



OVER THE TOP: Australia's Adam Gilchrist pulls one for the winning sixer during their ICC Champions Trophy match against USA at the Rose Bowl in Southampton yesterday.

Multi-Mushfiq



BISHWAJIT ROY, from Southampton

There was sheer frustration written on the faces among the majority of a 2,400 crowd, most of whom carried the colours of Bangladesh. It was no surprise who they vented their anger at after watching their cricket team crash to 93 against South Africa at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Sunday.

Knives were literally drawn out at Bangladesh Cricket Board president Ali Asghar, who also watched the horror show from the stands.

"Why did we lose so badly and why is our cricket going backwards?" screamed the angry crowd.

The game that the Tigers lost by nine wickets also embarrassed the Bangladeshi journalists covering the match.

"Here comes Rahman (Mushfiq) who is going to win the game for you," quipped a witty South African journalist as the bowler was about to bowl the final delivery. But the Proteas captain smashed that for four through the mid-wicket boundary for the winning runs.

But no amount of criticism could rattle the all powerful Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore, who woke up the next morning to confidently announce the rest of the world that his charges were capable of playing better cricket than they had done against South Africa.

"The result was frustrating but I still believe that it did not reflect the real strength of my boys. It can happen sometime. I firmly believe that the boys will bounce back against the West Indies," said the 50-year-old Australian coach.

"I don't see anything wrong to bat first on this kind of wicket. It was a good track and had the batsmen played sensibly a score of 200-plus was possible," he added.

But Whatmore's words sound like a prepared speech that he loves to deliver each time Bangladesh go down badly.

While Whatmore, who deliberately skipped the post-match briefing on Sunday, tried to put up a brave face, the body language of his side was totally the opposite when they set off for the Rose Bowl in Southampton to play their last group match against West Indies on Wednesday.

It was one of those days when Whatmore, a shrewd tactician, saw everything he tried simply backfire expect for the toss that Rajin Saleh won. But 24 hours later the moody coach again defended his every decision.

"If you consider everything I think Mushfiqur Rahman was better choice than Khaled Mahmud. He was fully fit to play the match. Besides, he is a multi skilled player," said Whatmore while explaining the reason for dropping Mahmud, who

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The people's champion

AGENCIES, New York



Roger Federer never thought in his "wildest dreams" he would win the US Open.

But, after a near-perfect 6-0, 7-6, 6-0 victory over Lleyton Hewitt in Sunday's final, the Australian Open and Wimbledon champion has also finally cracked the Big Apple.

The 23-year-old Swiss, rapidly establishing himself as one of the greatest players in the history of the sport, had never previously gone beyond the fourth round at Flushing Meadows.

The question now is how great is Federer?

"He may be the greatest player I've ever seen," tennis legend John McEnroe said of the Swiss star, who claimed his ninth title of the season and improved his 2004 match record to an astounding 64-6.

Those comments came a week before Federer nailed down his third

Grand Slam title of the season, something only Rod Laver, Jimmy Connors and Mats Wilander had accomplished.

Want a sign of Federer's greatness?

How about the most decisive opening set in a men's US Open final since 1903? Or the fact that he's the first US Open champion since 1884 to win two sets at a time in the final?

The discussion of where Federer sits historically began well before he took the court at Arthur Ashe Stadium. But it heated up following his rout of his Australian opponent.

"It's an incredible effort what he's done to win three out of four," said Hewitt the 23-year-old former world No 1 and two-time Grand Slam winner.

"I don't think people know how difficult it is."

Wilander also watched this final from his home in Hailey, Idaho, and wisely cautioned fans not to get too carried away with expectations. Not that Wilander wasn't impressed with

Federer.

"I'd like to be in his shoes for one day to know what it feels like to play that way," he said.

"He's a little better than everyone else at everything right now. Physically and mentally he has the advantage over the other players."

Asked what he would say to Federer right now, Wilander laughed and said, "Go for four next year. Take my name away completely."

Wilander did, in fact, call Federer moments later in the locker to congratulate him and urge him on. Yet a Grand Slam is far easier said than done, as is reaching the far distant record of Sampras, who won his fourth major a year earlier at age 22.

"When I won three in one year, I thought, like a lot of other people, that I could keep doing that," Wilander said.

"But things happen. It was hard to keep that level up and then I hurt my knee. He's way, way farther away."

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Inzy wary of India



AFP, Birmingham

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq told his side Monday to beware an India team without star batsman Sachin Tendulkar when they meet in the ICC Champions Trophy.

Sunday's 21,000 sell-out match at Edgbaston promises to be the game of the tournament, with Pakistan bidding to make it three one-day wins out of three against arch-rivals India.

When the teams last met in August at the Videocon Cup triangular event in the Netherlands, Pakistan enjoyed a 66-run win in a rain-affected contest.

Tendulkar pulled out on the

morning of that match with an elbow injury that has sidelined him ever since.

But in his absence India -- whose top-order features the likes of captain Sourav Ganguly, VVS Laxman and World Player of the Year Rahul Dravid -- began their Champions Trophy campaign with a 98-run win against Kenya at the Rose Bowl on Saturday.

However, Inzamam told reporters at Edgbaston here Monday: "Tendulkar is a great person but without him India still have a strong team and we will take them very seriously."

"In a one-day game, every day is different and the most important thing is to work hard," the 34-year-old batsman added as Pakistan looked to follow up their Dutch and Asia Cup triumphs.

But before the game that will have millions across the sub-

continent glued to their television sets, Pakistan begin their Pool C programme against Kenya at Edgbaston on Tuesday.

And Inzamam insisted there was no danger of complacency setting in against the Africans.

"We have a serious game and we will treat it very seriously. We will play with a full strength side."

Pakistan have just three players in their 30s, Inzamam, wicketkeeper Moin Khan and batsman Younis Youhana, with the likes of pace duo Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis as well as opening batsman Saeed Anwar all now retired.

And Inzamam said he enjoyed captaining a young side.

"It's lovely for me because the young boys are full of energy and willing to perform well."

Kenya, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe -- as well as rank outsiders

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Basher told to stay back

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket captain Habibul Bashar has been advised to stay in Australia for another week after he had a checkup on his injured right thumb yesterday.

Dr Greg Hoy, who performed the operation at the Avenue Hospital in Melbourne on September 6, was expected to remove his bandage.

However, Dr Hoy suggested after doing an X-ray that it would not be wise to remove the bandage for now and that Bashar should wait at least seven more days just as a precaution.

The injury forced the country's premier batsman to be ruled out of the ICC Champions Trophy.

AUSTRALIA-USA SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the ICC Champions Trophy Pool A match between the United States and Australia at the Rose Bowl in Southampton on Monday:

UNITED STATES

Alexander c Gilchrist b K'wicz	8
M Johnson b Lee	0
Romero run out	1
Massiah c Lehmann b K'wicz	23
Staple lbw b K'wicz	4
Reid lbw b K'wicz	2
Zial lbw b Gillespie	1
Ali c Gilchrist b Gillespie	1
Javed not out	2
Blake lbw b Gillespie	0
H Johnson b Gillespie	9
Extras: (lb-2, w-7, nb-5)	14
Total: (All out in 24 overs)	65
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-2, 3-32, 4-38, 5-46, 6-46, 7-49, 8-53, 9-53	
Bowler	O M R W
Lee	5 0 21 1
McGrath	6 1 13 0
K'wicz	7 1 14 4
Gillespie	6 1 15 4

AUSTRALIA

Gilchrist not out	24
Hayden c M Johnson b H Johnson	23
Ponting not out	8
Extras: (lb-1, w-7, nb-3)	11

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Talk Turkey

BBC ONLINE, undated

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has closed the pavilion at Lord's to start an 8.2-million-pound re-fit.

The project includes redecoration of the Long Room, construction of a new roof terrace and bringing the two turrets back into use.

Work started on Monday and is scheduled to be completed in time for the start of 2005 cricket season.

The building has never been closed for any such length of time in 114 years, and even remained open during World War One and Two.

The pavilion, which has Grade II listed status, was built in 1889-90 and is the focal point of a ground acknowledged around the world as the home of cricket.

The project will take MCC expenditure on ground improvement projects, since its bicentennial, well past the 50-million-pound mark.

Ponting's query



REUTERS/BBC, London

Australia captain Ricky Ponting offered some veiled criticism of the International Cricket Council on Monday after his side's annihilation of the United States in their ICC Champions Trophy clash at Southampton.

Australia dismissed the US for just 65 and then achieved their target for the loss of Matthew Hayden in 7.5 overs, ensuring they bettered New Zealand's run rate so they would progress to the semi-finals if their Pool A clash on Thursday is washed out.

"It was a pretty easy workout for us," Ponting said after the win,

having previously said emerging sides like the US gain nothing from being thrashed by the established teams.

"I hope they can learn some

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RICKY PONTING



KING OF NEW YORK: Number one seed Roger Federer of Switzerland is on his knees as he celebrates his victory over fourth seed Lleyton Hewitt of Australia in the men's final of the US Open on September 12.