



15 DAYS
TO GO

Anyone can
win: Sobers

AFP, Mumbai

West Indian great Garfield Sobers said on Friday the World Cup starting on his home turf next month would be a thriller, with the winner difficult to predict.

Sobers, widely regarded as the greatest all-round cricketer in history, told reporters that the top six or seven teams, including the hosts, were good enough to win the sport's biggest prize.

"It's wide open," said the 70-year-old, who is touring India to promote the tournament, which opens on March 13 and ends with the final in his native Barbados on April 28.

"There are six or seven teams that can win the cup. The West Indians under Brian Lara are right up there with the best."

"Three years ago if you asked me if we could win, I would have said no. But now we have turned the corner. We will be very hard to beat."

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Did U Know?

Sri Lankan wicketkeepers Brendon Kuruppu and Romesh Kaluwitharana both scored hundreds on their Test debut.



Aravinda de Silva
(Sri Lanka cricket legend)
"I honestly feel this side have a better chance than we had in 1996. When you compare the eras, I feel this team have got a better combination. We didn't have experience in 1996, but this team have."
On their chances of winning the World Cup in West Indies.

What to
WATCH

ESPN
English Premier Football League
Fulham v Man United
Live at 6:40 pm
Charlton v West Ham
Live at 8:55 pm

STAR Sports

English Premier Football League

Liverpool v Sheffield United

Live at 8:55 pm

Watford v Everton

Live at 11:10 pm

Primeria Liga

Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid

Live at 2:55 am (Sunday)



Bangladesh A v England A

3rd day, First Four-Dayer

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium



England A batsman Michael Carberry whips the ball towards mid-wicket as Bangladesh A wicketkeeper Sahagir Hossain and first-slip Nasiruddin Faruq look on during the second day's play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Visitors on top

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The visiting England A batsmen were in subdued mood, unlike their Bangladeshi counterparts, hardly playing any shots during the course of play on way to consolidating their position at the end of the second day's play in the first four-dayer at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Michael Carberry was the only batsman to score a half-century in their innings on the second day as the left-hander honed in on his warm-up match hundred to make 70. But almost all the other batters chipped in with significant scores as the tourists finished the day on 268-6, a 59-run first-innings lead.

From the home team's perspective, the two left-arm spinners Enamul Haque and Mosharraf Hossain revived hopes by taking

two wickets each to bounce back from disappointing batting before Alex Loudon (25) and Tim Bresnan (21) took away the initiative with an unbroken 48-run seventh wicket stand.

If the top-order batting let Bangladesh A down in the first session of the first day then new ball bowlers Dollar Mahmud and Mohammad Sharif frustrated most on the following day although the former regained his rhythm in the second spell as he trapped opener Nick Compton lbw with a beautiful full-length delivery.

Captain Tushar Imran however was not entirely displeased with his bowler's effort on the batting-friendly pitch. "There is still nothing on the pitch which can give the bowlers an extra advantage. I am happy with my team's bowling effort because the batsmen hardly gave any chances. While we tried to play too many shots they simply showed their temperament," he said.

Mosharraf captured two wickets for 62 runs in 26 overs while

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Enamul gave the first breakthrough after England A resumed their innings without any score when Will Jefferson tried to clear the long-on boundary only to reach at the hand of Sharif while Dollar added another to see the visitors go into launch on 97-2.

The tourists added 108 more runs in the second session with the loss of skipper Mike Yardy (34), victim of a run out, and Steve Davies (37), who was dismissed after wicketkeeper Sahagir dived down the leg to take a brilliant catch off left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain.

In the third session lanky left-arter Mosharraf also picked up the prize wicket of Carberry, who smashed seven boundaries and a midwicket six against Enamul during his 157-ball essay, after the batsman offered a simple return catch.

Mosharraf captured two wickets for 62 runs in 26 overs while

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Lee blow for Aussies

AFP, Sydney



Australia's hopes of defending their World Cup cricket crown suffered a huge blow with the official withdrawal of pace spearhead Brett Lee Friday.

On the back of five straight one-day defeats, Australia will leave for the West Indies next week minus their strike bowler and amid mounting concern over whether they can successfully defend their title.

Lee's pull-out with damaged ligaments in his left ankle is a shattering blow for the Australians, whose World Cup-strength bowling attack was plundered by New Zealand in the recent 3-0 Chappell-Hadlee Trophy series loss.

Stuart Clark, who was a controversial omission from the original 15-man squad named last week, is Lee's replacement.

Australian team doctor Trevor James said following a review by an orthopaedic specialist it was decided that Lee's damaged ankle ligaments would keep him out of

cricket for two to three months.

Lee had been optimistic of making a miraculous recovery after going over on his ankle in training ahead of the first Chappell-Hadlee Trophy match in Wellington.

"To get told that you can't be a chance to play in the World Cup is really disappointing," Lee told reporters Friday. "I couldn't undergo the exercises.



there's too much pain there.... There was absolutely no chance of me playing in the World Cup."

Chairman of selectors Andrew

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Hilditch said in a Cricket Australia (CA) statement Friday that he had been advised that Lee's ankle injury was more serious than first expected.

"It is a great disappointment for

Brett Lee that he is unable to take

his place in the Cricket World Cup

and is a significant blow for the

planning and preparation in place

for the tournament," Hilditch said in the CA statement.

"However, it does give a tremendous opportunity for Stuart Clark to join the 15-man squad.

"Stuart was extremely unlucky

to miss out on initial selection and despite the unfortunate circumstances surrounding his inclusion we strongly believe that Stuart is primed to seize his opportunity.

"Though Brett's injury is disappo-

inting from a personal and team perspective, we strongly believe we are taking a squad of players more than capable of winning a third successive Cricket World Cup.

"Every other nation would take

heart from what has happened over

the last couple of weeks. But who

knows? We won't know until the

end of the World Cup how it affects

us," Hilditch said.

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PHOTO: AFP

A Sri Lankan man holds a first day cover of two new stamps released to mark the forthcoming Cricket World Cup in Colombo yesterday.

Ctg hang on for draw

SPORTS REPORTER

The remaining two seventh round games of the Ispahani Mirzapur Tea 8th National Cricket League ended in draws yesterday as Chittagong batted throughout the day to nullify Dhaka's hope of an outright victory at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

Dhaka however managed four points by virtue of a first innings lead to improve their tally to 28 points, four adrift of table toppers Rajshahi who won their seventh round game by an innings and four-runs against Sylhet with a day to spare on Thursday.

In the day's other match, Khulna finished on 226-5 in their second innings in reply to an improbable victory target of 379 against Barisal at the Khulna Divisional Stadium. But Barisal's first innings advantage awarded them four points to leapfrog Sylhet in the table to secure the fourth place with 16 points.

Chittagong kept third place with 18 points after securing two points from the drawn match while Sylhet and Khulna bagged 14 points each after the seventh round.

DHAKA-CHITTAGONG

Chittagong resumed their second innings in a precarious position of 6-2 on their way to saving the innings defeat. But Nazimuddin joined overnight batsman Nafis Iqbal to almost ensure the match's fate.

The pair contributed 109 runs for

the third wicket stand before Anwar Hossain stumped out-of-favour

Nafis off left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny. Nafis scored 49 runs off 126 balls with the help of seven boundaries.

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PHOTO: AFP

A Sri Lankan man holds a first day cover of two new stamps released to mark the forthcoming Cricket World Cup in Colombo yesterday.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Moniruzzaman was declared the best swimmer in the Bangladesh Police Swimming competition in Uttara yesterday.

Inspector general Nur Mohammad distributed prizes among Moniruzzaman and other winners.

BURID TO LEAD SHEIKH RUSSELL

Moroccan recruit and defender Burid Mohammad has been given the captain's armband for B League side Sheikh Russell Krira Chakra. Striker Maksudul Alam was named as his deputy.

UNDER-19 HANDBALL TOURNAMENT

Sunnydale crushed Aga Khan School 10-0 in the opening match of the Beximco Pharma Under-19 handball competition at the Dhamondi Women's Complex.

Aga Khan's day got worse after they lost to Valkyries Skyliners 12-2 while Valkyries Skylines were awarded their match after Playpen School failed to show up.

NATIONAL WOMEN CHESS

The selection phase of the 28th National Women Chess Championship began at the federation hallroom. Sharmin Sultana, Farjana Hossain, Kishwara Sharmin

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Down The World Cup Lane

1975: Windies draw first blood

NADER RAHMAN

At The Oval, the West Indies won the most eagerly awaited game of the tournament by seven wickets against Australia. West Indies swept to victory with 14 overs to spare after Kallicharran and Fredericks had severely mauled the Australian fast bowlers. Julien claimed McCosker in his first over, the ebullient Boyce disposed of both the Chappells in the space of six balls, Greenidge ran out Walters with an amazing piece of fielding and Australia were tottering at 61 for five. Not for the first time they had cause to be grateful for the coolness of Edwards and the never-say-die approach of Marsh.

Marsh. In his 12 overs, bowled in

one spell, Gilmour took six wickets for 14 runs. Gasps, groans, or cheers, followed every ball.

Australia had no

hesitation

about putting England in to bat as

left-arm bowler Gilmour ripped

through the England batting.

Bowling a full length, over the

wicket, he not only swung the ball

in the heavy atmosphere, but he

moved it both ways after pitching.

Bringing the ball back after pitching on the off stump he had Amis, Fletcher, Hayes and Knott lbw - Fletcher without playing a shot - and all played back. He bowled Wood with a perfect yorker and had Greig caught one-handed by

Marsh. In his 12 overs, bowled in one spell, Gilmour took six wickets for 14 runs. Gasps, groans, or cheers, followed every ball.

Australia had no

hesitation

about putting England in to bat as

left-arm bowler Gilmour had treated

England. Then came Gilmour as a

batman. With Walters he shared a

unbroke

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PHOTO: INTERNET

West Indies captain Clive Lloyd (R) receives the first World Cup trophy from Prince Philip at the Lord's balcony in London on June 21, 1975.