

Trip down Brick Lane

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as he explained how lucky he was to get a ticket to the Northampton match against Pakistan on May 31.

"I failed to get one for the Chelmsford match. Thousands were disappointed on not getting the tickets for the match in nearby Essex," Faruk Uddin lamented.

The ticket that he bought about four months ago cost him sixteen pounds sterling and he was travelling to Northampton with thirty other friends and relatives, including whole families.

He seemed a seasoned supporter. "If we do not support the Bangladesh cricketers, they will not be encouraged. And, that is our work. We are proud because this is our first time (in the World Cup). We do not expect too much. If we win one or two games, that will be enough. It will help us to do better in the future," said Faruk Uddin in one breath.

Rezwan Ahmed of Sangeeta was luckier. He got tickets to both Chelmsford and Northampton. He and his friends, 25 of them, have booked a coach to travel to the Bangladesh matches. "The children are also interested but they have school," seemed his way of justifying an all-adult troupe.

He was humming along to a rural Bangla song that was playing on the speakers. Interrupting his crooning skills, he explained: "There is a lot of enthusiasm and support for the Bangladesh cricket team in England because we are in the World Cup. All we want is that they should brighten our face."

His shop, barely fifty yards away from the recent Brick Lane can bomb attack that injured several, has been selling T-shirts and caps with Bangladesh cricket logo.

"We are sold out," Rezwan Ahmed said, pointing to the lone Bangladesh flag hanging at the entry to the shop.

"We receive many phone calls from Bangladeshis inquiring about cricket match tickets. But, no one is selling. Anyone who has bought a ticket is going to the World Cup," he said.

Such is his devotion to the Bangladesh team that he was

not travelling to either Chelmsford or Northampton to lose. Call it ignorance or one hundred per cent nationalism. Rezwan Ahmed expects Bangladesh to defeat both New Zealand and Pakistan. About Scotland he does not even doubt for a second.

"We shall all be praying," he said but thoughtfully.

Hira Miah was realistic about his choice of tickets. He will be travelling in a car to distant Edinburgh with his two other friends, Tofazzal and Shoaib.

"We are very proud as this is our first time. There is big support for the Bangladesh team from our community here. Support is fifty percent of a game," he clarified.

"We are going to take food and drinks, flags, T-shirts and caps... we will be fully loaded for the game," Hira Miah was excited as he said those words.

Why this particular match, then? "Because we know we gonna beat Scotland," was his obvious reply.

Hira Miah and his friends may see some other matches "if we do well". He was optimistic enough to say, "... maybe also in the next round".

There is no doubt there will be full-throated support for Aminur Islam and his boys at all the matches Bangladesh play. Cricket has rekindled a feeling of patriotism. All they have to do now is play to win.

Banglatown celebrated Baisakh, the Bengali New Year 1406, with much pomp and gaiety last week. Coming up from 7-25 July is the Bangladesh Festival, of which prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Tony Blair are patrons-in-chief.

Events are earmarked at famous arts centres such as the Birla Centre and the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank, and the Brick Lane. It could be a different kind of celebration if Bangladesh lives even partially up to the expectations of the Bangalee here.

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Gavin Hamilton, the Scotland all-rounder plays a reverse sweep during practice at Worcester yesterday.

— AFP photo

KENYA-ZIMBABWE SCOREBOARD

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Scoreboard of the Kenyan innings against Zimbabwe at Taunton on Saturday:

KENYA	R	B	4	6
K Otieno c GW Flower b Johnson	16	35	2	0
Ravindu Shah c Strang AR Whittall	37	43	5	0
SO Tikolo c A Flower b Johnson	9	17	1	0
MO Odumbe lbw b Strang	20	57	0	0
HS Modi b Johnson	7	19	1	0
A Vader c AR Whittall b Strang	54	90	5	1
T Odoyo b Johnson	28	20	2	2
Aasif Karim not out	19	19	2	1
AS Sujit not out	3	4	0	0
Extras: 0-2, lb-5, w-24, nh-4	36			
Total: (For 7 wickets in 50 overs)	229			

Did not bat: M A Sujit, J Kamande

Fall of wkt: 1-62 (Otieno, 12.5 ov); 2-64 (Ravindu Shah, 13.1 ov); 3-74 (Tikolo, 16.2 ov); 4-87 (Modi, 20.4 ov); 5-171 (Odumbe, 42.2 ov); 6-181 (Vader, 44.1 ov); 7-219 (Odoyo, 48.4 ov).

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Streak	9	1	50	0 (8w)
Mbanga	8	0	37	0 (1nb, 3w)
Johnson	10	0	42	4 (3nb, 2w)
AR Whittall	9	0	51	1 (2w)
GJ Whittall	6	0	20	0 (5w)
Strang	8	0	22	2

Umpires: DB Cowie (NZ) and Javed Akhtar (Pak)

TV Umpire: KT Francis (SL)

Match Referee: JR Reid (NZ)



ANYONE FOR WORLD CUP BALLOONS? A street vendor trying to sell his merchandise to spectators entering Lord's cricket ground on May 14.

Akram: Vintage

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because he does bowl a few. He is definitely a wicket-taker and other teams will be aware of his presence.

"In an attack that's got big pace with Shoaib Akhtar, everybody will focus on Wasim and in a game situation, when you have a new batsman in, he's the ideal man to bring on and he has every chance of getting him out."

"Any new batsman looking to push the score along and taking a risk here and there against a bowler of that class is going to struggle. No matter who he plays against, the other team are always mindful of when Wasim's coming back on to bowl."

Lloyd looks

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century to tie the test series 2-2.

A one-day series was tied 3-3 but Lara missed the last three with a wrist injury.

"We matched the Australians and we have done well in the one-day game in the past year and a half to two years," said Lloyd.

Lloyd predicted players like wicketkeeper Ridley Jacobs, now opening paceman Mervyn Dillon and Reon King, and 20-year-old Jamaican all-rounder Ricardo Powell would make a big impact on the tournament.

The West Indies team management expect great things of Powell, who has been playing first class cricket for only a year and was drafted in when Carl Hooper suddenly announced his retirement.

"He's just come out of the blue, striking the ball hard and clean. It's seeing youngsters like Powell that make me still love the game," said Lloyd.

Bits & pieces

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pressure," The Times said.

"However, if India reach the super-six stage, most of the star wives plan to rejoin their husbands in England to cheer them on," it said.

Navjot embarks on political innings

PATIALA, May 15: Former Test cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu yesterday declared his entry into politics and said he would contest Lok Sabha election from Patiala city constituency in the ensuing general elections, reports PTI.

Sidhu, son of senior Congress leader and former state advocate general late Bhagwant Singh Sidhu, filed an application to the Punjab Pradesh Congress for grant of party ticket to him.

Sidhu said he decided to enter politics to ensure speedy promotion of sports and a clean and honest administration to the nation.

Warne spin

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"It will be interesting if Warne makes himself available for that one," Border told Sky television in England.

Border was unwilling to discuss the incident but, referring to the ACB statement, said: "There might be more heard and said about that."

Belated

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help coaches talk to their players.

Woolmer said: "The radio contact speeds up the whole game. The idea behind it is to take the game forward." He argued there was nothing in ICC rules outlawing such aids.

The South Africans have a reputation for innovative thinking and exploiting modern technology to help their game.

Woolmer was praised during the last World Cup for using a computer to log information and game patterns.

In a recent interview he said he wanted to see batting helmets equipped with microphones and ear pieces.

Caution for

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advice. If I have them at mid-off and mid-on I don't need to use my brain.

There is a lot of good crack among Pakistani bowlers about bowling with the old ball. They have taught me how to reverse swing with the old ball, but I can also swing the new ball both ways.

"The wickets were too wet for me in club cricket, but I am sure they will be dry for the World Cup. I know what the wickets are like here so it doesn't worry me."

"It makes me feel good to be thought of as the world's fastest bowler and I enjoy having people come to watch me for my pace."

"I like to see fear in a batsman. I can't bear a batsman hitting me, so I am prepared to bowl bouncers even if I am not.

"The batsman is a free man. He can hit you where he likes, so I don't think there should be restrictions on bowlers."

The West Indies will wait and see if captain Brian Lara can play as he struggles to recover from an injured wrist.

Stuart Williams may miss out with a leg strain but Courtney Walsh appears to have overcome a minor knee injury and should be fit to play on the ground he graced for 14 years before Gloucestershire controversially withdrew the offer of a new two-year contract to him in 1996.

The third and fourth games of the second set were crucial but so was the fifth as well," said Rafter, who has never won a tournament on clay but reached the semifinals of the French Open last year and will be back at Roland Garros later this month.

"He had a break point there and it would have been a real kick in the head if he had won it. It could have been 6-4, 6-1 to Rafter and the crowd would have booted me off."

"(This tournament) is a big surprise for me so far," said Rafter, whose best previous performance this year was a third round appearance at the Australian Open.

Even if Australia lose early wickets, as they seemingly frequently do, teams should not count the Australians out in the World Cup until they have the wicket of Bevan. He has proved devilishly hard to remove so far."

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at this level in the one-day and test arena. There are a few adjustments one has to make ... but once you have batting ability it should not be very difficult to adjust when playing in Tests," he said.

Battle of volatile

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World Cup encounters against the West Indies.

Both teams, following a turbulent period, come into the group B game in good form.

The West Indies were white-washed in a Test series in South Africa last year but regained their pride with a drawn Test and one-day series against Australia.

Lara, widely regarded as the best left-hander in the world, is expected to play despite a wrist injury that has troubled him for the past month.

Lara was sacked, then reinstated at the end of last year following a row over player payments.

Akram was also sacked following match-fixing allegations - before being brought back in January.

Akram, one of the foremost all-rounders in the game and one-day cricket's leading wicket-taker with 371 victims, knows a good showing at the World Cup could provide him with an escape route. He and several other players are still the subject of a match-fixing inquiry at home.

"I have nothing to fear because I have done nothing wrong," he said. "But like any self-respecting sportsman I

want to clear my name."

The best way of silencing those who question my commitment to Pakistani cricket is to do well and bring the World Cup back to Pakistan."

The 33-year-old, playing in his fourth and last World Cup, wants to emulate his mentor Imran Khan's title triumph in the 1992 edition in Australia and New Zealand.

Pakistan, coming off a successful tour of India and Sharjah, go into this World Cup as one of the favoured teams alongside South Africa and Australia.

But veteran Akram warned:

"Back home people think we have already won the World Cup. I know we are one of the favourites, but we still have to go out there and win."

Pakistan are so rich in bowlers

that the once-irreducible duo of fast bowler Younis and leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed may have to sit out Sunday's game as all-rounder Azhar Mahmood shares the new ball with Akram and the "100 miles per hour" man Akhtar.