

Hooper feels a little sorry

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, May 2: All-rounder Carl Hooper, who stunned West Indies cricket by announcing his retirement on the eve of the World Cup, has admitted his timing was poor, reports Reuters.

"Looking at it, I should have done it (retired) after the last Test (against Australia) and given the selectors a chance probably to play someone in the seven one-days and then take him on to the World Cup," Hooper told the Barbados Advocate newspaper on Friday.

"But I was hoping to get involved in the seven one-days and go on to the World Cup and call it quits after the World Cup but I just couldn't hold it."

Hooper, 32, retired last weekend after playing in the sixth one-day international against Australia. He has been replaced in the 15-man squad by young Jamaican all-rounder Ricardo Powell.

He believes West Indies are still capable of winning the World Cup even though his sudden retirement could affect the team and the plans of captain Brian Lara.

"He will have to change plans and if I put myself in his shoes and I had somebody like Brian retiring on me, it would have been disappointing," he said.

"But at the end of the day I had to weigh that up against somebody going out there and being one hundred per cent totally committed to West Indies' cause and I decided to retire."

Hooper, who made his debut for West Indies in 1987 and played 60 Tests and 182 one-day internationals, said he still hoped to attend some of the matches during the World Cup which opens in England on May 14.

"I will be there for a little while and I will go to the dressing rooms and support them and hopefully they can go all the way. There is no reason for me to stay away," Hooper said.

These are fellows that I have probably spent more time with than my family in the last 12 years, so there's no reason for me just to totally shut out and walk away. It is something that I can't really do, you know."

Big wins for Mirpur Bangla, Wills Little

ANZ Grindlays National School Cricket

Eight teams won their respective matches in the ANZ Grindlays Bank 17th national schools cricket championship of different city venues yesterday, reports UNB.

Green Herald International beat Radiant International by 3 wickets at the Orient Club ground.

Green Herald scored 216 for 7 in 32 overs, replying to Radiant's 211 for 9 in 35 overs.

At the Uttara Friends Club ground, Motijheel Govt. Boys outplayed Hammadia High by 7 wickets.

Hammadia scored 141 for 9 in 35 overs.

In reply, Motijheel made 142 for 3 in 21.3 overs.

New Light High beat Bidyaniketon Pre-Cadet by 5 wickets at the Kalabagan Club ground.

Bidyaniketon scored 150 for all in 32.4 overs.

In reply, New Light reached their target of 151 in 28.5 overs losing 5 wickets.

At the Mirpur Outer Stadium, Shaheed Lt Selim Shikhalaya beat Kadamtala Parko Basabo High by 35 runs.

Selim Shikhalaya made 191 for all in 33.2 overs.

In reply, Kadamtala were all out for 156 in 34.5 overs.

Nabakumar Institution defeated Wari High by 22 runs at the Mohammadpur Eidgah ground. Nabakumar made 206 for all in 34 overs.

In reply, Wari scored 184 for all in 32.1 overs.

At the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium, Mirpur Bangla High crushed Rashid Adarsha High by 9 wicket. Rashid Adarsha scored paltry 72 for all in 22.5 overs.

In reply, Mirpur Bangla reached their target scoring 74 in 8.4 overs losing only one wicket.

South Bridge defeated Oxford International by 6 wickets at the City Club ground. Oxford International were all out for 164 in 34.3 overs in reply to South Bridge's 170 runs for all in 32.5 overs.

At the Kalindi ground, Wills Little Flower earned a massive 9 wickets victory over Udayan Bidyalaya. Udayan made 137 for all in 29.1 overs.

In reply, Wills Little Flower reached their target of 138 in 20.1 overs for the loss of one wicket.

Botham sings for Mullally

LONDON, May 2: Leicestershire and England fast bowler Alan Mullally has been given a World Cup boost by Ian Botham, reports AFP.

The former England great described Mullally as "the most improved bowler in the country over the last 12 months by a country mile."

Mullally has confirmed his fitness for the World Cup which starts in two weeks by playing in the current County Championship game against Lancashire at Grace Road.

"I think the England selectors have got it pretty much right because the seamers will play an important part in our conditions."

He seems okay although he did complain of a bit of stiffness after his first bowling spell," said Leicestershire manager Jack Birkenshaw.

'83: Teamwork did the trick

LONDON, May 2 (AFP): Cricket's World Cup finally came of age in 1983, its third edition providing all the drama, shocks and surprises that the previous tournaments had lacked.

The fact that India took the trophy, thus depriving Clive Lloyd and the West Indies of a glorious hat-trick, was perhaps the biggest upset of them all.

With five defeats and only one previous World Cup victory to their name - and that against lowly East Africa - India had begun the event as 66-1 outsiders.

The so-called lesser sides, however, were beginning to develop strategies to give them a greater say in the 60-over one-day game, an evolution reflected in the fact that, for the first time, each of the eight nations taking part in 1983 recorded at least one victory.

This was to be a World Cup based not so much on larger-than-life heroes than on canny team work.

Once again, there were two groups of four, but this time they played each other twice before the semi-finals.

The drama began from the very start. On the opening day of the tournament, Kim Hughes' Australians lost to Zimbabwe, the only non-Test side in the field and making their debut in the Cup, by 13 runs.

That result - perhaps matched only by the West Indies' defeat to Kenya in 1996 - remains the greatest upset in World Cup history.

Australia's topsy-turvy form - they beat Kapil Dev's India in group B by 162 runs at Trent Bridge, then lost the Chelmsford return match by 118 - saw them crash to their greatest humiliation, with just two wins out of six.

The West Indies, however, with most of their 1979 stars still in harness and strengthened by such newcomers as Malcolm Marshall and Jeffrey Dujon, appeared as powerful as ever.

They won five out of their six group games - significantly, the one side to trip them up was India, with no front-line West Indian batsman reaching 30 in the 34-run defeat - while England topped their group with an identical record.

The Indians highlight, however - 175 not out by Kapil Dev against Zimbabwe after his side had been reduced to a desperate 17 for five - sadly did not get the coverage it deserved after BBC camera crews went on strike.

The tournament took a breath in the semi-finals, with India comfortably seeing off England at Old Trafford and the West Indies breezing past Pak-

istan by six and eight wickets respectively.

The final on June 25, however, made up for the pause in excitement.

Not that many people would have favoured India after 54.4 overs of the match.

By then, the West Indian quacks had stilted them for 183, with Andy Roberts, the pick of the bowlers with three for 32 - including the prize scalp of Sunil Gavaskar - off 10 fiery overs.

When Mohinder Armanath - the semi-final hero against England with 46 and two wickets for 27 against England - trapped Michael Robert leg before with one of his slow floaters, the West Indies had been bowled out for 140, 43 short with eight overs still remaining.

While the hugely talented Kapil Dev, one of the game's greats, was clearly the cornerstone of India's 1983 side - he averaged 60.60 with the bat and

took 12 wickets at 20.41 - it was Armanath, a batsman who bowled a bit, who again won the man-of-the-match award.

His 26 runs and three lower-order wickets for 12 off seven overs might not have compared with the heroics of previous final match-winners Clive Lloyd in 1975 (102 not out) and Vivian Richards (138 not out) in 1979.

But it confirmed a trend - that outsiders have a chance against the one-day greats if they can counter brazen ability with intelligence.

Rixon has high hopes

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, May 2: New Zealand cricket coach Steve Rixon wants his team to be the quiet achievers of this year's World Cup, reports AP.

When Rixon's three-year term as coach began he was, at times, given to making bold predictions for the side which they could not match.

Before the team's departure from Christchurch on Sunday, he expressed a quiet confidence in his charges' ability to challenge for cricket's ultimate prize.

"I'm happy with the players and the preparation we have," said Rixon. "This is perhaps the most open World Cup and it will take a pretty good punter to pick the top six."

Rixon expects other teams to be wary of New Zealand after having shown the ability to beat the top-ranked sides.

"What we will do when we get over there is lift the intensity level. We want to up the ante with the fielding because that is a vital area. A brilliant piece of fielding can turn a game."

"Now we have everybody fully fit, we have got aggressive top-order batsmen and some quality players like (Chris) Cairns, (Adam) Parore and (Dion) Nash in the middle."

While admitting the side did not have a strike bowling weapon in the Glenn McGrath mould, Rixon said he was again comfortable with the team's bowling resources.

He said a key factor of the campaign was the team's flexibility - having many bowling and batting options available for various conditions and situations.

Azhar: Do it or quit

NEW DELHI, May 2 (AFP): If there is anything about one-day cricket that Mohammad Azharuddin does not know, it is probably not worth knowing.

The Indian captain has played more one-day internationals and scored more runs than any other player in history, but he would trade those records for an Indian victory at the World Cup.

Records are meant to be broken but there's nothing like a World Cup win, says the 36-year-old, who leads India in a third successive World Cup and plays in his fourth.

It's a feat previously achieved only by West Indian Clive Lloyd, who led victorious campaigns in the first two World Cups in 1975 and 1979, only to be denied a hat-trick in 1983 by India.

Azharuddin, who made his international debut a year after India's shock triumph, remembers India's finest cricketing hour clearly.

"I will never forget that moment when Kapil lifted the World Cup on the Lord's balcony," Azharuddin said. "It was a very emotional moment and made us proud to be Indians."

With the World Cup returning to England, Azharuddin hopes luck will once again favour the Indians.

The wristy batsman was referred to as "God's gift" to the national game when he burst onto the world stage in 1984 with centuries in his first three

Tests against David Gower's Englishmen.

Fourteen years on, he is India's most successful Test and one-day captain, but the lack of World Cup success still rankles.

"It's never clicked for me at the World Cup and that hurts, because it's the stage everyone wants to do well on," Azharuddin says.

In 1987, Kapil Dev's defending champions were knocked out by England in the semi-final at home in Bombay.

Under Azhar's leadership Down Under in 1992, India failed to pass the league stage and four years later made a shameful exit from the semi-final at Calcutta when crowd trouble forced the match being awarded to the dominant Sri Bankans.

But he knows that nothing short of victory this time will satisfy India's fanatical fans - and the selectors. Even before the tournament, there have been rumblings that he should make way for a more attacking captain.

If India fail to win the World Cup, Azharuddin may again be forced to give way to Tendulkar.

"I don't care if I stay captain or not," Azharuddin says. "But if we don't win the World Cup, it will not be because of lack of effort on my part. A captain is only as good as the team under him."

That was the lowest point of my career," he said. "I had served my country for so long and to be omitted from the celebrations of India's 50 years of independence hurt badly."

Yet he not only fought back to regain his place in the team but was made skipper once again last year after the selectors decided that the burden of captaincy was affecting Sachin Tendulkar's batting.

Azharuddin's second innings as skipper has been rewarding, with India winning five of their eight one-day series in 1998 besides a 2-1 Test win over Mark Taylor's Australians at home.

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FLASHBACK: Victorious Indian skipper Kapil Dev shows off the coveted 1983 World Cup on the balcony at Lord's. — Star file photo

TEAM TRACK RECORD

LONDON, May 2 (AFP): India's World Cup track record: 1975-1996: Played 36, won 18, lost 17, no result 1

Winners: 1983

Semi-finalists: 1987, 1996

Eliminated after group stage: 1975, 1979, 1992

1975

Played 3, won 1, lost 2

Group matches

Lord's, London, June 7 - England bt India by 202 runs. England 334-4 (Amis 137, Fletcher 68, Old 51 not), India 132-3

Leeds, June 11 - India bt East Africa by 10 wickets. East Africa 120 (Bedi 12-8-6-1), India 123-0 (Gavaskar 65 not, Engineer 54 not)

Manchester, June 15 - New Zealand bt India by 4 wickets. India 230 (Abid Ali 70, McKechnie 3-49), New Zealand 233-6 (Turner 114 not)

1979

Played 3, lost 3

Group matches

Birmingham, June 9 - West Indies bt India by 9 wickets. India 190 (Viswanath 75, Holding 4-33), West Indies 194-1 (Greenidge 106 not)

Leeds, June 13 - New Zealand bt India by 8 wickets. India 182 (Gavaskar 55, Cairns 3-36, McKechnie 3-24), New Zealand 183-2 (Edgar 84 not)

Manchester, June 16, 18 - Sri Lanka bt India by 47 runs. Sri Lanka 238-5 (Wettimuny 67, Dias 50, Mendis 64, Amarnath 3-40), India 191 (Opatia 3-31, de Silva 3-29)

1983

Played 8, won 6, lost 2

Group matches

Manchester, June 9, 10 - India bt West Indies by 34 runs. India 262-8 (Sharma 89), West Indies 228 (Binn 3-48, Shastri 3-26)

Leicester, June 11 - India bt Zimbabwe by 5 wickets. Zimbabwe 155 (Lal 3-27), India 157-5 (Patil 50)

Nottingham, June 13 - Australia bt India by 162 runs. Australia 320-9 (T. Chappell 110, Hughes 52, Yallop 66 not, Kapil Dev 5-43), India 158 (MacLae 6-39)

Oval, London, June 15 - West Indies bt India by 66 runs. West Indies 282-9 (Richards 119, Binny 3-71), India 216 (Amarnath 80, Holding 3-40)

The Brisbane Wells, June 18 - India bt Zimbabwe by 31 runs. India 266-8 (Kapil Dev 175 not, Rawson 3-47, Curran 3-65), Zimbabwe 235 (Curran 73, Lal 3-2)

Chelmsford, June 20 - India bt Australia by 118 runs. India 247 (Hogg 3-40, Thomson 3-51), Australia 129 (Lal 4-20, Binny 4-29)

Semi-finals

Manchester, June 22 - India bt England by 6 wickets. England 213 (Kapil Dev 3-35), India 217-4 (Sharma 61, Patil 51)

Final

Lord's, London, June 25 - India bt West Indies by 43 runs. India 183 (Roberts 3-32), West Indies 140 (Lal 3-31, Amarnath 7-0-12-3)

1987

Played 7, won 5, lost 2

Group matches

Madras, October 9 - Australia bt India by 1 run. Australia 270-6 (Marsh 110), India 269 (Srikkanth 70, Sidhu 73, McDermott 4-56)

Bangalore, India, October 14 - India bt New Zealand by 16 runs. India 252-7 (Sidhu 75, Kapil Dev 72 not out, Patel 3-36), New Zealand 236-8 (Rutherford 75, Jones 64)

Bombay, October 17 - India bt Zimbabwe by 8 wickets. Zimbabwe 135 (Pycroft 61, Prabhakar 4-19, M. Singh 3-21), India 136-2 (Gavaskar 61, Sidhu 51, Vengarkar 63, Azharuddin 3-19)

New Delhi, October 22 - India bt Australia by 56 runs. India 289-6 (Gavaskar 61, Sidhu 51, Vengarkar 63, Azharuddin 3-19)

Ahmedabad, India, October 26 - India bt Zimbabwe by 7 wickets. Zimbabwe 191-7 (Arnott 60), India 194-3 (Gavaskar 50, Sidhu 55)

Nagpur, India, October 31 - India bt New Zealand by 9 wickets. New Zealand 221-9 (Sharma 3-51), India 224-1 (Srikkanth 75, Gavaskar 103 not)

Semi-finals

Bombay, November 5 - England bt India by 35 runs. England 254-6

TEAM TRACK RECORD

(Gatting 56, M. Singh 3-54), India 219 (Azharuddin 64, Foster 3-47, Hemmings 4-52)

1992

Played 8, won 2, lost 5, abandoned 1

Preliminary round

Perth, February 22 - England bt India by 9 runs

India 236-9 (Gooch 51, Smith 91), India 227 (Shastri 57, Reeve 3-38)

Mackay, Australia, February 28 - India v Sri Lanka match abandoned

Brisbane, March 1 - Australia bt India by 1 run

Australia 237-9 (Jones 90, Kapil Dev 3-41, Prabhakar 3-41) India 234 (after target revised to 235 off 47 overs, Azharuddin 93, Moody 3-56)

Sydney, March 4 - India bt Pakistan by 43 runs

India 216-7 (Tendulkar 54 not out, Mushtaq 3-59), Pakistan 173 (Sohail 62)

Hamilton, New Zealand, March 7 - India bt Zimbabwe by 55 runs

India 203-7 (Tendulkar 81, Traicos 3-35, Burmester 3-36)

Zimbabwe 104-