

Lanka kept Aussies guessing

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's decision to keep top players from the cricket World Cup clash against Australia was a ploy sanctioned by Colombo, the island's chief selector said Thursday.

Sri Lanka, already assured of a place in the semi-finals, kept out star bowlers Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralidaran for the Super Eights match in Grenada on Monday, which Australia won by seven wickets.

Their absence, and that of already injured Lasith Malinga, meant the 1996 World Cup winners went into Monday's loss to the defending champions without a trio of bowlers who have taken 41 wickets at the tournament.

Australia cruised to a seven-wicket win with 44 balls to spare after dismissing a full-strength Sri Lanka batting line-up for 226 at the Grenada National Stadium.

The controversial move, however, shocked the Australians and angered Sri Lankan cricket fans who were keen to see the home team beat Australia, the current favourites to win their third consecutive World Cup title.

"It was a decision, a ploy, to keep our key strike bowlers away from the Australian game. We wanted to bring the players out for the finals with Australia," Sri Lanka Cricket chief selector, Asantha de Mel, told AFP.

De Mel's comments contradict skipper Mahela Jayawardene's statement that Muralidaran and Vaas, two of the stars of the side that won the World Cup 11 years ago, were rested.

"Once we realised we had the semi-final spot, I thought we needed to give those guys a break," Jayawardene said after Monday's loss.

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Did U Know?

Andrew Hall of South Africa took 5 for 18 in the World Cup Super Eights match against England at Kensington Oval in Barbados on April 17. It was his best performance, the fourth time that he has taken four or more wickets in a match, first against England.



Ramnaresh Sarwan

(West Indies cricket vice-captain) "Bangladesh have improved a lot and come a long way. They are no more minnows and have done very well in the World Cup. We are not taking them lightly as they have quite a few good young players."



BTV & SET Max

ICC World Cup 2007
(Super Eights)
West Indies v Bangladesh
Live at 7:30 pm



B.League
Muktijoddha v Brothers Union (4:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Bangladesh cricket team are having a relaxed net session at the Police Ground in Bridgetown on Tuesday.

PHOTO: TIGERCRIKET.COM

Sarwan next skipper?

AFP, Bridgetown



month's tour of England replacing the under-fire Brian Lara.

The enigmatic Lara is likely to face the axe after West Indies' unimpressive World Cup performance which saw them losing four of their Super Eights matches.

There are chances Lara, who will play his last two one-day internationals this week, may not be selected at all for the tour of England in May where the West Indies play four Tests and three one-day internationals.

"I think the two names of Sarwan and Daren Ganga have appeared. Sarwan has been the vice-captain, so it's up to the Board to decide on the recommendations made by the selectors," said former captain and current manager Clive Lloyd.

Sarwan has been Lara's deputy since 2003 and many believe he is the right choice to carry the West Indies team forward.

Sarwan last week suggested he was ready for the responsibility.

"If given the opportunity I will grab it with both hands," said the 26-year-old from Guyana, who can follow in the footsteps of countrymen like Rohan Kanhai, Lloyd, Alvin Kallicharran and Shivnarine Chanderpaul as captains.

He has led the West Indies in four one-day internationals, winning three.

The 28-year-old Ganga has led the West Indies 'A' team and skippered the Trinidad and Tobago side to a domestic one-day tournament win in January this year.

When asked of Lara's chances not being selected at all, Lloyd replied: "That is up to the selectors, I am not among them."

Lara, who led the West Indies in 47 Tests with just ten wins during his three spells, has been under fire for team's failures and among his most severe critics has been former bowling great Michael Holding.

"Lara has to step aside, not necessary as player, but as a captain," Holding said earlier this month.

"He needs to co-operate with the new captain and allow him to have a free hand to take the West Indies forward."

Even veteran commentator-cum

writer Tony Cozier sided with Holding.

"During his long and otherwise celebrated career Lara has issued seven public apologies for his own indiscretions. The eighth, last week, was on behalf of his team," wrote Cozier of Lara saying sorry after his team's 67-run defeat against South Africa in Grenada.

"Yet he has been thrice persuaded to return to the leadership," said Cozier of Lara who was first appointed captain in 1998.

Lara also took over from Carl Hooper after West Indies' first-round exit from the 2003 World Cup in South Africa and then from Shivnarine Chanderpaul early last year.

Lara was also at the centre of a contract row between players and the West Indies Cricket Board and had his tiffs with the selectors, the most recent being during the Super Eights matches.

Another former fast bowler Colin Croft feels the time is right for a change.

"Sarwan must be given the job. I would also like to think that Denesh Ramdin must be groomed for future," said Croft.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Crickets Association of Bengal under-15 spinner Shoumik took four wickets to rout Rajshahi under-15 by seven wickets at the Rajshahi Stadium yesterday.

Having won the toss, Rajshahi batted first and were bowled out for 126 runs in 37.5 overs. The visitors chased down the small target in 20.4 overs.

Rajshahi captain Kabir hit 37 but his was the only score of note as Shuvodip, Raja and Vivek chipped in with wickets for the CAB age-group team.

In their chase, the visitors' opener Sayandip took charge from the first over as he struck a 53-ball 58 and Avishekh Raman struck an unbeaten 37.

Seamer Sadman took two wickets for the hosts.

UNDER-16 CRICKET

North Bengal Cricket Academy and Young Cricketers will play the final of the under-16 Young Tigers Elite Club competition at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on April 22.

Young Cricketers held their nerve to beat Uddity Club by just one run at the Gulshan Youth ground while North Bengal had an easier route as they beat Nabin Sangha by

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UNLIKELY DESTROYER: Sri Lanka paceman Farveez Maharoof (C) celebrates the fall of yet another Irish wicket with teammate Russel Arnold during the World Cup Super Eights match at the Grenada National Stadium in Saint George's yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BANGLADESH V WEST INDIES Hosts serious about Tigers

AFP, Bridgetown



hoping to rescue their tarnished reputation.

Brian Lara's men saw their slender chances of further progress in the tournament disappear when South Africa demolished England by nine wickets on Tuesday to grab the last place in the semifinal line-up.

Defending champions Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka had already confirmed their places in the last four.

A win on Thursday would at least help the West Indies, winners of the first two World Cups in 1975 and 1979, avoid last place in the Super Eights table and safeguard their unbeaten record against Bangladesh.

Team manager Clive Lloyd, who led West Indies to their only two Cup titles, said Bangladesh will not be taken for granted.

"They are a formidable side and have done well in this World Cup and they have beaten quite a few good sides in Tests so they are on their way up," said Lloyd.

Bangladesh have had problems since upsetting former champions India in the preliminary round.

They downed South Africa in the Super Eights but that remained their

only win in the second stage and they have been dogged by inconsistency.

"We don't take any team lightly, it's just that we haven't played quite as well as we could, our results have shown that," said Lloyd, who has been criticised for being too soft as part of the management team.

West Indies, winners of the ICC Champions Trophy in 2004 and runners-up in the same event last year, won all their three preliminary round matches to raise hopes of a successful campaign.

But the curse of the hosts (no home side has ever won the World Cup) came back to haunt them in the Super Eights where they lost to Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

They are now left with England, who they play here on Saturday, Ireland and Bangladesh in the bottom half.

Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar termed the situation as "disappointing."

"We created our chances by beating South Africa but here we are now fighting to avoid finishing in the last two," said Bashar, whose team lost tamely to Ireland on Sunday to crush any lingering hopes of reaching the last four.

Bashar said it was combination of poor batting and fielding which let them down in the Ireland match.

"We did ourselves no favours by giving them too many chances and

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Russel win rematch



SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel returned to top of the B. League table with a 2-0 win over Khulna Abahani in yesterday's rematch after their scheduled game on Tuesday was abandoned after 80 minutes.

The visitors conceded the lead after five minutes when defender Awlad Hossain scored an own goal while Moroccan midfielder Ighir Mohamed sealed undefeated Russel's fourth win in seven matches from a second half penalty in front empty stands at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Wajed Gazi's boys pushed their collection to 15 points, one above second-placed Dhaka Abahani who have played a match less. The Khulna outfit stuck to six points from as many games after their fourth defeat.

The home side started with a 4-4-2 formation, switching from Tuesday's 3-5-2 as they brought

Nayan in place of centre-back Shawkat while Khulna Abahani made a couple of changes, replacing Imrose and Tariqul with Hadiuzzaman and Nazrul in the starting line-up.

Russel, who dominated the show like the previous day, rushed early blood but Moroccan attacker Khoubache's weak header on a corner kissed the top of the crossbar in the second minute.

Three minutes later, Russel went ahead after rival goalkeeper Foyez and Awlad's clumsy display inside their box. Foyez shot the ball onto Russel striker Bulbul inside their box and it fell to Khoubache at the right side. The Moroccan won a hard tackle against Abahani captain Ashraf but hurried his shot wide, only to see Awlad's clearance go in off the post.

The touring side, whose previous visit to Dhaka resulted in a stunning 4-2 win over giants Brothers Union, failed to repeat a similar act and their only first-half chance was fluffed by Nazrul whose angled shot missed the far post in the eighth minute.

The hosts wasted two half chances before the break but enjoyed a one-way traffic in the

second half, creating numerous openings. With Ighir being inspirational in the middle and Tanvir dazzling at the left flank, the Khulna backline had no answer for the rival raids.

Tanvir squared the ball past two defenders and the keeper in the 55th minute but substitute Kaiser's placing shot hit the sidebar while Foyez held a close-range header by Khoubache on the line two minutes later.

Foyez remained calm at the Abahani goal, parrying a series of efforts, a low shot by Kaiser, a curling Ighir freekick and a pile driver by Khoubache from 25 yards inside seven minutes.

The pressure told nine minutes from time when Imrose fouled Ighir inside the box to stop a brilliant run and the Moroccan's clinical finish from the spot sent the goalkeeper the wrong way to make it 2-0.

Despite the edge, Russel could never relax due to Abahani's quick counter attacks. The midfield's efforts, however, went down the drains due to poor finishing by the inexperienced strikers in absence

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Transcom Cup golf from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The 11th Transcom Cup golf tournament will begin at the Kurmitola Golf Club today with nearly 450 golfers from home and abroad expected to take part in the two-day meet.

The inaugural Tee-off will be held tomorrow. Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman will be present as chief guest at the Tee-off ceremony. He will also distribute prizes tomorrow evening.

Latifur Rahman, Chairman and Managing Director of sponsor Transcom Group, will grace both the occasions as special guest.

THE BROADBAND COMPANY
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TODAY'S MATCH

Team	Time	Venue
West Indies v Bangladesh	7:30 pm	Barbados

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