

Sport

Simply not good enough

EDGBASTON, England, May 30: England's exit from the World Cup here on Sunday was their worst performance in the tournament and underlined their decline as a cricketing power, reports AFP.

It was the first time they failed to reach the knock-out stage of the World Cup.

In 1996 they had managed to reach a quarter-final stage but their only victories had come against Holland and the United Arab Emirates.

England have hosted the tournament four times since the inaugural event in 1975 but have never won it.

Their last performance of note came in 1992, when they lost to Pakistan in the final.

They also reached the final in 1979 and 1987, losing to the West Indies and Pakistan.

Sunday's failure is likely to undermine attempts to try and win new converts to the game in England, a nation of around 60 million people where youngsters increasingly flock to football.

In India, the game continues to have unparalleled popularity among a population of almost a billion people.

Mohammad Azharuddin's side are hoping to emulate the Indian side of 1983, which took the title at Lord's.

The ground was once considered the home of the sport but India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will argue the balance has shifted in favour of India.

A side from the Indian sub-continent has won three of the last four tournaments. Both India and Pakistan are among the last six sides in the tournament this time.

So far, sweetest

CHELMSFORD, England, May 30 (Reuters): Neil Johnson has stolen the World Cup spotlight from some of the tournament's more illustrious names after propelling Zimbabwe into the Super Six stage with a telling all-round performance against South Africa.

Johnson, who opened the batting and the bowling, made his highest Cup score of 76 and produced an inspired spell of three for 27 as South Africa's run of four wins out of four ended with a shock 48-run Group A defeat on Saturday.

Zimbabwe's prospects of qualifying for the Super Six appeared bleak after they followed wins over Kenya and India with defeats by England and Sri Lanka.

But Johnson's exploits have helped to revitalise a team who were playing below their best and seemed destined to return home after completing their group games against South Africa.

Victory over Hansie Cronje's side is particularly sweet for Johnson, who is Harare-born but grew up in South Africa where he played both for their A team and in provincial cricket before returning to his native country.

The quietly spoken Johnson said: "I left Zimbabwe when I was about nine and lived in Natal. I then went to university in Port Elizabeth, played at Eastern Province with (former South African captain) Kepler Wessels for four years and then went back to Natal for seven years. I left at the end of last year."

Against that background



NEIL JOHNSON

shattered, during the three-match series in which he made his debut towards the end of last year. But his ranks hit all-round World Cup performance on Saturday above that.

"This is much better," he said. "When you play against Pakistan we don't really get much support out there whereas

here it's in front of all our boys.

"We have a bigger crowd here than at home. This was fantastic."

When South Africa set out to make 234 to win Johnson knew his side's priorities.

"We had to get wickets. They're a great batting side with Lance (Klusener) coming in at number nine but with the new ball on these tracks you do get a little bit of assistance and we had to run in hard. It worked out perfectly (dismissing Gary Kirsten) first ball and we just kept kicking them out."

Asked how close Johnson came to selection for the senior South Africa side during his long stay in that country, coach Bob Woolmer said: "Over the years his name was mentioned but he didn't quite mix it with the likes of Klusener, Pollock and Kallis."

"But he played very well today and we didn't bowl very well at him until later on."

Woolmer's charges will finish top of Group A despite Saturday's upset — the first time Zimbabwe have beaten their African neighbours in their eight one-day meetings — but may go into the Super Six at a points disadvantage to the sides below them under the new format for the tournament.

However, former England all-rounder Woolmer said: "I think it's a wonderful format. I hope it stays that way. Yet in saying that, if we go through with only two points if we've got to win two of the three (Super Six) games which is going to be tough because there are some very good sides to play against."

Woolmer said he was glad to get a surprise loss out of the way before the semifinal.

"We played badly. We bowled badly, we fielded pretty well but we batted very badly," said Woolmer. "But I am pleased it has happened now. It would have been terrible if it had happened in the semifinal."

"And that's not taking any credit away from a fantastic Zimbabwe effort."

"They had nothing to lose. If they win they have a good chance of going through to the Super Six and now they've got a good chance of taking four points in."

Woolmer said his top order batsmen had failed to produce so far in the tournament but the situation was not drastic.

"Hopefully our top six are saving it up for the Super Six."

Words from Woolmer

CHELMSFORD, England, May 30 (AP): Neil Johnson, not considered good enough to play for South Africa, helped propel Zimbabwe into the World Cup Super Six by inspiring a 48-run win in the all-Africa derby.

And after the match, South Africa coach Bob Woolmer, whose team had already qualified for the Super Six stage, said Johnson played well. But he wasn't convinced that the South African selectors had been made to pay by not selecting Johnson for the national team.

"He came into consideration but he didn't quite mix it with the likes of the Kluseners and the Pollocks and Kallis," Woolmer said after Johnson's man-of-the-match performance.

Johnson took three top-order wickets as South Africa slumped to an astonishing 40 for six before all-rounders Shaun Pollock and Lance Klusener notched half centuries to bolster the total.

"(Johnson) played well didn't he," Woolmer conceded. "We didn't bowl very well at him until later on."

Johnson left his native Zimbabwe at age nine and lived in South Africa, where he played at the highest level with Eastern Province and Natal before returning to Zimbabwe in 1997 to kick-start his international career.

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Fallen stars ready

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Abdul Razzaq, Ijaz Ahmed, Inzamam-ul Haq, Salim Malik, Enamul Hoque, Hasibul Hussain, Manjural Islam.

PAKISTAN (probable): Saeed Anwar, Shahid Afridi, Younis.

HEAD TO HEAD

Bangladesh are not yet recognised at Test level and are also making their World Cup debut here. Their last one-day encounter came in Dhaka in March '99, when Pakistan won a one-off match by 152 runs, Bangladesh, chasing 293-7, were dismissed for 141 despite Pakistan using part-time bowlers.

WORLD CUP RESULTS TO DATE

Bangladesh: Lost to New Zealand by six wickets, lost to West Indies by seven wickets, beat Scotland by 22 runs, lost to Australia by seven wickets.

Pakistan: Beat West Indies by 27 runs, beat Scotland by 94 runs, beat Australia by 10 runs, beat New Zealand by 62 runs.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Bangladesh: Minhazul Abedin. An all-rounder, he has succeeded with the bat in particular after being left out of the first game against New Zealand. He made 68 not out against Scotland and 53 against Australia and has taken a wicket in each of his three matches — including the scalp of Brian Lara. Not included in the original World Cup squad but reinstated by public demand.

Pakistan: Wagan Younis. The 27-year-old right-arm fast bowler has something to prove. He once terrorised the world's batsmen with his vicious late inswinger, now he sits on the bench as Shoaib Akhtar takes all the glory. Will want to show he is still a force following recent injuries. Missed six months with an elbow problem last year.

VENUE

Northampton: This is one of several grounds, like The Oval and Trent Bridge, with a football connection. Northampton Town once played first division football here in the 1960s. Capacity: 7,000. (AFP)

BATTING, BOWLING SO FAR

LONDON: May 30 (Reuters): Top batting and bowling performances at the cricket World Cup after Saturday's completed match (*denotes not out):

BATTING

183 — Saurav Ganguly (India) v Sri Lanka, May 26, Taunton. 145 — Rahul Dravid (India) v Sri Lanka, May 26, Taunton. 140* — Sachin Tendulkar (India) v Kenya, May 23, Bristol. 104* — Rahul Dravid (India) v Kenya, May 23, Bristol.

97 — Saurav Ganguly (India) v South Africa, May 15, Hove. 96 — Jacques Kallis (South Africa) v India, May 15, Hove. 88* — Nasser Hussain (England) v Kenya, May 18, Canterbury. 88 — Alec Stewart (England) v Sri Lanka, May 14, Lord's. 81* — Younis Youhana (Pakistan) v Scotland, May 20, Durham. 81 — Inzamamul Haq (Pakistan) v Australia, May 23, Leed. 80* — Roger Twose (New Zealand) v Australia, May 20, Cardiff. 80* — Ridley Jacobs (West Indies) v New Zealand, May 24, Southampton. 77 — Shivnarine Chanderpaul (West Indies) v Pakistan, May 16, Bristol. 76 — Darren Lehmann (Australia) v New Zealand, May 20, Cardiff. 76 — Gavin Hamilton (Scotland) v Pakistan, May 20, Durham. 76 — Neil Johnson (Zimbabwe) v South Africa, May 29, Birmingham. 73* — Graeme Hick (England) v Sri Lanka, May 14, Lord's. 73* — Inzamamul Haq (Pakistan) v New Zealand, May 28, Derby. 71 — Steve Tikolo (Kenya) v England, May 18, Canterbury.

BOWLING

5 for 21 — Lance Klusener (South Africa) v Kenya, May 26, Amstelveen.

5 for 31 — Robin Singh (India) v Sri Lanka, May 26, Worcester.

4 for 21 — Allan Donald (South Africa) v England, May 22, The Oval.

4 for 25 — Courtney Walsh (West Indies) v Bangladesh, May 21, Dublin.

4 for 34 — Darren Gough (England) v Kenya, May 18, Canterbury.

4 for 37 — Alan Mullally (England) v Sri Lanka, May 14, Lord's. 4 for 37 — Geoff Allott (New Zealand) v Australia, May 20, Cardiff.

4 for 37 — John Blain (Scotland) v Bangladesh, May 24, Edinburgh.

4 for 40 — Wasim Akram (Pakistan) v Australia, May 23, Leeds.

4 for 42 — Nelli Johnson (Zimbabwe) v Kenya, May 15, Taunton.

4 for 56 — Debasish Mohanty (India) v Kenya, May 23, Bristol.

4 for 64 — Geoff Allott (New Zealand) v Pakistan, May 28, Derby.

3 for 7 — Courtney Walsh (West Indies) v Scotland, May 27, Leicester.

3 for 11 — Shoaib Akhtar (Pakistan) v Scotland, May 20, Durham.

Kiwis plan

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for the Black Caps. "They can not afford to write us off despite the fact that we have lost our first four matches," said Hamilton.

Scotland have only pride to play for and Hamilton is desperate to ensure they do not end the tournament with five defeats.

"To end the competition without a win would be an unfair injustice," said Hamilton. "With the exception of the game against West Indies we have played really well and have surprised a lot of people."

"A victory would give us the breakthrough we've been looking for. Although we are one of the so-called minnows we haven't disgraced ourselves at all."

SQUADS

NEW ZEALAND (Probable): Matthew Horne, Nathan Astle, Craig McMillan, Stefen Fleming, Roger Twose, Chris Cairns, Adam Parore, Chris Harris, Dion Nash, Gavin Larsen, Geoff Allott.

SCOTLAND (Probable): Ian Philip, Bruce Patterson, Mike Smith, Mike Allingham, George Salmon, Gavin Hamilton, Ian Stanger, Alec Davis, James Brinkley, John Blain, Asim Butt.

Complex cricket

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- that the top three out of six teams in each first-round group go through to the second phase, taking with them the points they scored against fellow qualifiers.

- that, should two teams finish on equal points, the team which won their first-round game qualifies.

- that, if three teams are equal on points, the two teams with the most points from the matches between them go through. If each has one win, however, the two teams with the best net run rate - the difference between runs scored and runs conceded per over - survive.

And if Steve Waugh still want to try and understand how scores are re-calculated in rain-affected matches, an explanatory sheet on the Lewis/Duckworth method shows that it is all about $T = (S \times R^2/R) + 1$. However, if ...

Scots for a cheer

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think about how we bring young players through in the future.

"We spoke about what happened on Thursday and everyone was fairly positive but we need to move onto the next stage now and that transition won't be easy."

The Kiwis stand on the threshold of making it through the first stage and have the added advantage of knowing exactly what margin of victory they will require against the Scots to qualify for the Super Sixes.

Zimbabwe make it big

CHELMSFORD, England, May 30: Zimbabwe's giant-killing World Cup cricketers were basking in glory here on Sunday after the greatest win - and the greatest achievement - in their short history, reports AFP.

Written off even by their own coach, they defeated tournament favourites South Africa on Saturday by 48 runs to reach the second phase of a World Cup for the first time.

Skipper Alistair Campbell said: "It is magnificent, not only in the context of being in the World Cup but for Zimbabwean cricket and Zimbabwe as a nation."

"Now that we are in the Super Sixes, there will be a truck-load of people coming over. They said if we reached the Super Six, they would all be here."

Coach David Houghton, meanwhile, was left delighted by the success of his reverse psychology.

He had accused his side of playing "schoolboy cricket" and "choking" earlier in the tournament in an attempt to fire their pride, then had fed the South Africans' confidence by saying they could not lose Saturday.

"To beat South Africa is just wonderful. They are probably the best side here along with Pakistan."

Johnson made an immediate impact at the start of both in-

nings, hitting two fours off the first over from Shaun Pollock - one admittedly an inside edge - then removing Gary Kirsten first ball.

Before Saturday's game, Zimbabwe had won only five of 29 World Cup games since their debut in 1983.

Their one previous encounter with South Africa saw them beaten by seven wickets in Canberra in 1992.

They had never got close to reaching the second stage