

Fightback Pakistan style

India slump to new low; tourists clinch ODI series 4-2

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan capped a fairytale fightback with a 159-run victory over India in the sixth and final one-dayer marred by crowd trouble here on Sunday to clinch the series 4-2.

Pakistan, who had lost the first two matches, completed their fourth successive win when they bundled the hosts out for 144 in reply to their own challenging total of 303-8 in the last game of their tour.

India had all but lost the match before a missile-throwing incident forced the rival teams to walk off the heavily-guarded Ferozeshah Kotla ground.

They were then reeling at 94-6 after a spineless batting performance, which had left the spectators angry. The win was a formality for Pakistan when the game resumed after nearly 20 minutes.

It was a new low for India as they suffered their biggest defeat in terms of runs and the biggest in any one-dayer against Pakistan. Pakistan's 143-run victory at Jaipur in 1989-90 was their previous best victory margin against India.

It was a disappointing end to John Wright's five-year stint as India coach as his players failed to rise to the occasion in his farewell match.

The fixture was watched for more than an hour in the morning by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Pakistan produced a fine batting performance on a good pitch with Shoaib Malik scoring 72, skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq 68, Yousuf Youhana 50.

Afridi led the way with an explosive 23-ball 44 and Inzamam applied the finishing touches with a

run-a-ball knock.

In contrast, India's batting woes began early when they lost hard-hitting openers Virender Sehwag for 21 and Sachin Tendulkar for nine.

Sehwag was caught by Afridi in the slips off medium-pace Navedul Hasan, while Tendulkar was bowled by Rao Iftikhar off an inside-edge.

India suffered a big blow when in-form stand-in captain Rahul Dravid was run out for 19 to leave his team wobbling at 64-3 after a smart pick up and throw from Yousuf Youhana at mid-on.

India's running between the wickets continued to let them down when Yuvraj Singh became the second victim after a mix-up with Mahendra Dhoni. Youhana again did the trick with a direct-hit.

Pakistan virtually wrapped up the match when they sent India reeling to 94-6 after dismissing Dhoni and Mohammad Kaif in quick succession.

Malik and Inzamam were instrumental in Pakistan's building of a sizeable total after they had elected to bat. The pair built on Afridi's early flourish to help their team set a challenging target.

Afridi, who smashed the second-fastest century off 45 balls in the last match at Kanpur on Friday, was again in a destructive mood as he struck one six and six fours in an entertaining cameo knock.

India were left stunned after the free-stroking opener exploded into action in only the second over with a flurry of boundaries, punishing Ashish Nehra.

First he flicked him for three successive fours, before pulling him over mid-wicket for a six and driving him through the covers for a final boundary to tot up 22 off the over.

But Nehra had the last laugh, SEE PAGE 13 COL 2



PAKISTAN UNITED: The victorious Pakistan cricket team with the Pepsi one-day series trophy at the Ferozeshah Kotla in New Delhi on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

FED CUP

MSC, Abahani play on opening day

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Tibet 20th Federation Cup final rounds will begin on April 21 -- six weeks after the end of the qualifiers - with traditional powerhouses Mohammedan and Abahani both playing on the opening day.

The start of the final phase has been delayed twice to accommodate the Independence Day Gold Cup and Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Brothers Union's involvement in the AFC Cup.

All matches including the May 3 final will be held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. The semifinals are scheduled for April 28 and 29.

Defending champions Muktiyoddha should have played in the opening match as is customary but they take the field the next day.

The Reds, who have a bright chance to move into the second phase of the ongoing Asian club competition, were given a day's rest to recover from Tuesday's AFC Cup game against visiting Nebtchi FC of

Turkmenistan. Muktiyoddha, who lifted the Independence Day Cup defeating Brothers Union 2-0 on Saturday, have been drawn in a tricky Group A that includes Brothers, Sheikh Russel and qualifiers Youngmen's Club Fakirpool.

Arch-rivals Abahani and Mohammedan, who are destined to clash for the first time this season on April 25 after avoiding each other in the Independence Day Cup, have Arambagh Kriya Sangha and Dhaka Wanderers in Group B.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), meanwhile, is looking forward to give the tournament a more national look from next year by bringing teams from different cities.

The Federation Cup began as a nationwide meet but the last time teams from outside the capital competed in the meet was back in 1995. Since then, only services teams have taken part in the qualifiers.

The BFF also wants to abolish the

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They outclassed us: Rahul

Team effort was the key to success: Inzy

AFP, New Delhi



Stand-in India captain Rahul Dravid conceded Sunday his team had been outplayed by Pakistan in the sixth and final one-day international here to lose the series 4-2.

India were shot out for 144 in reply to Pakistan's total of 303-8 in the match they needed to win to square the six-match series.

"They played better cricket than us. They simply outclassed us today," Dravid said after his team's 159-run defeat in a game marred by crowd trouble at the Ferozeshah Kotla ground.

The game was disrupted after a hail of missiles hit the ground and players from both sides failed to

"I am proud of my team. The players worked very hard and had self-belief," said the Pakistani skipper whose side were trailing 2-0 before winning the next four matches on the trot.

The Pakistan captain said winning the toss was crucial on what was a good batting track.

"Chasing even a total of 240 or 250 would have been difficult here. We were targeting a score of 270 or 280 after we got off to a good start and had wickets in hand," he said.

Shoaib Malik top-scored with 72, his third half-century in four matches. Inzamam with 68, Yousuf Youhana 50, Shahid Afridi 44 and Younis Khan 40 all chipped in to help their team set a stiff target.

"Younis batted well in closing overs to swell the total," said Inzamam, who had a 91-run stand for the fifth wicket with Younis.

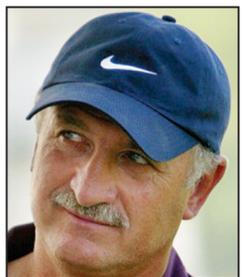
Malik was named man-of-the-match for his impressive knock containing eight fours.

"I just waited for the loose deliveries and relied on singles or twos in

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What to WATCH

ESPN
Sportscentre
Live at 8:30 pm
STAR Sports
Sportsline
Live at 8:00 pm
Primera Liga
Levante vs Real Madrid
Repeat at 8:30 pm



Luiz Felipe Scolari
(Portugal's Brazilian coach)
"My goal, as well of those around me, is to stay in Europe for five more years. In a club or national team."

FA Cup United set up dream final

AFP, Cardiff

Manchester United beat Newcastle 4-1 in the FA Cup semi-final at the Millennium Stadium here Sunday.

Ruud van Nistelrooy scored twice, putting holders United ahead in the 19th minute before netting again shortly before the hour mark.

In between the Dutch forward's goals, midfielder Paul Scholes doubled United's lead on the stroke of half-time.

But barely 60 seconds after van Nistelrooy put United 3-0 up, Newcastle pulled a goal back through striker Shola Ameobi.

However, Portugal winger Cristiano Ronaldo ended any slim hopes of an unlikely comeback with United's fourth 14 minutes from time.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side will now play Arsenal, who beat Blackburn Rovers 3-0 in the first semi-final here Saturday, in the May 21 Millennium Stadium final with the tournament effectively representing both clubs' last chance of silverware this season.

Defeat capped a depressing week for Newcastle who were without suspended duo Kieron Dyer and Lee Bowyer after the midfielders on-pitch brawl against Aston Villa.

On Thursday, the Magpies went out at the quarter-final stage of the UEFA Cup after a 4-1 loss away to Portugal's Sporting Lisbon in a 4-2

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He can hold his head high

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

When John Wright quits as India's first foreign coach after the current Pakistan tour on Sunday, he will leave with the satisfaction of having done the pressure job in a creditable manner.

Coaching India has never been a stroll in the park, considering fans' inflated expectations, continuous media nit-picking and the team's repeated failures to bridge the gap between potential and performance.

That Wright only enhanced his reputation in the hot seat is a tribute to his unflappable temperament, a quality which also stood him in good stead as New Zealand opening batsman and captain.

Wright, 50, will be remembered as the coach who taught India more than just winning. His main contribution was that he instilled self-belief into a team known for cracking at the slightest hint of pressure.

To cap it all, Wright restored Indian cricket's credibility because the game was in turmoil when he took over five years ago in a pressure-cooker situation with a new captain in Sourav Ganguly.

Sachin Tendulkar had quit as captain after losing a home Test series against South Africa in 2000, the match-fixing scandal had sullied many cricketers' and officials' reputations, and voices were raised

against naming a foreign coach.

But Wright adapted himself remarkably well in alien conditions and steadily transformed India into a force to reckon with in international cricket.

The New Zealander did not take long to prove that he was the right man for Indian cricket as one of his most memorable moments came in only his second Test series.

The unexpected happened in



PHOTO: AFP

Outgoing Indian coach John Wright with his gift.

2001 when India stopped Australia's juggernaut with a 2-1 victory after losing the opening match of a three-Test series at Mumbai inside three

days.

Wright's masterstroke was the promotion of Venkatsai Laxman, who hammered a solid 281 at number-three position in the second Test at Kolkata, eventually won by India after following on.

India had clinched a big series, but they desperately needed to improve their performances abroad. Wright provided the shot in the arm by changing the team's approach and attitude.

India may not have won a Test series outside the sub-continent under Wright, but succeeded in shedding the tag of 'lions at home and lambs abroad' by competing hard on foreign soil.

They drew tough Test series in England (2002) and Australia (2003) apart from winning a Test in Zimbabwe (2001) and the West Indies (2002).

Wright's unforgettable moment came last year when India won a maiden Test series in Pakistan on their first full tour of the country in nearly 15 years.

India won 20 of their 51 Tests under Wright, nine of them overseas, and lost just one home series, against Australia last year.

India's stock also grew in one-dayers as they reached the 2003 World Cup final and shared the 2002 Champions Trophy. They also won the NatWest Trophy in England in 2002 besides winning series in the West Indies and Pakistan.

Wright may be very popular with

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Crowd trouble in India again

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian and Pakistani teams walked off New Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla ground on Sunday following crowd trouble during the sixth and final one-day international.

The game was disrupted after a hail of missiles hit the ground and players from both sides failed to

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PHOTO: AFP

SAME OLD INDIAN SCENE: Security men try to appease disgruntled Indian cricket fans after they threw water bottles on to the ground with the home side were reduced to 94-6 in reply to Pakistani 303-8 at the Ferozeshah Kotla on Sunday.

Musharraf won't predict result

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi



Cricket bug has bitten Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Singh and Musharraf together watched the sixth and final one-day international cricket match between the two countries at the historic Ferozeshah Kotla stadium here this morning under extraordinary security.

Seated in an air-conditioned bullet-proof enclosure, the two leaders watched the match for slightly more than an hour before leaving the stadium for talks on a range of bilateral issues.

Prior to start of the match, Singh and Musharraf shook hands with

members of both teams.

Clad in a grey suit, Musharraf looked relaxed and was all smiles as he expressed his best wishes to the players and the officials.

Musharraf, known for his public relations skills and ability to play to the media, then saluted the capacity crowd who responded with a roaring cheer.

Singh, in traditional Punjabi dress, was accompanied by senior BJP leader and former federal minister Arun Jaitley, who is also president of Delhi District Cricket Association, Indian cricket board chief Ranbir Singh Mahendra and Pakistan board chairman and former foreign secretary Shaharyar Khan.

This was the second time that a Pakistani leader had come to India

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