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RANGS GROUP



An African mismatch

AMSTERDAM, May 25 : World Cup favourites South Africa take on minnows Kenya on Dutch soil here on Wednesday hoping to brush up the only weak link in their game, the top-order batting, reports AFP.

Hansie Cronje's men, though unbeaten, have had a few hiccups with the bat, making 225 for seven against England and 199 for nine against Sri Lanka.

The South Africans plan to field most of their first-choice top order against the Kenyans, while resting fast bowlers Allan Donald and Steve Elworthy.

Cronje said he wanted to make sure all the squad were in form before the second round.



HANSIE CRONJE

HEAD-TO-HEAD

First World Cup encounter between the two sides. Kenya have only recently been granted international one-day status and are not yet recognised as a Test-playing country.

Players to watch:

Kenya : Maurice Odumbe, vice-captain, right-hand bat and right-arm off break bowler. Has played in all of Kenya's official internationals. Best bowling 3-14 in shock win over West Indies in 1996 World Cup.

South Africa : Shaun Pollock. Conceded just 23 runs in his last 17 World Cup overs against England and Sri Lanka. But the flame-haired all-rounder has yet to take a bagful of wickets or show his qualities with the bat, with just two runs from two innings, including one golden duck.

Venue:

Amstelveen, in the suburbs of Dutch capital. Staging only one match in the World Cup. Home to VRA, the Dutch cricket champions. Former West Indian batsman Faouad Bacchus used to play for the team. Capacity: 5,000. (AFP)

All-rounder Shaun Pollock has not been among the runs and seems certain to play, as will reserve spinners Nicky Boje and Derek Crookes, all-rounder Alan Dawson and Natal batsman Dale Benkenstein.

"Maybe we slipped up because not all the batters had a chance in the early games," Cronje said.

"Then suddenly there was pressure in the quarter-final and we had batters going to the wicket who had not had a knock."

Although South Africa have won their first three matches this time, the top six batsmen have yet to hit consistent form.

On that occasion the South Africans found the turf pitch,

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only the second to be laid in Holland, to be true but slow and low.

A win will give the South Africans eight points from four matches, well-placed to top group A.

Kenya, who stunned the West Indies in the last World Cup, are still recovering from the thrashing handed out by India's Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid on Sunday. The pair put a World Cup record partnership of 237.

Kenyan captain Asif Karim said: "We will give it our best shot. It will be quite an experience playing against the best

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