

Bacher believes in SA's chances

AFP, Bridgetown

Former South Africa captain Ali Bacher on Friday said Graeme Smith's men can win the World Cup if they maintain the ruthless form they showed in their destruction of England.

The Proteas swept past England with a nine-wicket win here Tuesday to set up a mouth-watering semifinal clash with defending champions Australia at St Lucia on April 25.

Bacher, also a former South Africa cricket board chief and who knows how to beat Australia having recorded 4-0 win as captain in 1970, said South Africa can beat Australia.

"If South Africa play as they did against England, I can't see any team stopping them, not even Australia," said Bacher.

After losing to Bangladesh in the Super Eights, South Africa crushed England in a must-win match. They bowled out Michael Vaughan's men for a paltry 154 with medium-pace Andrew Hall returning career-best figures of 5-18.

Smith then completed the rout with a blistering 58-ball 89 not out to see his team through in the 20th over, a display Bacher feels can help make the Proteas world champions.

Glamorgan reject Fletcher return

BBCONLINE, undated

Glamorgan chairman Paul Russell has ruled out the possibility of Duncan Fletcher returning to take charge of the Welsh county.

Fletcher, who will step down as England coach on Saturday, guided Glamorgan to the County Championship title in his first season in charge 10 years ago.

But Russell said: "We've not had talks with him and have no plans to do so."

But Russell revealed the county are keen to have England assistant coach Matthew Maynard back at Sophia Gardens.

Maynard's England future remains in doubt following Fletcher's decision to quit after eight years in charge.

The 41-year-old ended a record-breaking 20-year career with Glamorgan in 2005 to join the England set-up.

And Russell told BBC Sport: "Our affection for Matthew is well known and well understood."

"We would be foolish to pass up an opportunity to bring him back to the club."

"But this is a long way off yet because he's an employee of the England and Wales Cricket Board."

He added: "Matthew is a wonderfully talented cricketer and becoming an increasingly able coach."

"Certainly at some time in the future Matthew's career will bring him back to Glamorgan. When that will be, we've got no idea."

Fletcher spent two successful seasons at Glamorgan before being appointed as England's first foreign coach.

The 58-year-old Zimbabwean tendered his resignation on Thursday as the pressure built after England's recent Ashes whitewash and their failure to reach the semi-finals of the World Cup.

Glamorgan appointed Adrian Shaw as coach in November, and Russell said the new coaching set-up will be given time to develop.

He added: "It would make all the plans we've made baseless if we were to peruse Duncan."

Of a mortal

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achieve ten thousand runs and a man who reclaimed his world record after ten years, not ten months after he had lost it -- you have got yourself quite a lot to contend with.

However, the beauty and greatness of Lara lies not in what he has achieved but the manner in which he has achieved it. When Lara goes into battle, he does so with a vigour and valour that wows millions. His ability to raise the game when the stakes are high is unprecedented. He pushes his game to the edge and unleashes his full repertoire of strokes knowing full well that the fate of the match hangs in the balance.

Lara is the only one who restores cricket as a game of sublime skills and high craft. The beauty of Lara is simple but glorious. One false stroke here could mean the end. He can be at the same time both eternally frustrating and glorious beyond comprehension.

With Lara, everything is so beautiful because we know that it is doomed.

Which is exactly why we should not be surprised if he bows out tonight in the most anticlimactic of circumstances.

After all its only characteristic of him.

What the future holds for the man from Trinidad is a question beyond the abilities of any cricket lover to comprehend.

But we do know this, there will never be quite another like Brian Charles Lara.



PHOTO: STAR

Runners getting into the first lane during the men's 1500m final on the opening day of the 32nd National Athletics Championships at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PCB denies

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to Kingston in connection with the inquiry into Woolmer's death which Jamaican authorities are treating as a murder.

A coroner's inquest into the former England batsman's death was to be held on Monday.

"No, so far we have received no such request from the Jamaican government or police," Ehsan Malik, Communications and media manager of the Pakistan Cricket Board, told PTI.

Woolmer was found unconscious in his hotel room on March 18 in Kingston and died later in hospital. He died on March 18, a day after Pakistan lost to Ireland in a shock result and were eliminated from the World Cup.

Jamaican authorities and police have indicated he was strangled to death after probably being given poison first.

The Pakistan government has sent two of its own investigating officers, Mir Zubair and Kaleem Imam, to assist the Jamaican authorities in the investigations while the PCB has also kept its assistant manager Asad Mustafa based in Kingston in case of any eventuality as the authorities have still to release the body of Woolmer to be flown to his hometown in South Africa.

Nat'l Athletics under way

SPORTS REPORTER

Jasmine Akhter of BJMC won the gold medal in the women's 100 metre hurdles in 15.35s on the inaugural day of the 32nd National Athletics Championships yesterday.

Her teammate Nilufar Yasmin took silver while Nasrin Akhter of Khulna DSA settled for bronze in the event in absence of country's top female hurdler Sumita Rani, holder of the South Asian Games silver medal.

It was the first competition on the newly laid track at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, very hastily organised by the Bangladesh Amateur Athletics Federation.

There was no publicity of the event, surprisingly arranged in the hottest time of the season, which did not even get a sponsor. It was painful to see young athletes from different corners of the country participate without proper gear, especially on bare

foot.

In the earlier events, Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Army and BKSP clinched one gold each.

Manzur Morshed of Navy leaped 7.11m to lift gold in men's long jump ahead of Al Amin (Bangladesh Air Force) and Farid Ahmed (Army).

Army runner Anisur Rahman notched the 5,000m gold in 16:08:57s and was followed by Monirul Islam of Mymensingh DSA and Rafiqul Islam of Army.

Roksana Happy gave BKSP their first gold, winning the women's shot put with a throw of 10.58m. BJMC athletes Nely Jasmine and Hazera Khatun settled for silver and bronze respectively.

Youth and Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury declared the three-day meet open in the afternoon. Federation president Didarul Anwar and other officials were also present.

India tinker

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Chittagong (May 18-22) and Dhaka (May 25-29).

Test squad: Rahul Dravid (capt), Wasim Jaffer, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatesh Laxman, Sourav Ganguly, Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Dinesh Karthick, Anil Kumble, Ramesh Powar, Rajesh Pawar, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Zaheer Khan, Vikram Rajvir Singh, Munaf Patel.

One-day squad: Rahul Dravid (capt), Gautam Gambhir, Robin Uthappa, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Manoj Tewari, Dinesh Mongia, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Dinesh Karthick, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Munaf Patel, Zaheer Khan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Piyush Chawla, Ramesh Powar.

Tour manager: Ravi Shastri

Akram to train

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supervise the camp for young and upcoming fast bowlers.

"He will also supervise a training camp in June for the national team in (the northwestern city of) Abbottabad," the spokesman said.

Wasim retired from international cricket with a world record 502 one-day and 414 Test wickets. He led Pakistan to the runners-up spot in the 1999 World Cup.

Malik wants to emulate Wasim



AFP, Lahore

New Pakistan cricket captain Shoaib Malik said Friday that he wants to be an aggressive leader like his hero Wasim Akram.

All-rounder Malik, who was named on Thursday to succeed Inzamamul Haq, said his first priority was to boost the team's confidence after their dismal World Cup exit.

He also blamed Pakistan's loss to minnows Ireland on a poor wicket -- a loss which sent Pakistan tumbling out of the tournament -- saying that no other teams had to play on one like it.

"As a captain I consider myself to be in the mould of Wasim Akram. He is my ideal captain," Malik told AFP. "I am going to have an aggressive approach. I don't like a defensive approach."

Fast bowling great Wasim, who led Pakistan to the runners-up spot in the 1999 World Cup, was known for his aggressive style. He retired in 2003 with 414 Test wickets and 502 in one-day internationals.

In contrast Inzamam, who resigned after the Ireland defeat, was sometimes criticised for being

defensive.

Malik said that his favourite current captain in world cricket was New Zealand's Stephen Fleming "because he is also very aggressive."

The Pakistan Cricket Board said it had chosen the 25-year-old Malik, who has played 18 Tests and 137 one-day internationals, over more established names to give the team a fresh start.

"I know that team morale is not very high, self-confidence is low and my job will be to get back the high positions for the team. It is still a very good team," Malik said.

"I believe in playing to win. One thing that can bring the confidence back is winning."

Malik brushed off suggestions by some former players that he could face jealousy from older members of the team.

"I respect my seniors, I treat them as my elder brothers. I will consult them and I will seek their guidance," he said.

He said that another priority would be to "get a good opening pair. Opening is a problem area for us at the moment."

Malik has previously opened the batting for Pakistan on occasions but said that he would now play at any number. "I have never consid-

ered which number should suit me. I am a team man, I play according to situations," he added.

He also echoed comments made by Pakistan's new chief selector, Salahuddin Ahmad, that he would prefer specialists to all-rounders in the team.

"I believe that specialist players are required for Test matches and all-rounders are useful for one-dayers," he said.

Pakistan, the 1992 World Cup champions, will be focusing on their one-day performances after the disaster in Jamaica but Malik said it was not all the team's fault.

"I blame the wicket, the wicket that we were asked to play," he said when asked about the loss to Ireland. "That sort of wicket was not offered to any other team."

"I also believe that our bowling on that day was not that good."

Malik paid tribute to coach Bob Woolmer, who was found murdered in his hotel room the day after the defeat.

"Bob Woolmer was the best coach and a great human being. It is not easy for all of us to digest his loss, it was shocking," he said.

"We felt very sad and pained, but life has to move forward. Pakistan cricket has to move forward."

Federer in last four



AFP, Monte Carlo

Roger Federer distinguished himself as a 30-million-dollar man in tennis winning his 500th match on Friday to coast into the semifinals of the Monte Carlo Masters.

The Swiss ace made light work of his encounter with David Ferrer, crushing the Spaniard 6-4, 6-0 to post a sixth win without defeat against a man now considered his personal punching bag.

"David's an excellent grinder and baseline player, and if he plays very well it's so hard to beat him," said the modest Federer, who will now meet either French hero Richard Gasquet or two-time former champion Juan Carlos Ferrero.

"But I always find a way against him to overpower him from the baseline and just have enough variety to maybe frustrate him a bit."

"When I needed good shots they came along, and today was a really good match so I'm really pleased."

Though he reigns atop the sport,

the 25-year-old Swiss can remember his first paycheck as a match-winner from a quarter-final showing nearly nine years ago in Toulouse.

"It was about ten grand," he said with eerie precision of the 10,800-dollar payout. "I put it straight into a Swiss bank."

Federer's running career prize money total puts him third on the all-time money list behind the 43.3 million of Pete Sampras and 31.2 of Andre Agassi.

Against Ferrer, the Swiss top seed still had to shake out some early jitters as the pair produced three consecutive breaks of serve midway through the opening set.

But once Federer got on track, the ten-time Grand Slam winner was untouchable, breaking his Spanish opponent for 5-4 and serving out the first set after 37 minutes.

The Swiss improved to 17-2 on the season as memories of back-to-back hardcourt defeats last month against Guillermo Canas begin to ease slightly.

"I finally kind of felt the ball really good from the baseline," said

Federer. "I just felt like it was easy to keep the ball in play. It was easy to play aggressive."

Defending champion Rafael Nadal was later set to try and extend his Open era record 64-match winning streak on clay against German qualifier Philipp Kohlschreiber in their quarter-final.

Czech tenth seed Tomas Berdych woke up to sweep the last dozen games as he overhauled Sweden's Robin Soderling 5-7, 6-3, 6-0 to reach the last four.

Soderling went into the contest leading the series 2-1.

"It's step by step," Berdych said of his recovery. "The start wasn't so good, but then things changed."

"I'm really happy that I can sit here and trying to prepare for tomorrow's semi-finals."

Berdych lifted a Masters Series title last November, winning in Paris. He owns an ATP clay trophy from Palermo as well as three at the lower level.



PHOTO: AFP

World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland serves to his Spanish opponent David Ferrer during their Monte Carlo Masters Series match in Monaco on Friday. Federer won 6-0, 6-4.

T INDIES V BANGLADESH SCORES

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Mohammad Rafique	10	0	46	0	-				
Shakib Al Hasan	8	0	38	1	-				
Aftab Ahmed	2	0	12	1	-				
BANGLADESH									
Javed Omar c Gayle b Powell	16	77	49	1	6s				
Tamim Iqbal run out (Bravo)	7	27	20	1	0				
Aftab Ahmed c Ramin b Collymore	6	10	8	0	0				
Shakib Al Hasan c Ramin b Collymore	0	9	5	0	0				
Mohammad Ashraf c Samuels b Powell	2	18	8	0	0				
Habibul Bashar c Bravo b Powell	12	29	21	1	0				
Mushfiqur Rahim not out	38	112	75	2	0				
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza b Bravo	37	58	51	4	0				
Mohammad Rafique lbw b Gayle	1	3	5	0	0				
Abdur Razzak c Lara b Bravo	0	9	10	0	0				
Syed Raseel b Gayle	2	18	13	0	0				
Extras: (lb-1, w-7, nb-2)	10								
Total: (All out in 43.5 overs)	131								
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-21, 3-23, 4-34, 5-35, 6-52, 7-110, 8-111, 9-114, 10-131.									
Bowler									
Collymore	7	1	11	2	w-1				
Powell	10	0	38	3	w-4				
Taylor	8	0	25	0	w-1				
Bravo	10	3	28	2	nb-2, w-1				
Gayle	8.5	0	28	2	-				
Result: West Indies won by 99 runs.									
Man-of-the-match: Ramnaresh Sarwan.									
Toss: Bangladesh.									
Umpires: B Bowden (New Zealand) and R Koertzen (South Africa)									
Match referee: J Crowe (New Zealand)									

Wright interested in Pakistan job

PTI, Karachi

Former India coach John Wright has expressed his interest to take over as the coach of Pakistan team, a top Cricket Board official said today.

"We have spoken to Wright on this issue and he was interested," the official said.

The PCB is finding a suitable replacement for Bob Woolmer who died while in the West Indies with the World Cup squad last month.

The Board has still not ruled out the possibility of appointing a foreign coach in place of the late Woolmer.

The official confirmed that several foreign and local candidates were under consideration including Wright, also a former captain of the New Zealand team.

Wright was coach of the Indian team from 2000 to early 2005 and led the team to its first series win in Pakistan in 2004.

The PCB official said Tim Boon who is with Leicestershire was another contender for the post.

All set for a fitting farewell

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and Zimbabwe to qualify for the second round, but disappointed their fans after losing the first four Super Eights matches.

Inconsistent batting was the main reason for their below-par performances as specialist batsmen could not deliver when it mattered most.

The same is true of England who have been relying on a couple of batsmen, including hard-hitting Kevin Pietersen who is the only player with a century to his credit.

"Our batting has not been any good through the tournament and it's an area we have to work on," said Vaughan, who has so far scored 130 runs in eight Cup matches.

"We know we have a big game on Saturday. We have to come out

and improve our performance. We know we are out of the World Cup but we have a lot of pride and we realise that there are a lot of supporters out here who we have let down, so it's important we put in a good performance."

England's batting problems are not confined to top of the order; Andrew Flintoff's form has also not been encouraging as he has so far made only 77 in seven matches.

Vaughan, however, will stay as captain against the West Indies for May's Test series his team's flopped Cup campaign.

"Michael Vaughan is the England captain. I talked with the chairman of selectors and he wants him to lead the side into the West Indies Test series," said England cricket chief David Morgan.

Moore's to replace

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England wicket-keeper Matt Prior, who also dismissed suggestions Moore's lack of international experience should count against him

"His personality, enthusiasm for the game, and his ability to motivate individuals make him stand out," he told BBC Five Live.

"As for experience -- look at what John Buchanan has achieved with Australia."

"It would be very easy to pin that on him but people should look at the positives he could bring to the England team."

And former England seamer Darren Gough had said before the appointment was announced: "If you were to go for an Englishman, which we'd all prefer deep down, Peter Moores has got terrific credentials."

Woolmer inquiry

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A team of four officers from Scotland Yard are in Jamaica to help with the inquiry, following a formal request from the Jamaican authorities.

Pakistan also sent as an observer senior police investigator Mir Zubair Mahmood, who led the investigation into the murder of US reporter Daniel Pearl in Karachi.

He and another security official had come at the request of the Jamaican government, an official said.

Two forensic experts from Interpol, the France-based international police agency, have also been helping the investigation.

Jamaica's deputy police commissioner Mark Shields has said the foreign investigators will help with DNA analysis and also examine theories that Woolmer may have been poisoned before being strangled.