

Walcott plays down Cronje affair

BRIDGETOWN, Apr 15: Sir Clyde Walcott, chairman of the International Cricket Council's cricket committee, says match-fixing allegations against South African players are very serious but does not believe the sport has a growing problem, reports AFP.

The former chairman of the ICC said he does not think there is reason for alarm despite an apparent increase in such cases.

"I don't know about an increase in the number of cases - because this is only the third case in three years," Sir Clyde told the Barbados Advocate newspaper.

"If people however, are fixing matches to get money, this could develop into a major problem for international cricket."

Sir Clyde said the ICC has instituted measures to counteract any rise in match-fixing and he believes the people entrusted with the powers to deal with such cases are very capable.

"The ICC is certainly prepared to deal with these cases and has set up a high-powered committee to deal with these issues," the former Barbados and West Indies wicket-keeper/batsman said.

"But one has to be very cautious since these are legal matters and the countries that contract the players deal with the allegations first."

Sir Clyde said that if the ICC was not satisfied with a country's investigations then it could launch an independent enquiry.

"The ICC has to deal with these issues because match-fixing is something that can harm the image of the game which is looked upon worldwide as a game of fair play," he said.

Howzzat!

LONDON, Apr 15: An unexpected revelation by a modest spin bowler has upset the authors of Wisden Cricketer's Almanack, the bible of the sport, which normally features little more than dry statistics, reports AFP.

On page 657 of this year's Wisden is a picture of the Leicestershire county team, all smiling dutifully for the camera in their whites.

Except that in the middle row, four from the left, is 29-year-old spinner Matthew Brimson apparently exposing himself, mischievous grin and all.

Wisden editor Matthew Engel was not happy. He described Brimson's prank as "an insult to supporters".

He also dished out some withering personal criticism: "I think if you're going to pull this kind of stunt, you need to be a more competent professional sportsman than Matthew Brimson," he said.

"And, frankly, more impressively arrayed. Even when we increased the size of the picture, after being tipped off today, we couldn't be certain that we had seen what we thought we had seen."

Brimson, played just 13 times for the county last season and took only 22 wickets.

Leicestershire issued an apology on Brimson's behalf, saying it was not in his character "to do anything that would cause offence".

Independence Day golf ends

The Independence Day golf tournament concluded at Savar Golf Club yesterday, reports BSS.

Mrs Elani Zulkifly, wife of the Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, became champion in the ladies' group, while Masuk Jinnah became champion in the men's group.

Besides, Air Commodore Fakhru Azam, Major General Hassan Masud Chowdhury and Brigadier A Mannan became the first, second and third runner-up respectively.

AKM Belal Uddin was awarded the Nearest to Pin prize and Ehsan Zulkifly got the award in the Longest Drive.

Chief of Army Lt General Muhammad Mustafizur Rahman took part in the tournament and later distributed prizes.

ECB chief for ICC summit

LONDON, Apr 15: Lord MacLaurin, chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, on Thursday called for an urgent meeting between the leading Test-playing countries to discuss the match-fixing controversy in South Africa, reports AFP.

MacLaurin revealed he has already sent a fax to the International Cricket Council suggesting such a conference.

Speaking at the England player-of-the-year lunch in London, MacLaurin said he believes all the leading nations should meet up and determine whether their stance on the subject is the same.

He also called for any player found guilty of breaching the code of conduct to be banned for life.

MacLaurin said: "I have sent a fax to the ICC today and I said we could not afford this game of ours to fall into this sort of crisis."

"We should have a meeting of all the members of the ICC to make sure we are all singing from the same hymn sheet - I want to make sure we all understand how each other is thinking."

Bodyline blow for SA



NOTTINGHAM, England, Apr 15: Former South African captain Clive Rice said on Thursday that he believed cricket in South Africa would be tainted by the Hansie Cronje scandal for years to come - just as the infamous 1932-33 Bodyline series between England and Australia had affected the sport for decades, reports AFP.

The 30-year-old, who led South Africa to 99 wins against only 35 defeats in 138 matches, with one match tied and three others abandoned without a result, had been South Africa's most successful Test captain, with 27 wins and only 11 defeats from 53 matches.

Rice, who spent most of his international career in the wilderness because of apartheid, said that it was imperative that the South Africans sorted out what had exactly happened so that they could try and rebuild the image of the sport.

"This will go on for years - remember they're still talking about the Bodyline series - so it will carry on like that for years," Rice said.

The sooner they get to the heart of it, they can get rid of it and then they can go forward," he added.

Rice admitted he felt a great deal of sympathy for Cronje, but was also critical of how he had been tempted into the seedier side of cricket.

"It's just really disappointing that Hansie, who is basically a really nice guy, will be remembered for this and what he has got involved in," he said.

"I'm sorry for him that this is how he's going to be remembered, but he's been very silly in terms of what he's been playing with here," he added.

But Rice was quick to point out that even though South African cricket was currently under a cloud, it would not be long before the sporting pride of the Proteas would see them

Sebastian in last four

CASABLANCA, Morocco, Apr 15: Sebastian Grosjean routed two-time French Open champion Sergi Bruguera 6-0, 6-0 on Friday, to reach the semifinals of the 350,000 dollars Grand Prix Hassan II tournament, reports AP.

The 21-year-old Frenchman, seeded four, meets Argentine Mariano Puerta, the number seven seed, in Saturday's semifinals.

Puerta downed No 1 seed and local favourite Younes El Aynaoui in two close sets 7-6 (8-6), 6-4.

Another French player, the No 8 seed Arnaud Di Pasquale, also made it to the last four with a 6-2, 6-3 victory against Swedish teenager Andress Vinciguerra.

Four-nation tournament

Australia taste victory

PERTH, Apr 15: Australia gained their first win in three matches in the four-nation men's hockey tournament here today when they beat South Africa 1-0 at the Perth Hockey Stadium, reports AFP.

It was South Africa's third defeat in the competition, following losses to Germany (3-2) and India (3-0).

Australia and South Africa will meet again Sunday in the play-off for third and fourth positions in the contest.

India and Germany clash in the final.

A relieved Australian coach, Terry Walsh, said: "It is always nice when you end a losing streak. Our first half was certainly a marked improvement. It was a lot closer to what we are aiming to do."

We got into the circle three more times than the South Africans, but again we failed to take advantage.

"Overall, we are still not happy with what we are doing. We still need to climb the rungs."

Walsh had high praise for goalkeeper Damon Diletti, who made several saves as South Africa strove for an equaliser.

"He stood his ground, was well balanced and had a good game," he said.

Bonnet again ruled the fact that his players were still uncertain whether they would compete in the Olympic Games in Sydney in September.

The National Olympic Committee of South Africa have said they do not intend to include the men's hockey team in the Olympic contingent.

But negotiations are under way about the possible reversal of this decision.

Sirajganj cricket

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 15: Sirajganj Mukti Joddha Sangsad Ekadashi beat Stadium Para Ekadashi by 68 runs today at the Shaheed Shaheedul Islam Stadium.

Winning the toss Mukti Joddha batted first and collected 190 runs losing all the wickets in 40 overs.

In reply, Stadium Para made



CLIVE RICE

bounce back.

"I think that it will just be a blip. There's too much pride and too much integrity. South Africa has always played their sport to win and on that basis I think they'll get back to that very fast," he said.

While doubts seem to have been cast of the international future of Cronje, Rice hopes the former skipper will be given a chance to atone for his mistakes by returning to play international cricket - although he conceded that he would never captain the side again.

"I would think Hansie's experience of what he has been through for the past week means that he would never want to do that again," Rice said.

"He wants to repair the damage and if it meant giving him the opportunity to repair the damage then you've got to give him a break - you can't keep kicking him in the teeth. But he's probably forfeited the opportunity to ever captain South Africa again."

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"I'm sorry for him that this is how he's going to be remembered, but he's been very silly in terms of what he's been playing with here," he added.

But Rice was quick to point out that even though South African cricket was currently under a cloud, it would not be long before the sporting pride of the Proteas would see them

in the way they played during the last month of international cricket in the Caribbean, reports AFP.

Bishop, who captured 161 wickets in 43 Tests, indicated there were encouraging signs during the two Tests against Zimbabwe and the three matches in the limited-overs series, including Wednesday's 96-run triumph over Pakistan in Kingstown, St. Vincent.

"Many people were not convinced by the victories over Zimbabwe in the Tests and the limited-overs matches, but it is not about that really," Bishop told AFP.

Meanwhile, investigators who travelled to the five Indian cities where South Africa had played cricket matches last month were expected to return to New Delhi on Saturday.

Cronje said speculation and criticism against other members of the South African team was wrong and unjustified.

"I know of no member of any side that I have led who has done anything reprehensible or wrong," a composed Cronje said.

Cronje said he found himself in an "awful predicament" brought about by his own foolishness and naivety.

Bacher told the Cape Town press conference meanwhile, that Cronje's lawyers had handed over the 8,200 dollars in cash he had received to South Africa's Central Reserve Bank.

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Emile Smith also had a chance to convert a cross from the right, but was unable to control the ball.

For Australia, Jay Stacy forced South African goalkeeper Brian Myburgh to make a solid save to prevent the home team going further ahead.

Abrahams had a chance to put South Africa on level in the final minute, but his shot was again blocked by Diletti.

"It will be a big fillip when we hopefully, get the go-ahead. This should have been sorted out earlier."

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