

None but themselves to blame



REUTERS, Colombo

Dejected South Africa captain Shaun Pollock blamed his team for their 10-run loss to India in the ICC Champions Trophy semifinals on Wednesday.

"We threw the game away," Pollock told reporters minutes after his team had slumped from a seemingly impregnable position chasing 262 to finish on 251-6.

"We have got ourselves to blame. We have to make sure this doesn't happen."

South Africa were coasting when opener Herschelle Gibbs, having made a potentially match-winning 116, was forced to retire with severe cramps and exhaustion.

India took a couple of quick wickets to turn the game on its head before piling on the pressure in the final overs.

Pollock said Gibbs was in no shape to continue. "It was unfortunate for us. He couldn't grip the bat with either hand. We can't have a go at him."

"It was brilliant batting, he set up the victory for us and we just needed to finish it off."

Pollock said his team should have won despite Gibbs leaving the field and blamed the batsmen for failing to score quickly.

But Pollock denied his team had choked again, refusing to accept comparisons with the World Cup semi-final elimination to Australia in 1999 after last man Allan Donald's run out with one run needed to win from three balls.

India captain Saurav Ganguly said his side were "down but never out" and praised his players for ensuring the "unbelievable victory".

"We grabbed our opportunities. We've fought till the end," he said.

Ganguly said he was aware that a new batsman would find it difficult to get going on the sluggish Premadasa pitch.

South Africa lost three wickets for 19 runs after Gibbs went off the field. "We bowled and fielded well under pressure. The result is victory."

"In the last ten months, the best part is we have never given up, that was the key in this match and we are again in the final," he said.

India had also reached the final in the 2000 Nairobi edition before losing to New Zealand.

India had chased 326 to beat

hosts England in a one-day tournament final in July before arriving at this 12-team event.

Virender Sehwag, who took 3-25 in five overs said he had never dreamt he would win a man of the match award for his bowling.

India's explosive opener had won the accolade for his match-winning 126 against England in their pool game.

The 23-year-old said he was not too worried to bowl the final over.

"South Africa needed 21 runs, even if they hit me for six, I was confident because they needed lot of runs," he said.

SCOREBOARD

Complete scoreboard of the day-night semifinal between India and South Africa in the ICC Champions Trophy cricket tournament at the Premadasa Stadium on Wednesday:

INDIA: 261 for nine (Yuvraj Singh 62, V Sehwag 59, R Dravid 49; S

Pollock 3-43, A Donald 2-41)

SOUTH AFRICA

Gibbs retired hurt 116

Smith c Yuvraj b Zaheer 4

Kallis c Dravid b Sehwag 97

Rhodes c Yuvraj b Harbhajan 1

Dippenaar c Kumble b Harbhajan 0

Boucher c Yuvraj b Sehwag 10

Klusener c Kaif b Sehwag 14

Pollock not out 0

Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-5) 9

Total: (For 6 wks in 50 overs) 251

Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-194, 3-194, 4-213, 5-247, 6-251

Bowler O M R W

Zaheer 9 2 27 1

Nehra 7.3 0 41 0

Kumble 10 0 53 0

Harbhajan 10 0 37 2

Yuvraj 3 0 17 0

Ganguly 1.3 0 15 0

Tendulkar 4 0 32 0

Sehwag 5 0 25 3

Result: India win by 10 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Virender Sehwag.



India players are overjoyed after dramatically beating South Africa in the semifinals of the ICC Champions Trophy in Colombo on Wednesday.

Wasim taking a break only

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani fast bowler Wasim Akram said Thursday he bowed out of next month's Test series against Australia to give his body a rest and not because of any disagreements.

"I have opted out of the Test series against Australia due to over-exertion. My body needs a rest and there is no rift behind me missing the series," Wasim told AFP.

Wasim, along with Inzamamul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Saeed Anwar and sacked manager Yawar Saeed returned from Sri Lanka on Wednesday night.

Opener Saeed Anwar has also opted out of the series while vice captain Inzamam and Yousuf Youhana had to pull out due to injuries.

"I am disappointed to miss an important series but it's no use playing when your body doesn't allow. It badly needs a rest and I had conveyed that I would not play the series long beforehand," said Wasim, 36.

Aussies uneasy about Sharjah

AFP, New Delhi

After refusing to tour Pakistan due to security fears, Australia's cricketers are now uneasy about playing two Test matches in the United Arab Emirates next month.

Australia are due to play a three-Test series against Pakistan at neutral venues from next Thursday, with the first Test in Colombo and the remaining two in the Gulf emirate of Sharjah.

Australian coach John Buchanan, in Sri Lanka for the ongoing Champions Trophy, said his players had talked about the dangers of playing in Sharjah because of the possible US-led strikes against Iraq.

"There has been some talk on this," Buchanan told AFP from Colombo.

"It all boils down to the advice we get from the Australian Cricket Board (ACB)."

"If they say it's fine to go, we'll go there and play. I don't think we'll be sent to places if they (the ACB) think we'll be in danger."

The Australians are concerned at reports that the United States and Britain were pressing for military action in Baghdad, geographically close to the UAE, team sources said.

The players' main concern is getting out of Sharjah if there is a conflict, even though the UAE itself is considered a safe place, the source added.

Check your luck with WC tickets

AFP, Johannesburg

Cricket World Cup 2003 organisers on Wednesday said single tickets for next year's contest will be sold through a "ticket ballot or lottery" giving everybody a fair chance to get one and reduce endless rows of queues.

From October 8, fans will be able to apply for individual tickets. Some 100,000 were available for a draw on November 25, Ian Smith, WC2003 commercial director said in a statement.

"The draw will take place on November 25, fans will be told on December 2 and have until January 10 to buy them," Smith said.

The system was introduced to avoid congestion of ticket sales which has hit snags since sales of ticket packages started on July 15.

"No one will benefit from being first in the queue. All applications during the four-week window will stand an equal chance of success," Smith said.

"This means that you don't have to rush on October 8. You have just as much chance as a guy who applies for a ticket on say, November 1," World Cup spokesman Rodney Hartman told AFP.

Applications can be made at WC2003 stadiums, on the official website or via a call centre hotline, said Smith.

Games were divided into two categories where up to four tickets in the first and 16 in the second would be sold to a single buyer.

Since July 15, tickets have been sold only in packages which were still available, Smith said.

How could they?

FROM PAGE 13

In fact, Bangladesh Television and the now defunct Ekushey Television had managed quite well by themselves once WorldTel had backed out from broadcasting Pakistan's tour of Bangladesh's last January.

The tour of South Africa is going to be very significant for two reasons; firstly, not only is it Bangladesh's maiden tour, but more importantly, will help in our preparations for the World Cup being staged in that country early next year.

Interestingly, it was ESPN Star Sports which itself stated in a press release earlier this year that they would show Bangladesh's tour of South Africa live if there was enough interest.

---Fahmida Waliullah, via e-mail



South Koreans perform during a rehearsal for the opening ceremony of the 14th Asian Games in Busan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Koreans' flag dilemma



AFP, Busan

North and South Korea will march as one in a symbolic gesture of unity at the Asian Games opening ceremony on Sunday - but who will carry their joint flag could cause a headache for organisers.

The two Koreas will be represented by a 'unity flag', a blue picture of the Korean peninsula on a white background, when they take part in the extravaganza at the Busan Stadium.

But the issue of which country will provide the flag-carrying athlete is shrouded in mystery - and Olympic Council of Asia president Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah added a new twist to the debate

here Thursday.

Asked at a press conference whether athletes from two countries could carry a single flag, Al-Sabah ruled it out.

"No, we can't have two athletes walking under one flag," Al-Sabah said. "We have a tradition of one athlete carrying the flag," the Kuwaiti official said, without referring to the two Koreas directly.

At the Sydney Olympics, when the two Koreas walked side-by-side into Stadium Australia at the opening ceremony, a member of each country's delegation headed the mixed procession. South Korean women's basketball player Chung Eun-Soon and North Korean judo coach Pak Jang-Chol entered the stadium with their hands in a symbol of unity.

Despite his apparent reluctance to let two Koreans hold the flag Al-Sabah expressed his delight at the prospect of the bitter historical rivals

walking together at the opening ceremony.

"This is a great symbol. Sport is the engine of friendship," said Al-Sabah.

North Korea's participation at the Asian Games is another indication of warming ties with the Stalinist state's southern neighbour.

The two countries remain technically at war since no peace treaty was ever signed at the end of their bitter 1950-53 conflict.

The North's participation in the South is being governed by strict guidelines, with the communist country's flag only allowed to be raised at competition venues and medal ceremonies.

It is against the law in South Korea to unfurl the Northern flag and organisers have got the message: a page on the Asian Games information service showing flags of participating countries has a blank under North Korea.

Sanowara soccer

CU CORRESPONDENT

Abahani Krira Chakra junior blanked Sitakundha Upazila Krira Sangstha 7-0 in the CJKS Sanowara Diploma Milk Powder Kishore Football Tournament 2002 played at the MA Aziz Stadium on Wednesday.

Ehsanul Kabir scored four goals while Siayed Noman completed a superb hat-trick.

Nasir Pakistan manager again

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan has reappointed a former army brigadier as its cricket team manager after the departure of Yawar Saeed on Tuesday, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced Thursday.

A statement said Saeed had asked to step down "due to personal circumstances" and former brigadier Khawaja Mohammad Nasir would be manager for next month's series against Australia.

Saeed's departure had been widely predicted following the removal of coach Mudassar Nazar due to the team's recent poor performances.

The media held Saeed equally to blame for the squad's rapid plunge in form just three months after beating Australia in Australia.

"Saeed recounted the team's recent poor performance and said fitness problems were the main reason behind the team's slump," the cricket board said.

Nasir was manager between November 1999 and December 2000. He sparked a controversy when in June 2000 he accused India of being the hub of match-fixing.

Pace bowler Mohammad Zahid has been cleared to join the team in Sri Lanka after passing a fitness test.

Pakistan meet Australia in Colombo from October 3 in the first of three Tests. The second and third Tests will be played in Sharjah from October 11-15 and October 19-23.

The home series was shifted to neutral venues over security fears.

The change

FROM PAGE 13 (Jayasuriya) over before I get on," joked Lee.

"He (Jayasuriya) is a world-class batsman and I know he hits it hard, but that shouldn't change our game."

"There are a few things we might try to counter that but it is a matter of sticking to our game-plans and not getting caught up in what they are doing."

"If we can play the way we have been doing over the past month then I think we have got a red-hot chance of beating them," added Lee.

Australia have reported no injury problems ahead of Friday's match, with batsman Damien Martyn now fully recovered from the hip injury that caused him to miss the nine-wicket win over Bangladesh.

The winners of Friday's semifinal will face India or South Africa in Sunday's final.

Bangladesh-India

FROM PAGE 13 Group. But hosts South Korea are the overwhelming favourite to win the 25-nation event after their dream World Cup campaign, where they finished fourth.

The top teams from the six groups and two best group runners-up will move into the quarterfinals.

BANGLADESH: Alfaz Ahmed (captain), Biplab Bhattacharyya, Rakib Mehboob Apel, Tito, Papel, Sujon, Mahmudul Hasan, Rajani Kanta Barman, Amit Khan Shuvo, Monwar Hossain, Matiur Rahman Munnna, Arman Mia, Arif Khan Joy, Parvez Babu, faisal Mahmud, Kanchan, saiful, Liton, Bulbul and Mujibur Rahman Ritu.

Mixed day for Serena, Dokic

Tennis

INTERNET REPORT, Leipzig

World number one Serena Williams needed three sets to overcome qualifier Anca Barna to reach the quarterfinals of the Sparkassen Cup International indoor event.

Williams, who received a first-round bye, prevailed over the 25-year-old German 6-1, 3-6, 6-1.

Williams came to this tournament after winning her seventh title of the year at the Princess Cup in Tokyo on Sunday.

The French Open, Wimbledon and US Open champion, Williams is the first top-ranked player to participate in this event since 1997. The last number one to claim the title was Steffi Graf in 1993.

Second seed Jelena Dokic of Yugoslavia also received a first-round bye, but failed to make the most of the opportunity, losing in straight sets to unseeded American Meghann Shaughnessy 6-2, 6-4. It was the first time Shaughnessy has beaten Dokic in four meetings.

Justine Henin also struggled in her second-round tie before overcoming Czech qualifier Iveta Benesova 6-7, 7-6, 6-2. On three occasions, Henin was two points from losing in the tiebreakers.

In the quarterfinals, third seed Henin meets number five seed Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia, who beat Italy's Rita Grande 6-4, 2-

6, 7-6.

Number seven Silvia Farina Elia of Italy went the distance against compatriot Francesca Schiavone in her first-round match, eventually winning 6-4, 6-7, 6-2 and American Alexandra Stevenson advanced

with a 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 victory over Czech qualifier Denisa Chladkova.

Stevenson meets Slovakian Janette Husarova in the second round on Thursday, while Farina Elia faces wild card entry Barbara Rittner of Germany.



SERENA WILLIAMS

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-60.

CRYPTOQUIP

Q J J C V R I S S V A I I U K S X E Z R . H M V P I K D Q E U V G J H P V J C E R S V G Q U Q D J V A R U E X X E M P Q G E R Z I R .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE I'D LIKE TO BE A STAR PHOTOGRAPHER IN THE FUTURE, I VALUE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals M The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals Q, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.