

## 1ST SEMIFINAL: NEW ZEALAND V SRI LANKA

# Fleming targets SL top-order

AFP, Kingston



New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming believes Sri Lanka's top-order batting is a weakness the Black Caps can expose when the teams meet in Tuesday's first World Cup semifinal.

The pitch at Kingston's Sabina Park is expected to be far bouncier than the one in Grenada on April 12 where Sri Lanka beat New Zealand, yet to reach a World Cup final, by six wickets in a Super Eights match.

And the belief persists amongst opponents that if they can remove dashing opener Sanath Jayasuriya, one of the stars of Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup winning team, early they are into a vulnerable batting line-up.

"We feel if we can get through their top-order we can keep it to a (manageable) score," said Fleming.

New Zealand's bowling attack, taken apart by Australia during Friday's 215-run thrashing in Grenada, is set to be strengthened by the return of all-rounder Jacob Oram from a right heel problem, and fast bowler Shane

Bond from illness.

Oram believes pitch conditions will help New Zealand make good on Fleming's assessment of Sri Lanka's batting.

"The Jamaican pitch is going to have a bit more bounce and seam than we've experienced everywhere else in the West Indies, so I know a few of the guys at the top of the bowling order are keen to extract some sort of bounce," said Oram.

"If that's the case hopefully we can expose them. I'm not saying they can't handle the bounce but, like a lot of the subcontinental teams, it's pretty foreign to them."

However, Sri Lanka skipper Mahela Jayawardene was adamant he and the rest of his side's stroke-makers would relish the Sabina Park surface.

"Like any other cricketers in the world, our batsmen love to play on bouncy tracks when the ball is coming on," Jayawardene said.

"And we've got a very decent bowling attack to complement

those conditions."

Meanwhile, Oram said he'd no doubts about his own fitness.

"I'll be fine. It's my left foot, my landing foot and that's the one that's gets a lot of stress put through it when I'm bowling," said the giant all-rounder.

"Three games in six days last week sent it over the edge. Rest was the potion that we needed."

Even though New Zealand often opt for a 'horses for courses' selection policy, off-spinner Jeetan Patel will have every right to feel aggrieved if he is left out after being one of the few Black Caps to emerge with credit on Friday by taking two for 48 in 10 overs.

Patel's control was in marked contrast to that of quicks Michael Mason and Mark Gillespie whose combined nine wicketless overs cost an expensive 94 runs.

And for all New Zealand's talk of opposition top order frailties, their frontline batting is not the strongest either, with number four Scott Styris -- who made 111 not out against Sri Lanka in Grenada -- often obliged to perform rescue missions.

Veteran Sri Lanka left-arm quick Chaminda Vaas removed New Zealand's top three on his way to three for 33 in Grenada.

His figures included dismissing left-handed opener Fleming lbw

for nought for the fourth successive time.

Muttiah Muralidaran, as he has frequently done before, then mystified the middle-order with three cheap wickets of his own.

Sri Lanka's attack Tuesday is likely to be even stronger with unorthodox fast bowler Lasith Malinga set to return after three games out with ankle ligament damage.

Fellow quick Dilhara Fernando has an ankle problem too but all-rounder Farveez Maharoof, who took three wickets in an over last time out against Ireland, could once more provide cover.

### TEAMS

**NEW ZEALAND:** Stephen Fleming (captain), Peter Fulton, Ross Taylor, Scott Styris, Craig McMillan, Jacob Oram, Brendon McCullum, Daniel Vettori, James Franklin, Shane Bond, Jeetan Patel/Michael Mason.

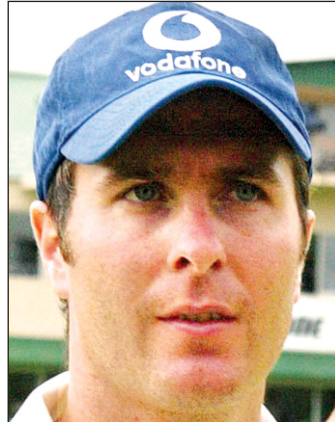
**SRI LANKA:** Upul Tharanga, Sanath Jayasuriya, Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Chamara Silva, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Russel Arnold, Chaminda Vaas, Lasith Malinga, Muttiah Muralidaran, Dilhara Fernando/Farveez Maharoof.

**Umpires:** Rudi Koertzen and Simon Taufel.



NOT EYE TO EYE: Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene (R) and New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming cross paths as they arrive at their team hotel in Kingston on Monday ahead of their World Cup semifinal clash at Sabina Park today.

PHOTO: AFP



### Michael Vaughan

(England cricket captain)

"I'd love to say we're glad to see the back of him. He's scored a lot of runs against us and it will be nice to play against the West Indies without him. He's had a great career and we wish him well."

While paying tribute to just-retired Brian Lara.



### BTV & SET Max

ICC World Cup 2007

(First Semifinal)

New Zealand v Sri Lanka

Live at 8:30 pm

### TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League

Man United v AC Milan

Live at 12:00 am (Wednesday)



B.League

Brothers Union v Abahani (4:00 pm)

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Khulna Abahani v Muktijoddha (3:45 pm)

Venue: Khulna Stadium

## SL keep faith in Tharanga

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka will persist with out-of-form opener Upul Tharanga for the World Cup semifinal against New Zealand, the country's chief selector said on Monday.

The left-hander's poor form -- he has scored just 17 runs in his past three innings -- raised speculation that former skipper Marvan Atapattu could replace him at Jamaica's Sabina Park on Tuesday.

But Asantha de Mel, the chairman of Sri Lankan selectors, said Tharanga's good deeds far outweighed his recent failures and he deserved to stay in the team.

"We must not forget that Tharanga scored two centuries against England last year and also scored two centuries in the Champions Trophy," de Mel said just before leaving for the Caribbean on Monday.

"In this World Cup also he was

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## Maharoof to give 200%

AFP, Kingston



World Cup semifinals here on Tuesday.

Maharoof made a compelling case for a starting place in the team with a man-of-the-match performance against Ireland last week where he took four wickets, including three in an over, as well as pulling off a stunning run-out.

"I will give 200 per cent in the match and I would back myself to perform," said the 22-year-old from

Colombo.

"We have played really well so far. It will be a case of continuing to give it our best."

Maharoof, a former captain of his country's Under-19 side, seized his chance against Ireland in Grenada to make a case for semifinal inclusion with Dilhara Fernando ruled out through injury.

"I got injured earlier in the tournament against Bangladesh but I just kept working hard in the nets. This is my first World Cup and it is something I have been looking forward to ever since I became professional three years ago."

Sri Lanka's bowlers have been mightily impressive in the World Cup.

Maharoof has nine wickets but he is behind teammates Muttiah

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PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan batting great Aravinda de Silva (L) and former international Roshan Mahanama share a light moment at a promotional event in Colombo from where they sent a good luck message to the national team that is currently playing in the World Cup in the West Indies.

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## Cruciani face to face with Nayeem again



SPORTS REPORTER

About 16 months after losing the SAFF Championship final to Indian coach Syed Nayeemuddin, Diego Cruciani will once again face his coaching rival when Abahani meet Brothers Union in the B. League today.

Brothers' home match, which kicks off at 4pm, will be telecast live

## Razzak in ODI top 10

AFP, Bridgetown

Seven of the top 10 batsmen in the latest ICC rankings are from teams involved in this week's World Cup semifinals.

Of the top 10 only Kevin Pietersen, Ramnaresh Sarwan and Mahendra Singh Dhoni will not be in Jamaica or St Lucia on Tuesday and Wednesday for the penultimate stage of the competition.

Sri Lanka opener Sanath Jayasuriya has moved up to third following his run of good form while there have also been moves in the right direction for Sarwan of the West Indies, AB de Villiers and Herschelle Gibbs of South Africa and Australians Matthew Hayden and Michael Clarke.

Hayden has moved up one place to seventh spot and is enjoying his highest rating for nearly three years following his third century of the World Cup against New Zealand on Friday.

England's Pietersen is still on top spot, closely followed by Australia captain Ricky Ponting in second. Sarwan's good showing in the Super Eight stage of the tournament has propelled him up no fewer than 10 places to sixth.

In the bowling rankings, South Africa's Shaun Pollock is still in front but he is slowly being caught by Shane Bond and the latest Australian fast bowler to make a challenge, Nathan Bracken.

The 29-year-old New South Welshman has moved past his teammate Glenn McGrath and now occupies third spot.

Another Australian to have an excellent tournament so far is Brad Hogg.

He has moved up nine places to 14th and 19 places since the World Cup began. Hogg's teammate Shaun Tait is also in impressive form, having moved up 66 places since the start of the tournament, into the top 50 for the first time.

Bangladesh left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak reached the top ten with his impressive haul of 13

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## Let mind games begin

AFP, Gros Islet



Africa's potentially explosive World Cup semifinal on Wednesday.

Kallis is one of four survivors from the dramatic tied semifinal against Australia at the 1999 World Cup in Birmingham, together with former captain Shaun Pollock, wicketkeeper Mark Boucher and batsman Herschelle Gibbs.

All four insist that the experience of playing in what at the time was rated the greatest one-day game of all time will have positive benefits in Wednesday's clash at Beausejour.

But Hayden, the 2007 tournament's most prolific run-maker with 580 to his name at an average of 82.85 as well as three centuries, is not convinced and believes that Graeme Smith's Proteas are fright-

ened by the defending champions.

"We gained a lot of experience in that 1999 game," said Kallis who made 53 in that famous semifinal.

"Looking back there are a few things that we might have tried to do differently so the experience we've carried around for all these years will probably stand us in good stead," added the veteran who has 480 runs in the Caribbean at an average of 96.

That 1999 tournament had also seen Australia prevail over South Africa by five wickets in a group game in Leeds where Gibbs made 101 before dropping a catch off Steve Waugh who went on to make a match-winning 120.

The parallels with in 2007 are staggering.

Just as eight years ago, Australia have already beaten South Africa in a group game triumphing by 83 runs in St Kitts on March 24.

Hayden smashed the World Cup's fastest ever century in that game making 101 off 68 balls as Australia piled up 377-6.

South Africa were then bowled

out for 294 for an 83-run defeat despite Smith and AB de Villiers giving them a flying start with a 160-run opening stand.

Hayden believes Australia, who have never lost a Test series to South Africa since the Proteas' return to international cricket in 1992, have the mental edge.

"Last time we played better than them and you could tell by the looks on their faces they were intimidated by us," Hayden said in Australia's Sunday Mail newspaper.

"It is an edge which came from many years of beating them. It was just body language. You could feel that they could feel it."

Gibbs says there is no pressure on the South Africans who squeezed into the semifinals thanks to a nine-wicket win over England after their campaign had almost been derailed by a shock defeat to Bangladesh.

"Our backs were against the wall (before the game against England). Now we're just going to go out there and enjoy it."

## Farashganj stun Ctg MSC

SPORTS REPORTER

Farashganj Sporting Club rallied in the second half to crush visiting Chittagong Mohammedan 3-0 in yesterday's B. League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Ali Hossain scored a brace and striker Mohammed Robin struck his fourth league goal as the riversiders recorded their second win in seven matches to put an end to the port city club's impressive

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### TODAY'S MATCH

Teams	Match	Time	Venue
New Zealand v Sri Lanka	1st semifinal	8:30 pm	Jamaica

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