

Zimbabwe enjoy run feast

ST GEORGE'S, Grenada, Mar 5 (Reuters/AFP): Alastair Campbell and Stuart Carlisle shared an unbroken sixth wicket century stand as four Zimbabwe batsmen completed half centuries on the opening day of their West Indies tour on Saturday.

Zimbabwe ended the first day of their three-day match against a West Indies Board XI on 302 for five.

Campbell and Carlisle regained the initiative for the touring team after they had stumped for 168 for two to 200 for five.

Both were unbeaten on 52 at the close.

Carlisle was the more enterprising of the two, driving particularly well in his 85-ball innings which was included seven fours.

Campbell has faced 97 balls and hit six fours.

Opener Grant Flower had given the innings a blazing start by reaching his half century before lunch. He went on to make 69 off 81 balls with 11 fours and a six before attempting an ambitious reverse sweep of spinner Rodney Sooklal.

Flower and Trevor Gripper put on 98 for the second wicket. Gripper made the most of being missed twice to score 62 before pulling across the line and being bowled by 20-year-old pace bowler Keremy Jeremy.

Jeremy was the most successful bowler with two for 38 off 15 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the opening day of the three-day match between the West Indies Cricket Board XI and Zimbabwe at Queen's Park Stadium here on Saturday.

ZIMBABWE: First Innings G Flower c Semple b Sooklal 60 Johnson c Wallace b Black 17 Gripper b Jeremy 62 Goodwin c Brown b Hinds 27 A Flower c Ganga b Jeremy 13 Campbell not out 52 Carlisle not out 52 Extras: (b-1, lb-2, nb-7) 10 Total: (For 5 wickets) 302 To bat: M Nkala, H Streak, B Murphy, M Mbanga.

Fall of wkt's: 26-1; 124-2; 168-3; 187-4; 200-5

Bowler O M R W
Cuffy 18 4 47 0
Black 16 2 60 1
Jeremy 15 4 38 2
Sooklal 21 3 80 1
Semple 5 2 18 0
Hinds 13 2 47 1
Sarwan 2 0 9 0

WICB XI: P Wallace, D Ganga, K Semple, R Sarwan, R Hinds, D Rampersad, C Browne (cap/wkt), M Black, K Jeremy, C Cuffy, R Sooklal.

Toss: Zimbabwe.

Umpires: G Johnson, B. Drocove.

Koubek, Calatrava reach final

DELRAY BEACH, Florida, Mar 5: Spaniard Alex Calatrava has the opportunity to become the second qualifier ever to win the Citrix Tennis Championships if he can upset sixth seeded Stefan Koubek of Austria in today's final, reports Reuters.

The 26-year-old Calatrava, who was considering quitting tennis if this year did not go well, will have to have a quick recuperation from his long Saturday night 6-0, 5-7, 7-6 (7-3) semifinal battle with American Paul Goldstein.

"I'm so happy now, I'm just going to enjoy it so much that I think I'll recover okay for tomorrow," Calatrava said. "I don't know how I kept going, but I think I wanted to win so badly that even though I was tired, I kept going and going."

Koubek, who will be playing in his third career final and first on hardcourts, also went three sets Saturday afternoon before ousting Australian Richard Fromberg 6-7 (6-8), 6-3, 6-2 in the other semifinal.

"It feels very good because before this I've only done well on clay courts," Koubek said. "It will be good for the other players to know I can play on hardcourts, too."

Koubek knows what it is like winning a tournament as a qualifier because he won his lone career title as a qualifier in Atlanta last year.

Fromberg's departure puts an end to the Australian reign over this tournament with the past five champions from Down Under — Todd Woodbridge in 1995, Jason Stoltenberg in 1996 and 1997, Andrew Ilie in 1998 and Leyton Hewitt in 1999.

Calatrava, a clay court specialist with a surprisingly big serve, was simply stunning as he seemed to win every shot, racing to a 6-0, 2-0 lead in the match.

Goldstein, playing in his first tour semifinal, settled down and started to mix up play, which meant Calatrava could no longer dominate him in lengthy baseline battles.

In the end, Goldstein had a 5-4 lead and two match points on Calatrava's serve in the 10th game of the final set, but when the match went into a tiebreaker, the Spaniard's serve saw him through to the final.

"I didn't start off trailblazing," Goldstein said. "I'm proud of myself that I battled back and put myself in position to win, but I failed to do so."

This was the second consecutive week that Koubek has beaten Fromberg after losing the first set, eventually winning their second-round encounter on clay at Mexico City.

This time the match turned in Koubek's favour after a two hour delay occurred when the stadium hardcourt started to come up right behind one of the baselines at 2-2, 15-30 with Koubek serving in the second set.

Portuguese playmaker Rui Costa doubled the lead with eight minutes to go while Aturro di Napoli grabbed a consolation goal for Piacenza on the final whistle.

When play resumed after the court was repaired, Koubek held serve and then broke Fromberg's serve in the sixth game.

Road to World Cup kicks off

Smashing start by T&T

PORTE OF SPAIN of Spain. Trinidad, March 5: The long road to the 2002 World Cup finals in South Korea and Japan began on Saturday as Trinidad and Tobago crushed the Netherlands Antilles 5-0 in the very first match of qualifying, reports AFP.

Angus Eve and Arnold Dwarika led the assault, grabbing two goals apiece for Trinidad in the Caribbean Zone preliminary phase first-leg match.

The match kicked off a qualifying competition that will span 809 games and 21 months.

The World Cup itself -- the first to be co-hosted by two countries -- begins in South Korea on June 1, 2002 and concludes in Japan on June 30.

As co-hosts of the competition, South Korea and Japan already are assured berths, as are defending champions France.

Another 195 countries will battle for the remaining 29 berths through November 2001.

After the Antilles, composed of amateur players, managed to hold their own in the opening minutes, Trinidad found gaping holes in the visitors' defence before an estimated crowd of 8,000 at Hasely Crawford Stadium.

"If anyone would have told me before the game the final result would be 5-0, I would have been very happy," Trinidad coach Ian Porterfield said. "I thought we started out a little bit shakily. We were a little bit nervous. As the game went on, we improved and we scored some very good goals... We could have scored more because we

had a lot of good chances."

Marvin Andrews, who plays for Raith Rovers in the Scottish League, connected for the first goal of qualifying as he headed a left-wing cross past goalkeeper Marcello Pisos in the 19th minute.

Trinidad was far from finished. Dwarika picked up a pass from team captain Anthony Rouger pass and blasted in a 12-yard shot in the 63rd minute. Dwarika closed out the scoring in the 87th minute with Pisos at the top of the penalty area.

The match culminated a rather tumultuous week for Trinidad, which secured a new coach barely 48 hours before the kick-off and lost an international tug of war with Manchester United over the services of star striker Dwight Yorke.

Yorke stayed in England and played the first 85 minutes of United's 1-1 draw with Liverpool in the Premiership.

On Thursday, Scottish native Porterfield was named Trinidad coach, replacing the fired Bertille St. Clair. Porterfield, who had been coaching Joe Public in the Trinidad professional league, has extensive club coaching experience in England and has directed National Teams in Oman, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

St. Clair was axed after Trinidad was eliminated in the semi-finals of the Football Confederation's Gold Cup by Canada, the eventual champion.

"It caused a hiccup," Rouger said. "It was not a situation we would want to go through in the World Cup preliminary round. The players have done very well with the circumstances. The boys were pretty much focused. This has been a very, very stressful week. We feel pretty proud of ourselves, not letting go of the goal, which is qualifying for the World Cup."

LONDON, Mar 5 (Reuters): Eyesbrows were raised when Liverpool's French manager Gerard Houllier spent about 25 million pounds (\$39.4 million dollars) in the summer on seven foreign players in the centre back area has been a weakness at Anfield.

The calls for Houllier's head were predictably swift but he shrugged them off, insisting the rebuilding job was a long-term project.

Back-to-back victories over Leeds and Arsenal bought him some time but a poor spell saw the Merseysiders stuck in 12th place in October.

Houllier was unconcerned.

Things did not start well. A home defeat by Watford was followed by a 1-0 reverse at Mid-Desbrough.

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Bookmakers decided he was the second most likely Premier League manager to be sacked while long-suffering fans were left wondering just who were these new Anfield savours.

Totti Camara of the Ivory Coast, Dutch goalkeeper Sander Westerveld and Finnish defender Sami Hyypia were mystery men while Swiss defender Stephane Henchoz was hardly setting the pulses racing for relegated Blackburn.

But Houllier splashed out some 13 million pounds on them and then another seven million for Newcastle United's Dietmar Hamsik as he tried to rebuild the club after the departure of Steve McManaman, Paul Ince and David James.

Anfield was suddenly buzzing with 15 nationalities, held together by a French coach

Egypt coach fired

CAIRO, March 5: Deposed African Nations champions Egypt have sacked their coach, Frenchman Gerard Gilli, after five months on the job, the Egyptian Football Union announced early Sunday, reports AFP.

Gilli's future with the Pharaohs had been in question since the 1-0 elimination of the defending champions from the African Nations Cup in a bruising quarter-final showdown with Tunisia last month.

General Dahshuri alleged that Gilli had left, for France immediately after Egypt's defeat and had not returned on time to train Egypt's Olympic team and prepare the first team for more matches.

Gilli, who has faced a barrage of criticism, walked out of a heated six-hour meeting of the union's board of directors to decide his fate. But he was summoned back from his hotel to be informed of the board's decision.

He pointed to other foreigners such as Chelsea's Marcel Desailly and Manchester United's Jaap Stam as examples of players who needed time to adjust to the English game.

"Our new players will need time and indulgence," said Houllier. "I don't want to use a plea of patience as a shield for me but it is just a fact that it will take time for these players to adapt."

He was not helped by injuries to England strikers Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen. But gradually the new faces began to settle and the results

started to come.

Importantly, the defence was sorted out first. Ever since the 1980s trophy-laden days of Alan Hansen and Mark Lawrenson the centre back area has been a weakness at Anfield.

A succession of Scandinavians had tried and failed to fill the void but Henchoz and the powerful Hyypia have developed into an outstanding partnership.

With Westerveld proving an able goalkeeper and Hamann patrolling as a deep midfielder Houllier's team can boast the best defensive record in the league — 22 goals conceded in 26 games compared with Manchester United's 34 in 27.

Although Saturday's 1-1 draw with United at Old Trafford allowed Chelsea to climb above Liverpool into third place, Houllier was delighted with his side's performance and the progress it showed.

"I'm really proud of my players," he said. "We created some good chances which is not easy at Old Trafford and I think we played some good football."

"We are still learning a lot. It is still developing and there is a long way to go but I am very pleased with our progress."

"It is too late now as I'm sure United will win the league but I can see the core of a coming team."

Owen, who came on as a 77th minute substitute for his first appearance since straining a hamstring on January 22, agreed that things will be a big achievement," he said.

"We've said all along that qualifying for the Champions' League will be a big achievement," he said.

"People are starting to take notice now. They were asking questions about these players they hadn't heard of but they are starting to gel and we are playing well as team now."

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