

Batsmen falter again

SPORTS REPORTER

While the senior team were revelling in glory after their Super Eights qualification in the World Cup, their second-string compatriots were struggling at the Colombo Cricket Club ground in Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh left-arm spinner Enamul Haque returned with figures of 6-106 by claiming all the remaining five wickets of the Sri Lanka A innings as the home team were all out for 395 after resuming the day on 296-5.

But his brilliant effort wasn't enough for the Bangladesh A batsmen to as the visitors were reduced to 201-7 before stumps were drawn on the second day being 194 runs behind Sri Lanka A.

Out-of-favour Mehrab Hossain and in form Jahurul Islam gave the visitors, who trailed the two-match series by 1-0, a bright start by starting with a 69-run opening stand. But they lost wickets at regular intervals once Jahurul returned to the pavilion for 23 off 61 balls.

Left-hander Mehrab struck team highest 51 off 83 deliveries that contained eight boundaries while Tushar Imran contributed 33-ball 31 with the help of five boundaries.

Mahmudullah Riyad and Mohammad Sharif showed some resistance during their 45-run seventh wicket stand. Sharif was out for 20 but Riyad finished the day on 37 with Mosharraf Hossain accompanied him for 1.

Earlier two overnight batsmen Kaushal Silva smashed 75 and veteran Upul Chandana added 43 as Sri Lanka A added 99 runs to their overnight score.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA A: First innings 395 all out in 117 overs (overnight 296-5) (Gunawardene 10, Udawatte 19 Vandort 114, Kapugedera 38, Mubarak 55, Silva 75, Chandana 43, Hearth 14, Lakshitha 10 not out, Prasad 0, de Silva 0, extras 17; 1-60, Sharif 2-55, Enamul 6-106, Mehrab 1-33).

BANGLADESH A: First innings 201-7 in 57 overs (Jahurul 23, Mehrab 51, Nazimuddin 4, Tushar 31, Nadif 0, Mahmudullah 37 n.o., Sahagir 5, Sharif 20, Mosharraf 1 n.o., extras 29; de Silva 2-36, Herath 2-39, Prasad 1-24, Chandana 2-54).

Twenty20 settles Oval Test

AFP, London

Cricket officials from England and Pakistan have reached an agreement for compensation for Pakistan's forfeiture of last summer's Oval Test match.

Under the agreement, Pakistan will waive their right to a fee for a Twenty20 match as part of their tour of England in summer 2012 to settle the claim.

The Test match was declared forfeit by umpires Darrell Hair and Billy Doctrove after the Pakistan players stayed in their dressing room after the tea interval in protest at a five-run penalty for ball tampering.

The England and Wales Cricket Board estimated they lost 800,000 pounds (1.2million euros) after being forced to offer refunds to fans who had bought tickets for the fourth day of the Test, which was abandoned after tea, and for the final day.

The ECB initially set the Pakistan Cricket Board an October 31 deadline to settle the compensation row, but it has taken almost five months more to reach agreement.

As part of the revised plan, England's next tour of Pakistan in 2010 will now be postponed to January/February 2012, and will comprise of three Test matches and five one-day internationals.

Pakistan will then tour England in summer 2012, playing three more Tests and five one-day internationals in addition to the Twenty20 match which will settle the claim.

ECB chief executive David Collier commented: "The meetings with PCB demonstrated the goodwill and desire of both boards to find a cricketing solution to the issues arising from the Oval Test Match.

"Both boards were concerned that the timescale in the Future Tours Programme allocated for England's tour to Pakistan in 2010 would preclude a tour of three Test matches and five one-day internationals as scheduled."

England's tour commitments for 2010 are now significantly lighter. They will tour Bangladesh now in 2010 instead of 2012, playing two Tests and three ODIs.

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq was later cleared of ball tampering but found guilty of disrepute in relation to the post-tea no-show at the Oval and banned for four one-day matches.



PHOTO: AFP

West Indies fast bowler Daren Powell during a practice session at the Antigua Recreation Ground in St John's on Sunday.

Gary recalls good times

REUTERS, Basseterre



Wearing the years with the dignity and presence of an old blues musician, Garfield Sobers relived the past for the benefit of an appreciative modern audience during a fleeting visit to St Kitts last week.

Unlike a musician, writer or painter the active life of an athlete is fleeting and memories are short.

Fortunately some of Sobers's greatest moments have been captured on film, he has been lavishly praised in the written word and the statistics endure for ever.

Those who know little else about cricket or Sobers remember he hit six sixes in an over playing for Nottinghamshire back in 1968.

A younger generation were informed that only Sobers and Indian Ravi Shastri had previously managed the maximum number of sixes in an over when South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs struck Daan van Bunge over the boundary six times during a World Cup group match against the Netherlands last week.

Sobers, the greatest all-round cricketer in history and one of Wisden Almanac's five cricketers of the 20th century, was flown from Barbados to Basseterre for a ceremony in which he and Gibbs presented a sponsor's cheque for \$1 million (510,000 pounds) to charity.

"I had always learnt from listening to the older players," Sobers told a news conference. "I remembered Everton Weekes, now Sir Everton Weekes, and Lord (Learie) Constantine telling about the way they played the game of cricket and there were two versions of how to

play.

"Everton would always say to keep the ball on the ground. In that way no one could catch you. Lord Constantine, on the other hand, said if you need to get quick runs, hit in the air.

"There's nobody there to stop it. But you must make sure you clear the boundary. So I took Lord Constantine's version and luckily it came off ... wherever the last ball was pitched it was going to go for six."

Constantine was a fine mentor. Although his test record is modest he was a truly great all-round cricketer who played with the concentrated passion and Caribbean flair for the unexpected Sobers was to demonstrate too with such effect.

There is no quibbling about Sobers's figures. He scored over 8,000 runs at an average only a fraction below 58 with his highest score a then test world record 365 notout.

He captured 235 wickets, starting his career as an orthodox left-arm spinner, adding wrist spin to his repertoire on the somnolent Indian sub-continent pitches and lively swing bowling elsewhere.

He also led West Indies to series victories over Australia and England in the mid-1960s.

Such skills these days would make Sobers a wealthy man. Instead, although he was the prototype of the modern international cricketer, playing year round in Australia, England, at home and on tour the monetary rewards were not there.

"In the 70s and before that, the West Indies played the game because they loved it," he said.

"There was no kind of monetary fund really involved. It was sheer love and enjoyment playing the game. When I went to England in

1957 I used to get five pounds a week.

"The beauty of it was that we were representing our country, the incentive in those days was traveling, to travel to places like Australia, New Zealand, England and Pakistan and those places that you wouldn't have seen otherwise.

"So it was quite different and one could understand the different approach today, there's a lot of responsibility and people expect so much more these days."

Sobers flourished a bat which was little more than a willow wand compared to the bludgeons wielded by Gibbs and his contemporaries. He still hit the ball ferociously hard from a high backlift.

From a short loose-limbed approach and a long sweep of the arm he bowled wickedly late inswing at a pace which could be genuinely quick.

A swift, agile outfielder as a young man he became one of the great short-leg fielders to the bowling of spinner Lance Gibbs. His bearing and distinctive rolling gait radiated confidence.

"The walk?" he said. "It wasn't just something that was put on by me over the years playing cricket. It was just a natural walk and a lot of people copied it."

Recently, International Cricket Council chief executive Malcolm Speed said the West Indies team from the 1960s to the mid-1990s were the greatest phenomenon in 20th century team sport.

"The roots of rapid run-getting are clearly in the flamboyance of the West Indies players," he said at the annual Sonny Ramadhin lec

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Ashraf denies match-fixing

AFP, London

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Nasim Ashraf has denied the Pakistan cricket team were involved in any kind of match-fixing or corruption, Sky Sports website reported on Monday, as the Bob Woolmer murder investigation continued.

Investigators are studying videos from the hotel in Kingston, Jamaica, where Pakistan coach Woolmer, 58, and the rest of the

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Walkathon ends with fun

SPORTS REPORTER

The 100-km walkathon 'Grameenphone Activate Bangladesh -- Challenge of the Longest Beach-2007' ended amidst much fun and frolic at the Cox's Bazar beach yesterday.

The fourth day of the event was devoted to enjoyment and activities to commemorate the Independence Day. The main event was a fun 10-km walk with the Independence Day as a theme although various sports like cricket, beach volleyball and kabaddi were played in the morning.

The sporting events were followed by a cultural show in the evening which was attended by celebrities like Ayub Bacchu, Close Up One star Sweetie and notable artist Shahiduzzaman Sacchu.

The event was organized mainly to raise awareness about the necessity of physical exercise amongst the youth while at the same time highlight the attractions of Cox's Bazar -- which has the longest unbroken stretch of sea beach in the world -- to the world.

Lara relishes big test

AFP, St John's



Australia in the opening match of the World Cup Super Eights here on Tuesday.

West Indies, bidding to become the first host nation to win the world title, could not have chosen a more menacing opponent.

Australia cruised to victory in all of their three Group A first round matches, hitting over 300 runs in each and saving their best for last by scoring 377 against world number one and bitter rivals South Africa.

Lara intends to fight fire with fire when the two sides meet at the new

Sir Viv Richards Stadium.

"I know it is a different class of opponents in the game on Tuesday, but we've played well against Australia in the recent past and we expect to do well if we play to our strengths," said Lara.

His side beat Australia in the Champions Trophy group games in India in 2006, when seamer Jerome Taylor grabbed four wickets and Runako Morton top-scored with 90.

However, Australia had the last laugh in the final with an eight-wicket win.

Lara fell to the classic Aussie one-two in that game -- caught Gilchrist, bowled McGrath -- but believes the West Indies, buoyed by three wins in the World Cup so far and lifted by home support, are a better side now.

"We are very consistent. We're building to the point where we want to get onto the bigger games, the Australians, the South Africans, the

biggest teams in the tournament. So far we've performed really well. I'm proud of the guys," he said.

Antigua has been good to Lara. At the old Antigua Recreation Ground, he created history in 2004 when he smashed the highest ever Test score of 400.

That was achieved on a batsman's paradise of a pitch; whether the strip at the new Viv Richards ground is equally as generous remains to be seen.

West Indies may need all the help they can get.

Australia captain Ricky Ponting believes his team's impressive 83-run victory over South Africa on Saturday could be the key to securing a third successive World Cup title.

Matthew Hayden hit the fastest century in World Cup history with a 66-ball ton in that game in St Kitts, while Michael Clarke (92) and Ponting (91) guided Australia to 377-6, their highest total in the competition's history.

In reply, South Africa raced to a 160-run opening stand between AB de Villiers (92) and captain Graeme Smith (74) before being bowled out for 294 with two overs to spare.

"The West Indies are a very dangerous team, they are on home soil, they should know these conditions very well and they have great crowd support from all over the Caribbean," said Ponting.

"But it starts now. Every step you take in this tournament becomes more and more exciting."

TEAMS

WEST INDIES (from): Brian Lara (captain), Ian Bradshaw, Dwayne Bravo, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Corey Collymore, Chris Gayle, Kieron Pollard, Daren Powell, Denesh Ramdin, Marlon Samuels, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Lendl Simmons, Devon Smith, Dwayne Smith, Jerome Taylor.

AUSTRALIA (from): Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Nathan Bracken, Michael Clarke, Brad Haddin, Matthew Hayden, Brad Hodge, Brad Hogg, Michael Hussey, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart Clark, Glenn McGrath, Andrew Symonds, Shaun Tait, Shane Watson.

SUPER 8s SCHEDULE		
Date	Venue	Match
March 27	Antigua	West Indies v Australia
March 28	Guyana	South Africa v Sri Lanka
March 29	Antigua	West Indies v New Zealand
March 30	Guyana	Ireland v England
March 31	Antigua	Australia v Bangladesh
April 01	Guyana	West Indies v Sri Lanka
April 02	Antigua	Bangladesh v New Zealand
April 03	Guyana	Ireland v South Africa
April 04	Antigua	England v Sri Lanka
April 07	Guyana	Bangladesh v South Africa
April 08	Antigua	Australia v England
April 09	Guyana	Ireland v New Zealand
April 10	Grenada	West Indies v South Africa
April 11	Antigua	England v Bangladesh
April 12	Grenada	Sri Lanka v New Zealand
April 13	Barbados	South Africa v Ireland
April 14	Grenada	South Africa v New Zealand
April 15	Barbados	Bangladesh v Ireland
April 16	Grenada	Australia v Sri Lanka
April 17	Barbados	South Africa v England
April 18	Grenada	Ireland v Sri Lanka
April 19	Barbados	West Indies v Bangladesh
April 20	Grenada	Australia v New Zealand
April 21	Barbados	West Indies v England
(All matches start at 7:30pm Bangladesh time. BTV will show all the matches live)		

Last of the minnows

REUTERS, Port of Spain



with their heads held high.

The team of teachers, policemen and chartered accountants from an island of 60,000 people brought an amateur spirit to the showpiece event before their first-round exit.

From a results perspective, Bermuda were out of their depth.

Sri Lanka crushed them by 243 runs, India beat them by the biggest one-day victory margin after scoring a Cup record 413 runs, and they lost by seven wickets to Bangladesh to round off Group B.

But skipper Irvine Romaine, whose real job is a primary school

teacher, insists Bermuda added a dash of colour to the World Cup and deserved to be there.

"This was the first time and we brought some life to the game," said Romaine after his team bowed out on Sunday.

"The flavour we brought was great."

Policeman Dwayne Leverock instantly became the face of the team when the 19-stone left-arm spinner had England batsman Kevin Pietersen stumped in a warm-up game.

His popularity rose each time he celebrated a wicket with a jig or flung himself at slip to bring off a rare catch.

"Leverock, I'm sure you will all miss him," said Romaine. "You people look forward to him fielding."

Fans flew down to watch the action while the team's World Cup entry encouraged the Bermuda government to fund the football team.

"I'm proud of our supporters and the World Cup experience," said Romaine. Insisting it was unfair to harshly judge a team chosen from a pool of just 30-odd players who do not have turf pitches at home due to stringent laws on importing soil.

"Once we go home it is back to nine-to-five, dealing with your family, training in the evening twice a week and then trying to play with your club on Sundays and maybe Saturdays," said Romaine, who was given an ovation at the news conference.

"We've to make a living so we have to put our jobs first and our cricket second."

David Hemp, skipper of English county club Glamorgan and a rare professional in the team, said critics should be patient and realise

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Cops see CCTV footage

AFP, Kingston



One week after the murder of Pakistani cricket coach Bob Woolmer, Jamaican police on Sunday analysed security videos for clues that could indicate who strangled the former England international.

"It is critically important because it may provide an image of the killer or killers," Jamaica's deputy police commissioner Mark Shields told journalists here on Sunday.

He said investigators were carefully looking at images taken by closed circuit cameras in the Pegasus hotel and were focusing on the 12th floor, where Woolmer was found unconscious in his room on March 18. He was declared dead a few hours later.

His death came just one day after a stunning loss to minnows Ireland knocked Pakistan out of the World Cup, stirring speculation that match-fixing criminals may have been involved.

Shields said that while the video footage does not give a view of the room doors, it does show both ends of the corridor "and will give us an indication who was on that floor."

Investigators believe Woolmer probably knew his killer, or killers, as there was no sign of forced entry in his room.

Meanwhile, his team left

Jamaica on Saturday, after investigators questioned captain Inzamamul Haq, caretaker coach Mushtaq Ahmed and manager Talat Ali for a second time.

"There is nothing to suggest any of them is a suspect at this stage," Shields said.

The players were in London for a stopover before heading home.

Police had earlier questioned all members of the team and took DNA samples and fingerprints.

"They clarified a number of points," Shields said after Saturday's interviews.

He dismissed claims the players had been involved in a row with Woolmer after their defeat to Ireland on the eve of the killing.

"As far as I'm aware at the moment, the players and officials were very subdued and there was no heated exchange," he said.

A Pakistani diplomat who travelled from Washington to liaise with police in Kingston expressed anger over swirling rumours about the team.

"Please don't speculate. The team is traumatized," Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, the first secretary at the Pakistani embassy in Washington told journalists, adding: "There is no suspect or suspects."

Dalawar Chaudhry, who organized the London stopover, said the team were all "very, very down."

"I have had a word with all the boys and they have lost someone very near and dear to them. A father figure has been lost ... They haven't been sleeping well. It's been a very

emotional time," Chaudhry said. Nagging rumours of match-fixing in connection with Woolmer's death have cast a further shadow over the sport and the World Cup, which officials insisted had to go on despite the killing.

"Of course it's one of our lines of inquiry," Shields said of the speculation the criminal gangs may have been involved in the murder, either because Woolmer was about to expose the extent of the match-fixing practice in a forthcoming book or because of bets lost by Ireland's win.

Shields took up the issue with Jeff Rees, the chief investigator of the International Cricket Council's anti-corruption unit, who is currently in Kingston.

"One aspect is, what were the odds on Ireland if Ireland won? I understand that they were extremely good if you bet on Ireland," Shields told the London observer.

Woolmer's body will remain on the island until the conclusion of a coroner's inquest, which authorities said will be held as soon as possible.

A former England international, Woolmer had coached the Pakistan team since 2004.

Before that, he was coach of South Africa when their former captain Hansie Cronje was bought off by bookmakers in 1996, but was never alleged to have been involved himself.



Walkers hold Bangladesh flags before the start of a 10-km fun walk at the Cox's Bazar beach to commemorate Independence Day yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR