.

Their losses to South Africa in the recent one-day series have caused much concern in their camp and the recent injuries to their key players have further weakened them.

They have a lot to improve upon if they want to do good against the indomitable Sri Lanka.

Wasim Akram with only three wickets from five matches does not justify his reputation as the best attacking bowler. He must recover from his injury to take his place in the team. So far, Pakistan have batted well. Their bowling and fielding will have to improve if they want to face India squarely. If Wasim considers himself to be an all-rounder then he should drop a batsman and include a bowler in the side.

Tendulkar is in great nick. He has only failed once in five innings. This may prove to be a boon in their match against Pakistan. Azhar and Manjrekar have had their quota of failing.

They should also come out of their bad patch and, if that happens, it will be a cracker of a contest.

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The West Indian, with seven scalps, goes for just 3.1 runs an over while Donald has

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spinner, and just gets the nod over Mark's twin Steve.

The all-rounder's spot goes to Brian McMillan. The South African has yet to get amongst the wickets or runs, but the miserly cost of his overs — currently costing 2.7 an over, even less than Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne — gets him the nod. His extraordinary reactions in the slips might also come in useful — as well as his renowned sledging.

The wicketkeeping gloves go to Ian Healy — just.

His expertise standing up to Warne, the side's spinner, is a crucial factor. Sri Lankan pinch-hitter Romesh Kaluwitharana, despite a strong case, just

eats dust.

Six-wicket Warne's inclusion ahead of Pakistan's Mushtaq Ahmed (8 wicket at 22.75) and Anil Kumble of India (11 wickets at 16.45) is based largely on his ability to stanch runs, even in the final overs of an innings.

Warne currently goes for 2.9 runs an over, while Kumble costs 3.6 and Mushtaq 3.8. No batsman has yet got the better

of the Victorian, most choosing to block out rather than risk survival against a bowler who can turn the ball square.

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The former springbok batsman added, "Brian Lara has always been a wonderful friend of South Africa and played a major role in helping the development programme in South Africa by coaching the underprivileged areas."

Manager Cassim Docrat and team captain Hansie Cronje refused to comment on the report, published in the Delhi-based Outlook weekly magazine.

The high-flying South Africans would earn three slots in the elite starting line-up — including the captaincy — and, board the 12th man and team coach as well, just giving them the edge over pre-tournament favourites Australia, who would also provide a hatrick of stars.

Hansie Cronje just beats Mark Taylor to the captain's job, on the back of his side's unbeaten run, his imaginative leadership, the occasional over of medium pace and a useful middle-order average of 59.

ISLAMABAD, Mar 7: (AFP): Unbeaten South Africa are the new World Cup favourites ... statistically at least.

They would dominate an elite 'dream team' selected on performance after the first round jousting, with Australia in their slipstream. New Zealand, in contrast, are the only quarter-finalists unable to get a man into the select side.

Cronje himself would be bracketed by Sri Lankan Aravinda de Silva, with 145 against Kenya last time out and 244 runs in three matches, and Englishman Graeme Hick.

Hick, with a 104 and 85 to his name — that second innings only ended when his runner got himself dismissed — is also a fine slip and useful off

spinner, and just gets the nod over Mark's twin Steve.

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