

Goodwin leads Zimbabwe revival

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 21: Murray Goodwin hit 73 off 71 balls to make Zimbabwe recovered from a mid-innings slump in the first match of the Standard Bank international triangular limited-overs tournament against South Africa at Wanderers Stadium Friday, reports AFP.

Goodwin's innings enabled Zimbabwe to post a total of 226 after they won the toss and decided to bat on a true, fast pitch. Zimbabwe seemed to have squandered a fair start when they slipped to 105 for four after 28 overs, losing three wickets for 11 runs in 34 balls.

The mini-collapse started when Neil Johnson was run out by a direct hit at the bowler's end by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher after Alastair Campbell called him for a leg bye.

Goodwin and Stuart Carlisle revived the innings in a fifth-wicket stand of 79, mixing some hard-hit shots with quick running between the wickets.

Goodwin, a former Western Australia state player, played some powerful cut and pull shots as he reached 50 off 59 balls.

His innings included eight fours and a six over long-on against Shaun Pollock, who bowled him with his next delivery in the final over of the innings.

England are the third team competing in the triangular tournament.

Hick's all-round show



PORTCHEFSTROCK, South Africa, Jan 21: Graeme Hick struck 77 as England cruised to a 4-1 run win over North West in a limited-overs match on Thursday, reports Reuters.

The touring team restricted North West to 223 for eight after scoring 264 for nine from their 50 overs.

Unorthodox medium pacer David Pryke stole the limelight in England's innings, his brisk leg-cutters off the wrong foot earning him figures of five for 34.

England, who elected to bat on a firm pitch and fast outfield, lost their first two wickets for 20 in the opening six overs.

Nasser Hussain was bowled by a delivery from fast bowler Neil Rossouw which straightened to hit off-stump and Nick Knight edged a ball from the same bowler to gully.

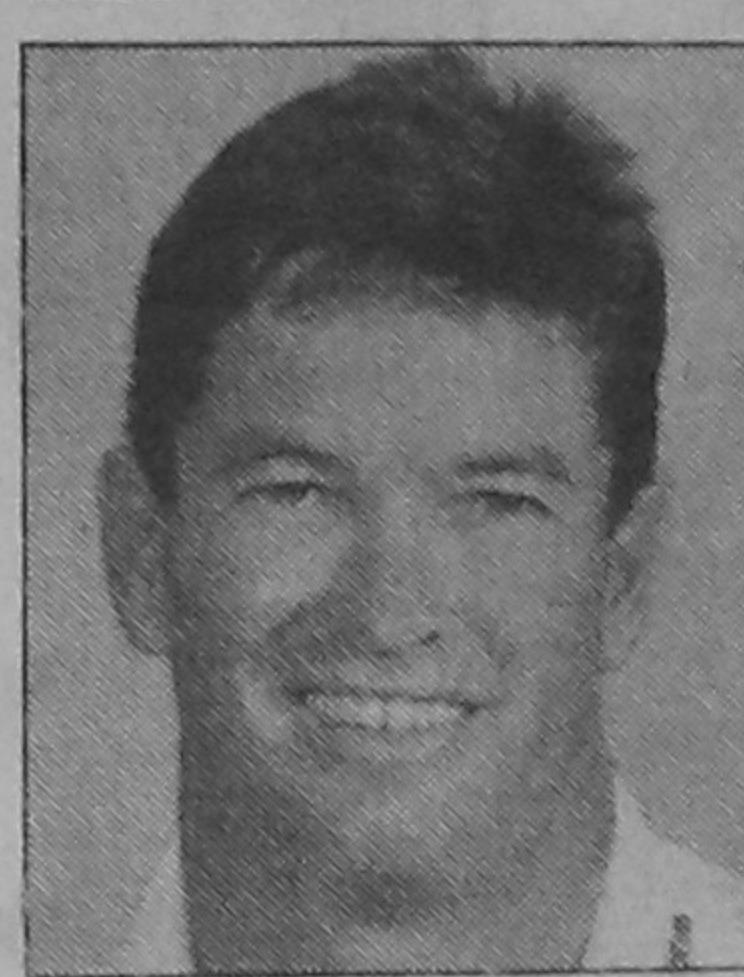
Hick, whose 81-ball 77 earned him the man-of-the-match award, and Chris Adams (47) then put on 110 for the third wicket to put England back on track. Craig White followed their efforts by plundering 50 off 37 balls.

However, Pryke undermined some of their good work with an inspired spell of penetrative bowling.

The best of North West's batting came in an opening stand of 71 between Gary Outram and

Hendrick de Vos who scored 34 and 30 respectively. However, they needed 23 overs to put those runs on the board and the innings continued in similar despatch fashion with North West going into the last 10 overs needing 116.

SCOREBOARD: Scoreboard in the Day/Night match between North West and England on Thursday: ENGLAND Hussain b Rossouw 8



GRAEME HICK: Knight c Jacobs b Rossouw 77, Hick c Poole b Lavine 77, Adams c Poole b Fryke 47, Solanki c Pryke b Rossouw 38, White c sub (Du Plessis) b Fryke 50

Alleyne b Pryke 10, Ealham b Fryke 5, Swann not out 6, Caddick b Fryke 1, Mullally not out 2, Extras: (b-1, lb-2, nb-6, w-9) 18, Fall of wickets: 1-12; 2-20; 3-130; 4-154; 5-228; 6-244; 7-247; 8-256; 9-261.

SCOREBOARD: Bowler O M R W: Pryke 10 0 34 5, Rossouw 10 0 70 3, Lavine 9 0 57 1, Jordaan 10 0 35 0, Light 10 0 54 0, Hewitt 1 0 11 0

NORTH WEST: Outram c Swann b Hick 34, De Vos c Ealham b Swann 30, Jacobs c Hick b Ealham 39, Hewitt b Swann 25, Rossouw c Solanki b Adams 19, Lavine c sub (Maddy) b Caddick 3, Venter b White 17, Light not out 26, Poole b White 6, Fryke not out 2, Extras: (lb-7, nb-2, w-16) 25, Total: (For eight wickets) 223, Fall of wickets: 1-71; 2-86; 3-142; 4-145; 5-167; 6-179; 7-207; 8-220.

Did not bat: C Jordaan, Bowler O M R W: Caddick 8 0 28 1, Mullally 9 0 39 0, White 9 0 41 2, Ealham 9 0 42 1, Swann 10 1 38 2, Hick 4 0 19 1, Adams 1 0 9 1

Result: England won by 41 runs.

WICB seeks answers

'BRIDGETOWN, Jan 21 (AP): The West Indies isn't taking its recent poor form lightly.

Players met privately with West Indies Cricket Board officials Wednesday to explain why they were so heavily beaten on their recent tour of New Zealand.

The West Indies lost both tests and all five one-day internationals to opponents ranked below them in the international ratings.

Captain Brian Lara and every member of the team, along with manager Clive Lloyd and coach Viv Richards, were summoned to what WICB chief executive Stephen Camacho called "a debriefing session" with the executive committee.

The meeting has been called by the executive committee of the WICB to hear from management and players just what went wrong in New Zealand," Camacho said. "It is of understandable concern to everyone involved in West Indies cricket."

Lloyd, the former West Indies captain who earlier announced he would not renew his three-year contract as manager, was the only absentee at the meeting at a south coast hotel in Barbados. Camacho said Lloyd, who now lives in England, informed the WICB he was committed to a prior engagement.

Camacho also disclosed that WICB president Pat Rousseau was unable to attend, but he did not elaborate.

Such a session with all the players is unprecedented and reflects widespread disquiet among West Indian fans over the team's recent performances.

After the West Indies were beaten in all five Tests and six of the seven one-day internationals in South Africa last year, Lloyd, Lara and the late Malcolm Marshall, then the coach, flew directly from Johannesburg to Antigua for a meeting with a designated committee of the WICB.

As a consequence, Lara was placed on probation as captain for the first two tests of the home series against Australia and he, Lloyd and Marshall were set "specific performance targets." They were all retained after the West Indies, inspired by Lara's batting, drew the test series 2-2 and shared the one-day internationals 3-3 with one match tied.

In a prepared statement last weekend, chief selector Mike Findlay said his committee and the WICB itself needed not only to assess the New Zealand tour "to determine why the team performed so poorly" but also to hear from management and players why the West Indies have been so badly beaten on recent overseas tours.

Prior to the defeats in South Africa and New Zealand, they lost all three Tests and three one-day internationals in Pakistan in 1997.

Findlay said the players should be given the chance "to put forward their views about the problems facing West Indies cricket and the way forward for the game in the Caribbean."

Symcox bids final bye

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 21: Teteran South African and Griqualand West off-spinner Pat Symcox today announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, reports AFP.

Symcox, one of the great characters of South African cricket, stepped out of the international arena last year but stayed active to help a young Griquas side lift their first trophy in more than 100 years last season.

Now 38, the bowler, who made his first class debut for Griquas against Northern Transvaal 22 years ago, reckoned age had finally caught up with him. "It's time I stepped down," he said.

He played in 20 Tests and 80 one-day internationals. "When you think that I only made my first international appearance when I was 33, then the last five years have been good to me," he said. "I was always flirting with time."

A spin bowler at an average of 43.32 - Symcox was no slouch with the bat. His 741 runs (average 28.50) included a memorable century against Pakistan at the Wanderers.

Mujibur Rahman passes away

Sports Reporter



Noted chess organizer and former general secretary of Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) Mujibur Rahman died in the city yesterday. He was 60.

Rahman, who had been serving as the BCF general secretary from 1992 to 1998, was suffering from bronchitis.

BCF has expressed deep shock at the death of Rahman. The federation also extended sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

African Nations Cup starts today

Nigeria the team to beat



Lagos, Jan 21: Nigeria return from the African Nations Cup wilderness this weekend as favourites to win a three-week tournament that brings together the best teams on the continent, reports AFP.

ing Spain before Denmark expected defensive naivete.

Ghana, who many West Africans hope will travel to Lagos for a dream final against Nigeria on February 13, enter the competition with a much younger and less experienced squad than arch rivals Nigerians.

governing body FIFA and boasting world-class players in defender Nouredine Naybet and midfielder Mustapha Hadji.

South Africa are another powerful challenger with an excellent record having finished first and second in previous appearances, and the luck of the draw has left them with a relatively simple task of qualifying for the quarter-finals.

The cup is usually won by teams with outstanding rearguards - Egypt conceded only one goal in 570 minutes two years ago - and South African coach Trott Moloto is spoilt for choice when it comes to goalkeepers and defenders.

Tunisia have prepared with the professionalism expected of a visionary football nation and for the "old guard" like goalkeeper Chokri al-Oueri it may be a final opportunity to strike gold.

Cote d'Ivoire and defending champions Egypt are other potential winners of a tournament first staged 43 years ago in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, and won by Egypt.

The Ivorians bring an exciting mix with the experience of goalkeeper Alain Gouamene and midfielder Tchiresoua Guel balancing the youth of striker Bonaventure Kalou.

Tradition is stacked against Egypt as no country has successfully defended the title since 1965, when the Black Stars from Ghana defeated hosts Tunisia 3-2 after extra time.

The Pharaohs lost friends in Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, the assistant coach resigned after disagreeing with French boss Gerard Gili, and the recall of inactive veteran defender Ibrahim Hassan smacked of desperation.

Each Nations Cup produces shocks and while the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal and Zambia can be discounted as champions, they have the ability to trip some giants.

After Shabani Nonda preferred helping struggling French club Rennes to Group B, the Congolese suffered a second blow when another striker, Michel Ngonge from English Premiership club Watford, said he was doubtful because his wife is expecting a child.

A seven-goal hiding from Honduras that led to the cancellation of a Central American tour and the resignation of the football association executive hampered the preparations of Zambia, who will be led once more by the seemingly ageless Kalusha Bwalya.

Senegal could be the dark horses as they have a wily old German coach in Peter Schnitger, an unbeaten record in warm-up matches, and a squad comfortable with a work ethic and unhampered by prima donnas.

That leaves 1990 champions Algeria, who have been sliding since, Burkina Faso, whose unexpected fourth place in 1998 owed much to home advantage. Brazilian-coached Gabon and probable whipping boys Congo and Togo.



NWANKO KANU

They have a star-studded squad led by African Footballer of the Year Nwankwo Kanu, a proven coach in Jo Bonfrere from Holland, and the backing of a vast, football-obsessed West African nation.

Political differences with South Africa prevented Nigeria defending the title in 1996 and this decision led to them being barred from the next edition of the biennial African showpiece.

After playing three qualifying matches for the 2000 tournament, the two-time African champions received automatic entry as co-hosts with Ghana when the event was taken away from poorly-prepared Zimbabwe.

The Nigerian build-up has been poor with an under-strength team suffering heavy losses against a club and a regional selection in Spain and football federation chairman Anthony Kodjo-Williams was sacked this week.

But when names like Arsenal's Kanu, Taribo West, Celestine Babayaro, Finidi George, Jay Jay Okocha, Sunday Oliseh and Jonathan Akpoborle roll off the tongue, there is an exciting sense of anticipation.

At full strength with capacity 60,000 crowds packed into the Surulere Stadium in Lagos, it will be difficult for the other 15 challengers to emerge victorious, although success for Nigeria is not a foregone conclusion.

Nigeria are in one of two groups of death with North African giants Morocco and Tunisia and outsiders Congo, and only two of them can reach the knockout second phase of the 22-day event.

The Europe-based Nigerians are also rusty, not having performed together since the 1998 World Cup in France where they flattered only to deceive, beat-

Defensive marshal Samuel Kuffour of Germany's Bayern Munich, was runner-up to Kanu in the African pool, midfielder Charles Akonnor leads the Black Stars and Kwame Ayew scores regularly for Sporting Lisbon.

Ghana have lifted the trophy a record-equaling four times and Emmanuel Maradas, the widely-respected editor of African Soccer magazine, believes they can go all the way

and defeat Cameroon in the final. Cameroon are overdue a good run after a series of poor showings following triumphs in 1984 and 1988. Defender Rigobert Song, midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe and striker Patrick Mboma play at the highest level in Europe.

No list of potential champions can exclude Morocco, ranked number one in Africa throughout last year by world

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Premiership preview

All roads lead to Old Trafford



LONDON, Jan 21: Manchester United return to English Premiership action this weekend when they face title rivals Arsenal in a game which could decide the ultimate destination of the trophy, reports AFP.

The treble winners, rested and refreshed after their early exit from FIFA's inaugural World Club Championship, are in good shape to launch their bid for a sixth league title in eight years.

While United have been soaking up the sun in Rio, their main contenders for the biggest prize in English football have seen their campaigns falter in the mud of the English winter.

United return from their three-week "break" to find themselves just one point behind leaders Leeds with two games in hand.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side have also played three games less than Arsenal, who they are level with on 43 points and who they face on the freshly laid pitch at Old Trafford on Monday.

Although Arsenal have beaten high-fliers Sunderland they also dropped valuable points away to basement club Sheffield Wednesday.

United will start the match firm favourites. Arsenal's confidence suffered a major blow in midweek when they were bundled out of the FA Cup fourth round on penalties by Leicester.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger also has serious selection problems, especially in attack.

The Frenchman is definitely without injured Dutch duo Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars, while captain Tony Adams remains very doubtful as he recovers from a stress fracture in his right foot.

To add to Wenger's problems, Nwankwo Kanu is away on African Nations Cup duty with Nigeria and Croat Davor Suker is suspended.

The Gunners boss dismissed suggestions he will try to sign Juventus Uruguayan striker Daniel Fonseca on loan as cover. "It did not come as a shocker when the Board eventually sided with the estranged CCDM boss by slapping the ban on the CWAB leaders and launching an inquiry against them. BCB however did not dare to question Tanvir's controversial behaviour.

It is learnt from reliable sources that the two-member probe body formed by the BCB to investigate on the seven accused cricketers, is yet to get into action, probably for the fact that there is nothing to inquire about!

BCB must realise that both CCDM and CWAB have already done a lot of harm to the reputation of the country's cricket.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) President Jagmohan Dalmiya came to Dhaka last week for official purposes. What sort of impression did he get after watching this off the field fiasco?

Bangladesh's appeal for Test status is also likely to get a severe jolt. Three ICC inspectors are now in Dhaka on a fact-finding mission regarding the infrastructure and administration of the game in the country.

Can we honestly expect a good report from them when they have been the witness of the chaotic state of domestic cricket?

It is about time the organisers treated players professionally. The BCB president Saber Hossain must present up with a solution himself that would save cricket. And sooner the solution comes is the better.

confidence and I am sure that goal will have helped him," said Houllier.

The Czech is relishing the chance to play in an orthodox striking position. He said: "I've read articles with people talking about Smicer the winger, but in France I played just behind the front two or in attack."

Norwegian striker Erik Meijer, meanwhile, has recovered from a calf injury and will be available to play some part.

Middlesbrough's under-fire manager Bryan Robson has had "positive" talks with chairman Steve Gibson and chief executive Keith Lamb this week and they have assured Robson of their continued support.

Boro have slumped to 14th in the Premiership after a promising start to the season, and the 4-1 home defeat by Derby last Saturday was greeted angrily by sections of the supporters.

Robson said: "If you're not doing so well, you're going to get a bit of criticism. But the chairman is the main person."

"I've spoken to the people who matter in this football club and they're 100 per cent behind me and the staff and the way that we go about the job."

Sheffield Wednesday will be looking to lift themselves from the foot of the table for the first time this season should they win at Tottenham and Watford lose at Bradford.

Wednesday's cause will not have been helped by events off the field this week with chairman Dave Richards offering to step down.

Richards said: "I have often said, and will say again, that if someone comes along who wants to do my job, and the circumstances and the person are right, and he is committed to the club, then I would step down."

Fourth-placed Liverpool take on Middlesbrough at Anfield on Saturday where Czech international Vladimir Smicer is set to start alongside Michael Owen up front as Titi Camara is suspended and Robbie Fowler is recovering from injury.

Smicer scored his first goal for Liverpool in last week's win at Watford, and manager Gerard Houllier hopes that it will kick-start a scoring run.

"It should have boosted his

debut for the London side. United, by contrast, will be at full strength.

On Sunday leaders Leeds United, on 44 points, go to fifth-placed Sunderland where the spotlight will be on United youngsters Lee Bowyer and Jonathan Woodgate -- should they play.

Manager David O'Leary must decide whether to select the pair following the players' arrest and subsequent release in connection with an attack on an Asian youth.

Chairman Peter Risdale said there would be no attempt by the board to influence O'Leary's decision.

Risdale said: "The decision on whether Bowyer and Woodgate play against Sunderland has nothing to do with me and I have not even asked David the question."

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Morocco: Class put to test



RABAT, Jan 21: Frenchman Henri Michel is under pressure as coach of Morocco despite transforming sleeping giants into a team ranked the best in Africa for more than one year, reports AFP.

The many successes of the manager who took France to third place at the 1986 World Cup were almost instantly forgotten as the Atlas Lions crumbled 4-0

in Belgium last September. When Morocco hosted the United States several months later in Marrakesh, there was unprecedented whistling during the national anthem and Michel was left in no doubt as to what many supporters thought of him.

Michel is surprised at the media criticism and unhealthy atmosphere which surrounds the team, claiming it is common for a mini-league in Ethiopia.

But just getting beyond the first round at the 2000 finals is going to be difficult with opponents like co-hosts and favourites Nigeria and superbly-prepared Tunisia.

Michel labels Nigeria as a team holding all the aces through a star-studded squad and home advantage while believing Tunisia may have lost their way a little. He confesses to knowing nothing about group outsiders Congo.

While Michel emphasises unity and teamwork, he can call on some of the most exciting individuals on the continent led by Mustapha Hadji, the 1998 African Footballer of the Year.

Hadji and Youssif Chippo have blossomed since joining Coventry City this season with skilful touches that can light up even the coldest mid-winter nights in the English midlands.

They are also finding the net with increasing frequency and if you add the defensive steel of Naybet and predatory instincts of Abdeljelil Hadda, there are many reasons for hope among a team that reached the 1998 quarter-finals.

Basler out with torn ligament

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany, Jan 21: Mario Basler, a recent transfer from Bayern Munich to Kaiserslautern, is facing several weeks on the touchline after suffering an injury, reports AFP.

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Primera Liga preview

Leaders under pressure



MADRID, Jan 21: Deportivo La Coruna may be on top of Spain's Primera Liga but the alarm bells will be rising to a crescendo Saturday if they fail to see off visitors Real Betis on Saturday, reports AFP.

Deportivo took advantage of the miserable pre-Christmas form of the traditional giants of Spanish football Real Madrid and Barcelona to rack up a nine-point lead in the First Division and were looking titleholders-in-waiting as they put together a stunning run of results.

But football fans of "Superperdo" are more aware than anyone of the old adage that it's never over until the fat lady sings.

They have never won the Spanish league and the north western club twice choked spectacularly when in sight of the title in the 1990s.

On the most famous example in 1993-4 they surrendered the title on the last day of the season with their 1994 Brazilian World Cup winning striker Bebeto missing a penalty that would have brought the Primera Liga crown to Galicia for the first time ever.

And on the evidence of early 2000 that ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory has not changed in the new millennium.

Real Zaragoza have now whittled that lead down to two points with defending champions Barcelona a further point adrift.

Zaragoza have a relatively easy match at second bottom Oviedo on Sunday while Barcelona should not have any problems at their Nou Camp fortress against a Racing Santander side that nonetheless boasts in Salvador "Salva" Balles Spain's most prolific scorer with 21 goals this season.