



13 DAYS
TO GO

Tigers gain edge

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh reduced Bermuda to 93-5 in 32 overs in the first match of the warm-up tri-series yesterday.

Left-arm paceman Syed Rasel provided the first breakthrough removing Clay Smith after Bermuda had decided to bat first at the Antigua Recreation Ground.

Pace spearhead Mashrafee-bin-Mortaza, Shahadat Hossain, Javed Omar and Rajin Saleh were all left out from the side according to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) website sources.

The match against Habibul Bashar's men was Bermuda's first-ever official one-day international against a Test team.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

The women's team of Gazipur won in straight sets over Naogaon in the Palco 28th National Table Tennis championship at the Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday.

The Gazipur men also came on tops with a 3-2 win over Kurigram.

In other matches of the women's section, Jessore, Narail, Natore and Rajshahi won their respective matches.

GAIBANDHA SCHOOL CRICKET

Kanchipara Academy beat Police Line High School by six wickets in School Cricket competition at the Gaibandha Stadium.

Kanchipara notched up their target of 98 runs in only 17.1 overs losing four wickets.

FAZLUL HAQ HALL SPORTS

Statistics student Mahfuzur Rahman and Botany student Majedur Rashid

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Did U Know?

England's David Gower and Pakistan's Shahid Afridi both hit their first ball they faced in Test cricket for a boundary of the bowling of Liqat Ali and Glenn McGrath respectively.

TALK TURKEY

AFP, London

England A win a thriller

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A lost their momentum in the second innings on the final day of the first four-day Test as their English counterparts pulled off a thrilling five-wicket victory at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday and take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

A draw was on sight when the second string Bangladesh side resumed the day on 137-1. But England A off-spinner Alex Loudon -- highly rated in his country -- caught the local batsmen in his web, mostly with his wrong ones, to return with figures of 5-76 to wrap up the home side innings for 279 just after tea.

The 130-run target in 20 overs was not a difficult task for the visitors but still, the match saw a breathtaking finish in limited-overs

style in the last hour, especially when they needed to score eight runs from the last over.

Left-arm spinner Enamul Haque rejuvenated a small crowd in the big bowl when he had rival captain Mike Yardy (27) caught at short mid-wicket by Tushar Imran in the very first ball. But Loudon smashed the second ball through the extra-cover fence and collected remaining four runs from the next two deliveries to reach the target with two balls to spare.

Defending the total looked difficult but the home team's buffet-bowling and sluggish fielding made it easier. The way a player like Mehrab Hossain fumbled in ground-fielding was hard to believe while Mosharraf Hossain floored a regulation catch at mid-off of Enamul in a crucial stage to let opener and top scorer Matt Prior off the hook and play a match winning 50 off 52 balls featuring four boundaries and a six.

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England A opener Matthew Prior cuts fiercely through point during his quickfire half-century on the final day of the four-day match against Bangladesh A at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur on Sunday.

'Watch out for old boys'

AFP, London



vice-captain.

"They will be just that bit hungrier to leave that little legacy, that little mark, that personal touch -- like 'that was my World Cup'."

Sangakkara believes Jayasuriya, whose early innings big hitting wowed fans 11 years ago, will have another major role to play in the Caribbean when the 2007 World Cup opens on March 11.

Tendulkar and Brian Lara will set the World Cup alight.

The three will be playing in their last World Cup with only Sangakkara's teammate Jayasuriya having so far tasted World Cup glory, being part of the Sri Lanka side which sensationally clinched the 1996 title.

"I think people who are coming to the end of their careers are going to be the most dangerous players in this World Cup," said the Sri Lanka

vice-captain.

"Sanath doesn't want to be in the shadow of any other batsman in the world," Sangakkara told www.cricinfo.com.

"To do that he has got to come out, improve and do the hard work. He is willing to do the hard work and at 37 he is one of the fittest in the team, he is bowling, fielding well and he is batting for longer."

"Forty-five runs from Sanath make us win 75 percent of matches and that's why we look forward to

him giving us a start. Now we know that if he gets that start he goes on to make that big score."

Indian superstar Tendulkar and West Indies skipper Lara will also make their mark, insists Sangakkara.

"I can see Sachin Tendulkar playing more cricket but I don't know until when," he said.

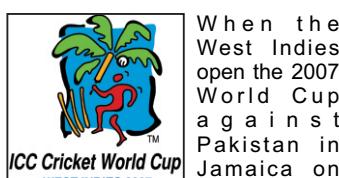
"It's up to the individual player to decide when you retire. But if you miss that window of opportunity to walk out when you are on top it can be disappointing in the long run."

"Sachin has been a fantastic player over the years, a great batsman and an example to watch. He is going to be that much more focused to leave a mark."

"Lara is another one, at home probably his last World Cup."

Can't win if you host!

AFP, New Delhi



process to grab six wickets in one-day internationals.

England were very much in the game when they reduced Australia to 39-6, but again ran into Gilmour who scored a vital 28 not out to see his team home in a low-scoring encounter.

The hosts again looked the best prepared team in 1979 till the final against the West Indies. It was the combined excellence of Viv Richards and Collis King that sank England.

Richards hammered an unbeaten 138 and shared a century stand with King (86) to help his side post a challenging 286-9 off their allotted 60 overs.

It may be a flash of individual brilliance, like England batsman Graham Gooch's century in India in 1987, or a pure mathematical error, as by South Africa in 2003, but the outcome has been the same.

England's rich one-day experience counted little in big matches when they hosted the first three tournaments, their best coming in 1979 when they finished runners-up to Clive Lloyd's West Indians.

They looked impressive in group matches before being blown away in the 1975 semi-final by Australian all-rounder Gary Gilmour.

The left-arm paceman made merry on a seaming Headingly track when he finished with 6-14 to bowl the hosts out for a meagre 93, becoming the first bowler in the

England in a close match.

Allan Border's Australians ruined Pakistan's party with an 18-run victory in the first semi-final at Lahore, fast bowler Craig McDermott being the star performer with 5-44.

The same fate was to befall India, who were knocked out in the semi-final at Bombay not so much by England as by Gooch (115) who employed the sweep shot to a devastating effect to neutralise the efficacy of the hosts' spinners.

It was now Australia's turn to suffer the fate of the hosts in 1992.

Australia were crushed by the weight of expectations and never looked at their best when they hosted the tournament with New Zealand. They even failed to qualify for the semi-finals.

New Zealand looked a better side under Martin Crowe before being buried by Pakistan in the semi-final at Auckland, again by an individual brilliance.

Pakistani middle-order batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq, then only 22, smashed a 37-ball 60 under pressure to steer his side home with four wickets to spare.

It was a battle among the hosts in 1996 as India beat Pakistan in the quarter-finals before being beaten by Sri Lanka in the semi-final, awarded to the winners after riots in Calcutta.

Those praying for the India-Pakistan final at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta had no option but to watch a young Australian side beat

Arjuna Ranatunga's Sri Lankans.

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Rules bent for Belal

SPORTS REPORTER

Match referee Belayet Hossain Belal had to work overtime on February 23 as he conducted a First Division match at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium after having completed a National League encounter in Rajshahi the day before.

Earlier, Bangladesh A lost their way when four wickets fell before lunch (191-5) with Loudon starting the carnage by trapping overnight batsman Mehrab, who failed to add anything after resuming on 41, lbw in the fourth over.

Graham Onions dealt a massive blow by dismissing Nasiruddin Faruque (17) and Marshal Ayub (0) in consecutive deliveries. The young Ayub once again upset everybody offering a simple catch at Davies mid-on.

Promising Nadir Chowdhury (7) also failed to make up for his first-innings disappointment after being adjudged lbw to Tim Bresnan.

Captain Tushar, another lbw victim, however, smashed back-to-back half centuries. The dashing

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It was however not known what kind of trouble Belayet took to sprint all the way from the northern headquarters of the country to Dhaka to catch the Dhanmondi match on Friday, but his dilemma was understandable since that meant additional pay.

Belal was paid a cheque of Taka 12,000 for the National League match at Rajshahi. Although the match finished a day before with the home team winning over Sylhet by an innings and four runs, Belal was not in any rightful position of conducting another match within the same schedule. Eyebrows were raised when he was seen sitting during the First Division match between Young Pegasus B and Orient Sporting Club. For that match, he is supposed to be paid another Taka 3,000.

But this is absolutely unauthorized. It was learned that the member secretary of the umpires' committee Sailab Hossain Tutul approved his latter appointment.

Interestingly, the job of all the allotments of umpires, match referees and other match officials is

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Table toppers clash today

SPORTS REPORTER

Leaders Rajshahi travel to Fatullah to take on Dhaka today for the eighth round match of the Ispahani Mirzapur Tea 8th National Cricket League.

Rajshahi so far have 32 points while Dhaka are hot on their heels with 28 points after seven rounds.

At the Chittagong Divisional Stadium, the home side takes on Barisal. Chittagong survived the last day against Dhaka at the Fatullah Stadium to earn a draw after Dhaka piled 500 in their first innings.

Bottom side Sylhet travel to Khulna to get back some pride after they were trounced by an innings by Rajshahi.

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AFC secretary to grace gala B. League opener

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will send a three-member delegation to Bangladesh for the launching of the Professional Football League.

Date Paul Mony, who replaced the long serving Peter Velappan as the general secretary of the AFC this January, will head the mission which will be present during the opening ceremony on March 2.

The B. League will begin with the two top-budgeted teams -- Abahani and Muktiuddha Sangsad -- pitted against each other at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

"We have reached an agreement with Muktiuddha, the home team of the inaugural match, in this issue. As the BFF will spend a lot of money to make the memorable event colourful, we will have the rights of ticket selling on March 2," Helal told yesterday.

"We will give them a portion of the gate money," he added without elaborating.

The clubs, meanwhile, will have to deposit seven percent of their gate money within three days of

Down The World Cup Lane

1979: Viv Richards's final

The line-ups for the semis were complete and it would be West Indies against Pakistan and England against New Zealand. At Manchester on June 20 England won by 9 runs as they overcame a spirited New Zealand. The capable New Zealand attack, spearheaded by the fiery Hadlee, tied down most of the England batsmen. Brearley played a cautious game and fell for 53. Then followed a bold stand between Gooch and Botham who put on 47 in ten overs. Taylor came in at the end and calmly put Cairns over long on for 6 as England snatched 25 runs from the last three overs.

Two left-handers, Wright and Edgar, began New Zealand's task of scoring 222 to win in masterly fashion, putting on 47 in sixteen overs before Old had Edgar leg-before. Then Boycott removed Howarth leg-before. Wright kept New Zealand moving the right way until he succumbed to some brilliant fielding by Randall from deep square leg. Lees lifted Hendrick over mid-on for 6 and Cairns hoisted Botham even further before Hendrick removed them both. With Willis lame, and Botham and Hendrick also limping, it was touch and go, but with 14 wanted from the last over, sent down by Botham, New Zealand went out of the World Cup with their flag flying.

At The Oval West Indies took on Pakistan. West Indies thrived on a positive opening stand of 132 by Greenidge and Haynes. In the end Asif claimed the wickets of the first four batsmen, but not before Richards and Lloyd had played some glorious strokes. West Indies powered themselves to 293. Bowling at great pace and hostile with the bouncer, Holding dismissed Sadiq for 10. This setback did not deter Majid and Zaheer who rose to the occasion in a wonderful partnership of 166 off 36 overs that put their side within striking distance. Lloyd, looking for a solution, brought on Richards with his spin and re-introduced Croft. The gamble worked, for although Richards' first over cost 12, Croft made the breakthrough by dismissing Zaheer, Majid and Miandad in twelve balls for 4 runs. Richards followed by disposing of Mudassar, Asif and Imran; and with Roberts proving too much for the tail, West Indies gained their deserved success.

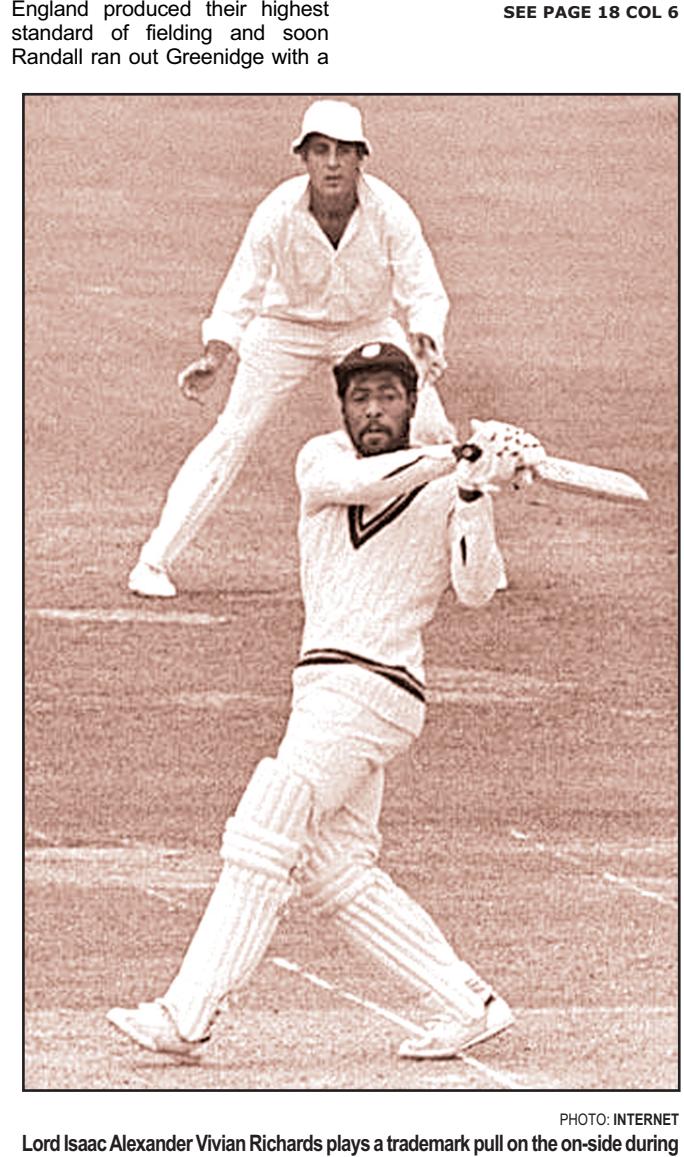
It was all set up West Indies

were to play England in the final of the World Cup.

deadly underarm return to the bowler's end as he dashed in from mid-wicket. Hendrick dismissed Haynes with a low-taken catch at slip off Old, and he followed this by bowling the left-handed Kallicharan round his legs, just grazing the leg stump. A superb left-handed catch by Old when Lloyd drove the ball back low meant that England had taken the first four wickets for 99 and at this stage clearly held the initiative.

Then came the partnership that turned the scales. Richards, the hero of the day and rightly named Man of the Match, was already installed and he found the right ally in King, who virtually

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Lord Isaac Alexander Vivian Richards plays a trademark pull on the on-side during his impudent unbeaten 138 as England captain Mike