

Powell to fill in Hooper's shoes

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Apr 28: Ricardo Powell, a 20-year-old all-rounder who has yet to play a one-day match for his native Jamaica...

Powell is an attacking middle-order batsman, an off-spin bowler and brilliant fielder. But he has only played six first-class matches and has no experience in England.

"We will obviously miss Carl, who is an outstanding cricketer and had vast experience, not least playing for Kent in the English county championship for many years," manager Clive Lloyd said.

"If I play to the best of my ability I know I can make an impression," he said.

Experts were impressed by Powell's aggressive batting in the regional Busta Cup competition, during which he scored 246 runs in three matches...

The innings, his first century in first-class cricket, contained 17 boundaries and three sixes and impressed many including Everton Weekes...

Powell also picked up five wickets bowling his off spinners, which made him a suitable replacement for Hooper, a similar type of cricketer.

Powell was a prolific run-scorer in the Headley Cup, the leading competition for rural schools in Jamaica...

The team is scheduled to leave for the tournament on May 2 and will play in a preliminary group with Australia, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Pakistan and Scotland.

Celtic-Rangers clash sparks security fears

GLASGOW, Apr 28: Celtic and Rangers security officers will meet later this week to finalise arrangements ahead of potentially one of the most hostile Old Firm derbies in the fixture's long history...

Rangers have the opportunity to seal the Scottish Premier League title at their rivals' home Parkhead for the first time ever if they claim victory on Sunday...

Already the Scottish Premier League have stressed there is no prospect of the trophy presentation being made to Rangers at Celtic Park...

Now Rangers security officer Lawrence McIntyre has raised the issue of where players not involved in the action should sit amid fears they might be subject to abuse if based in the main stand.

His Celtic counterpart George Douglas on Tuesday claimed that given the sensitive nature of a high-profile fixture, special arrangements might well need to be made in conjunction with the police.

It has happened before that players from the opposing side have been seated in the away section, but I cannot speak for the police who may have their own views on what should happen on the day this time.

The Old Firm game is quite different from all other matches and brings its own pressures, but both clubs are well-rehearsed regarding the operation which needs to be put in place and every issue will be addressed.

Mutola's 1000m record ratified

MONACO, Apr 28: Mozambique's Maria Mutola had her 1000m indoor world record ratified by the sports world governing body IAAF on Tuesday...

Mutola, the outdoor African and Commonwealth 800m champion, clocked 2min 30.94sec on February 25 at the Globen Galan meeting in Stockholm.

Germany's Nicole Rieger-Humbert women's world indoor pole vault record of 4.56m set at the same meeting was also ratified.



JUST LANDED! The new media centre at Lord's Cricket Ground in London, named 'Spaceship', was unveiled on April 27. The 5.8 million pounds structure will accommodate 250 pressmen.

Of a Lankan fairytale

LONDON, Apr 28 (AFP/Internet): The 1996 World Cup will be remembered as a Jekyll-and-Hyde event which managed to mix scintillating cricket and a fairytale finale with unprecedented controversy.

Sri Lanka's first triumph, beating Australia in the final by seven wickets thanks to Aravinda de Silva's undefeated 107, secured a superb sporting climax.

Sadly, however, that high point was more than matched by the tournament's many lows. The event ran into trouble before a ball had been bowled.

Shortly before the 12 teams congregated in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, a massive explosion in the centre of Colombo killed around 90 people.

Australia and the West Indies responded to the bombing, blamed on Tamil separatists, by refusing to play there.

Their hosts first tried to assure them by offering massive military security. When that failed, they bitterly ridiculed them, with national politicians all but accusing the Australians in particular of cowardice.

Finally, both Australia and the West Indies were forced to forfeit the games, virtually guaranteeing Sri Lanka a place in the quarter-finals in the process.

The tournament never really recovered. The format didn't help. A lengthy first round merely eliminated four sides - Zimbabwe, Kenya and the hugely outclassed United Arab Emirates and Holland.

At least there was some sensational batting, on admittedly friendly tracks, as Sachin Tendulkar and Mark Waugh, seen as the top two batsmen in the world, put on a real show.

The Indian opened with four day innings began slowly and gradually accelerated. Sri Lanka, exploiting new rules restricting the number of over-fielders during the first 15 overs, turned that idea on its head.

Against India, openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana put on 43 in three overs. Against Kenya, the same duo scored 83 off 40 balls as the team recorded 398 off 50 overs.

And Jayasuriya later hit 82 against England at two runs a ball. The World Cup had never seen anything like it. The real business, however, began in the quarter-finals in the process.

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Waugh words for Windies

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Apr 28 (Reuters): Australia's captain Steve Waugh has warned West Indian cricket authorities as they must upgrade security at their grounds significantly if they hope to stage the World Cup in 2007.

"I thought Barbados would be a safe place. I've always enjoyed playing cricket here and the crowds have been fantastic, but their reputation has been tainted today," Waugh said after Sunday's game.

"Someone's going to have to put their hand up and take responsibility because if they are hoping to hold the World Cup here in eight or nine years then obviously things have got to change.

"Every second game there's something happening with spectators running on the pitch. You can't do that in any other professional sport.

"I'm just so disappointed at what's happened in the last couple of games, it makes you wonder what are you playing cricket for."

West Indies team manager Clive Lloyd said because of the intimate nature of the smaller

innings of 127 not out (v Kenya), 70 (v West Indies), 90 (v Australia) and 137 (v Sri Lanka). The Australian riposted with his first three knocks of 130 (v Kenya), 126 (v India) and 76 not out (v Zimbabwe).

SL'S SCHEDULE Group A Round One May 14 England, Lord's May 19 South Africa, Northampton May 22 Zimbabwe, Worcester May 26 India, Taunton May 30 Kenya, Southampton



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began in the quarter-finals with the unexpected demise of the South Africans. The only unbeaten side with five wins from the preliminary stage, they crashed to Richie Richardson's West Indians and a Brian Lara century.

Soon only Australia, the West Indies, Sri Lanka and India - who had beaten Pakistan in a contest preceded by threats of violence from radical Indian Hindus against Wasim Akram's team - were left standing.

One semi-final was to prove a classic, the other a disaster. Australia, reduced to 15 for four before struggling to 207 for eight, managed to defeat the West Indies in Chandigarh by five runs with three balls to spare.

A flabbergasted Richardson, heading for retirement, saw his men collapse from 165 for two to 203 all out, man-of-the-match Shane Warne grabbing four for 36.

That classic confrontation, however, was overshadowed by the game in Calcutta. The match was awarded to Sri Lanka after 110,000 fans in Eden Gardens, realising India were heading for certain defeat, rioted and began hurling projectiles onto the pitch.

That night, effigies of Mohammad Azharuddin, the Indian captain, were burned in the streets.

He - like Wasim Akram who was blamed for Pakistan's exit - ended the tournament in hiding from his own supporters.

Fortunately, that fate did not befall the captain of the other host nation.

Arjuna Ranatunga was instead feted as a national hero after the seven-wicket defeat of the Australians in the Gaddafi stadium in Lahore.

Ranatunga - whose undefeated 47 that night gave him a tournament average of 120 - and his side, deserved their success, if only for their thrilling reinvention of one-day batting.

African matches and Roger Twose had several innings in the 60s and 70s which secured his potentially shaky hold on a middle order one-day place.

Left-arm fast bowler Geoff Allott, while not spectacular in either Test series, was aggressive and a match-winner in the one-dayers, especially against South Africa.

Crowe said the big responsibilities of the World Cup would rest on Cairns with the new ball and his middle order batting. Gavin Larsen with his miserly slow medium bowling near the end of the first 15 overs in which fielding restrictions apply, and Chris Harris, a one-day specialist with his unorthodox right-arm leg cutters and vigorous batting.

If you look at a winning innings in a one-day international, someone has done a good anchoring job and hit a good 70-odd, and that will fall on Fleming and Twose after Astle. Matt Horne and McMillan have hopefully given us a blazing start," Crowe said.

New Zealand are perennial dark horses at World Cups and taking them lightly is a risky business.

In a first-round six-team group including Scotland and Bangladesh, they will certainly be disappointed not to be among the top three qualifying for the second stage.

Goalkeeping coach Castellini took over but will step aside in the close season to make way for former Juventus boss Marcello Lippi.

"I'm at Lippi's complete disposal," said Hodgson, who coached Inter from 1995-97, stepping down after the Italian giants lost the 1997 UEFA Cup final to Germany's Schalke 04.

"I'm here for Inter and the future of Inter is called Lippi," he added.

The decision of Inter president Massimo Moratti to recall Hodgson was greeted by surprise and humour in Italy.

"It's just not possible. If this news is true that it must mean that my friend Massimo has gone mad," said Maurizio Zamparini, chairman of Serie A side Venezia.

But Inter star Ronaldo, speaking from Barcelona where he is due to play for Brazil on Wednesday night, against his former Spanish club, praised Moratti for making a bold move at a critical moment.

"I don't know the English coach personally but I've heard he's the right man to clean up our house," Ronaldo said. "It's the right solution at a difficult moment."

He was subsequently told by the Barbados police commissioner that the Australian players' safety could not be guaranteed if they did not return to continue the match.

'Spaceship' unveiled

LONDON, Apr 28: The traditional hub of world cricket took on a futuristic look Tuesday when Lord's officials launched the modern media centre, dubbed the 'spaceship', reports AP.

The 5.8 million pound (9.3 million dollars) facility was unveiled by Marylebone Cricket Club president Tony Lewis less than two weeks before the World Cup opens at the ground with a match between England and defending titlist Sri Lanka.

The oval-shaped building stands 15 metres (yards) above the pitch at the Nursery End and supplants the existing facility in a unique mix with the more stately architecture at St John's Wood.

Lord's will also be the venue for the World Cup final on June 20, the fourth time the championship final has been held at the ground.

Thomas Lord established the ground in 1814 and the MCC moved in 1866. The MCC was cricket's world governing body until 1968 and still maintains its headquarters at Lord's.

The usually ultra-conservative MCC, which broke more than a century of tradition by admitting women after a landmark vote of its 17,000 members this year, built the new facility in conjunction with NatWest Bank.

"Some people may not like something of such distinctive style," Lewis said. "But we love it."

Bevan, Pollock top ODI ratings

UNDATED: Michael Bevan and Shaun Pollock are the new number one batsman and bowler in the PricewaterhouseCoopers One Day Ratings, updated after 65 one-day internationals played this year, says a media release on the internet Tuesday.

Bevan has averaged 102.2 with the bat in 1999 and takes over from Sachin Tendulkar who missed two series for India. Pollock replaces Saqlain Mushtaq at number one.

The one-day ratings put more emphasis on players' recent form than performances earlier in their careers.

In the batting, there have been big climbs for Adam Gilchrist (up 15 to 5th) and Lance Klusener (up 30 to 9th). Those surprised at Klusener's rise will be interested that he has averaged 88.6 with the bat this year, scoring at about a run a ball.

Graeme Hick (11th), Inzamamul Haq (14th) and Darren Lehmann (20th) have also moved up significantly in 1999. Sri Lanka has done very well, almost 100 points since January, but his very high rating from previous years means that he holds on to third place.

In the bowling, Azhar Mahmood's combination of wickets and economy has lifted him to third in the bowling (Mahmood has been one of the most economical ODI bowlers over the last twelve months).

Glenn McGrath, who has been hit by injury for much of the last two years, is up 12 places to 10th. Other bowlers heading for the top are Adam Dale (20th), Alan Mullally (33rd), Merv Dillon (39th) and Shoaib Akhtar (41st). All of these bowlers are still qualifying for their full ratings (which they will achieve after playing 40 matches).

Hodgson yet happy

MILAN, Italy, Apr 28 (Reuters/Internet): English coach Roy Hodgson feels a little embarrassed to be back at Inter Milan but insists the move was dictated by extraordinary circumstances.

"This is a strange, extraordinary situation," Hodgson said after Inter brought him back to the San Siro on Tuesday to work alongside Luciano Castellini, the club's third coach of the season.

"I'm a bit embarrassed but I'm here as a friend of the club to lend a hand," he told Gazzetta dello Sport. "I'm happy to be back and hope to get as many points as possible and maybe reach a play-off place for the UEFA Cup."

Inter have had a terrible season and are ninth in Serie A and out of all cup competitions. They sacked coach Luigi Simoni in December and replaced him with Romanian Mircea Lucescu who in turned stepped down last month after a 4-0 defeat at relegation-threatened Sampdoria.

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Miandad: Change of heart

KARACHI, April 28 (AFP/Internet): Javed Miandad, who dramatically stepped down as coach last week, backed Pakistan as "hot" favourites for the Cricket World Cup as the squad left without him for England on Tuesday.

Miandad, 43, who has cited family commitments for his resignation, said he wished the team "good luck" but added he would be available to help if the team needed him.

His exit came after the Pakistan cricket bosses hired South African Richard Pybus as technical coach, a move Miandad saw as "an attempt to isolate and embarrass him," sources close to the veteran cricketer said.

Miandad however sought to dispel the impression that he had problems with senior players including skipper Wasim Akram, saying, "It is time to forget the issue."

"I do not have any problems with any of the players. Otherwise my combination with Wasim and the boys would not have won matches. Even now I will be available to help whenever the boys need me," said Miandad.

"I wish all of you best of luck. And I want to tell you that I will be available any time you need me during the world cup," he said.

Miandad was confident of the team's talent.

"Our team has proved itself to be one of the favourites for the world cup through its excellent performance in recent times. It has the weaponry of talent and unmatched experience."

Miandad, who became coach in September last year, loathed the morale of the team to level the series against India and win

But he warned any new change in strategy could prove disastrous. "I will strictly advise against any new techniques for the team."

"They just have to make sure they play the full 50 overs. Once they do that and set a respectable total, our bowlers will do the rest," he added.

"Bowlers like Wasim, Saqlain Mushtaq, Shoaib Akhtar, Waqar Younis and Mushtaq Ahmed can bowl the side out twice in 50 overs."

Miandad scored 8,032 runs in 124 Tests during his 21-year career starting in 1975, and played in all six World Cup tournaments so far.

"I have always served my country. I was born as a cricketer and will die as a cricketer as cricket is in my blood," he said.

Pak exuberance untainted

"Our team is very confident. We have been winning for the last three months but in England it's a different ball game altogether," he said.

"It's nice to be the favourites, not the main favourites but in the first two or three, I think South Africa, Australia and England all have good sides."

"But in my opinion any team with captain Wasim Akram insisting the team's chances will not be harmed by the match-fixing row.

The tournament favourites arrived at Manchester Airport 24 hours before a commission investigating the claims holds its final hearing in Lahore.

But despite the disruption to his team's preparations for the tournament, which begins next month, a bullish Wasim was quick to play down concerns of team morale being affected.

"The match-fixing issue doesn't matter to the Pakistan cricket team," he said. "We have been winning for the last three months, not just against India but also Sri Lanka and England. As for any other concerns apart from cricket, we are not bothered about it."

"I think the Pakistan team is sick of the allegations that have been going on for the last year and a half.

Wasim was just decided in the end we will not be bothered by the allegations and we will just get on, play our cricket and enjoy our cricket."

"That has been our motto for the last three or four months and everything has been going well for us.

"We are tough boys and the best thing about us is we want to work hard, do well and have consistency in our side."

Wasim was careful not to overplay his team's excellent chances of winning the tournament but is happy they are rated good enough to take the trophy home with them.

KARACHI, Apr 28 (AFP/Internet): A judicial commission investigating match-fixing allegations in Pakistan cricket postponed hearings on Wednesday and its findings may now be delayed until after the World Cup, officials said.

Former captains, Rashid Latif and Aamir Sohail and Javed Miandad sought adjournment citing personal reasons, the registrar of Lahore High Court, Abdus Salam Khawar told the news agency.

No proceedings were held and the judge, Malik Qayyum, adjourned the hearing to a date to be fixed later, Khawar said.

"Apparently it seems difficult to complete the findings until the World Cup is over," he added.

Wasim Akram-led 15-member squad left for England on Tuesday to participate in the May 14-June 16 World Cup matches.

Miandad, who resigned as coach requested the commission for the postponement saying his mother was sick. Latif also cited similar reasons, the registrar said. Only former manager Intikhab Alam was present.

"Now it is for the judge to decide whether he thinks the commission has enough substance to finalise its findings or it should cross-examine more witnesses," Khawar said.

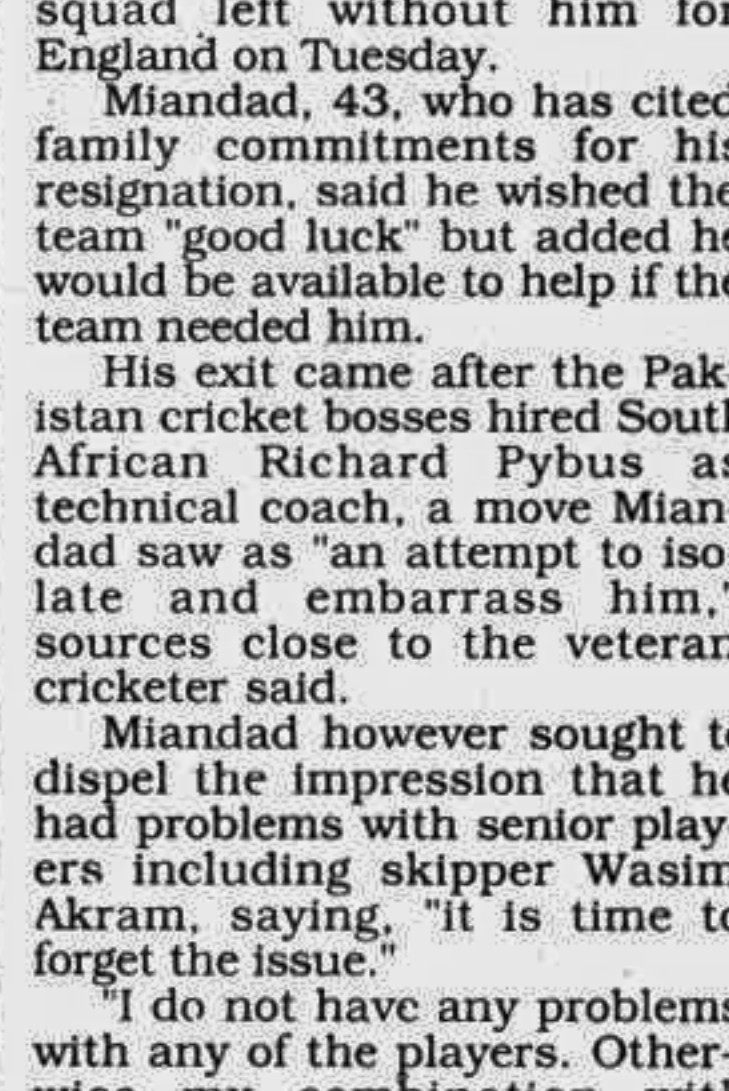
PCB legal advisor Sibtain Fazl said if the proceedings were held during the World Cup, the judge would hold the hearings "in camera" so that performance of the players was not affected.

The match-fixing allegations cropped up four years ago when Australian players Shane Warne, Tim May and Mark Waugh accused Salim Malik of offering them bribes to perform poorly during the 1994-95 tour of Pakistan.

Skipper Akram, star batsmen Salim Malik and Ijaz Ahmed, bowlers Mushtaq Ahmed and Waqar Younis - all members of present the World Cup squad - were implicated in the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) interim report last year for their alleged involvement in bribery.

The players have denied the allegations.

Around 50 witnesses, including present and former players, cricket officials and alleged bookies have already appeared before the commission which started its investigation in September last year.



JAVED MIANDAD

The triangular Asian Test Championship and the Sharjah Cup.

His resignation on April 21 left fans stunned.

"I think Pakistan has a better chance than South Africa and Australia but they just have to stick to the pattern we set for the World Cup and that is all," he said.

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