



Australia captain Ricky Ponting lofts the ball over mid-on off England spinner Monty Panesar (not in picture) as wicketkeeper Paul Nixon looks on during their Cricket World Cup Super Eights match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in St John's on Sunday.

PHOTO AFP

Aussies beatable: Vaughan

AFP, St John's



England captain Michael Vaughan insisted Australia were beatable at this World Cup despite seeing his side go down to a convincing seven-wicket defeat against the reigning champions.

Australia, bidding for an unprecedented third straight title, have now gone 24 matches unbeaten at the World Cup since losing to Pakistan in 1999.

Yet there were moments in Sunday's match here at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium where England had their oldest foes on the ropes.

At 164 for two, with Kevin Pietersen -- whose 104 was England's first individual hundred of the tournament -- and Ian Bell (77) going well in a stand of 140, Vaughan's team looked on course for a score of around 280.

But instead they were bowled out for 247 with veteran Glenn McGrath taking the key wicket of Bell and man-of-the-match Shaun Tait, who'd removed both openers, ensuring England then lost two quick wickets by getting rid of the dangerous Paul Collingwood. Yet McGrath, in what could be his last match against England, had seen his first three overs go for 25 runs while Michael Clarke and Andrew Symonds conceded 67 in their combined 10-over stint.

"They are looking a real powerhouse at the World Cup but I still

think they are beatable," said Vaughan, who suffered yet another batting failure after playing on to fast bowler Tait for five.

"No one team in the world is unbeatable and I'm sure if good teams come up against them and if we meet them again I'd be confident we could produce a performance to beat them. "It's very frustrating. We were in a great position to put Australia under a huge amount of pressure."

England now need to win their three remaining Super Eights games -- against Bangladesh, South Africa and West Indies -- and hope other results fall in their favour to reach the semifinals.

"We'll need to win those three games but we're certainly a team that can do that," added Vaughan.

Well though Pietersen played,

runs dried up late on with England scoring a mere 51 off the last 10 overs.

"One of our strengths over the last few games is that in the last 10 overs we've been able to hit 70, 80 runs quite easily and today we just lost wickets at key periods and put Kevin under a lot of pressure in that last 10 overs," Vaughan explained.

Bangladesh, who in the group phase beat India, upset the formbook again Saturday with a comprehensive 67-run defeat of former world number one side South Africa.

"They look a dangerous team. The spinners, the three of them play a huge part," Vaughan said ahead of Wednesday's match against the Asian side in Barbados.

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Bracewell rates Tigers win highly

AFP, Georgetown

Bangladesh's shock win over South Africa is a warning for other teams and has made the World Cup more interesting, according to New Zealand coach John Bracewell.

Bangladesh achieved a historic 67-run win over South Africa on Saturday to score their first points in the second round. Their win also threw the race for the semifinals wide open.

"I think it (Bangladesh's win) was a warning that you must respect all teams in all conditions in this competition," said Bracewell whose team face outsiders Ireland in their third Super Eights match here on Monday.

"Obviously respect is the key word we use. It has made the tournament interesting and it's an outstanding turn to the tournament. The semifinals are not going to be decided until the later stages."

New Zealand are among the leading contenders for a place in the last four with six points from three matches. They achieved an all-win record in the group stage with wins over England, Kenya and Canada.

With two carry over points in the bag, they have thrashed Bangladesh by nine wickets and hosts West Indies by seven wickets in their two Super Eights matches so far.

Bracewell reckoned Bangladesh exploited the slow paced wicket at the Guyana National stadium to the best effect.

"I am not sure it was compla

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Powerplay decision justified

AFP, St John's

Ricky Ponting believes his decision to delay the third powerplay proved crucial in his team's seven-wicket World Cup win over England here on Sunday.

Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell were cruising along, putting on 140 runs for the third wicket as England sighted a score beyond 300 at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

But Ponting's decision to call for the third powerplay from the 27th over paid off as Bell was quickly removed, caught by Michael Hussey off Glenn McGrath for 77, followed by the dangerous Paul Collingwood who was caught behind by Adam Gilchrist off Shaun Tait for just two.

The run-rate dried up, the English tail was exposed and Michael Vaughan's side limped to 247 all out before Australia knocked off the runs to maintain their 100-percent record in the tournament.

"It was a really tight game and Kevin and Ian played beautifully," admitted Ponting.

"The intensity was the difference today. We kept up the pressure and the bowlers did a terrific job."

"We had to keep the third powerplay back. If you take them too early, it can be really hard work for the bowlers. So I decided to hold off a little bit to see if the ball would reverse swing."

"It reversed a little so we took the powerplay then and Shaun Tait in his spell was terrific."

Ponting, who made 86 in his team's innings, believes mastery of the powerplay, when fielding restrictions come into operation, is a useful tool in dictating the pace of a game.

"When they came in I think a lot of captains just wanted to get them out of the way as quickly as possible," said Ponting whose side are on top of the Super Eights table and virtually guaranteed a semifinal place.

"But conditions vary around the world and it means sometimes it

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Left is right!

AFP, Georgetown



Left is proving to be just right at the World Cup.

Bowlers are finding it difficult to keep their reputation intact against teams having a left-handed power-hitter at the top of the order in the Caribbean.

Australians Matthew Hayden and Adam Gilchrist, Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya, New Zealander Stephen Fleming and South African Graeme Smith have proved that power-hitting

is the key to setting or chasing big targets.

Teenager Tamim Iqbal may be in the infancy of his international career, but has played a big role in Bangladesh's shock wins over India and South Africa. The left-handed opener scored 51 against India and 38 against South Africa.

One of the main reasons for the West Indies' below-par batting performances is the mediocre form of Chris Gayle, another left-handed opener capable of seizing the initiative for his team when in full flow.

Unfortunately for the West Indies, Gayle is still without a half-century

after six matches.

Hayden and Jayasuriya are playing in their last Cup and look determined to leave their mark on the biggest one-day event.

The Australian's hunger is understandable as he has been in and out of the one-day side since the 2005 Ashes tour of England.

"I wasn't in the side about six months ago. I'm just very grateful for the opportunity. I've really worked hard over the last year and a half to get my position back," said Hayden who was the tournament's top-scorer going into Sunday's

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PHOTO AFP

Australia paceman Shaun Tait (L), who took three for 41, raises his arm for joy after dismissing England captain Michael Vaughan during their Cricket World Cup Super Eights clash at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in St John's on Sunday.

Tait impresses Ponting

AFP, St John's



Australia captain Ricky Ponting has backed Shaun Tait to fill the void left by Brett Lee and spearhead the team's charge for a third straight World Cup title.

The 24-year-old quick was named man-of-the-match for his three for 41 in Australia's seven-wicket Super Eights victory against England here at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium as his table-topping team moved a step closer towards the semifinals.

Tait beat England captain Michael Vaughan (five) and the recalled Andrew Strauss (seven) for pace, the experienced duo both playing on.

He then returned in the middle of the innings to maintain the pressure by having Paul Collingwood, a thorn in Australia's side during England's 2-0 CB series finals win in February, caught behind for two. Often criticised for his wayward-

ness, Tait was noticeably more accurate than in previous games and Ponting said his strike bowler was following a similar path to Lee, who didn't make it to the Caribbean because of an ankle injury.

"The pleasing thing in Shaun being man-of-the-match is that he took a look at his bowling in the first few games and found an area or two where he could change things around a little bit."

"It's great to see the younger guys working on their games and getting some results out of it," said Ponting who backed up Tait's efforts with an 86 that helped see Australia, chasing 248, win with 16 balls to spare.

Tait, who has now taken 11 wickets at under 23 apiece this tournament, added: "I've been a bit disappointed throughout the tournament with my first few overs of every game."

"I haven't been hitting my straps quite like I should be. I've been defended well and managed to contain us whenever we went forward," lamented Sevilla coach Juan Carlos Ramos.

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Australia ride on Ricky

AFP, St John's



England by seven wickets in the Super Eights match at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium here Sunday.

Together with Michael Clarke, Ponting shared a third-wicket stand of 112 as Australia reached their target of 248 with 16 balls to spare.

Clarke was 55 not out off 63 balls and Andrew Symonds, who finished the match with a four off Sajid Mahmood, unbeaten on a run-a-ball 28.

Although England didn't require a victory to keep their semifinal hopes alive, this defeat left them needing to win all three of their remaining Super Eights matches against Bangladesh, South Africa and the West Indies while hoping other results go their way.

Victory meant Australia, chasing an unprecedented third straight title, had gone 24 unbeaten at the World Cup since a 10-run defeat against Pakistan at Headingley in 1999.

Kevin Pietersen's maiden World Cup hundred was the cornerstone of England's 247 all out.

Pietersen, whose 104 was England's first century this World Cup, put on 140 for the third wicket with Ian Bell (77) after his side slumped to 24 for two.

But Australia fought back by taking three wickets for 15 runs in

six overs as England declined from 164 for two to 179 for five.

Openers Adam Gilchrist (27) and Matthew Hayden (41) saw Australia off to a brisk start before the former was caught by Paul Collingwood at square gully off Andrew Flintoff.

Hayden was clean bowled by Durham medium-pacer Collingwood after playing down the wrong line.

Runs were then hard to come by and Ponting, on 21 had given up when opposing captain Michael

Vaughan's throw from mid-wicket just missed the stumps with the batsman yards out.

Ponting appeared to be easing his way to a 24th one-day international hundred when he was run out, sent back by Clarke for 86, by Collingwood's direct hit running round from point. He faced 106 balls with 11 fours.

Pietersen nearly caught Symonds on four, but the umpires correctly ruled he didn't have full

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AUSTRALIA V ENGLAND SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Super Eights match between Australia and England at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Sunday:

ENGLAND	R	M	B	4s	6s
Bell c Hussey b McGrath	77	126	90	9	0
Vaughan b Tait	5	12	8	1	0
Strauss b Tait	7	11	10	0	0
Pietersen c Clarke b Bracken	104	182	122	6	1
Collingwood c Gilchrist b Tait	2	3	5	0	0
Flintoff st Gilchrist b Hogg	4	20	19	0	0
Bopara c Hussey b Bracken	21	43	36	2	0
Nixon c Hodge b McGrath	8	14	6	0	1
Mahmood c Hodge b Bracken	0	2	2	0	0
Panesar not out	1	3	2	0	0
Anderson lbw b McGrath	0	2	1	0	0
Extras: (b-4, lb-4, w-7, nb-3)	18				
Total: (All out in 49.5 overs)	247				

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-24, 3-164, 4-167, 5-179, 6-230, 7-240, 8-240, 9-246, 10-247.

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PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid's in-form Brazilian Robinho (R) runs past an Osasuna player during their Primera Liga match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid on Sunday.

SEVILLA SPURN ANOTHER CHANCE Real back in the hunt

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona had gifted Sevilla a great opportunity to replace them as the league leaders when Diego Milito scored the game-winning goal in a 1-0 win for Real Zaragoza on Saturday.

It means Barcelona remain on course for their third successive La Liga crown.

The Catalan club have 56 points from 29 games, and nine games remaining in one of the closest title races of recent years, with Sevilla having now reduced their advantage to one point.

"We did everything we could to try and get a goal but Racing defended well and managed to contain us whenever we went forward," lamented Sevilla coach Juan Carlos Ramos.

Sevilla's Brazilian international right back Daniel Alves hit the crossbar after 32 minutes while Duda and Alexandr Kerzhakov also spurned chances to grab a late winner for the hosts.

The Spanish league's leading scorer Fredi Kanoute, although the Malian striker has now been joined at the top of the rankings by Milito with 19 goals, started on the bench for the second successive game.

Ramos intended to rest Kanoute ahead of their UEFA Cup quarterfinal second leg match at Tottenham Hotspur on Thursday but sent him on after 68 minutes in an ultimately fruitless bid to break the deadlock.

Third-placed Real Madrid took advantage of the leading pair dropping points to edge closer to their championship rivals with a 2-0 win over Osasuna.

Real are now only one point behind Sevilla and two behind their bitter rivals Barca.

"We've clawed back the points,

we're in good physical condition and the good spirit of the team is important. Also, when we win games like this it's good psychologically, and that's the most important thing," added the Italian.

Raul Gonzalez opened the scoring midway through the first half with a left foot shot from just outside the six-yard box after being left unmarked.

Robinho added Real's second goal 10 minutes from time, after Osasuna goalkeeper Ricardo Lopez had batted away a Gonzalo Higuain cross straight to the feet of the Brazilian striker.

Atletico Madrid remain sixth after their 1-0 win at Villarreal, the only goal of the game coming from a Fabiano Eller header after 31 minutes.

Fernando Torres had a chance to put Atletico further ahead but the Spanish international striker missed his fourth penalty in the league this season three minutes from time.

Recreativo Huelva move up to seventh and maintain their dreams of playing in Europe for the first time next after their 4-2 win over

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