

Still a long way to go: Dav

AFP, Bridgetown



and South Africa, is adamant that there is still plenty of work to do to finetune the Asian Tigers.

The burly Australian is used to upsetting the world order of international cricket -- in 1996, he coached Sri Lanka to the World Cup title.

"We can't just sit back and say, 'that's it, we have answered our critics and that's the end of the story'. Far from it," said Whatmore.

"We have still got a long way to go yet and the reality is that Bangladesh are still the number nine side in the world and, as sometimes happens, we put in a shocking performance and we get beaten heavily.

"When that happens, it leads to more comments (from the critics).

"We know that within ourselves we have improved and that we are capable of causing upset wins and we would like that to continue."

Bangladesh's win over India in the first round helped dump Rahul Dravid's side out of the tournament while Saturday's 67-run win over South Africa in Guyana threw the race for the semifinals wide open.

If Bangladesh were to beat England here on Wednesday, they would become outside contenders for a last four place themselves.

"The win against South Africa gave us a lift but we are not getting carried away," said Whatmore.

"Everyone who saw the game in

Guyana knows that conditions there were very different to the ones we encountered in Antigua (where Bangladesh lost to Australia and New Zealand)."

Whatmore was referring to the slow Georgetown pitch which was ideally suited to left-arm spinners Mohammad Rafique, Abdur Razzak and Saqibul Hasan who took seven wickets between them.

The pitch at the Kensington Oval here is expected to have pace and bounce.

But England batsman Ian Bell, whose team need to win all of their three remaining matches to stay in contention for a semifinal place, said that Bangladesh will not be under-estimated.

"Bangladesh are a fantastic side and we are not treating them as minnows," said Bell.

"We know they have talented young cricketers and they have proved that they can play against some of the best sides in the world."

Nothing could save Windies

AFP, Bridgetown

West Indies tried everything. Pace, spin, their entire 15-man squad and even a mid-tournament holiday all proved in vain.

And in a final, desperate attempt to save their doomed World Cup dream, even religion couldn't save them, not even in the daunting shape of former feared fast bowler-turned-preacher Wes Hall.

Hall, now an evangelical minister, had tried to rally support in the

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PHOTO: AFP

COMIC RELIEF: England captain Michael Vaughan (2nd from R) takes pleasure in running out counterpart Habibul Bashar after having dropped Shahriar Nafees in the same instance during the World Cup Super Eights match at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown yesterday.



Did U Know?

Kevin Pietersen of England scored 104 runs in the World Cup Super Eights match against Australia at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on April 8. It was his fourth ODI century, first against the Aussies.



ICC World Cup 2007 (Super Eights) Sri Lanka v New Zealand Live at 7:30 pm



Brett Lee

(Australia fast bowler) "A lot has been said about this but no, Sachin (Tendulkar) should not retire. He should play till 50. On a more serious note, I think that this is something which only he can decide."

Pakistan in captaincy dilemma

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan cricket managers are struggling to choose a new captain for the national team after prime candidate Younis Khan set conditions for accepting the job, official

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Lara quits ODIs

AFP, St George's



The 37-year-old record-breaking batsman confirmed that his last two games will be the Super Eights clashes against Bangladesh and England in Barbados on April 19 and April 21.

His decision came in the wake of his team's 67-run defeat to South Africa on Tuesday which left the hosts with virtually no chance of reaching the semifinals.

"I think this is the end of my one-day career, for sure," said Lara.

"I honestly feel that my game is over and we should give it to one of the younger players. It's really tough playing one-day internationals out there when you are 37-38 years old."

"After the World Cup the next one-day tournament for the West Indies is in England and I'd love to sit back and watch and see the team do well."

"I want to leave a team that play better. And that is still my hope. These might be my last two one-day internationals but I still want to see the team moving out of this competition learning something from it and

that's all I can hope for.

"It's demoralising yes but I want to see certain things happen and I want to see the team move on."

West Indies crashed to their fourth successive Super Eights loss which left them on two points and needing a miracle series of results to allow them to creep into the semifinals.

Lara, in his third term as skipper, has been under fire throughout the tournament with a host of former players and pundits calling for him to stand down as captain.

He has played 297 ODIs and scored 10,354 runs at 40.60 with 19 hundreds and 63 half-centuries.

After four successive defeats in the Super Eights, Lara felt compelled to apologise to the Caribbean fans.

"We are all disappointed and we are very sorry for the way we have performed in this World Cup," said Lara.

"All we can say is that we are sorry to our people."

"There will be no semifinal place for us but we have to play with pride and character in the next two games. It's a chance to show we can perform with pride and character."

West Indies qualified for the Super Eights with three wins in three matches in the first round which included a victory against Pakistan.

"We beat Pakistan with disciplined bowling and fielding," said Lara.

"We weren't as convincing as maybe we should have been. But we are ranked eight in the world so we were the underdogs. However, we expected to do better than we did."

South Africa captain Graeme Smith, whose side piled up 356 after being put into bat by West Indies, paid tribute to Lara.

"It's sad to see him go," said Smith.

"He's been an unbelievable performer for the West Indies and has got them out of trouble plenty of times."

"He has been a great servant to the team and I hope the West Indies give him a great send off in the last two matches."

FACTFILE

Full name: Brian Charles Lara
Born: May 2, 1969, Cantaro, Santa Cruz, Trinidad

Age: 37
Major teams: West Indies, ICC World XI, Northern Transvaal, Trinidad Tobago, Warwickshire

Batting style: Left-hand bat
Bowling style: Legbreak googly

ONE-DAY CAREER
Batting
Matches: 297
Innings: 287
Not out: 32

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PHOTO: AFP

A FUTILE END: West Indies captain Brian Lara drags the ball onto the stumps off South Africa all-rounder Jacques Kallis (not in picture) during the World Cup Super Eights match at the Grenada National Stadium in St George's on Tuesday.

Afro-Asia Cup in Bangalore & Chennai

PTI, New Delhi

Bangalore and Chennai will host the second edition of the Afro-Asia Cup cricket tournament featuring three day-night one-day internationals in June.

The 100,000-dollar prize money event will kick-off with the first match at Bangalore on June 6, followed by the remaining two matches in Chennai on June 9 and 10.

Former Test opener Chetan Chauhan is the Indian representative in the four-member selection panel to pick the Asian side that will comprise also players from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Majid Khan (Pakistan), Lalith Kaluperama (Sri Lanka) and ASM Faruque (Bangladesh) are the other three selectors who will meet in Dhaka on May 11 to choose the Asian team.

The African squad will feature players from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya.

"It's the first major collaboration on any sporting level between the two continents and I'm sure, it will come to be seen as a truly significant event in the world of cricket," Sharad Pawar, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India president and chairman of the Afro-Asian Cricket Co-operation, said at a press conference.

"We know we are capable of

SRI LANKA V NEW ZEALAND Fleming's self test

AFP, St George's



against fellow contenders Sri Lanka here on Thursday will go a long way to seeing if he is right.

The Black Caps -- like defending champions Australia unbeaten at the tournament so far -- top the Super Eights table on run-rate.

But unlike Australia, who've beaten South Africa, and are chasing an unprecedented third straight title, they've yet to come up against a leading one-day international side at this event although they did defeat England by six wickets in their opening group match.

One more victory will see New Zealand, yet to win the World Cup, into the last four.

Thursday's match marks the start of a run of games that sees them up against 1996 champions Sri Lanka, South Africa and Australia in the space of 10 days in Grenada.

"We know we are capable of

winning it," said Fleming.

But all-rounder Jacob Oram added: "These three games will either build on our confidence or chip away at it."

New Zealand are now just one short of equalling their 10-match winning run of 2004, having already beaten Australia three times at home before coming to the Caribbean.

However, Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene for one believes New Zealand have yet to be tested at this tournament.

"They are playing some really good cricket but they haven't played one of the top teams yet," he told AFP.

Hosts New Zealand, third in the International Cricket Council (ICC) one-day ratings, and fourth-placed Sri Lanka squared a five-match series 2-2 in January after the final game was washed out.

But the balance of Thursday's match could swing New Zealand's way before a ball is bowled after Lasith Malinga was ruled out.

Sri Lanka's fast bowling ace missed practice Tuesday after sustaining ligament damage in his left ankle during an earlier training session.

Malinga, whose round-arm

action makes him difficult to face -- New Zealand asked umpires to put sweaters round their waists to act as an additional sight-screen last time they played against him -- tops the tournament bowling averages with 15 wickets at an average of under 15.

And against South Africa his record-breaking four wickets in four balls so nearly saw Sri Lanka to a stunning win.

"Lasith has an ankle problem and we'll assess it over the next couple of days. We're not sure he's 100 per cent," Jayawardene explained.

Farveez Maharoof and Nuwan Kulasekara, the most likely replacements, don't spook opponents as much as Malinga.

But last time out unheralded quick Dilhara Fernando saw Sri Lanka to a two-run win over England by clean bowling Ravi Bopara last ball.

And their attack will still include left-arm quick Chaminda Vaas and incomparable off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, both World Cup winners.

Sri Lanka's two most recent one-day wins against New Zealand featured major contributions from opener Sanath Jayasuriya -- 111 in Napier and 70 in Auckland.

One criticism of Sri Lanka is that they are too often dependent on the veteran left-hander for big scores.

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Russel still on top



SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel regained pole position in the B. League table within 24 hours from Muktiyoddha despite sharing points with Brothers Union in a goalless draw yesterday.

Although the title aspirants failed to break the duck in 90 minutes at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, the match was played in excellent pace before empty stands.

Russel, who drew their last round match against Farashganj to give up a handsome lead, needed one point to topple Muktiyoddha who just reached the top on Tuesday by virtue of better goal difference.

After six matches each, Russel are on 12 points while second-placed Muktis are on 11. The struggling Brothers, who were the home side, are at fifth place with eight points from five outings.

The match, however, could have gone either way with Russel dominating the first half and the Oranges coming on top in the latter part.

With prolific Moroccan striker Toutai Younes missing his second successive game, Russel lacked the cutting edge in the rival penalty area although they put pressure on Brothers' ageing backline.

Khoubbache Mohamad, who replaced fellow countryman Younes in the line up, screwed an early chance when he nodded Mishu's centre over the bar from close. Ighir Mohamad had a chance on the half hour but the unmarked Moroccan midfielder lost control after meeting a square pass by Pradip.

Wajed Gazi's boys, one of the two teams still undefeated in the 11-team fray, had their best opportunity in the 38th minute when Amin Rana split the Brothers defence with a brilliant through. Bulbul, playing virtually the lone

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HEAD-TO-HEAD

Total meetings	65
Sri Lanka win	28
New Zealand win	34
Tied	1
No Result	2

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TODAY'S MATCH

Team	Time	Venue
Sri Lanka v New Zealand	7:30 pm	Grenada

Ad