

Bevan's WC begins today

AFP, Potchefstroom

Michael Bevan hopes to make a belated appearance at the World Cup when defending champions Australia take on minnows Namibia in a Pool A match here on Thursday.

The left-hander has not had a chance to bat, bowl or take a catch in the four matches so far which Australia won easily to become the first team to book a place in the Super Sixes.

Victories over Namibia and England at Port Elizabeth on Sunday will see Australia end the preliminary league as the only side with an all-win record.

Bevan was paddled up to come in next when Darren Lehmann and Damien Martyn hit half-centuries to guide the champions home by seven wickets against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo on Monday.

"We'll have to think about that, for sure," Ponting said after the Zimbabwe romp.

"Another game has gone by without Bevo having a hit. That was the only thing that was disappointing to come out of the game. We've played four games and he hasn't had a bat yet, so we'll have to look at that."

Bevan though was not worried at having to cool his heels in the pavilion.

"There's no doubt I'll get my opportunity to play a batting role soon," he said.

"Batting at number six gives me the opportunity to bat in a number of different situations and I'm sure I'll be at the crease at some stage."

"The top order is performing extremely well and that is helping us win games."

This is not the first time that Bevan has had nothing to do.

During the 1996 World Cup in the Indian sub-continent, he did not get to bat till the semifinals, but the lack of match practice was not a hindrance.

As Australia were reduced to 15-4 by the West Indies in the semifinal at Mohali in northern India, Bevan stepped in to hit 69 and guide his



TOLD YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH US! The Australian team doctor attends coach John Buchanan (on the ground) who hurt himself while playing during practice at Potchefstroom yesterday.

Buchanan backs Eng

REUTERS, Potchefstroom

Australia coach John Buchanan believes an England victory over India in Pool A on Wednesday would provide the defending champions with the perfect preparation for the World Cup's Super Six stage.

Should Nasser Hussain's team beat India in Durban, they would climb to second place in the group standings and then meet Australia in Port Elizabeth on Sunday in a battle for top spot.

"If England had not been going so well, there would have been nothing worse than going to Port Elizabeth with nothing to play for but now we will both be playing a major game with a lot of meaning to it," Buchanan said on Tuesday.

"If England beat India, we will be fighting them for top place in the group and that would be a fantastic lead into the Super Sixes for us."

"We have talked about the Zimbabwe match as the start of the

second phase of the competition for us, with our first three games against Pakistan, India and Holland as the first phase.

"What we now want to do, after a good win against Zimbabwe, is to see that continue against Namibia and then hit England with things going well in a big game."

"Then, if we can play well in a match with things riding on it, we can take that feeling into the Super Sixes," he added.

For Australia, the desire to secure top spot in Pool A is additionally significant as it would guarantee them playing their Super Six matches at their preferred venues.

"If we top the group, that would mean us playing at Centurion, Port Elizabeth and Durban, and that is what we would like to do," said Buchanan.

"It means that, if we are playing well and we advance to the semifinals, we would have already played

at the venues for both those matches in Port Elizabeth and Durban."

Australia have not lost to England in a one-day international in four years and beat them six times in the recent tri-series that also involved Sri Lanka.

Buchanan was happy to dwell on statistics like that but was not sure they would count for a great deal when Sunday's match comes around.

"There will be some legacy of us beating them on a regular basis but it is a new tournament and they have got a new side," he said.

"(Michael) Vaughan has added that thrust for them, (Andrew) Flintoff, (Ashley) Giles and (Craig) White are back and (James) Anderson, who was only really finding his feet in the VB Series, is now playing with confidence."

"They showed in that series that

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Marsh picks his champions

AFP, Johannesburg

Ricky Ponting's Australia on Wednesday received the thumbs up to win the World Cup from a man familiar with both the sweat and hard work of players and the mental agony of a coach.

Geoff Marsh, the former Australian opening batsman, was a member of Allan Border's side which beat England in the final at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta in 1987.

He then coached Steve Waugh's team to repeat the feat in the 1999 final at Lord's when Australia thrashed Pakistan by eight wickets.

Marsh, who now coaches Zimbabwe, believes the current Australians are well on their way to retaining the title in the final at the Wanderers here on March 23.

"The next period of the tournament is obviously the key but they're looking a real class act at the

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Education first

REUTERS, Potchefstroom

Namibia batsman Jan-Berry Burger hopes that his impressive performances at this World Cup will pave the way for a career in cricket, but only after he completes his education.

The 21-year-old, popularly known as JB, is studying for a qualification in human resource management but, away from the textbooks, he has been one of the shining lights of the tournament among the part-timers with 154 runs in four matches.

"I would definitely like to make a career out of cricket, that is in the forefront of my mind," the right-hander told Reuters on Tuesday, as Namibia prepared for their Pool A match against world champions Australia on Thursday.

"If I perform well, then there may be opportunities. You never know,"

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

ACU upset by upset

AFP, Johannesburg

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday said its Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) had asked for additional tapes of Kenya's shock World Cup win over Sri Lanka due to an equipment "confusion".

A source had told AFP earlier on Wednesday the ACU had sought the tapes of Monday's game in Nairobi in which Kenya upset 1996 champions Sri Lanka by 53 runs.

"Yes, the tapes have been asked for," the source said. "I believe it is the first match in this World Cup where the tapes have been summoned."

An ICC statement later in the day said the ACU had requested the tapes because "there was some confusion about the availability of the necessary recording equipment

ment."

"As is widely known the Anti-Corruption Unit receives a tape of all matches at the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003 as part of its standard operational procedures," the statement said.

"On arrival at the Nairobi Gymkhana Club, there was some confusion about the availability of the necessary recording equipment for the ACU to obtain match footage in the usual manner.

"As a result a request was made to the producers of the game coverage to provide additional copies of the same footage. All of this took place before the start of the game."

"At the end of the game an ACU representative collected tapes in the usual manner and was provided with two additional copies of the same footage from the producers of

the game coverage.

"The ACU took all four tapes away from the ground."

ICC official Brendan McClements added: "As it has at all ICC Cricket World Cup 2003 games, the ACU obtained tapes at the conclusion of the game between Kenya and Sri Lanka."

"This is not unusual, this is standard practice for the ACU."

The ACU, two years ago after the match-fixing scandal broke, promised in its initial report that it would ensure a corruption-free World Cup.

The ACU has also said that a random selection of matches will be reviewed routinely and the Sri Lanka

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A lot to play for

REUTERS, Cape Town

West Indies captain Carl Hooper. "If we thought for a minute that it was going to be a piece of cake to beat Sri Lanka...then maybe we should sit down and check our attitudes and the way we are approaching the one-day game."

West Indies made a flying start to the World Cup when they upset South Africa in the tournament opener in Cape Town, Brian Lara paving the way with a masterful century.

But they have largely struggled since then, losing to New Zealand, missing out on valuable points when their match against struggling Bangladesh was rained out before beating Canada.

Victory over the Canadians was hastened by lightning-fast fifties from Lara and opener Wavell Hinds,

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Waqar wants improvement

INTERNET, Paarl

Pakistan skipper Waqar Younis admitted that rapid improvements were necessary before their high-profile showdown with India at the weekend.

Pakistan completed a comfortable 97 run victory over the Netherlands but a lackluster performance by the middle order and an unacceptable 40 sundries took the gloss off their win.

This current Pakistan team, despite being hailed as more talented by Wasim, are struggling to match the achievements of their winning compatriots 11 years ago.

Only man-of-the-match Yousaf Youhana surpassed 50, while Waqar was also disappointed to have given away 40 extras.

It is perhaps a sad reflection on the batting line-up that a bowler, Shoaib Akhtar, tops the averages.

"We should have got 300 on that wicket," Waqar said. "And then we didn't bowl well giving away so many easy runs was a worry."

"Perhaps we were a little lethargic playing against a weaker side but there are a few things we've got to improve on and talk about in the next few days."

But Waqar paid tribute to Wasim Akram who became the first bowler to take 500 ODI wickets.

"I just want to salute him. It is an outstanding achievement for him and for Pakistani cricket. I don't see anybody else bettering his achievement," said Waqar.

He also expressed his faith in Inzamam-ul Haq, whose previous two innings have lasted a combined three balls with no runs, and said he believed the prolific batsman still had had a huge role to play in the World Cup.

"He is one of our best players and has performed brilliantly for Pakistan in the past," added Waqar.

"Hopefully, he will get some more runs in the next game against India."

But the omens still look worrying for Pakistan as they prepare to face arch-rivals India, a team they have never beaten in a World Cup.

Can the batsmen regain their form under pressure?

Will Shoaib and Wasim take early wickets, and will the secondary bowlers stop a tide of runs being scored?

If not, Sachin Tendulkar, Saurav Ganguly and co may send Pakistan home early where they can expect a torrent of abuse from both press and fans alike.

WAQAR YOUNIS

WAQAR YOUNIS

Steve Tikolo

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

PHOTO: STAR FILE