

Column One

DID U KNOW?

(The Professor does)

THAT since 1744 when the first laws of cricket were believed to have been first instituted, almost all the rules and laws have been modified or scrapped altogether.

Despite the apparent fluidity of the Laws and all the modifications in the course of time, the only measurement to remain unchanged has been the length of the pitch which was laid down as 22 yards in the 1744 Laws and has never varied.

So, why look down on someone who plays an agricultural shot?

WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

Table with 3 columns: 11 weeks, 12 weeks, 13 weeks. Includes questions about World Cup 1996, South African Jonty Rhodes, and Guy Kirsten.

Name: Class: Roll No: School Address: Phone: (if any)

SPORTS TALK



Brian Lara (West Indies' master batsman)

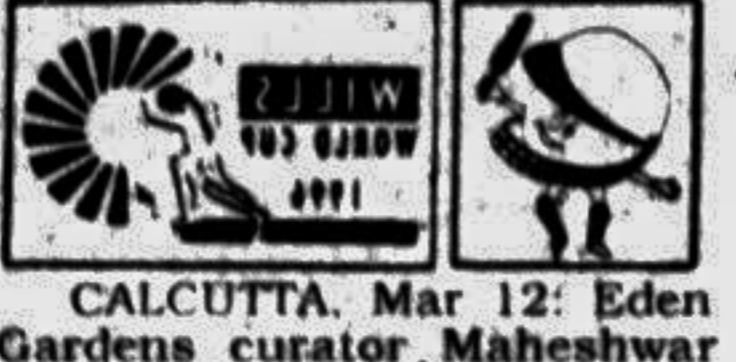
Wasim on a sticky wicket

ISLAMABAD, Mar 12: A writ has been served on Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram, alleging he deliberately lost the World Cup quarter-final against India after gambling on the result, reports AFP.

Tough draw for Jansher

CARDIFF, Mar 12: Jansher Khan, Pakistan's world number one who is aiming for a fifth successive British Open title here, may have to survive a repeat of his difficult World Open final, reports AFP.

Indo-Lanka battle today



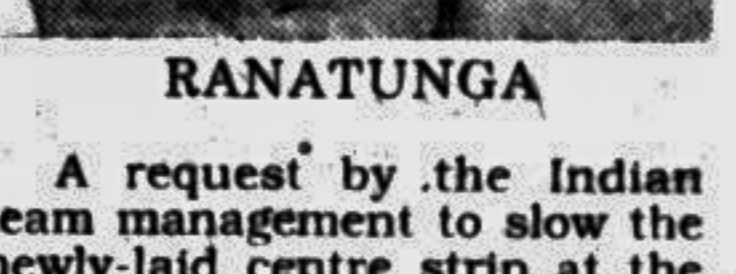
CALCUTTA, Mar 12: Eden Gardens curator, Maheshwar Sahu is the hidden trump card for down-to-earth India as they try to blunt Sri Lanka's attack in Wednesday's World Cup semifinal here, reports AFP.

The Indians, whose total of 271 was overhauled by Arjuna Ranatunga's men in their group encounter, are leaving no stone unturned to stop the most trenchant batting line-up in the tournament.

India have won their last three internationals at the Eden Gardens by batting first, when the wicket was at its best.

"Yes batting first is a distinct advantage here," Azharuddin said. "It's never easy to chase runs at night."

India's strategy session on the eve of the match was thrown in turmoil when manager Ajit Wadekar, reported sick and was confined to bed.



RANATUNGA

A request by the Indian team management to slow the newly-laid centre strip at the 100,000-capacity stadium was conveyed to the ground staff soon after Saturday's quarterfinal win over arch-rivals Pakistan.

The 55-year-old Sahu, who has been tending the Eden Gardens turf for 20 years, obliged immediately.

"We have watered the wicket a lot in the past few days to remove the bounce," Sahu said. "It will be a pitch factory made for the Indian batsmen and spinners."

Both teams had similar verdicts after looking at Sahu's creation today - the semifinal was unlikely to be a run feast as many expect.

Sri Lankan manager Duleep Mendis said, "The pitch looks a little wet and there is not much grass on it. I think it will be slow."

Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin added, "Our strength lies in our batting and spinners. This wicket looks ideal for both."

The toss will play a crucial role in determining the fortunes of the match, for the team batting second under lights will be affected by a thick layer of smog that envelops the ground at dusk.

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But former Test batsman Sandeep Patil, who takes over from Wadekar after the World Cup, stepped in to help the team out during training.

"We hope to recreate the Bangalore magic at the Eden Gardens," Patil said. "Sri Lanka have been playing well but I know we can beat them. There is nothing to worry."

Patil said Navjot Sidhu, who was affected by cramps during his knock of 93 against Pakistan, was recovering. "We are playing very safe with him, not making him stretch very much."

"It would be nice to play a winning combination, but Sidhu is still a bit of a worry," said Patil. The final eleven will be named on Wednesday morning.

Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga said the entire team was geared up for their first ever World Cup semifinal.

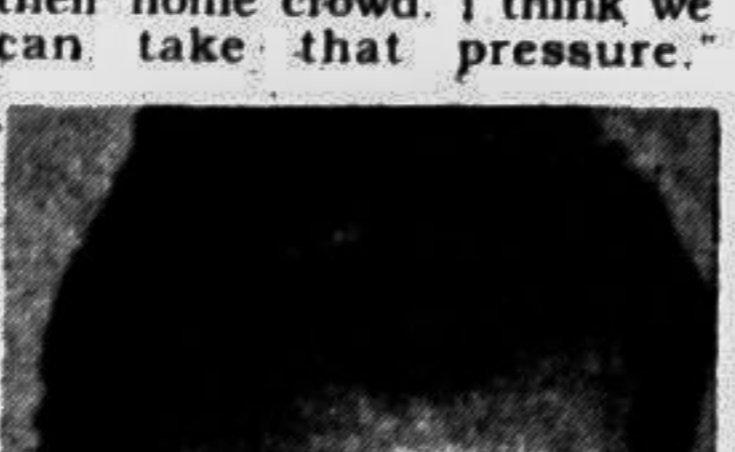
"It is the biggest game in Sri Lanka cricket history. When the tournament began, our target was to make the semifinals, but now we are hungry for more. The boys have had a great World Cup so far and we are in no mood to let up."

The Indians are a great side, but we don't mind the tag of underdogs. The pressure is

always on the other team." Ranatunga said the slow wicket and crowd pressure was unlikely to cause a shift in the team's strategy of going for runs from the start.

"We have seven top-class batsmen, all capable of getting big scores at a fast clip. It will be stupid to change something which has worked so well for us in this World Cup."

"And I think the pressure from the 100,000 crowd will be on both teams. It's a double-edged weapon. The Indians will want to do well in front of their home crowd. I think we can take that pressure."



AZHARUDDIN

Ranatunga said. **TEAMS**

INDIA: Mohammad Azharuddin (capt), Sachin Tendulkar, Navjot Sidhu, Sanjay Manjrekar, Vinod Kambli, Ajay Jadeja, Nayan Mongia, Javagal Srinath, Anil Kumble, Venkatesh Prasad, Venkatapathy Raju, Ashish Kapoor, Manoj Prabhakar, Sali Ankola.

SRI LANKA: Arjuna Ranatunga (capt), Aravinda de Silva, Sanath Jayasuriya, Romesh Kaluwitharana, Asanka Gurusinha, Hashan Tilakaratne, Roshan Mahanama, Chaminda Vaas, Kumar Dharmasena, Pramoday Wickramasinghe, Muthu Muralitharan, Ravindra Pushpakumara, Upal Chandana, Marvan Atapattu.

Umpires: Steve Dunne (New Zealand) and Cyril Mitchley (South Africa)

TODAY'S VENUE

CALCUTTA: Calcutta traces its history to 1690, the year Job Churnock of the British East India Company purchased the three villages of Sutanuti, Govindapur and Kalikata from a local Zamindar. Over the years these villages combined to form the city of Calcutta. The capital of British India till 1911, Calcutta is today the largest city in India besides being the capital of Bengal. Calcutta has a spirit that is indomitable, a culture that is unparalleled and a charm that is irresistible.

India's bustling eastern metropolis, 100,000-capacity Eden Gardens, one of the most modern cricket stadiums in the world is the venue for today's World Cup semifinal match between Sri Lanka and India.

Down in the streets, no one is discussing cricket. People seem unconcerned about India's biggest game since 1987, or unaware about Sri Lanka's 15-over cyclone. But, this is only a veil over the waves of emotion, suppressed for fear of the unexpected to happen, nurtured to celebrate the absailing of the titel.

Opposite the New Market a cobbler's 70-year-old face lit up, the words "India and only India" escaping his parted lips as his eyes reflected annoyance to the query, who will win tomorrow? A bearded bookseller

Concern over security for Lankans

CALCUTTA, Mar 12: Officials are worried about the safety of the Sri Lanka cricket team, reports AP.

About 35,000 people have been killed in the 12-year battle for independence being fought in Sri Lanka by its Tamil minority, and that sometimes involves terrorist attacks.

On Jan 31, a suspected Tamil rebel suicide bomber set off a truck full of explosives outside the central bank in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, killing 88 people and injuring 1,400.

Tamilis, who are mostly Hindu, have some supporters in predominantly Hindu India. Most of them live in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, but thousands also reside in Calcutta.

Tamil organisations have said they will not disrupt any cricket match, but this does not mean we can be complacent, said a senior official from the Criminal Investigation Department.

Calcutta has deployed 7,000 policemen and 500 commandos from the Rapid Action Force to protect Sri Lankan players during the World Cup semifinal.

"We are on full alert and this state of alert will remain until the Sri Lankan team leaves Calcutta," said additional police commissioner Dinesh Bajpai.

Commandos with sten guns also were posted outside the rooms of Sri Lankan players in the Taj Bengal Hotel in Calcutta.

Pundits predict

There are only four teams left in the 1996 World Cup. Who will become the new world champion? Live semifinal action begins on March 13 from Calcutta at 15:00 BST with the battle between India and Sri Lanka. The second semifinal will take place in Chandigarh, India on Thursday March 14 with live coverage beginning at 15:00 BST, says a press release.

STAR Sports - on-air commentators Brian Langley, Farook Engineer, Madan Lal, and Syed Kirmani recently enjoyed a day off from their hectic schedule to play a round of golf at Clearwater Bay Golf and Country Club in Hong Kong. Between shots, and there were many, they discussed their predictions on the semi-finals and they are as follows:

Brian Langley - "The winner of the India v Sri Lanka match could come down to the winner of the coin toss. If either India or Sri Lanka has the opportunity to chase rather than bat first, they should win the match. Australia, who are currently playing at the top of their game, have learned from their first defeat against the West Indies, and will come out of top in this re-match."

Farook Engineer - "India is playing very solid cricket right now. Sri Lanka is on a roll but I believe their bubble is about to burst. India has a solid batting line-up and have learned from their previous defeat against Sri Lanka. Australia should win their semi-final match as the West Indies rely too much on one man - Lara to produce runs. Australia on the other hand have a handful of solid batsmen and are playing well as a team."

Madan Lal - "India is an all around better side with stronger bowlers and batters. The outcome of this match will be different than their first World Cup meeting. The pressure is on and India will perform better under the circumstances with the home crowd on their side. It is difficult to predict the winner of the Australia v West Indies match - considering the way Australia played against New Zealand. This will be an excellent contest and it should come down to individual performances."

Syed Kirmani - "Both matches will be very close and it depends on how well the teams perform on that particular day. The West Indies are charged up at the moment and should make it to the final. The loss to Kenya was their wake-up call and this was evident in their match against South Africa. They now believe in themselves and their confidence as a team is much stronger."

If India bat second they should win as they are great chasers. Both teams have been going their own way but for some reason I believe the Sri Lankans will upset the India team to advance to the finals."

Inside the City of Joy



From Nizamuddin Ahmed on the footpath at Chowranghee, his forehead red from a visit to the mandir, did not even bother to reply.

Whatver was visible of his face belied words, his choice was obviously the hosts, Ranatunga and his high-flying band may have a game plan to reach Lahore by tomorrow.

The amount of interest may partly be gauged by the soaring price of tickets; Rs 300 going for Rs. 2000 and Rs 450 going for Rs. 3000, if available.

Bangladesh may not have qualified for the greatest spectacle in the cricketing world, but thousands came across the border to witness the grand semifinal between India and Sri Lanka to be held at the giant Eden Gardens tomorrow.

The much sought-after tickets now being captured by the peddlers, are sold six times than its original price of 100 US dollars. And most of the buyers of those tickets are Bangladeshis, claimed Calcutta police.

About 30,000 cricket fans witnessed the practice session of both India and Sri Lanka at the Eden Gardens. But it was learnt that Indian team manager Ajit Wadekar had left the

ground following a row with captain Azharuddin.

Wadekar, who persisted on off-spinner Aasish Kapoor against Azhar's choice of left-arm spinner Raju in their semifinal showdown, stormed out of the practice session after failing to convince the Indian captain.

Sachin Tendulkar, the mainstay of the Indian batting sustained a mild injury during the light practice session, however, it was reported that the Kamikaze kid is ready to roll for the big occasion.

Meanwhile, the cricket-crazed Calcutta dwellers, who have considered the divorce of Azhar as a very injurious move, are ready to throw him away if India face anything but a win against Sri Lanka.

Azhar, who having a relationship with Indian film-actress Sangita Bihari, is expected to move in a newly-bought apartment in Bombay along with his fiancée after the World Cup.

But whatever going on in the minds of Azhar or the millions Indians, who are keenly awaiting for a victory, only tomorrow will tell whether Calcutta becomes the 'city of joy' or turns into the 'city of cry'.

ROQUIBUL ON THE ROCKER

WI, Aussies deserve to win

The new-look West Indies dashed the hopes of smoothie South Africa, but they were 19 runs short as Australia overcame an unlikely hurdle posed by lowly New Zealanders in their respective quarter-finals on March 11. The two will now face each other in Chandigarh to settle the issue as to who gets the ticket to the finale at the Gaddafi Stadium on March 17.

Their last group match against Australia helped the West Indies team to lift their game as was very visible on the day. The bowlers bowled well, fielding catching were simply top class, and finally the little genius Brian Lara rose to the occasion to hit a colossal ton. It was indeed a great team effort.

While making the post-mortem of the match I would like to discuss the following points which really mattered the result. So far the batting has been the weak link in the West Indian side, and a good start of 42 runs in six overs, took the pressure off and pushed the South Africans on the defensive track. This helped Lara and Chanderpaul to settle down and they plundered the South African bowling at ease to post a 138-run partnership in no time.

On 140 for two in 25 overs it all looked West Indies would muster up something around 300, had it not for the brainless batting by their middle-

order batsmen after the departure of Lara (111) and Chanderpaul (96). For South Africa a bowler named out and experimenting with two spinners, Pat Symcox and Paul Adams, totally back fired. Expecting young unorthodox spinner Adams to do a miracle without sufficient match practice was too much. However, they succeeded in restricting West Indies to 264 - a target not difficult but not easy either to achieve - on a wicket which turns slower with the progress of the game.

Richie Richardson had a tough job in hand to defend and excepting the tall consistent fast bowler Curtly Ambrose he had little support from his two other front-line bowlers Walsh and Bishop, and had to fall back on his only specialist spinner Harper and the two parttimers Jimmy Adams and Arthurton.

South Africa was going on well in their run-chase before Adams came in to bowl over the wicket and used, the bowler's trademark 'pitching around the leg-stump. This tactic did the real trick as the South African batsmen, trying to force against the spin on the turning surface, only managed to be picked up in the well covered on-side field. Jimmy Adams in the process might have conceded a few extra runs but succeeded in sending back Hudson, Cullinan and Cronje to bring back West Indies right into the game. From that point, Roger

Harper, who had been quite consistent during the competition, put the last nail on the South African coffin when he picked up three wickets in one over. The Caribbeans, no doubt, won the match as the better team on the day.

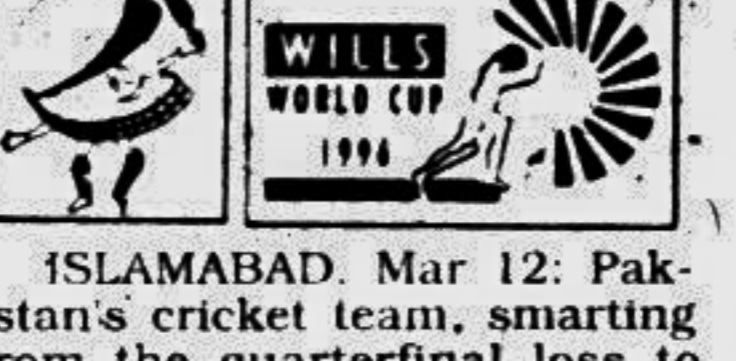
It was a great effort by the Kiwis in Madras against the Aussies. After setting a huge target of 287 with the help of a magnificent 130 off 124 balls by Chris Harris and 89 from Skipper Lee Germion, they lost the match due to their bowling weakened by the injuries of experienced Morrison and Larsen.

While saying this I am not at all taking anything out of the great batting display of Mark Waugh (110). It was an innings of temperament, timing and placement to the highest order. After he left, Steve Waugh, his twin brother, and Stuart Law completed the job as true craftsmen.

The highlight of the Aussie innings was that they never allowed the asking rate to go beyond six. Captain Mark Taylor gambled successfully with Shane Warne sending him up in the order as 'punch hitter'.

New Zealand captain Lee Germion tried everything by frequent change of bowling and thus saw the success but was not enough to stop the professional Australian batsmen. If only his fielders could garner the catches and earn some breakthrough, it would have been New Zealand and not Australia in the semis.

Pak heroes in hot water



ISLAMABAD, Mar 12: Pakistan's cricket team, smarting from the quarterfinal loss to arch-rivals India, fear they may be targets of fans enraged by their failure to retain the World Cup, newspapers reported today, reports Reuters.

"I am deeply concerned over the security of my players," team manager Intikhab Alam told the Dawn newspaper after the dejected team flew home on Monday night.

"(Captain) Wasim Akram's Lahore residence was stoned, while quite a few players have received threatening calls. At the moment I have not asked for special security, but I think it is needed."

The Urdu-language newspaper Jhang reported that angry fans had thrown brackets, eggs and tomatoes inside Akram's house at midnight. Threatening or abusive calls had been received at the homes of batsmen Salim Malik and Ijaz Ahmed, it added.

Intikhab said the entire team were upset and demoralised. "They are under tremendous pressure not only because they lost to India but also because they failed to come up to the expectations of their followers," he said.

The team were originally due to fly direct to Lahore from New Delhi but changed plans, apparently fearing a hostile reception at the airport in the Punjab provincial capital.

Instead they flew into Karachi on Monday evening and spent six hours resting at a hotel before taking a coach to Lahore.

One aggrieved fan is taking legal action against Akram, forced by injury to miss Saturday's high-pressure match in the southern Indian city of Bangalore which Pakistan lost by 39 runs.

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WORLD CUP QUIPS & QUOTES

ISLAMABAD, Mar 12 (AFP): Who said what at the 1996 cricket World Cup:

"You can't fool around with a team like that. There are no short cuts against the Australians," Indian manager Ajit Wadekar before the Group A defeat to Mark Taylor's men.

"I don't think we can bowl the West Indies out for 93," Australian captain Mark Taylor after Kenya's victory over the West Indies.

"The surprise element could be a vital weapon. If you keep your rivals guessing, sometimes you can catch them off-balance," Wesley Hall, the team manager, before Richie Richardson was asked to resign.

"They tell us there is a lobby to get rid of me when we get home," England supremo Ray Illingworth after his side lost in the quarter-finals.

"I'll be ready for the quarterfinal against India. I'll be ready in 24 hours," Wasim Akram after straining a side muscle against New Zealand. He missed the India game and Pakistan were knocked out of the tournament.

"I knew about Vivian Richards World Cup record of 181, but only because one of the umpires told my teammate Darryl Cullinan. After passing that, I just wanted to bat out the rest of the overs. I wasn't aware of Richards', 189," South African Gary Kirsten after missing the world one-day record by a single run against the United Arab Emirates.

"You can't arrest them and put them in," Pakistan Cricket Board chief executive Arif Ali Abbasi after being asked why attendances were so low.

"Even if you asked me to face Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram, I would prefer to face them without a helmet. Although I am 52 years old, Emirates team manager Abdul

Razaque Kazim after his captain Sultan Zarawani refused to don a helmet after being hit in the head by Allan Donald. Zarawani wore a helmet against Younis.

"A wave of grief has swept the country - we have lost our global honour. The front-page banner headline of Islamabad's Al-Akbar daily newspaper after Pakistan were knocked out of the Cup by India.

"This was the final. It doesn't matter who wins the World Cup now. For me the tournament is over and India are the champions," Indian journalist K. V. Prasad.

"What was taboo in the first three World Cups has now become pretty much accepted practice. Spin is definitely here to stay," former West Indian pace bowler Michael Holding after tipping the spinners to dominate the World Cup.

"The art of strokeplay is a way of communication between strokeplayers and cricket lovers. Perfect strokeplay touches the heart of a cricket fan, as a lover's message touches the heart of the beloved," former Pakistan player Zaheer Abbas after halting England's Graeme Hick a "God gifted".

"Instead of asking me about Javed Miandad, why don't you ask me about the quarter-finals against India?" Wasim after Miandad scored five against New Zealand.

"The old swagger is just there but the shots are missing at the moment. The timing's just a little astray. The little nudges and the way he uses his wrists, that's just missing at the moment. He was one of the best in the business at it," Ian Chappell on Javed Miandad during Pakistan's defeat to India in the quarter-finals in Bangalore.

Steffi survives a toughie

INDIAN WELLS, Cal, Mar 12: Steffi Graf, playing only her second match in four months, was tested by Julie Halard-Decugis, but came away with a 6-3, 7-5 victory in Monday's third round of the \$50,000 dollars Ever Cup.

"I've never felt as bad as when we lost to Kenya on Thursday. I lost my mother a few years ago and that was awful. But this was terrible as well," Richardson.

Graf, back on the tour after having surgery for a bone spur in her left foot, had to come from a 4-1 deficit in the second set. She won the next three games, then after three games, then after Halard-Decugis held service. Graf won three more games in a row to take the match.

Halard-Decugis, from France, has been one of the most consistent players on the tour this year. She was 18-3 in matches going in against Graf and had won twice, at Hobart, Australia, in January and the Paris Open last month.

Defending champion Mary Joe Fernandez, seeded eighth, was ousted in an evening match. Nathalie Tauziat, seeded 13th, beat Fernandez 7-6 (7-3), 6-4.



Steffi Graf plays a backhand during her World Cup encounter against Judy Halard-Decugis of France in Indian Wells on Mar 11. Steffi won 6-3, 7-5. - AFP/UNB photo

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes a crossword puzzle grid and a list of clues for across and down words.