

Brian sorry for fans

AFP, St George's



West Indies captain Brian Lara apologised to fans after his team's World Cup hopes were shattered by South Africa in their Super

Eights match at the Grenada National Stadium Tuesday. AB de Villiers slammed a maiden one-day international century to set South Africa on the way to a 67-run win which effectively ended the hosts' hopes of reaching the semifinals.

"We don't deserve to be in the semifinals and we say to our people, we're sorry about that," said Lara.

"There are many more World Cups to come and we just hope the young players in the team can regroup and get over it. It has been a shock not only not to fulfil our dreams but the dreams of the people of the Caribbean."

Lara said South Africa had outplayed his team.

De Villiers (146) and Jacques Kallis (81) put on 170 for the second wicket and South Africa went on to hammer 356 for four after being sent in.

West Indies managed 289 for nine in reply, with Ramnaresh

Sarwan hitting 92.

Lara said a key period of the game was when De Villiers and Kallis went on the attack in the second powerplay.

"After the tenth over they pounced on us. Between ten and 15 they scored 50 runs and that set the tone for the rest of the innings."

The assault forced Lara to delay the third and final powerplay.

When he eventually took it in the 45th over Herschelle Gibbs and Mark Boucher went on the rampage, adding 77 runs in five overs to take South Africa to an insurmountable total.

"The powerplay was very difficult," said Lara.

"It was a bit dangerous to take it with two guys who seemed to want to pounce on that situation. We were hoping to get a breakthrough and it didn't really materialise."

Lara pointed out that the West Indies had been ranked below all the major teams who had beaten them in the Super Eight phase – Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

"We were the underdogs and we had to work really hard to win. All I can say is that the teams played better cricket than us. There's not much excuse I can give other than the fact that on the day we were outplayed by the opposition."

He admitted: "We did not stand up to the pressure."

South African captain Graeme Smith said it was a "very important" win for South Africa, coming just three days after a shock defeat against Bangladesh in Guyana.

"It was a quick turnaround and there were always going to be some nerves around this morning. Under that amount of pressure to come out and play the way we did was more important than anything."

Opening batsman De Villiers, battling cramps, heat exhaustion and dehydration, was the star of the day.

He hammered 146 despite needing treatment for cramp when he was on 91. He also needed Smith to come on as a runner for him when he was on 102.

Barely able to move, De Villiers went on the slog, hitting four sixes off five balls – two each off spinners Chris Gayle and Sarwan – as he raced from 100 to 146 off 16 balls.

De Villiers faced 130 balls and hit 12 fours and five sixes.

Kallis was also battling physical problems, needing attention after straining a ligament in his left ankle.

Gibbs, who had been a doubtful starter because of a calf injury, made 61 not out off 40 balls, while Boucher hit the third-fastest World Cup fifty, off 22 balls before he was caught for 52.



PHOTO: AFP

OOZING CLASS: South Africa opener AB de Villiers is over the moon after reaching his maiden ODI century during the World Cup Super Eights match against West Indies at the Grenada National Stadium in St George's on Tuesday.

De Villiers OK

AFP, St George's

AB de Villiers earned his man-of-the-match award against West Indies the hard way.

He smashed 146 runs in 30-degree sunshine, suffered cramps and dehydration, hit six sixes on one leg and then had to be put on a drip before still managing to take the field where he held a catch in his team's 67-run victory.

Despite such heroics, the 23-year-old de Villiers avoided talking up his contribution.

"It's a very special day for me and I enjoyed every second of it," said the blond opener after hitting his maiden one-day century.

"I had a tough time out there. It started when I was on 40 but I'm OK now and luckily got through it to get to my hundred."

"It's important for an opener to be tight up front but still play the game and that's what the coach asked us to do."

South Africa captain Graeme Smith was relieved with a win which came just four days after a humiliating defeat to Bangladesh in Guyana, a venue where the team never settled amongst accusations of suffering from cabin fever.

"The two points are crucial but I liked the way we played, with lots of energy, passion and freedom," said the skipper.

"It's been a tough few days building up to the game having played so badly in Guyana but all credit to the boys."

"We managed to play our natural

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AFP, St George's



AB de Villiers slammed a maiden one-day international as South Africa beat the West Indies by 67 runs in a World Cup Super Eights match at the Grenada National Stadium Tuesday.

The defeat effectively ended the hosts' hopes of reaching the semifinals.

Opening batsman de Villiers, battling cramps, heat exhaustion and dehydration, hammered 146 as South Africa thrashed 356 for four after being sent in to bat.

The West Indies lost four wickets inside the first 20 overs and managed 289 for nine in reply, 137 and a stroke-filled 92 off 75 balls by Ramnaresh Sarwan.

The hosts need a series of freak results to make the last four.

If West Indies win their last two matches, against Bangladesh and England, they will only have six points. New Zealand and Australia already have eight, while Sri Lanka and South Africa are both on six.

West Indies also have a poor net run-rate the decider in the event of a tie on points.

De Villiers and Jacques Kallis (81) put on 170 for the second wicket to set up South Africa's big total on a pitch which did not prove to have as much life as West Indian captain Brian Lara expected when he won the toss.

With De Villiers and Kallis scor-

ing 50 runs in the second five-over powerplay, Lara delayed the third and final powerplay until the 45th over.

It cost 77 runs in five overs as Herschelle Gibbs and Mark Boucher both slammed quickfire half-centuries.

De Villiers was treated for cramp when he was on 91 and South African captain Graeme Smith came on as a runner for him when

he was on 102.

Barely able to move, de Villiers went on the slog, hitting four sixes off five balls, two each off spinners Chris Gayle and Ramnaresh Sarwan as he raced from 100 to 146 off 16 balls.

De Villiers faced 130 balls and hit 12 fours and five sixes.

Kallis, who needed treatment after straining a ligament in his left ankle when he was on 39, was

dropped by wicketkeeper Denesh Ramdin, standing up to the wicket off Dwayne Bravo, when he had 40. He went on to score 81 off 86 balls with six fours and a six.

Gibbs, who had been a doubtful starter because of a calf injury, made 61 not out off 40 balls, while Boucher hit the third-fastest World Cup fifty, off 22 balls before he was caught for 52 off the next delivery.

There were 14 sixes in the South African innings.

Corey Collymore was the only West Indian bowler to turn in respectable figures, taking two for 41 off 10 overs.

The West Indies made a poor start when Shivanine Chanderepaul drove Shaun Pollock to Smith at mid-off in the second over.

Chris Gayle and Devon Smith put on 60 off 53 balls for the second wicket but were out in successive overs.

De Villiers was put on a drip after his innings but returned to the field briefly to take a diving catch at point off Andre Nel to dismiss Smith, while Gayle was run out by a direct hit from Ashwell Prince at midwicket.

Lara and Sarwan added 50 before Lara charged down the wicket to drive Kallis but edged the ball into his stumps, virtually ending the match as a contest.

With South Africa falling behind in their over rate Smith brought himself on to bowl off-spinners and tailender Daren Powell slogged 48 not out off 36 balls.



PHOTO: AFP

Local fans try to cheer on the West Indies during the World Cup Super Eights match against South Africa at the Grenada National Stadium in St George's on Tuesday.

Fergie's greatest night

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson believes Manchester United's 7-1 Champions League demolition of Roma proves they have the strength to win the treble.

Ferguson's side produced what he claimed was the greatest European performance he had ever seen at Old Trafford as they advanced to the semifinals with a stunning display on Tuesday.

United trailed 2-1 from the quarterfinal first leg, but they blew Roma away with three goals in seven minutes early in the first half and went on to record their biggest win of the season.

The Premiership leaders' breathtaking display clinched an 8-3 aggregate victory and set up a semifinal meeting with either AC Milan or Bayern Munich - their first appearance in the last four since 2002.

After successive defeats to Roma and Portsmouth last week, United looked as though they were crumbling under the weight of injuries to Gary Neville, Nemanja Vidic and Louis Saha, but they produced the perfect response against the Italians.

Now they will go into the decisive final weeks of the season with renewed belief and Ferguson is adamant he has a squad with enough strength in depth to emulate his

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MU massacre Roma

AFP, Manchester



Manchester United booked their place in the Champions League semifinals with a breathtaking display of football that destroyed AS Roma 7-1 in the last eight, second leg on Tuesday.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side hit three goals in just seven minutes early in the first half through Michael Carrick, Alan Smith and Wayne Rooney in a stunning opening to what must go down as one of the greatest European performances ever seen at Old Trafford.

Cristiano Ronaldo was in unstoppable form, scoring a goal either side of half-time, and Carrick and Patrice Evra were also on target after the break as Roma completely capitulated in the face of the sustained United onslaught, going out 8-3 on aggregate.

Ferguson agreed that it was one of United's best performances in Europe under his charge.

"Absolutely. The scoreline tells you that. It was a fantastic performance from every one of them," he told ITV.

"There was speed, penetration, the confidence to believe in themselves. We've had a couple of bad results in the last week but great

teams get over mishaps, you're always going to lose games."

Ferguson reserved special praise for Smith.

"He was fantastic and deserves it more than anyone else."

"Two years ago we played AC Milan and Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo were young boys but they've showed their maturity. We can't wait for the semifinals now. There is every chance of an all-English final."

United had trailed 2-1 from the first leg a week ago and much had been made of their five past failures to overturn a first leg deficit in the Champions League.

That defeat in Rome had been followed by another loss against Portsmouth on Saturday, prompting suggestions that United were losing their nerve with the finish line in sight.

But the Premiership leaders gave the perfect response with their biggest win of the season and will face either AC Milan or Bayern Munich in their first Champions League semi-final since 2002.

The treble remains a distinct possibility for Ferguson's team if they continue to produce performances of this quality.

With so much at stake there was never any danger of the atmosphere being anything less than red hot, but pre-match skirmishes outside the stadium as police tried

to keep rival fans apart raised the temperature even higher.

Although Roma only needed a draw to go through they weren't content to sit on their lead and Francesco Totti fired just wide after six minutes.

But the Italians' attacking intent was naive as it gave United spaces to exploit and Carrick took advantage in the 12th minute.

He collected Ronaldo's pass and strode forward, and with Roma's defenders backing off, had time to look up and drive in a shot that wrong-footed Doni as it looped into the top corner.

That goal sparked wild celebrations around Old Trafford but it was nothing compared to the roar that greeted their second just five minutes later.

Ryan Giggs's astute pass picked out Smith and the United striker kept his nerve to delicately lift a shot over Doni for his first goal since November 2005.

Roma were shellshocked by United's blistering start and it was no surprise when the hosts got a third goal in the 19th minute.

Giggs surged down the right wing and whipped a low cross into the penalty area for Rooney to flick home from close range.

United were now firmly in control of the tie and Ronaldo was narrowly off target with a fierce 25-yard strike.

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PHOTO: AFP

A PICTURE SAYS A THOUSAND WORDS: The electronic scoreboard at Old Trafford displays the extraordinary scoreline in the Champions League quarterfinal second leg between Manchester United and AS Roma on Tuesday.