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IT'S SO ROMANTIC: Zimbabwean opener Grant Flower looks towards the Headingley pitch while rain keeps falling yesterday. —Internet photo

Marauding Moin

MANCHESTER, England, June 7: Moin Khan has scored his World Cup runs faster than any other player in the tournament, reports AFP.

The wicket-keeper-batsman is averaging more than 47 and set up Pakistan's key first-round win over Australia. He has also taken 10 catches and two stumpings.

Yet he has been totally overshadowed, first by his teammates, then by his opponents.

On Saturday, coming in at number seven, he scored 63 off 56 deliveries, yet found Lance Klusener stealing the limelight with 46 off 41 as South Africa snatched an unlikely victory.

Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram, however, is well aware of Moin's contribution. "I can only congratulate him," he said. "He is playing so well at the moment and having a big influence."

Moin's success in front of the stumps has been based not so much on weight of runs - he has scored 189 - as on speed.

His most remarkable innings saw him swing two sixes off Australia's Glenn McGrath on his way to 31 off 12 balls against Australia as Pakistan won by 10 runs at Headingley.

His effort at Trent Bridge against South Africa was almost as explosive - Allan Donald, vying with McGrath for the mantle of the world's best pace bowler, disappeared for two sixes and a string of boundaries.

The 1999 World Cup has been seen as a bowlers' tournament but Moin appears not to have heard. He said: "These wickets in England have been very good for batting. This World Cup has been quite good for me."

The 27-year-old from Rawalpindi, in and out of the side since his 1991 debut, only made the World Cup squad after Rashid Latif lost both form and the captaincy last year.

Several wicket-keeper-batsmen were expected to make a mark here, including Australia's Adam Gilchrist, England's Alec Stewart and South Africa's Mark Boucher. Moin has emerged from the pack.

He admits, however, that his batting is based more on instinct than science.

Against Donald, he collected one ball outside the off stump and flat-batted it into the midwicket stands. He stepped inside another delivery and, using the momentum of the ball, flicked it high over fine leg into the Trent Bridge car park.

"How many batsmen think of a particular stroke after the ball has been bowled by a fast bowler? I can't," he said. "Many times it's instinctive. I just have a feeling it will work."

"I took my chances against Donald and it worked. But it won't be my game. My game is based on attack."

"I can't hang around without playing a shot."



WEATHERMAN ALLOTT: New Zealand's premier paceman Geoff Allott stays under an umbrella while inspecting the ground at Headingley yesterday. —AFP photo

Sticking with Sachin

MANCHESTER, England, June 7: India will gamble again on Sachin Tendulkar opening the innings in the make-or-break World Cup second-round clash against Pakistan at Old Trafford here tomorrow, reports AFP.

Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin said the risk was worth taking, even though the tactic backfired badly in the last match when Tendulkar, regarded as the world's best batsman, was dismissed for a fourth-ball duck.

"It's not the first time Sachin got out for a duck. But we know he makes up for it very fast," Azharuddin said.

"Even Tendulkar can have a bad day, he's only human."

Tendulkar bats at number four in Test cricket. But he has been made an opener in one-dayers and rewarded his team with 21 of his world-record one-day 22 centuries from the top of the order.

Critics, however, continue to argue that if he is dismissed



early, the team is often so demoralised that it can spark a batting collapse. That scenario occurred against Australia when India slumped to 17 for four after Tendulkar's fall.

Azharuddin, however, rejected the argument, saying: "That's not true. It's not a one-man team. See how Saurav and Rahul have batted in this tournament."

Opener Ganguly scored 183 against Sri Lanka in the first round, while Dravid, who bats at number three, made two consecutive centuries followed by a half-century.

Tendulkar fell to Glenn McGrath, one of the world's top strike bowlers, at The Oval on Friday. On Tuesday he will face Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar, the fastest of them all.

Akhtar was timed bowling at 95 miles per hour in his previous game against South Africa and will be hoping to exploit early-morning dampness and cloud cover at Manchester to try and duplicate McGrath's feat of dismissing Tendulkar.

Best and the worst

MANCHESTER, England, June 7: India's cricketing battles with arch-rivals Pakistan have often brought out the best in their players and the worst in their fans, reports AFP.

Few rivalries in international sport are more intense than cricket games between Pakistan and India.

Political tensions between the two nations, simmering on their disputed Kashmir border ever since partition more than 50 years ago, have fuelled the flames.

During a Test at Ahmedabad in India in 1987, Pakistani captain Imran Khan ordered his players to wear helmets while holding after spectators began throwing stones.

During India's 1989 tour of Pakistan, a fan ran onto the field during the first Test in Karachi and assaulted Indian captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth, tearing at his shirt, before being tackled by security men.

Friction in Kashmir led to Test cricket being suspended between the two nations for 10 years until Pakistan visited India for a three-Test series earlier this year.

One-day meetings, however, continued at neutral venues like Sharjah, Colombo, Dhaka and Singapore.

There were no problems until 1997, when Pakistani bats-

man Inzamam-ul Haq attacked an Indian fan who had been abusing him through a megaphone.

Inzamam was charged with assault after marching into the crowd armed with a bat during the Sahara Cup series in Toronto, Canada. The case was settled out of court.

Pakistan ended the 10-year freeze earlier this year when they visited India and played three Tests.

They were given a standing ovation after winning the opening Test at Madras by the Indian crowd but there was crowd trouble in the third Test at Calcutta's Eden Gardens.

Following the controversial run-out of India's Sachin Tendulkar, bat-on-welding police evicted 70,000 spectators from the ground to allow the match to finish after missiles were thrown onto the ground.

The match, won by Pakistan, ended in front of empty galleries.

There have been other incidents. At the world under-15 final between India and Pakistan at Lord's two years ago, fans invaded the ground to try and stop a result just as India were about to win.

The last World Cup meeting between the sides, however - the 1996 World Cup quarter-final at Bangalore - passed off peacefully. —See page 14

A lot of scalps for Allott

LEEDS, June 7 (AP): Geoff Allott is enjoying his first trip to England.

The left-arm Kiwi paceman's three Zimbabwe wickets for 24 runs Sunday took his World Cup tally to 18 - equalling the record for the most scalps in a single tournament held by India's Roger Binny, Craig McDermott of Australia and Wasim Akram of Pakistan.

With at least two matches still to play, Allott looks a certainty to become the highest wicket-taker in one World Cup.

"This is the first time here (in England) and I am loving it," a delighted Allott said after Sunday's Super Six match was suspended until Monday after a rain-hit day's play.

Allott credited his success to a combination of English conditions and the white balls being used at the World Cup. With every match, his confidence is growing, he said.

"I am going out there expecting to get a couple of wickets early and I have been lucky to get them and also support from the other guys," he said.

Allott's success is all the more remarkable given that his bowling action was completely retooled to save a career threat-

ened by a serious back injury.

"As a result of the Australian tour a couple of years ago I suffered a double stress fracture in my back and a bulged disk. I had to remodel my action and as a result I now get more swing."

The bad news for World Cup batsmen is that 27-year-old Allott does not think he's hit his peak yet.

"I have only played 19 one dayers ... I still feel I have got a lot to learn," he said.



Zimbabwean paceman Heath Streak appeals successfully for lbw against New Zealand batsman Craig McMillan on June 6. —AFP photo

Farokh foresees trouble

MANCHESTER, England, June 7: Former Indian star Farokh Engineer has warned that a single burning flag could spark trouble at the India-Pakistan cricket World Cup clash at Old Trafford on Tuesday, reports AFP.

Engineer, quoted in Monday's Daily Mail newspaper, said he feared there could be fan violence following ongoing military clashes between the two nations across their disputed Kashmir border.

"It could only take one flag being burned to spark a serious problem and people must know that. If it occurs, I wouldn't like to think what would happen next," he told the daily.

Rival captains Mohammad Azharuddin and Wasim Akram have already joined local community leaders in appealing to supporters to behave during and after the game.

Unprecedented security measures, including fans being searched and plain-clothes police being deployed among the crowd, are expected to be used by police.

They, however, have refused to give details of their operations.

Cricket grounds in England do not have fencing and end-of-match pitch invasions by fans, who are not segregated, have been tolerated in the past.

But several captains during this tournament have called for greater protection, fearing that players could be assaulted.

Azharuddin is one of several players who has been jostled and abused by fans at the end of a match.

To add to the tension, India must win Tuesday's game to remain in the World Cup.

Engineer, who had a long and successful career with county side Lancashire, lives close to the Old Trafford ground where the game is being staged.

He added: "I feel Indian, Asian and also British because I've lived in this country for so long."

"I am proud of all three of those things and I just hope I feel the same pride in all three at the end of tomorrow's game."

"Anybody who misbehaves will be insulting the dignity of their own country, the reputations of India and Pakistan, as well as themselves."

He said the players - who have already stressed how well they get on off the pitch - would have a big role in calming down the fans.

"Wasim and Sachin Tendulkar could make it clear they are friends and joke with each other, so the fans can see it. Maybe just put a hand on each other's shoulders. It would send a message to the crowd," he was quoted as saying.

The last time India and Pakistan played a Test in February, 70,000 spectators were driven out of Calcutta's Eden Gardens stadium by bat-on-welding police after projectiles were thrown following a controversial decision.

British Asian fans are among the most passionate followers of cricket. The north-western city of Manchester has significant populations of Indians and Pakistanis.

The injury list

MANCHESTER, England, June 7: India may have to go into Tuesday's make-or-break World Cup battle against Pakistan without key opener Saurav Ganguly, who faces a race to recover from a knee injury, reports Reuters.

"He tripped over while bowling yesterday and the knee is very stiff. We've had the X-rays and everything is clear, but it just depends," Indian coach Anshuman Gaekwad said today.

The loss of Ganguly - the tournament's second highest run scorer and a crucial bowling option - would be a serious blow to India's hopes of rescuing their World Cup bid, close to extinction after losing to Australia in their first Super Six match.

But fitness problems have also upset Pakistan preparations for the keenly-awaited Old Trafford contest which sees both sides trying to bounce back from defeat.

Emerging batsman Yousuf Youhana is likely to miss out because of a hamstring injury picked up in Saturday's loss to South Africa. Veteran Salim Malik is in line to step into the middle order.

The injury worries - which some suspect may contain an element of koddology - heighten the tension ahead of Tuesday's confrontation, which rekindles one of the sport's fiercest rivalries.

Recent hostilities in the two countries' disputed region of Kashmir have put police on high alert in case of crowd trouble, although they remain tight-lipped about any extra measures they are taking.

Gaekwad admitted that the overexuberance of some supporters did give cause for concern, adding that pace bowler Venkatesh Prasad had been upset to be jostled by fans in the match with England at Edgbaston.

"Over-keenness and enthusiasm can create problems. No-one likes to be pushed around," he said. But he played down any threat of needle on the pitch itself, saying there was little animosity between the players.

"Some of the boys from the two sides get together in the evening and have a drink together," he said.

Manchester rain could yet render all the speculation academic, with heavy showers that forced both sides to call off outdoor net practice today forecast to continue.

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Chandrika cure

COLOMBO, June 7: A group of businessmen and lawyers have appealed to President Chandrika Kumaratunga to intervene and reconstitute the country's cricket board following Sri Lanka's poor performance at the World Cup, reports Reuters.

"We have not been able to sustain the successes and various views are propounded by experts. Ageing of players, absence of a nursery, bad selection of teams, lack of commitment from players etc, are some of the reasons given," they said in a letter today.

"We are however convinced that to develop the game and sustain performance we need a committed group at the helm of the administrative process who are devoid of political affiliations, motives of financial gain, and a knowledge of the game."

Sri Lanka, the defending champions, won only two matches, against Zimbabwe and Kenya, but lost the other three to India, South Africa and England and failed to qualify for the second round.

Elections to the cricket board ran into a controversy earlier this year when losing presidential candidate Clifford Ratwatte alleged that gun-toting intruders had prevented free and fair voting.

Thilanga Sumathipala was re-elected president with a big majority, but that result is being contested in a court action.

The letter, signed by 32 leading businessmen and lawyers, See page 14

Hopeful Houghton

LEEDS, June 7 (AP): Cricket in Zimbabwe remains an expensive sport for most people, hampering efforts to make the game popular, coach Dave Houghton said Sunday, adding that things may change after his team's good run in the World Cup.

"There's an unbounding enthusiasm for cricket," Houghton said. "The difficult part is to provide facilities as cricket remains a very, very expensive sport," he said.

Almost all the equipment in Zimbabwe is imported but the Zimbabwe Cricket Union is now looking at producing some at home to reduce costs and making it available to young players said Houghton, a former Zimbabwe captain who will turn 42 in a fortnight.

The lack of facilities has meant that Zimbabwe has only two teams from Matabeleland and Mashonaland provinces in the domestic first class competition and a pool of only 35 top-grade cricketers from which to choose national players.

Houghton said the Zimbabwe Cricket Union also is making efforts to provide a career structure for selected youths but efforts to expand domestic first-class cricket to four teams by including Midlands and Manicaland provinces is expected to take three more years.

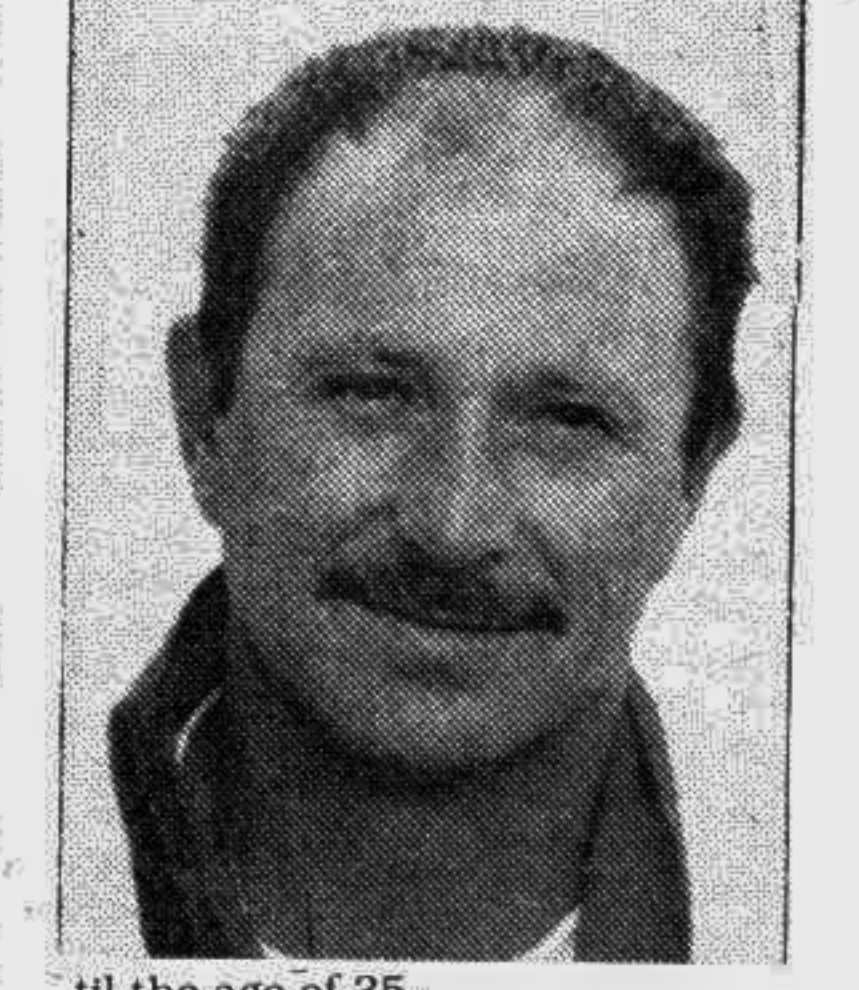
"Cricket in Zimbabwe is looking up ... it's moving one way, but the expansion is still taking a lot of time," Houghton

said. "Once we have more provinces playing first-class cricket, there will be no looking behind."

He said the good run in the World Cup will evoke more interest. "People usually back any team that performs well," said Houghton, who was Zimbabwe's most successful cricketer despite being denied test place until the age of 35.

When he left international cricket at the age of 40, Houghton was the oldest player on the circuit and was still the most dependable batsman in the squad.

"With good results being produced by the cricket squad, the nation has become to back us," he said. "The World Cup will bring more support for cricket"



TAKE THAT HUNDRED MAN: New Zealand wicketkeeper Adam Parore (C) jokingly throws a kick towards Chris Cairns (R) as the star all-rounder had taken his hundredth one-day international wicket on June 6. —Internet photo