



New Zealand opener Peter Fulton launches a sweep shot during his polished 83 as Ireland wicketkeeper Niall O'Brien looks on during their World Cup Super Eights match at the Guyana National Stadium in Georgetown on Monday.

NZ get top spot

AFP, Georgetown



Peter Fulton hit a solid 83 as New Zealand boosted their chances of qualifying for the World Cup semifinals with an emphatic 129-run win over Ireland in a Super Eights match here on Monday.

The opener's sixth half-century and a rollicking 71-run stand for the eighth wicket bailed Brendon McCullum and James Franklin helped New Zealand reach a challenging 263-8.

Left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori bagged four wickets as New Zealand dismissed debutants Ireland for 134 to post their sixth successive win in the tournament, including three in the first round.

Defending champions Australia and New Zealand are the only unbeaten sides with eight points from four matches. They are followed by Sri Lanka (6/4), South Africa (4/4), England (2/4), the West Indies (2/4) and Bangladesh (2/4).

Ireland never looked like threatening New Zealand's total despite an entertaining 75-run stand for the fourth wicket between Kevin O'Brien (49) and brother Niall O'Brien (30). Kevin smashed three huge sixes in his 45-ball knock.

Fast bowler Shane Bond rocked Ireland with two quick wickets in his lively opening spell,

removing William Porterfield and Jeremy Bray to eventually finish with 2-18 off five overs.

Vettori and off-spinner Jeetan Patel (2-32) kept non-stop pres-

sure on Ireland, who lost their last seven wickets for 24 runs.

Earlier, man-of-the-match Fulton's responsible knock and a late flurry of boundaries from

wicket-keeper McCullum (47) and Franklin (34 not out) put paid to Ireland's hopes of restricting New Zealand to a modest total.

It was New Zealand's depth in batting that thwarted Ireland who reduced the opposition to 189-7 in the 43rd over before losing their way in the closing stages, with 45 coming in the last three overs.

McCullum's 37-ball knock contained a six in the last over that smashed a window-pane in one of the boxes, while Franklin hit one six and three fours in his 22-ball innings.

Seamer Dave Langford-Smith (2-41), and off-spinners Kyle McCallan (2-35) and Andrew White (2-45) had bowled with discipline to raise Ireland's hopes of containing New Zealand despite Fulton's half-century.

The New Zealand opener regained form with a well-paced innings just when his teammates had been struggling for runs against Ireland's disciplined seam-spin combination.

Fulton, a middle-order batsman opening the innings in the World Cup, had made only 62 in his last three matches before playing a valuable innings.

New Zealand were not allowed to build a partnership as Fleming (10), Hamish Marshall (16), Scott Styris (10), Craig McMillan (22) and all-rounder Oram (20) all got starts, but none could play a long knock.

AND V NEW ZEALAND SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Super Eights match between New Zealand and Ireland at the Providence Stadium in Guyana on Monday:

| NEW ZEALAND | R | M | B | 4s | 6s |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|------|
| Fulton lbw b McCallan | 83 | 160 | 110 | 9 | 0 |
| Fleming c Porterfield b Rankin | 10 | 26 | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| Marshall c Morgan b Langford-Smith | 16 | 21 | 21 | 2 | 0 |
| Styris c O'Brien b Langford-Smith | 10 | 25 | 15 | 1 | 0 |
| McMillan c Johnston b McCallan | 22 | 29 | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| Oram c Morgan b White | 20 | 78 | 48 | 0 | 0 |
| McCullum c Morgan b Johnston | 47 | 49 | 37 | 2 | 1 |
| Vettori c O'Brien b White | 5 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Franklin not out | 34 | 31 | 22 | 3 | 1 |
| Bond not out | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Extras: (b-3, lb-1, w-12) | 16 | | | | |
| Total: (For eight wickets in 50 overs) | 263 | | | | |
| Did not bat: Patel. | | | | | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-59, 3-83, 4-118, 5-172, 6-181, 7-189, 8-260. | | | | | |
| Bowler | O | M | R | W | NB/W |
| Langford-Smith | 10 | 1 | 41 | 2 | w-1 |
| Rankin | 8 | 0 | 55 | 1 | w-7 |
| Johnston | 10 | 0 | 63 | 1 | w-1 |
| McCallan | 10 | 0 | 35 | 2 | w-1 |
| White | 10 | 0 | 45 | 2 | - |
| KO'Brien | 2 | 0 | 20 | 0 | - |
| IRELAND | R | M | B | 4s | 6s |

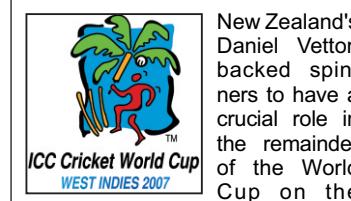
SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez (C) watches his charges as they drill at the Melwood training complex prior to their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal second leg clash against PSV Eindhoven on Tuesday.

Spin to rule: Vettori

AFP, Georgetown



New Zealand's Daniel Vettori backed spinners to have a crucial role in the remainder of the World Cup on the Caribbean's slow pitches.

Vettori took 4-23 while fellow slow bowler Jeetan Patel snagged 2-32 as the Black Caps went to the top of the Super Eights table with a comfortable 129-run win over Ireland on Monday.

"It's nice to see spinners playing an important role and it's good to see us playing two," said Vettori who now has 12 wickets in the competition -- the same number as fellow spinners, Australia's Graeme Hogg and Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralidaran.

Vettori and Patel took their wickets late in the Ireland innings as the World Cup debutants collapsed from 110-3 to 134 all out.

"It was always going to be tough for them, but we still managed to tough them," said Vettori.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming paid tribute to Fulton.

"Fulton's innings was important because things were not going too well around him. I guess his 83 held things together and we were able to

post a competitive score once we got some hitting at the end," he said.

"Ireland did exactly what we thought they would do. They put pressure on us and we weren't good enough to get partnerships in the middle."

"Vettori did a terrific job. He's not a massive turner of the ball, but his subtleties with pace and variation are very, very good. And he used that to great effect today (Monday)."

Ireland skipper Trent Johnston admitted the game got away from his team in the closing stages of the New Zealand innings.

"After the first ten overs I thought we bowled particularly well. We kept them down until around the 43rd over and then they got on top of us," said Johnston.

"It's one thing we've been working hard on (death bowling) but we didn't execute those plans today (on Monday). All credit to New Zealand. They are a very good team and will be one of the favourites to win this competition."

Moni, Brahim rescue Reds



SPORTS REPORTER

Muktijoddha came from a two-goal deficit to hold a spirited Farashganj 2-2 in yesterday's exciting B. League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

A brace from young Bangladesh international Robin gave home side Farashganj a stunning 2-0 lead against the local giants at the break but Muktijoddha, who showed signs of improvement after a poor start to the competition, snatched early second-half goals through Brahim and Moni to avoid a defeat.

The draw -- the Reds' second in six matches -- put them on top of the table by virtue of better goal difference as they came level with Sheikh



Muktijoddha Sangsads' Moroccan striker Brahim (L) vies for the ball with Farashganj defender Riyad during their B. League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Seven days for Sachin, Yuvraj

CRICINFO, undated

Sachin Tendulkar and Yuvraj Singh have been given seven days to explain their conduct to the Indian board for having spoken to the media on former coach Greg Chappell.

"The notices seeking an explanation were sent yesterday and they have been asked to respond within seven days," a BCCI official told Cricinfo.

The two players were issued notices on April 7 asking them to explain their comments to the media which were in violation of the board's Code of Conduct for its players.

On April 4 The Times of India published an interview with Tendulkar in which he said that Indian cricketers would be disappointed with Chappell if he questioned their attitude.

The New Zealand opener regained form with a well-paced innings just when his teammates had been struggling for runs against Ireland's disciplined seam-spin combination.

Fulton, a middle-order batsman opening the innings in the World Cup, had made only 62 in his last three matches before playing a valuable innings.

"It's not that we are defending ourselves," he added. "We do realise that we played badly and, as a team, we take full responsibility for that. But what hurt us most is if the coach has questioned our attitude."

Yuvraj's comment to a television channel on April 6, that all the players supported Tendulkar, was also deemed a breach of the code.

Reds taking nothing for granted

AFP, Liverpool



If Steven Gerrard leads Liverpool into the Champions League semifinals on Wednesday he shouldn't expect any thanks from Rafa Benitez.

Liverpool manager Benitez has revealed he keeps Gerrard on his toes by offering constructive criticism rather than praise, even when his captain has produced a match-winning display.

Gerrard's combination of perspiration and inspiration has been crucial in both of Liverpool's major successes under Benitez. The England international was heroic in the 2005 Champions League final against AC Milan and last year's FA Cup triumph over West Ham.

He was equally influential in last week's 3-0 Champions League quarterfinal first leg victory over PSV, scoring the opening goal with a powerful header to put Liverpool on course for a last four showdown with Chelsea or Valencia.

The talismanic midfielder is certain to be at the heart of the action when PSV visit Anfield for the return leg on Wednesday.

But, even though Gerrard is known to be slightly put-off by Benitez's tough-love approach to man-management, the Spaniard has no intention of changing his ways.

"I know he wishes I would say well done," Benitez told Liverpool's website. "But I like to put him under pressure. If you think the players can give something more you have to push them sometimes."

"I know he will be disappointed at times but the best thing anyone has ever said about me has come from my former players."

"They talk about me eight or 10 years afterwards. They say: 'I learned this from him.' I think my way is the right way to make Steven an even better player."

"I know he is a fantastic player and a nice person but he can do even better. I think he's more mature now."

"If I play him on the right, he plays well. If I play him in the middle, he plays well and if I play him

"We must approach the game the same as we did against Barcelona in the last round and try to win. We do not go into the game thinking a draw will be enough. We need to go for a win."

While Benitez is cautious, the Dutch league leaders all but conceded defeat in the aftermath of the chastening loss at the Philips Stadium.

Their morale will hardly have been helped by a 2-1 defeat at NEC Nijmegen on Saturday that left PSV facing a tense struggle to retain their title.

Koeman has also not been helped by his team's lengthy injury list. Ivory Coast striker Arouna Kone is back after missing the first leg, but Michael Reiziger, Alex and Edison Mendez are all likely to miss out.

PSV captain Phillip Cocu admitted those injuries mean the tie is all but over. "We have lost all our aspirations of reaching the semis," he said. "In the Netherlands, squads are smaller compared to those of Liverpool or Arsenal."