

Richards keen on India job

PTI, Antigua

West Indian batting great Sir Vivian Richards is not averse to the idea of coaching the Indian cricket team and make the players "mentally stronger".

Richards said the Indians were the most talented side on paper but lacked the mental toughness to be able to succeed at the highest level.

Asked specifically if he would accept the offer to coach the Indian team, he said "I would like to be a part of the Indian set up, I would deal with the mental side of things".

"I believe I would be very helpful in the mental side of things. I have done many motivational speeches and chat with some of the best teams in the world... I think I could help where the head is concerned", Richards told CNN-IBN.

Disappointed with India's early exit from the World Cup, the former West Indian captain said teams from the sub-continent needed to have "a sense of steel in the mind" while performing in bigger tournaments.

"I am very disappointed. I have always felt that on paper they are the most talented team that you can see. I also believe the same for Pakistan. But I also believe that when it comes to such huge occasions, mentally they never seem to get it right."

"I think in the future that one of the things that they will have to work on. How strong you can get these guys mentally will matter because cricket is not just about the ability and talent that you have in order to go out and hit the ball around," he pointed out.

Providence is not so divine

INTERNET, undated

While the Caribbean islands may have staged their opening group matches without too much fuss, the mainland state of Guyana could well be the one that lets this World Cup down. South Africa's coach Mickey Arthur could not hide his frustration yesterday at the inadequacy of the new Providence Stadium's facilities.

South Africa have a vital Super Eight encounter today against Sri Lanka - a match they really need to win if they are to shake off the perception of them as World Cup chokers. But their normally meticulous preparations have been badly disrupted by the shambolic state of the ground.

"The nets are wet and the run-ups are wet," said Arthur. "Some of the batsmen have had throw-downs and after a major fight the bowlers have been allowed to practice on the outfield. You get used to improvising with teams and tactics, but here we are having to improvise with facilities."

The International Cricket Council says there are no plans to fine Guyana's local organising committee for their failure to deliver the basic requirements of an international stadium. "They are 98 per cent there," said a spokesman, "and I am sure that with a lot of hard work everything will be ready for the match."

The good news is that the playing area itself looks in fine shape, despite heavy rain. Georgetown, Guyana's atmospheric capital, stands several metres below sea level. But while Test matches at the old Bourda Oval were hardly ever known to reach a conclusion, the Providence Stadium has been built on higher ground. Its ground-staff boast that two inches of rain will drain away in half-an-hour.

It takes more than a nicely-tended outfield to make a decent cricket ground, however, and problems are expected with the incidentals: things like power sockets, phone lines and broadcasting facilities. The BBC team turned up to find nothing in their booth but a table and chair. Unless equipment can be shipped in from St Vincent, their commentary will end up being broadcast over crackly mobile phonelines.

A top innings'

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tions have all been made against Australia since the 2005/06 season, including a world record 438 for nine by South Africa in Johannesburg in March last year.

"It's fair to say we've had some big scores chased down so first of all it's nice to know we are making the big scores," said Buchanan.

"But if we look around the world, the game has changed and teams are finding it harder and harder to hold sides that are chasing."

And Buchanan said he was encouraged by the way Australia held their nerve after South Africa's rapid start in pursuit of 378 for victory last weekend where the run-out of AB de Villiers and the clamp suffered by Graeme Smith helped the titleholders.

"I think we did a very good job against South Africa albeit a run out and possibly a bout of cramp helped our cause," said Buchanan.

"Nonetheless our bowlers and our fielders stuck with the task and we were able to take nine wickets for 70 runs on a ground that was batting friendly."

"I'm pretty pleased with the way the bowling group is coming along."

Opening batsman Vincent's World Cup ended Sunday when his wrist was broken while batting in the nets by a delivery from fast bowler teammate Shane Bond.

Fulton, normally a middle-order batsman, is now set to open alongside Fleming.

Fulton has played in just one of New Zealand's three matches at this tournament - the 114-run victory over Canada last Thursday that saw the Black Caps complete a hat-trick of wins in Group C where he made 47.

But the 28-year-old, whose only previous experience of opening at this level saw him score nine on debut against

Bangladesh in November 2004, has been in fine form of late.

His last five one-day internationals have featured three fifties and Fleming told reporters: "Pete is a different type of player (to Lou) and if anything his form is outstanding."

"To leave him out of the first couple of games was incredibly difficult. The positive is he gets a chance, and a consistent chance, to bat in one spot for a while."

"Pete's played up and down the order knowing he was going to be a utility batter," Fleming explained of Fulton, who averages over 35 in his 29 one-day internationals.

New Zealand are set to be without another batsman in Ross Taylor, who sustained a hamstring injury against Kenya, against the West Indies although the talented shot-maker is still with the squad.

"It's been a dramatic week with Lou going and Ross working hard on getting back, it has changed the balance of the side," Fleming said.

"But the core is still there and



PHOTO: COURTESY

Former chief adviser to the caretaker government Latifur Rahman poses with the winners of the two-day Bank Alfalah Independence Day Cup golf tournament at the Ghatal Golf Club at the Shaheed Salihuddin Cantonment on Saturday.

Gibbs's tips for Irish spinner

APP, Georgetown

Ireland have been given some timely advice on 'spin ahead of their World Cup Super Eights clash against England from West Indies legend Lance Gibbs. Ireland's top spinner Kyle McCallan said he was overjoyed to meet 72-year-old Gibbs who was the first spinner to reach 300 Test wickets. "It's always nice to meet one of the legends of the game, and interesting to see the state of his spinning finger," said McCallan.

"The way he grips the ball is completely alien to the way I grip it. He talked about gripping it hard, spinning it hard. I try to give it a rip but that's not the way he did it. "But it was a privilege to meet him, he still looks well and is a fit looking man."

Meanwhile, McCallan admits he is getting his motivation for the

next stage of the World Cup from the internet.

"I am reading so many comments at the moment, saying Ireland shouldn't be in the Super Eights. No matter what you do, people are trying to knock you down. They are saying we have qualified on the basis of one performance," he told www.cricketeurope1.net.

"Hasn't everyone? England lost to New Zealand. They are only in the Super Eights because they beat Kenya."

"They're all motivating factors for us to go out and perform another upset."

Ireland, who shocked Pakistan in the first round, meet England in their first Super Eights clash here on Friday.

It will be the second match between Ireland and England in nine months with England winning in Belfast by 38 runs in June last year.

"We were disappointed at how

we bowled against England in Belfast," said McCallan.

"They haven't got Marcus Trescothick, who got a big hundred against us, albeit they now have Kevin Pietersen and Andrew Flintoff, but we didn't disgrace ourselves in that match and we'll take that experience into Friday's game."

"They've lost Harmison from that attack and while we cannot be overly-confident going into the game, we can realistically compete with them. Having heard what we've heard about the pitch here, apparently it suits the slower bowlers so I hope that they will play the pace bowlers. It will come on to the bat and make for faster scoring."

"The guys have coped with the quicker bowling rather well and if we can hit the ball down the ground in the middle overs, we should get more runs. The batters know what they have to do."

Chappell unhappy with WC length

APP, Bridgetown

Former Australian captain Ian Chappell has called for the World Cup to be shortened.

The marathon 2007 tournament in the Caribbean lasts for almost seven weeks and features 16 teams.

But Chappell believes it can be trimmed.

"I am quite happy with the globalisation of the game, but I really think the World Cup is running too long at the moment," said the Australian.

"Let's take the eight major teams as they are. I would then like to see two teams qualify to make it ten and then I would like to see those teams play each other once, so that everybody has played each other," Chappell said in his www.cricinfo.com column.

"The team that goes on to win the World Cup would have played all the other teams once, no one will have missed out and the tournament will come to an end much

faster."

Chappell also thinks a shortened version would still involve the non-test playing nations who, with the exception of Ireland, have been generally out of the depth here.

"For those who would then jump up and down and say that there is no encouragement for the minnows, what I would say is that firstly, they play in the qualifying tournament," added Chappell.

"We had these practice games before the tournament that all the major teams played in, which I thought was a good idea as it helps in getting used to the conditions.

"The minnows could be involved in those games as they could then play against the major sides. I think the most important thing is that it is not so much what you do with the minnows at the World Cup."

Azhar also said the team composition for the mega event "was not right" but did not elaborate on what was wrong in it.

Asked whether senior players should be in the team or not, he said it was for the selectors to decide and he could not comment on what was wrong in it.

Azhar was here for announcing the setting up of the country's biggest indoor stadium which will be built at Koba village in Gandhinagar district.

Fulton gets captain's backing

APP, St John's

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming believes Peter Fulton is ideally placed to fill the gap left by the injured Lou Vincent when the Black Caps begin their World Cup Super Eight campaign against hosts West Indies on Thursday.

Opening batsman Vincent's World Cup ended Sunday when his wrist was broken while batting in the nets by a delivery from fast bowler teammate Shane Bond.

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Rahul Dilip's leader

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's chief selector Dilip Vengsarkar has come to the defence of Rahul Dravid after the skipper came under fire for his team's first-round elimination at the World Cup.

India, runners-up in the last edition, crashed out in the Caribbean last week after losing two out of three group matches, to Bangladesh and former champions Sri Lanka.

India fans in the cricket-crazy country have demanded the axe fall on Dravid and coach Greg Chappell.

"He is an experienced campaigner and has all the leadership qualities," Vengsarkar told national daily Times of India on Wednesday.

Vengsarkar recalled former Australian captain Richie Benaud's comments on the role of the captain: "Captaincy is 90 per cent luck and 10 per cent ability."

"He (Dravid) has done quite well thus far. After all, as they say, a captain is only as good as his team."

Vengsarkar said the defeat to Bangladesh was a one-off.

"I feel Bangladesh played its best cricket in that match. I am positive if India plays Bangladesh in the future, it will win nine out of 10 matches.

"But nobody knows what will happen in that one match. That's the uncertainty of cricket. Whatever the Bangladeshis did in that match clicked."

The Indian cricket board is to analyse the national team's World Cup performance at a meeting next week.

Pakistan not

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them before his death that indicated he was set to blow the whistle on cricket corruption.

However Shields acknowledged on Tuesday that a possible match-fixing link "is coming to light".

"One of those that keeps coming to light, it looks like, is around match-fixing and bookies, so therefore that's the clear line of inquiry, but it's not the only line," Shields said.

Officers from the International Cricket Council's Anti-Corruption Unit, including chief investigator Jeff Rees, are in Jamaica to assist with the inquiry.

Having scored 237 runs in 49.3 overs, they bowled out Amligola out for only 100 runs, with Shakhsawat and Rajib sharing seven wickets.

In the other matches, Gazia Tank (147-3) registered a seven-wicket victory over Sadharan Bima (145-10) at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium and Suraj Tarun (274-7) defeated Rupali Bank (240-10) by 34 runs at BKSP.

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