



PHOTO: AFP
Australia captain Ricky Ponting is beaten by a throw from Ramnaresh Sarwan (not in picture) during their World Cup Super Eights encounter at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in St John's on Tuesday.

SRI LANKA V SOUTH AFRICA

Pitch baffles sides

AFP, Georgetown



Guyana National Stadium Wednesday.

The match is the first of any consequence to be played at a new stadium, outside the capital Georgetown, where workers are still battling to get everything ready for Wednesday.

Rain prevented both teams from practising Monday and the pitch remained under cover, so the players could not make any assessment of it.

South African coach Mickey Arthur said he hoped the pitch would have more pace and bounce than Guyana's old international ground, the Bourda in Georgetown, which was notoriously low and slow.

"We have been told by (International Cricket Council pitch consultant) Andy Atkinson that it should have reasonable bounce," said Arthur.

More rain was predicted for Tuesday but it is expected to clear Wednesday, although there may be scattered thundershowers.

It is a crucial match for South Africa, who were beaten by Australia in their group decider in St Kitts on Saturday, whereas 1996 World Cup champions Sri Lanka

carried two points through to the Super Eight phase after defeating fellow qualifiers Bangladesh.

The previous World Cup meeting between the two sides was dramatic.

When rain ended play in Durban in 2003 the scores were tied on the Duckworth-Lewis method.

South Africa needed to win and for the second time in successive World Cups were eliminated after a tied match. It was an ignominious ending for the Proteas who failed to reach the second round in their own country.

South African captain Graeme Smith said his team would not be haunted by the memories of 2003.

"We haven't discussed it but we haven't forgotten about it either. It has not been a major issue in the team since I have taken over the captaincy."

The pitch could play a crucial role.

If it has pace and bounce, South Africa will be confident that they can overpower their opponents with their seam-based attack.

But if it helps the slow bowlers in any way it will be Sri Lanka who will fancy their chances.

Although South Africa have dominated home matches against Sri Lanka, they have won only one out of 11 matches in Sri Lanka, with their batsmen often getting tied down by the spinners.

Both teams have won eight times in 16 matches on neutral territory, the most recent when South Africa gained a convincing 78-run in an ICC Champions Trophy match in

Ahmedabad, India, last October.

The overall record shows both teams have won 21 times against each other, which gives Sri Lanka a better record against South Africa than any team other than Australia.

South Africa, who need to win to maintain their ranking as the world's top one-day international team and claim a 175,000-US dollar bonus for leading the rankings on April 1, batted well in their group matches in St Kitts.

Openers Smith and AB de Villiers and top order batsmen Jacques Kallis and Herschelle Gibbs showed good form.

But their bowlers were hampered by Australia, with key player Shaun Pollock conceding 83 runs in ten overs as Australia piled up 377 for six.

Pollock is likely to be put under pressure again by Sri Lanka's aggressive veteran Sanath Jayasuriya, who made a rapid century against Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka's batting has been solid all down the order, with Chamara Silva hitting quick-scoring half-centuries in each of his team's first three matches.

Their bowlers have yet to be mastered and were impressive in the win over India which consigned the Indians to an early flight home. Champion off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran took three for 41.

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Did U Know?

India's Yajurvindra Singh and Greg Chappell of Australia share the world record of taking the most catches, 7, in a Test match.



Habibul Bashar
(Bangladesh cricket captain)
"As long as we are there I won't miss anyone."
Whether the Tigers would miss India and Pakistan in the Super Eights of the World Cup.

What to WATCH
BTv & SET Max
ICC World Cup 2007 (Super Eights)
South Africa v Sri Lanka
Live at 7:30 pm

DAY'S EVENT
B. League
Farashganj v Arambagh (4:45 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

LOCAL SNIPPETS
SPORTS REPORTER

Saifuddin had a good time in the NI Khan Independence Day badminton (ranking) tournament at the National Wooden Floor Gymnasium yesterday. In the men's singles, he beat Nishan 21-14, 21-15 while in the doubles, he along with Tushar beat

Dav dreams golden future

AFP, St John's



the World Cup Super Eights.

Bangladesh have made the second round for the first time and will face Australia, Whatmore's own country, in their next match here on Saturday.

"It's terrific," said Whatmore of his team whose average age is just 22.

"We've got a couple of more experienced players, but the vast majority of them are under 25, which is absolutely perfect for an emerging team like us.

"They now have an absolutely wonderful opportunity to play against seven of the world's best sides and they will grow enormously because of

that experience.

"I understand that we are still ranked number nine in the world and have a long way to go before we are consistently challenging the big boys. But we've got the resources and talent to really progress and we will be going to the Super Eights to really enjoy ourselves.

"And from a personal point of view it's great to be in a position where your team is playing well and your methods are being validated."

Whatmore is no stranger to World Cup sensations having been at the helm when Sri Lanka won the title in 1996.

Bangladesh made the second round with a win over India and a nervy seven-wicket victory over Bermuda achieved in the semi-gloom of the Queen's Park Oval on Sunday.

"I thought the game (against Bermuda) was an extremely difficult one and the boys did brilliantly to keep their focus," said Whatmore.

"I know we were only chasing a small total (96), but the ball was doing all sorts of things out there in the first ten overs, and it took a very brave batting performance from the middle order to get us through.

"They've never really been in that situation before, with so much on the line and with so much to lose.

"This is very significant for us. It's something we always believed we could do if we played to the best of our ability and had a little bit of luck," Whatmore told reporters.

"We were the first team to arrive in the Caribbean and had a couple of extra matches in the conditions against Canada and Bermuda. We've only had one training session called off because of bad weather and in general our preparation has been as thorough and as focused as it possibly could be.

"People might think we've caused upsets' but we knew deep down that we were capable of beating the best teams on our day."

CA's aid to families of Rana, Shetu

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed has directed the Sports Ministry to give financial assistance to the family members of late national cricketer Manzurul Islam Rana and first-class cricketer Sajjadul Hasan Shetu, who were killed in a tragic road accident in Khulna on March 16.

As per the directive of the Chief Adviser, Youth and Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday decided to provide Tk 3,00,000 for the family of Rana and Tk 1,00,000 for the family of Shetu from the Ministry's fund, informed Press Secretary to the Chief Adviser Syed Fahim Munaim.

Nayeem shapes Rajshahi win

SPORTS REPORTER

A blazing 81 by Nayeem Islam enabled defending champions Rajshahi's way to a bright start in the one-day competition of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 8th National Cricket League with a thrashing 72-run win against Khulna at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Title aspirants Dhaka recovered from early hiccup to beat Barisal by five wickets at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium while Chittagong crashed to a 60-run loss to Sylhet at BKSP in the other opening day's fixtures.

RAJSHAH-KHULNA

Left-arm spinner Murad Khan returned with 5-50 but still, Rajshahi piled up a huge 285-6 in the stipulated 50 overs after opting to bat.

Rabiul Islam (32) and Junaid Siddiquee (50) laid the foundation by sharing 63 runs in 10.5 overs for the opening wicket before Nayeem and Anisur Rahman produced 124 runs for the fourth wicket.

Man-of-the-match Nayeem smashed four boundaries and a six in his 85-ball innings while Anisur struck five fours to score a 74-ball 63.

Asadullah Khan made 78 off 88 balls with the help of four boundaries and a six but it was not enough for Khulna to chase down the total as they were all out for 213.

DHAKA-BARISAL

Chasing 239 runs to win, Dhaka lost openers Al Shahriar and Uttam Sarker within 12 runs but an unbeaten 95-run sixth wicket partnership between Sharifullah and Sajjad Kadir guided them to a convincing victory.

Sharifullah hit 56 off 49 balls, laced with four boundaries and a six, and Sajjad smashed four boundaries and a pair of sixes to score a run-a-ball 47 as Dhaka reached the target losing five wickets in 46.1 overs.

Earlier, Iftakar Nayeem quickfired 81 off 80 balls with half-dozen fours as Barisal were all out for 238 in 49.4 overs after deciding

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PHOTO: STAR
Rahmatganj captain Shoaib Hossain Sony wins a tackle against Muktiyoddha Sangsad hattrick hero Alfaz Ahmed (R) during their B. League clash at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP
A FORLORN FIGURE: India legend Sachin Tendulkar walks towards the swimming pool of the hotel in Port of Spain on Monday.

No knee-jerk now

AFP, New Delhi



ved to probe the team's World Cup debacle.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has called former captains for a brainstorming session on April 6 and 7 that will also hear Chappell's views on the team's dismal performance in the Caribbean.

India, the 1983 champions and 2003 finalists, failed to advance to the Super Eights round after losing two of their three matches in Group B of the preliminary stage.

India were stunned by Bangladesh in their first match, then hammered first-timers Bermuda in the second before losing a must-win game against Sri Lanka to bow out of the tournament.

It was India's worst World Cup performance since the second edition in 1979 in England, where

they had also won just one match.

Inderjit Bindra, a former BCCI president and still one of its most influential members, rubbished media speculation that the board had already decided to sack both Chappell and Dravid.

"We are all disappointed but I can promise you there will be no knee-jerk reaction," Bindra told reporters.

"We will hear both Chappell and Dravid and see how best we can find a long-term solution. By mak-

ing sweeping changes we are not going to improve Indian cricket overnight.

Chappell, a former Australian captain, has served as India's coach for a two-year term that was due to end after the World Cup.

The Indian media predicted that Chappell would either be sacked from the job or quit on his own after returning from the Caribbean this week.

"The meeting next week has

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TODAY'S MATCH

Team	Time	Venue
South Africa v Sri Lanka	7:30 pm	Guyana

Ad