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RANGS GROUP



KING MAKES THE GRADE : West Indies fast bowler Reon King is elated after getting the prized scalp of New Zealand skipper Sten Fleming at Southampton yesterday. -AFP photo

India rejoices

NEW DELHI, May 24 (Reuters/AF/Internet): Indians were in raptures on Monday over Sachin Tendulkar's blazing century against Kenya in the World Cup five days after his father's death.

The sombre mood after India's Group A defeat at the hands of South Africa and Zimbabwe turned into one of hope and joy as Tendulkar stroked an unbeaten 140 off 101 balls on Sunday.

"Everytime we think we have seen every aspect of Sachin Tendulkar's cricket, destiny wills us to rethink as the 'Little Big Man' reveals a new facet to his personality," Ganesan Rajaraman wrote in the Hindu Times.

The diminutive batsman dedicated the innings at Bristol to his father, Marathi language poet Ramesh Tendulkar.

"I did it for my father and my country," an emotionally charged Tendulkar said after the scintillating innings. "This was a difficult, but special occasion."

After reaching his 22nd century in one-day internationals, Tendulkar raised his bat, looked skyward, shut his eyes and pursed his lips to take in a few private moments.

"This one is for you father," he seemed to be saying. The master batsman can be sure that his was not the only throat that had a lump in it.

The Indian Express said Tendulkar revealed a steely determination to win over Kenya during pre-game practice.

"When he batted in the nets for almost three hours, it was obvious that the little maestro was steeling himself to play an

sixes as India scored their first Cup victory and keep alive their struggle to qualify for the Super Six stage of the tournament.

Pictures of Tendulkar looking skyward after reaching his century were the lead story in most newspapers, pushing the story of a bitter split in the prominent Congress Party ahead of elections down the page.

The Pioneer newspaper said his century came just in time for India, after the collapse of its government last month.

"Country before self," said the daily. "Sachin Tendulkar kept his word in uncertain terms and an unbeaten century of sparkling brilliance gave India its first victory and lots of self-respect."

"This one was for his father. It was as well as for a beleaguered nation. Something to cheer for this cricket-crazy nation in political convulsions already, mourning its cricketers' two consecutive losses," it said from Bristol.

The mass-circulation Hindustan Times said the 94-run victory had touched the hearts of millions.

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A Pakistan fan takes a stump during an invasion of the pitch at Headingley on May 23. -AFP photo

Plight with pitch invaders

LONDON, May 24 (Reuters/Internet): World Cup organisers said on Monday they would ask the British government to introduce emergency measures to stop pitch invasions that have marred several matches at cricket's premier tournament.

World Cup event manager Michael Brown told the news agency that the government would be lobbied to extend legislation that bans crowd invasions at Britain's football grounds to the stadiums where World Cup cricket matches are being played.

"It has escalated to the point where we are very concerned," said Brown after hundreds of fans ran on to pitches at matches on Sunday in Leeds and Bristol.

"In a situation like yesterday, if something goes wrong ... well you just don't know what might happen," Brown said.

"As far as I'm concerned the players should be on the pitch and the fans should be in the stands and that's how it should stay."

Crowd invasions have been a fact of life in international cricket for many years and a World Cup semifinal was abandoned in 1996 in Calcutta after spectators threw missiles when Sri Lanka were on the verge of victory against India.

But organisers and players at the 1999 World Cup have been disturbed by the frenzied nature of those running on the pitch.

Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar, fielding in front of an Indian-dominated crowd at Bristol on Sunday, sneaked off the ground two overs before the end to avoid being mobbed.

Captains Waugh, Alec Stewart of England and India's Mohammad Azharuddin have been voicing their fears since the start of the tournament on May 14.

"It's gone on for far too long. Someone is going to end up getting killed," Azharuddin said on Sunday after his players were forced to flee the field as up to 1,000 Indian supporters raced on to the Nevill Road ground.

The worst problems appear to be among the almost hysterical supporters of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, although there was a pitch invasion in Cardiff when New Zealand beat Australia.

When India played South Africa in Hove, an Indian player was forced to use his fists to defend himself against an irate -- and probably drunk -- spectator who wanted to remonstrate with him for losing.

Organisers of Sunday's Australia v Pakistan clash at Headingley had confidently predicted there would be no pitch invasion because of their experience of international matches.

The opposite was the case and stumps were stolen from the ground when Australia lost their ninth wicket. "It's getting crazy. Players are really getting seriously worried about the end of matches," said former England player Alan Lamb.

Waugh won't throw in the towel

LEEDS, May 24: Skipper Steve Waugh refused to concede Sunday that Australia were virtually out of World Cup contention and said his side was still in with a chance to qualify for the next stage, reports AP.

Australia, hit hard but was still beaten by 10 runs by a better Pakistan side in a crucial Group B match at Headingley.

Australia's world champions in 1987 and finalists in 1996, have to secure seven successive wins to win the Cup.

"I haven't thought that far yet," Waugh said after the defeat, their second in successive matches after losing to New Zealand by five wickets in Cardiff.

"We're looking at Bangladesh first up," he said.

"We played a lot better today, that's a good sign. We're capable of winning the next two games, and if we get through to the next round anything is possible."

"A lot of people have written us off already, which is good because it can motivate players. It's up to us now. We've got to big deep and come out and see what lies ahead of us."

"The last 15 overs weren't good with the bowling side of things -- 145 off the last 15 has never happened to us before," Waugh added.

"I must admit the hitting was fantastic from the Pakistan players towards the end."

Australia were handicapped by a lack of a quality fifth bowler as Waugh, Darren

Lehmann and Damien Martyn went for 75 runs in 10 overs between them after all-rounder Shane Lee was ruled out with a sore knee.

"I fancied my chances of getting a few wickets out there," Waugh said. "I thought I bowled okay. Hindsight is always good... that the fifth bowler went for few."

"Our main bowlers went for a few in the last 6-7 overs as well. So I won't put it down to the fifth bowler being the problem."

Australia also lacked the hitting power of their opponent, managing a solitary six in the last 10 overs to Pakistan's 11 fours and five sixes.

"It was always going to be difficult for any new batsman coming in," Waugh said. "They bowled well and looked much sharper compared to us."

"It pretty hard to hit those opening bowlers when they are swinging that far in those conditions. It was a good effort to get so close."

The last time Australia failed to qualify for the semifinals was when they hosted the World Cup in 1992.

"We tried hard to get ourselves up for the game. We've been a little bit flat, which everyone can see from the outside," Waugh said.

"It comes down to, you've got to do it yourself. You've got to lift yourself out in the middle, you can talk a lot off the field. We were much improved today, which is a good sign."

Frost factor

TAUNTON, England, May 24 (Reuters): Phil Frost, rated the top groundsman in English first-class cricket three times in the last five seasons, may be the man to help Sri Lanka's out-of-form World Cup batsmen get back among the runs.

Frost is head groundsman at Somerset's county headquarters in Taunton where holders Sri Lanka meet India on Wednesday in a Group A match that is a "must win" for both teams.

A flat pitch at a relatively small ground with some invitingly short boundaries is likely for the game.

Frost, who won the groundsman of the year award from England's cricket authorities in 1994, 1996 and 1997, said today: "It should be a good pitch for a one-day game. There will not be any moisture in it, although the white ball may move around if it is overcast early on."

A key factor in producing a good pitch is an early start, according to Frost. "I begin to pre-

pare a pitch three and a half weeks before a match," he said.

The Asian rivals have a battle on their hands to qualify for the Super Six second stage after winning only one of their first three fixtures.

Frost's work on the surface was watched with keen interest by Sri Lanka's manager Dulip Mendis as his squad, who are all fully fit, practised at the ground today.

Nothing would encourage Mendis more than a true batting surface in view of the struggle most of the Sri Lankan top order have had to put together a big score.

Aravinda de Silva, their most experienced player in English conditions, has made 0, 1 and 6 in his three innings while opener Sanath Jayasuriya and captain Arjuna Ranatunga have managed an aggregate of only 82 runs between them in six visits to the crease.

Mendis said: "Our bowling and fielding is excellent but the batting is the problem. It used to be the other way round."

They were therefore restricted to batting for only 46 instead of 50 overs and lost by three runs.

Indian plea turned down

LONDON, May 24 (Reuters/Internet): A protest by India over playing conditions during their group A defeat by Zimbabwe has been rejected by World Cup organisers.

In a statement the organisers said a meeting of their technical committee on Monday decided match officials had been correct in allowing Zimbabwe to end restrictions on field placings after 13 overs of the Indian innings rather than 15.

The reduction followed India being penalised four overs when they batted because of their slow over rate in the Zimbabwe innings.

India sent down 21 wides and 16 no-balls in the game on May 19 and had bowled only 46 overs when the time allotted for the Zimbabwe innings elapsed.

They were therefore restricted to batting for only 46 instead of 50 overs and lost by three runs.



WONDERFUL WASIM : Pakistan captain Wasim Akram is over the moon after having Australian opening batsman Adam Gilchrist clean bowled at Headingley on May 23. -AFP photo



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