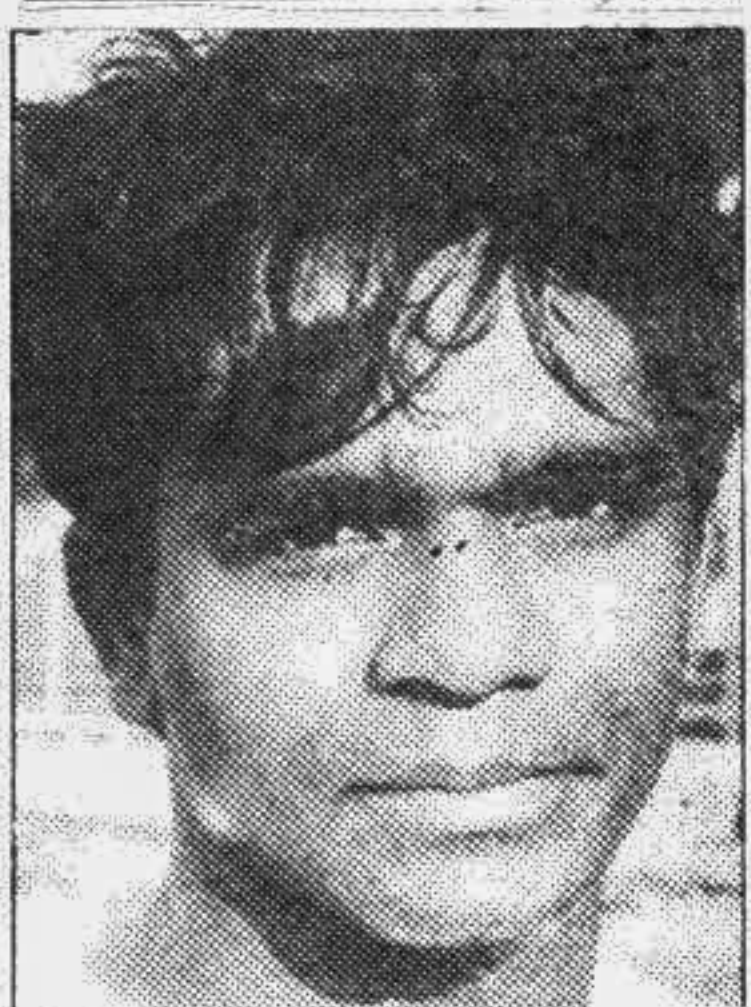


Column One

SPORTS TALK



Aminul Islam
(Bangladesh cricket captain)
"You see, one-day games are like a lottery. The team playing better on a particular day will be the winners. So you cannot write off an upset."

Boost sports

WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN
Competition-115
✓ Tick the Correct Answers
Post to The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
May 14 '99 and draw shortly afterwards

- Who will replace Bob Woolmer as South African cricket coach?
Ford Stewart Marsh
- When England last hosted cricket World Cup?
1975 1987 1983
- Umpire Steve Bucknor is a
Guyanese Jamaican Trinidadian
- The final match of the 1999 cricket World Cup will be held at
Edgbaston Lord's Oval
- The World Cup match between Bangladesh and Scotland will be played in
Edinburgh Belfast Cardiff

Name

Class Roll No.

School Address

Phone: (If any)

POWERED WITH
EN-VITS
ENERGY RELEASING VITAMINS

National schools cricket finals from May 15

Sports Reporter

ANZ Grindlays National School Cricket

The final round of the ANZ Bank 17th National School Cricket Championship will begin from May 15.

Sixteen teams, split into two zones - Dhaka and Tangail - will take part in final round.

The winners of each zone will face each other in the final which will be held at Tangail.

The following 16 schools have qualified for the final round:

Dhaka zone: Nabakumar Institution, Pirojpur Govt Boy's High School, Willes Little Flower School, Mymensingh Zilla School, Narayanganj High School, Govt Laboratory School, Segun Bagicha High School and Scholastica.

Tangail zone: Tangail Bindubashini Govt Boy's High School, Kushtia Dinmoni Madhyamik Bidyalaya, Chandpur Hasan Ali High School, Chuadanga MA Bari Madhyamik Bidyalaya, Comilla Zilla School, Dinajpur Maharaja GN High School and Sylhet's Aided School.

Tendulkar finds his feet

TRENT BRIDGE, May 11: Sachin Tendulkar warned World Cup rivals he was back in business after injury with a sparkling 91 in India's warm-up game against Nottinghamshire here today, reports AFP.

Rahul Dravid chipped in with 89 as India, celebrating their chance at the crease after two frustrating wash-outs, scored 245 for five in 44 overs.

Tendulkar, regarded as the world's top batsman, and Dravid added 155 runs for the second wicket after opener Saurav Ganguly had fallen for two.

Nottinghamshire were set a revised target of 247 in 44 overs due to a rain interruption at the start of India's innings.

Bangladesh: So far so good

LONDON, May 11 (AFP) - For a team taking part in their first World Cup, Bangladesh have endured as much intrigue and controversy as some of the established teams in the build-up to the event.

Since qualifying for the World Cup by winning the ICC Trophy two years ago, they have sacked the captain and coach, reinstated the coach, then thrown out the entire selection committee.

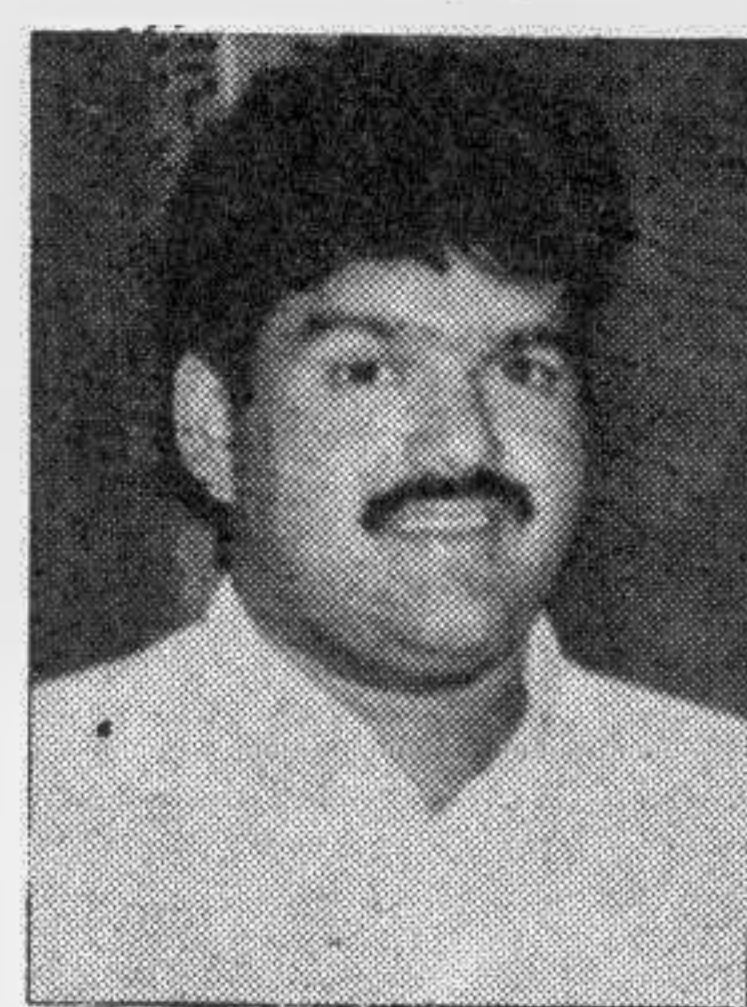
But they have survived that uncertainty to win two practice matches against English county sides Essex and Middlesex over the last three days.

Even if they lose to Northamptonshire on Wednesday, Bangladesh will be confident of doing themselves justice when the tournament starts on Friday.

Bangladesh are under no illusion about their World Cup chances in group B. But they want at least one victory, over their fellow newcomers Scotland.

"New Zealand, Australia, Pakistan and the West Indies are way ahead of us," skipper Aminul Islam conceded. "They have more experience and better skills than us."

But if Kenya could beat the West Indies in the last World



AKRAM KHAN

Cup, anything can happen, especially in England.

"The weather could prove to be a great help to the smaller teams."

The squad came to England in mid-April, ahead of any of their rivals, in an attempt to acclimatise.

The inspiration comes from their coach, former West Indian great Gordon Greenidge, who played in three World Cups and scored 5,134 runs in 128 one-day internationals.

When Bangladesh won the ICC Trophy in 1997, Greenidge was made an honorary citizen

of the country. A year later, he was sacked, along with skipper Akram Khan after a dispute with officials.

But Greenidge was too valuable to be ignored for the World Cup and his positive outlook has rubbed off on his wards.

"It's refreshing to see them going for their shots," Greenidge said. "For too long they have been uncertain of their own capabilities. They are coming out of it now."

The last-minute inclusion of veteran Minhazul Abedin - after the selectors were sacked following an outcry in parliament - has added solidity and experience to the squad.

A victory over Scotland on May 24 - or even an upset over one of the fancied teams - will light up the Dhaka streets and add to the growing influence of cricket.

World stars like Wasim Akram, Neil Fairbrother, Arjuna Ranatunga and Sanath Jayasuriya have been lured to Bangladesh to play in the lucrative local leagues. Sachin Tendulkar recently rejected a six-figure offer from one of the clubs to play just one limited-overs match.

Dhaka is now an established cricket centre after hosting the nine Test-playing nations in a 'mini World Cup' last year. Bangladesh may soon join them as the 10th.

Donald focused on himself only

LONDON, May 11: South African strike bowler Allan Donald refused to be drawn into a head-to-head pace duel with Pakistan star Shoaib Akhtar here today, saying winning the World Cup was more important, reports AFP.

"I'm not bothered about who is the quickest bowler in the World Cup. I'm just here to do a job and do it well," said Donald.

Akhtar has been labelled the fastest bowler in the world, with speculation that he could break through the 100 mile-per-hour mark during the tournament.

But Donald, who at 32 is nine years older than his rival, added: "If I'm in the final on June 20, I won't be bothered about who is the fastest bowler in the world."

Akhtar was recorded as bowling at 96mph in Sharjah recently, Donald clocked 93 mph in last summer's Test series in England.

Donald added: "I played against Akhtar in Durban and he's the quickest thing I've seen."

"I don't think people know much about him and that's in his favour, but they will certainly find out what he's about. He's very quick through the air. Good luck to him."

Donald has one significant advantage over Akhtar - experience. That included a long stint with county side Warwickshire. He also showed his worth when taking 33 wickets at less than 20 runs apiece in the five-Test series in England last season.

"I know the English conditions," he said. "The wickets are very slow and you have to bowl an English length. That can take some time to find."

"One-day cricket also demands a lot more variation. There's more to it than running up and bowling a length."

"It's a batter game, I don't care what anybody says, but good bowlers can win you one-day games."

Mullally, Hick inspire hosts

SOUTHAMPTON, May 11: Alan Mullally and Graeme Hick gave England a timely boost in their last World Cup warm-up game here today as Hampshire were routed by nine wickets with almost 30 overs to spare, reports AFP.

Left-arm paceman Mullally took four wickets for 20 as Hampshire were dismissed for 91. Hick then smashed a run-out ball 65 not out, hitting boundaries off the last two deliveries as England raced past the target of 20.2 overs.

There was also a lift for skipper Alex Stewart. His partnership with Nick Knight failed again as the left-hander fell for a duck, but the out-of-form Stewart hung around to end on an undefeated 20.

Stewart said: "Today I was very impressed with the way we bowled. We wanted to chase a total but when you bowl like that you're not going to have go."

"As for Graeme Hick, he's on fire."

England, after winning the toss, made the first breakthrough via the accurate medium-pace of Ian Austin, who found movement off the wicket as he trapped Giles White leg before.

Austin also removed former England batsman Robin Smith to end with two for eight off eight overs.

Left-arm Mullally, held back as first change, then took over. His best delivery, angled across John Stephenson, cut away off the seam and clipped the off stump.

Hampshire were all back in the pavilion after 38.2 overs, with all the front-line bowlers getting among the wickets.

When England responded, Knight, under pressure to keep the opener's slot for Nasser Hussain, was caught behind off an attempted cut.

The Daily Star Sport Countdown Gallery



days to go JAYASURIYA... a symbol of sheer aggression. — Star file photo

Sanath the slayer

LONDON, May 11 (AFP) - A cricketing great? More a gatecrasher.

There was cricket, enjoying a quiet little World Cup party in 1996, when along came Sanath Jayasuriya, quite uninvited, grabbed the game by the throat and gave it such a violent shaking that it has never been the same again.

The Sri Lankan may not yet have achieved enough to be classed among the sport's immortals, but few men have ever had such a dramatic effect on the way it is played.

Compellingly, Jayasuriya, after making his international debut in 1989/1990, had seemed set to follow a career of settled, bits-and-pieces mediocrity, batting at seven while trundling away with inoffensive left-arm spin.

Gradually, however, he edged up the batting order. The season before the 1996 tournament saw him make the opener's slot his own.

Then all hell broke loose. When the left-hander from Matara walked to the crease at the World Cup - his one-day batting average still below 20 - nobody had an inkling of what was about to happen.

At first, nothing did - just six runs against Zimbabwe. In the next game against India in New Delhi, however, he and his opening partner Romesh Kaluwitharana put on 53 in the first five overs.

The stocky, balding Jayasuriya, oblivious to risk, used his lumberjack forearms and powerful build to loft the ball over the infield from the very first ball on his way to 79 off 76 balls.

Crouched over his front pad, his approach seemed as revolutionary as it was simple - open the face of the bat if you have to, hit it hard and hit it high.

The headlines began. Against Kenya at Kandy, he made 44 from an opening stand of 83 off 40 balls. Against England in the Faisalabad quarter-final, he obliterated the bowling, with 82 off 44 balls, 22 of

them off a single Phil DeFreitas over.

England captain Michael Atherton was so shell-shocked that he declared this was not cricket and suggested that new rules limiting the number of out-fielders during the first 15 overs should be revised.

"Jayasuriya's innings? I wouldn't go as far as to say it was a great innings but it was a fine knock," he moaned. "It's difficult to bowl when someone bats like that."

"They played the first 15 overs as if they were the last 15. I think Sri Lanka have taken the game to new levels."

True, the World Cup wickets were flat. And true, the likes of Mark Waugh and Sachin Tendulkar were crafting even big scores.

But Jayasuriya's approach, as Atherton conceded, was radically different, scoring so fast and furiously that he seized the initiative for his side from the start.

Few won it back. Whenever Jayasuriya failed, there was batting enough behind him to pick up the pieces.

Against India in the semi-finals at Eden Gardens, Sri Lanka lost two wickets in the first over but still won. Significantly, Jayasuriya still contributed, with three wickets.

By the time Sri Lanka won the World Cup, Jayasuriya had been voted the most valuable player of the tournament.

Tendulkar, regarded as the world's best batsman, says: "He is exceptional. He plays out-of-the-book shots... Sometimes he has the luck, but a batsman of his skill, ability and capacity... to play tremendous shots all-round the wicket does not need luck. He was simply brilliant."

A new star had been born and a new term - "pinch-hitter" - borrowed from baseball - adopted to describe the Jayasuriya phenomenon.

Every other leading side in the world had since experimented with pinch-hitters - top-order batsmen given carte blanche to throw the bat from the start.

Jayasuriya has continued to play in the same vein since

1996. Shortly after the World Cup, he hit 134 against Pakistan off 64 balls, reaching three figures off 48 balls, hitting 11 sixes and cracking 29 off one over.

No wonder crowds love him. There is one foot-note.

In 1997, playing against India in a Test, he put away the fireworks and batted for 13 hours at Colombo. He scored 340, putting on a world record partnership 576 with Roshan Mahanama.

He also scored a double century in Sri Lanka's single test against England at The Oval last year.

His highly-respectable test average is now over 45, way ahead of his one-day average. Perhaps this 29-year-old will be recognised in time as more than mere mayhem after all.

Austin power

LONDON, May 11 (AFP) - For a man written off as "laughable", amateur, overweight and with more form as a beer drinker than an international cricketer, Ian Austin might have permitted himself a grin here on Tuesday.

The barrel-shaped Lancastrian showed just why the England selectors think he might prove to be their secret World Cup weapon.

Bowling medium-paced cutters in a practice game against Hampshire at Southampton, he opened with an eight-over spell costing eight runs and earning him two wickets. One of them was Robin Smith, the former England batsman, the ball darting in and trapping him leg before.

It wasn't frightening, like Pakistan paceman Shoaib Akhtar, nor infernally unplayable, like Australian leg spinner Shane Warne. It was neat, nigglingly accurate, very English and just the boost his team needed after a difficult week.

A few days ago, Pakistan coach Mushtaq Mohammad said it was laughable that England should resort to 30-some-things rather than bring on their youngsters.

Austin is 32 and a bits-and-pieces player, offering seam bowling perfectly attuned to the local conditions and useful lower-order batting. He has played just four one-day internationals and done little of note.

Before this winter and his selection for the England World Cup squad, he would spend the off season delivering beds, working in a butcher's shop or doing a bit of carpet-fitting.

Yet he is revered by the Old Trafford faithful as one of them, a man close to his roots and unchanged by his (limited) brush with stardom.

"I still meet the same lads for a pint in the pub that I did 12, 15 years ago," he says, while conceding that he is "quite well known on the social side of our team as well."

He admits he is not a fitness fanatic, even now that he has England's back-up team of nutritionists and physiotherapists to consult. "I think they've washed their hands off me," he says. But he is a solid fielder with a good pair of hands.

Significantly Wasim Akram of Pakistan, Austin's Lancashire team-mate, holds him in high regard, saying he is a "perfect one-day 'death bowler' - especially in English conditions."

Laughable? The man from Haslingden may yet have the last laugh.

The ready-reckoner

LONDON, May 11 (Reuters/Internet) - Following are format, rules and playing conditions for cricket's World Cup starting on Friday.

FORMAT: 12 teams have been divided in two groups.

Group A contains Sri Lanka, India, South Africa, England, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

Group B contains Australia, West Indies, Pakistan, New Zealand, Bangladesh and Scotland.

Top three teams in each group will progress to the Super Six second phase. Teams will take forward points scored against other qualifying teams from their group.

Each qualifying team from group A will now play three qualifiers from group B. Top four teams at end of Super Six will play in knock-out semi-finals where team ranked first will play team ranked fourth. Winners of semi-finals will play in final.

PLAYING CONDITIONS: Innings are 50 overs. Minimum of 25 overs a team will constitute a match. In case of bad weather, matches can continue until 2000 local (1900 GMT).

Each match will have one reserve day in case of bad weather. Final will have two reserve days.

For first 15 overs of each innings only two fielders are allowed outside semicircles drawn 30 yards (metres) from

each set of stumps.

For the remaining overs only five fielders are allowed outside the semicircles.

Also in the first 15 overs of each innings there must be at least two fielders within a 15-yard inner circle centred on the batsman on strike. The two fielders may only stand deeper than 15 yards if they are at slip, leg slip and gully.

At no time must there be more than five fielders on the leg side.

No bowler may bowl more than 10 over per innings.

A bowler will be no-balled if ball passes or would have passed above the shoulder height of the batsman on strike.

Umpires have been instructed "to apply a very strict and consistent interpretation" of the laws governing negative bowling.

White balls and black sight-screens will be used.

POINTS: Two for a win, one for tie or no result.

If teams finish on equal points in group matches, entry into the Super Six phase will be decided on the following criteria (in order of priority):

- most wins in the group matches;

- winner of head-to-head match where only two teams finish on equal points;

- if more than two teams finish on same points, winner of most matches involving these teams will proceed;

- if still equal, run rates will decide order of teams.

- if still equal, wicket rate per balls bowled in matches where results were achieved will decide order.

- after that, lots will be drawn.

In Super Six phase, if teams finish equal, entry into the semi-finals will be decided on the following criteria (in order of priority):

- most wins in matches against other Super Six qualifiers;

- winner of head-to-head match where only two finish on equal points;

- if more than two teams finish on same points, winner of most matches involving these teams will proceed;

- if still equal, run rate in matches played against other Super Six qualifiers will decide order of teams;

- if still equal, wicket rate per balls bowled in matches against Super Six qualifiers in which results were achieved will decide order;

- after that, lots will be drawn.

If semifinal is tied or there is no result, the team that finished higher in Super Six phase will proceed to final.

If final is tied or there is no result over three days, the World Cup will be shared.

PRIZE MONEY: Totals \$1 million.

Winner - \$300,000, runner-up \$150,000, losing semi-finalists \$100,000.

Group match winners \$6,000 each, losers \$3,000 each.

New format to test the best

LONDON, May 11 (Reuters/Internet) - World Cup cricket 1999 style, with a new and improved format to Test

the game's greatest talents, has the ingredients to transcend the six previous tournaments.

For five and a half weeks starting on Friday the sport's most prestigious event brings together the nine Test-playing teams and three qualifying sides for 42 matches in 16 British towns and cities as well as Dublin and the Dutch venue of Amstelveen.

With an estimated global television audience of two billion, it offers a showcase for such compelling images as the sublime strokeplay of Sachin Tendulkar and Brian Lara, the artistry of leg-spinner Shane Warne and the irrepressible fast bowling of Allan Donald and Glenn McGrath.

Unlike the last World Cup on the Indian sub-continent in 1996, the seventh edition is designed to be significantly more competitive, with no team getting an easy ride through the first round.

Because eight of the 12 teams were scheduled to qualify from the first stage three years ago, it was clear before a ball was bowled that all the test sides with the likely exception of the weaker Zimbabweans would fill the last eight places.

England went through even though their only two victories were against non-Test countries, the Netherlands and United Arab Emirates, but Sri Lanka in the opening match at Lord's in four days' time, winning will be a priority from the outset.

Hosts England are in the more difficult of the two six-team groups - they also face India, favourites South Africa,

Zimbabwe and Kenya - from which only three progress into the Super Six second stage.

England captain Alec Stewart has acknowledged the demanding early nature of their challenge.

"One of the hardest aspects is getting through our first round group," he said. "It is important we start well against Sri Lanka (at Lord's)."

The incentive to win group games is underlined by the fact that the points scored against the two other teams who qualify will be carried forward into the Super Six stage.

Even given the hugely unpredictable character of limited overs cricket, there can be little argument with South Africa being made the early favourites.

Their great strength is in having so many players who can operate as all-rounders, providing batting in depth and ideal balance. Jacques Kallis, Lance Klusener and captain Hansie Cronje are the key trio in this respect.

With outstandingly athletic fielding led by Jonty Rhodes and potent fast bowling from Donald and Shaun Pollock, South Africa have a resourceful and resilient squad to give outgoing coach Bob Woolmer a Cup-winning farewell.

Steve Waugh's Australia are not far behind South Africa in the early betting to lift the trophy at the Lord's final on June 20. They have developed a specialist one-day side who during the past six months have won series in Pakistan and at home as well as drawing in the West Indies.

Skipper Waugh epitomises the mental strength which makes the Australians such formidable opponents in a crisis, and the World Cup is likely to be won by the team who best respond to such a situation.

Waugh's men had to confront a Lara-inspired West Indian re-

vival during their recent tour, prompting hopes of a repeat of the Caribbean triumphs in the first two World Cups in England in 1975 and 1979.

The form and fitness of captain Lara and his two ageing but indomitable fast bowlers, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, may be the key to that prospect.

Pakistan, despite a troubled off-field build up in which Javed Miandad quit as coach to be replaced by another of their famous former batting heroes, Mushtaq Mohammad, are a mercurial side with the potential to cause an upset.

Wasim Akram, in his fourth spell as captain, has turned Pakistan's form and fortunes around since the beginning of the year. They won the Asian Test championship against India and Sri Lanka, a one-day series involving the same opponents, then the Sharjah cup England and India. That series in the desert again revealed England's unhappy knack of self-destructing in a favourable position.

Their subsequent form in the warm-up matches against county teams, including a one-run win over Essex, has hardly encouraged a reduction in the odds on England becoming the first host country to lift the World Cup.

Australia blank South Africa

PERTH, May 11: Olympic champions Australia crushed South Africa 5-0 in a one-sided final of the four-nations Telstra Challenge women's hockey series here today, reports AFP.

Spurred on by enthusiastic home team supporters at the Perth Hockey Stadium, Australia outclassed the opposition as they completed their eighth successive victory of the year.



England star batsman Graeme Hick pulls Hampshire paceman Simon Renshaw during a warm-up match at Southampton yesterday. — AFP photo