

Inzamam irked at Atkinson

AFP, Multan
Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq on Tuesday blamed English curator Andy Atkinson for the dead wicket in the ongoing first Test against India, saying this was not the track his team wanted.

"The curator did not prepare the pitch we asked for," Inzamam told reporters.

"We need hard and bouncy tracks because fast bowling is our strength. Even grassy wickets will not suit us because our bowlers are not seamers."

The wicket at the Multan Stadium has been severely criticised after India piled up a mammoth 675-5 declared and the hosts replied with 364-6 by the third day.

Pakistan need 112 runs to avoid follow-on with four wickets in hand and Abdul Razzaq the last recognised batsman at the crease.

"I have always said that I want to play on positive pitches, but this pitch does not suit us and I hope wickets in the remaining two Tests will be different," Inzamam said.

Former Pakistan captain Imran Khan also slammed the dead pitch, saying it provided for boring cricket and was bad for country's image.

Atkinson admitted a good wicket could not be prepared because of lack of time.

"I am sure there will be better wickets for the remaining Tests at Lahore and Rawalpindi," Atkinson said.

Singer chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Grand Masters Niaz Murshed, Ziaur Rahman and International Master Reefat-bin-Sattar jointly maintained the lead with 2.5 points each after the end of the third round games of the Singer 30th National Chess Championship at the NSC conference room yesterday.

THIRD ROUND RESULTS

Niaz drew with Reefat, Zia drew with FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, IM Enamul Hossain Rajib bt Mohammad Javed, IM Abdullah Al-Rakib bt Aminul Islam Polash, Shaikat Hossain Pallab bt Monjur Alam, Saifuddin Lavlu drew with Abdul Maleq and Mehdi Hasan Parag drew with Debaraj Chatterjee.

Ranatunga smells a rat

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's former captain Arjuna Ranatunga lashed out at the International Cricket Council (ICC) Tuesday for bringing Muttiah Muralitharan's action under scrutiny once again.

Ranatunga, who led Sri Lanka to an epic triumph in the 1996 World Cup, felt the prolific off-spinner was being put under pressure just when he was set to become the highest wicket-taker in Test history.

In remarks published in the Island newspaper here, Ranatunga said he saw a conspiracy against Muralitharan, who is just six wickets short of retired West Indian pacesman Courtney Walsh's record of 519 wickets.

"This is to totally discredit the achievements of a great player. Murali is chasing the world record with Shane Warne (of Australia) and the Australians and the English do not want one of our players getting there," he said.

Muralitharan was reported to the ICC after the third and final

Test against Australia on Sunday by match-referee Chris Broad, a former England Test batsman, who doubted the legitimacy of one of Muralitharan's deliveries.

Broad said the bowler's 'doosra', which turns away from the right-handers unlike his stock ball that comes in, needed more looking into.

Broad added that he had discussed the matter with umpires Dave Orchard and Steve Bucknor and they were fully aware of the situation.

Ranatunga criticised Broad and said his appointment as match referee was a let down for the game.

"The ICC should appoint those who are experienced, with an impeccable record in such responsible roles," Ranatunga told the Island newspaper. "What experience does Broad have? Look at his background. His appointment and what he has done is a let down to the ICC's reputation."

The newspaper said Ranatunga was hinting at a "white conspiracy" against Muralitharan who finished the series against Australia with 28 wickets to take his tally to 513.

"This issue now comes under the ICC's regulations dealing with

this matter and over the next six weeks an expert bio-mechanist will be appointed by Sri Lanka Cricket to work with the bowler to clearly identify and address any flaws that may occur during the delivery action," an ICC statement said.

"Muralitharan will be able to continue to play during this time." It added that the match-referee reviewed Muralitharan's new delivery and after examining the action closely decided to report him to the ICC and notify the Sri Lankan board.

Muralitharan was three times called for "chucking" by Australian umpires before being cleared by bio-mechanical experts, who concluded that he suffered from a congenital condition that prevented him from straightening his elbow.

He is the fourth player to be reported to the ICC under its revised process to deal with potentially flawed actions in the past 12 months.

West Indies' Jermaine Lawson, Bangladesh's Sanwar Hossain and Pakistani pacesman Shabbir Ahmed have already been asked to undergo remedial work on their bowling actions.

Gripper steals Kapali thunder

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by the part time pace of Ehsanul Haque. Still the tourists were going merrily along and were 153 for one in the 31st over when rain stopped the proceedings.

Once the showers were out of the way, a fresh target was fixed according to the Duckworth-Lewis method and Zimbabwe A required a further 65 runs in 11 overs.

Manjarul (2-32) and right-arm pacer Tareq Aziz Khan (1-55) took three wickets when the match resumed but Gripper's 119-run second wicket stand with Vusumuzi Sibanda ensured that the tourists never felt any pressure.

The dashing Gripper hammered an 89-ball 98 with fourteen fours and one over boundary before offering a return catch to Manjarul. Sibanda was quick to follow after a cultured 65 off 117 balls but Charles Coventry and Stuart Matsikenyeri safely took their side home.

Gripper was named man-of-the-match for his belligerent knock.

The third encounter of the series will take place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka on April 2.

SCORECARD

Scoreboard of the second limited-over match between Bangladesh A and Zimbabwe A at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday:

Table with columns for BANGLADESHA and Zimbabwe A, listing players, runs, and wickets.

Table with columns for Gripper, ZIMBABWEA, and individual player statistics (Runs, Wickets, etc.).

Man-of-the-match: Trevor Gripper (Zimbabwe A). Target was revised to 218 in 42 overs under the D/L method.

FRIENDLY SCHEDULE

- AFB, Paris
Fixture list for international friendly matches on Wednesday. Includes matches like At Rotterdam, Netherlands v France, etc.



Brazil's latest sensation Kaka (driving) and superstar Ronaldo (standing) ride a golf cart with an unidentified escort while playing a few holes of golf at the Yacht and Golf Club in Asuncion on March 29.

Brazil in bogey land



South American Zone leaders Paraguay take on Brazil in the top match of the fifth round in the 2006 World Cup qualifying campaign on Wednesday determined to cut the world champions down to size.

Roma in a soup?

Trading in Italian side AS Roma's shares was suspended on the Milan stock exchange for two days from Tuesday.

Satkhira v'ball

Palli Mongal High School, Bakal High School, PN High School and Kaliganj Ujjibani Institute won their respective matches in the Satkhira inter-school volleyball competition at Satkhira Stadium.

In yesterday's games, Palli Mongal High School defeated Rasulpur High School 2-0 and Bakal High School defeated Palashpole High School by the same score.

On Monday, PN High School defeated Karina High School 2-0 and Kaliganj Ujjibani Institute defeated Satkhira Government High School also 2-0.

Antic leaves Celta

Serbian coach Radomir Antic announced Monday that he was quitting as coach of Spanish first division strugglers Celta Vigo.

Antic, who was recently linked with a move to Premiership side Tottenham, said that he took the decision in agreement with club bosses after their 2-0 loss at home to Real Zaragoza Sunday.

The Serb arrived at Celta last January to replace sacked Miguel Angel Lotina but has not helped stop the rot with the club currently second from bottom of the Primera Liga with 28 points after 30 games.

Deputy coach Moncho Carnero will fill the gap until a new coach is found as the club face the drop with just eight games left this season.

Border police threaten strike

Portuguese border police have threatened to go on strike during Euro 2004 over overtime pay demands.

Union spokesman Goncalo Rodrigues said Tuesday officers would refuse to work overtime from April 15. He claimed they were owed 2.5 million euros in back pay.

However, Jose Luis Arnaut, the government minister overseeing the soccer championship, said he did not believe a single Portuguese would use Euro 2004 to harm the country's image.

And Lisbon airport director Francisco Severino said they had a back-up plan in case of a strike.

Around half a million people, on top of the usual 1.4 million tourists, are expected for the June 12 to July 4 tournament.

beat them 1-0 in their first match after winning the final.

Paraguay also qualified for this August's Olympic Games at Brazil's expense, beating them 1-0 at under-23 level in January.

"Brazil must thrive in the most difficult moments," coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said. "We will make sure that our quality prevails. 'We'll get over all this on the pitch,' he said. 'If we can impose our rhythm, we'll win the game.'

Parreira was only entitled to his players 48 hours before Wednesday's match because the date had been allocated by FIFA for friendlies.

As a result, most of the squad took part in domestic games for their European clubs at the weekend, flew out on Sunday and arrived in Paraguay on Monday where they were greeted by temperatures in the high 30s Celsius.

"I'm not complaining but the guys have come from Europe, it was snowing in some countries, and they arrive here where it's 30 degrees," said Parreira. "No matter how motivated you are, the human body suffers."

Superstar Ronaldo shrugged off jet lag and searing heat and headed straight for the golf course after the world champions arrived in Paraguay.

Paraguay got off to a bad start with a 4-1 defeat in Peru but since then have won their last three matches while Brazil, the first world champions forced to qualify, have won two and drawn two.

Brazil are promising that adversity will bring out the best in them as they aim to settle some scores against it.

Brazil face injury problems, searing heat and will only have had one training session before the match against the Paraguayans, who are making a habit out of upsetting their neighbours.

Brazil lost 2-1 on their last visit to Asuncion three years ago and had their 2002 World Cup celebrations damped by Paraguay, who

The players crossed the Atlantic and arrived in Asuncion at midday on Monday after journeys of around 15 hours, had been advised to spend the afternoon resting.

But Parreira said that he was not upset that the Real Madrid striker had joined AC Milan's Kaka for a 90 minute round on the golf course at the Brazil team hotel on the banks of the Paraguay river.

Ronaldo took up the sport when he was recovering from knee surgery and now lists it as his favourite past-time.

"There was no ban on players getting out of bed," Parreira told reporters. "There was a certain amount of freedom."

Midfielder Kleberson, right back Belletti and midfielder Alex all withdrew from the squad through injury.

Paraguay have had similar problems to Brazil but managed to get some of their squad together last week.

"Brazil are an attacking team but they leave spaces which we can use to our advantage," said Spanish-based defender Delio Toledo.

Paraguay lead the South American qualifying group with nine points from three games, one more than Argentina and Brazil.

Argentina, second in the table, entertain Ecuador on Tuesday without Kily Gonzalez and Javier Zanetti whom Inter Milan failed to release before Sunday's Italian league matches.

Table with columns for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, listing matches and scores.



Grand Master Niaz Murshed (L) and International Master Reefat-bin-Sattar ponder their next moves during their third round game of the Singer 30th National Chess Championship at the NSC conference room yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 24 mins.

Cryptogram puzzle with a grid of letters and a key: W D V K J F J E I W G O. Includes a solution time of 24 mins.

M'singh cricket

Abahani Krira Chakra recorded a five-wicket victory over ASIT Memorial Club in the Navana Premier Division Cricket League at the Mymensingh circuit house ground yesterday.

Batting first, Asit Memorial made 133 all out in 41.3 overs. Abahani replied with 135-5 in 30.2 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ASIT MEMORIAL CLUB: 133-10 in 41.3 overs (Suman 33, Rabin 27, Rani 15, Rakib 4/22, Shawan 2/28). ABAHANI: 135/5 in 30.2 overs (Emon 37, Arman 35, Mitul 18; Suman 2/9).

Result: Abahani won by five wickets.

Khulna Div champions

BSS, Faridpur
Khulna Division emerged winners in the two-day final of the Under-15 Age Group Development Cricket Championship defeating Dhaka Metro Blues by virtue of a first innings lead at the local stadium here yesterday.

Dhaka Blues resumed the day at 37 for two in reply to Khulna's first innings total of 224 for nine in 90 overs.

But Khulna bowlers shot their opponents out for 192 in 56.2 overs to take a 32-run lead.

Khulna in their second knock scored 171 for seven wickets in 47.2 overs. Masud Rana of Khulna was declared man-of-the-match for scoring 58 not out and taking four wickets.