

Colly's appeal to mates

AFP, London

England captain Paul Collingwood said his side had to be "brave" if they were to win the World Twenty20 even though fitness doubts surround star batsman Kevin Pietersen, their boldest player.

They may have pioneered one-day cricket as a professional sport but hosts England have still to win a major international limited-overs event.

And since reaching the last of their three finals in the 50-overs-per-side World Cup in 1992, England's one-day record has been nothing to shout about.

Just as some generals are always said to be "fighting the last war", England's general preference for steady accumulation at the top of the order and containing seam bowling, has often looked hopelessly outdated in the modern one-day game.

They head into this tournament without injured all-rounder Andrew Flintoff (knee) while Pietersen, whose ability to score rapidly with both conventional and outlandish shots makes him dangerous in all forms of cricket, has been struggling with an Achilles problem.

However, Collingwood expects the South Africa-born run-scorer "to play a major part in all the games".

England open the tournament proper against the Netherlands at Lord's on Friday and Collingwood, England's captain during their lacklustre showing at the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa two years ago, said now was not the time for caution.

"I think we've got to be brave," the Durham all-rounder told reporters during a captains' press conference at Lord's here on Sunday.

T20, an old

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"I think Twenty20 is ideally suited for us (retired players). It's good knowing that you only have to bowl four overs," said Kumble, who led Bangalore to the final.

"I agree it's a young man's game and you need to be supremely fit and athletic, but if you have six or seven guys like that, experienced guys can take the pressure and use their skills to pull a team through."

India's Sachin Tendulkar, who has opted out of T20 internationals, also batted for the veterans, saying that age was no barrier to success.

"It's a cricketers' game, so it really doesn't matter whether you are young or old. It's a cricket match," said Tendulkar, the world's top scorer in Tests (12,773) and one-dayers (16,684).

If further proof was needed of the veterans' significance, it was provided by Warne who marshalled his limited resources remarkably well to lead Rajasthan to victory last year besides excelling as a bowler.

"You really need to pinch yourself to believe that he (Warne) can still spin a web around the batsmen in the world," Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh said during the recent IPL.

"He retired in 2007 and now spends more time on the poker table than on cricket pitches, but give him the ball and the magic resumes."

Roger survives

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"It was very close. It goes through your head that you could have served for the match. I wanted to play a good return, not too deep, but he hit the winner," said the German former world number two.

"You have to tip your hat to him. He went for it. It was too good and he got his reward."

American second seed Serena Williams set up a French Open quarter-final meeting with Russia's seventh seed Svetlana Kuznetsova after blazing through her fourth-round match here on Monday.

Williams, the 2002 champion, took just 53 minutes to see off Canadian 24th seed Aleksandra Wozniak 6-1, 6-2, while Kuznetsova triumphed 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 against Polish number 12 seed Agnieszka Radwanska.

Maria Sharapova of Russia reached the quarter-finals of the French Open on Sunday with a 6-4, 0-6, 6-4 win over Li Na of China.

She will play Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia for a place in the semi-finals.

Later Monday, Serbian fifth seed Jelena Jankovic was due to take on unseeded Romanian teenager Sorana Cirstea, with France's Virginie Razzano set to face Australian number 30 seed Samantha Stosur.



Players of Bangladesh Rifles celebrate after clinching the EXIM Bank 19th National Men's Handball title beating Bangladesh Police 32-17 in the last 'super three' match at the Dhaka Handball Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SA have a point to prove

AFP, London



South Africa captain Graeme Smith believes winning the ICC World Twenty20 in England will be the ideal way to show his side are a force to be reckoned with in all forms of the game.

Smith has led his side to Test series wins in England and Australia in recent times and now the opening batsman is looking for fresh success on English soil as South Africa seek a first major one-day trophy since 1998.

"It would be lovely if we could be successful in this tournament or any ICC tournament that is coming up," Smith told reporters at Lord's here on Sunday.

"We have had an incredible period in the last 16 months and the team has achieved so much."

"The confidence is good and we are excited about playing this tournament with the chance to go out and express ourselves. I think there is a lot more talent, flair and confidence among this team than ever before."

Smith and several of his compatriots had the ideal preparation for the World Twenty20 by taking part in the 20-overs-per-side Indian Premier League.

A franchise event featuring many of the world's leading players, the IPL was moved to South Africa at short notice after security fears meant it could not be played in India.

"Cricket South Africa and the country as a whole did a fantastic job in hosting the event at

three weeks' notice," said Smith.

"It was an incredible effort and we proved our country's ability at hosting major events. A lot of our players had prominent roles in a number of the teams which probably wouldn't have happened if it had been in India and they had good leadership roles among their teams."

Veteran all-rounder Jacques Kallis helped the Bangalore Royal Challengers to the IPL final.

He has, though, sometimes been criticised for slow scoring and an unwillingness to bowl his sharp seamers and Smith said: "Jacques is the one player who arrives here with a point to prove."

"He had a decent performance in the IPL so his confidence is high and tactically how we use him is important. He's an all-rounder and needs to contribute in all forms."

For many South African players, the combination of international and IPL commitments has led to a fairly intense schedule.

"Mental fatigue is probably our biggest challenge and something we have addressed as a team," Smith, whose side are in Group D alongside New Zealand and minnows Scotland, said.

That professionalism wasn't matched, in Smith's eyes, on Sunday when the Proteas turned up at the Southgate club ground in north London, used by Middlesex for home matches when they are not at Lord's, for a practice session only to discover that their arrival was news to their hosts.

They had to head back to Lord's instead and Smith said: "Even today with the not-so-great training facilities we have had all over the place the guys have still applied themselves."

Lanka leave all behind

AFP, London



Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara said that while life for his side would not be the same after the attack on their team bus in Pakistan it would not stop them from playing international cricket.

Sangakkara's men have arrived in England for the ICC World Twenty20 after a particularly torrid few months.

In March, their bus was attacked with bullets and grenades in Lahore as they travelled to the Gaddafi Stadium for the second Test against Pakistan in an incident that saw several players, including wicketkeeper/batsman Sangakkara hurt, and eight Pakistanis killed.

And their landing in England was overshadowed by British newspaper reports of Sri Lankan government 'war crimes' against the separatist Tamil Tigers, which led to the cancellation of a trip to the Oxford Union.

"It was funny getting back on a bus from the airport to go to hotel when we arrived in England," Sangakkara explained to reporters at a captains' press conference at Lord's here on Sunday.

"After Lahore, we went through a terrible time but what we've realised is that life goes on."

"We've got to play cricket, cricket for us means normalcy."

Sangakkara, who might have been a lawyer had he not come good as a cricketer, was realistic about the extent of sport's role in surmounting political problems - particularly after the Lahore attack which led to Pakistan becoming a 'no-go zone' for international cricketers.

But nor was the erudite 31-year-old dismissive of the role that cricket in particular plays in his country's culture.

"Cricket in Sri Lanka has been that one unifying force over the years," he said. "It's been the passion of the entire country, cricket transcends religion, race and politics."

"I think that's the greatest thing we represent. As a team we are representative of all the ethnicities and religions that are there in Sri Lanka and we get on fine."

Sangakkara, who was due to address the

Oxford Union, the University's debating society, with team-mate Muttiah Muralidaran, said the team had shown great 'mental fortitude' in resuming international cricket.

However, he admitted life had changed for the Sri Lankan players. "When we came here we were aware of increased security around us," he said.

"We requested after Lahore for a security expert was on tour with us because we know terrorism is a worldwide problem."

"In Lahore, the bubble burst. We thought that because we are an Asian team, and we are cricketers we would be safe in Pakistan. We were way off the mark and naive."

Sangakkara said there was a straightforward reason why the Oxford Union visit had been called off.

"Since then the Oxford arrangements were not made known to our security team well enough in advance that was why it was cancelled."

Sangakkara, who said the war had touched "every single person" in Sri Lanka, was optimistic about both his country and his cricket team's future.

"We've experienced first hand terrorism in Lahore and we've had a bloody war for 26 years in Sri Lanka that has come to an end. It presents a great opportunity for our country to move forward as one nation and one people."

"It's a weight of the shoulders of everyone in Sri Lanka. Twenty-six years is a long time. I've grown up with it. Now it's a great opportunity for us to move forward. Everyone in Sri Lanka is looking forward to that."

Sri Lanka, who have warm-up matches against South Africa at Lord's on Wednesday and against Bangladesh at Trent Bridge on Thursday, find themselves drawn in a group with fellow Test nations Australia and the West Indies.

Nevertheless, they remain strongly fancied to qualify for the Super Eights and Sangakkara, whose team features a mix of newcomers and veterans such as star batsman Sanath Jayasuriya, insisted their attention was now solely on cricket.

"I think talking about a Lahore over and over again has helped us in a way. It's good to remind ourselves of our mortality, sometimes we're led to believe otherwise by the press. The only challenge for us is to get used to the conditions and do it quickly."

John denies 'treachery'

AFP, Sydney

Former Australian coach John Buchanan has denied suggestions of treachery amid reports he has met with English officials to help plot their strategy for next month's Ashes series.

A London newspaper reported that Buchanan had held a series of meetings with England officials and coaching staff last week about their Ashes tactics.

The Sunday Telegraph said it would be seen as "an act of treachery by many Australians, given Buchanan's intimate knowledge of this Australian side."

Buchanan's advisory contract with Cricket Australia has not been renewed, leaving him free to work with other countries.

While defending his right to act as a coaching consultant, he has denied his talks involved leaking information for Ashes game plans.

"I did meet with them but we did not discuss their Ashes strategy," Buchanan told Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper Monday.

"We mainly talked about the Twenty20 game and the development of their centre of excellence."

"It was basically a continuation of the work I had done (earlier this year) when I spoke to the English Lions team in New Zealand."

Buchanan, 56, said he had nothing to apologise for, given that coaching had become a global profession and Australian coaches were in demand.

ICC will look

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need to keep in mind that if they created a window for IPL other similar domestic leagues could also demand space in the international calendar.

"The rest of the domestic seasons for every member country sorts themselves out. You could feasibly (create an IPL window), but why would you do it? It's a domestic event."

"If you do it in one domestic season, what about all the other domestic seasons? There could be many others that arise. The FTP is done by the members for international fixtures," he said.

Thrilling win

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to qualify for the final.

Babu (31st), Khaled (53rd) and Zayed (56th and 57th) scored for Victoria who will now meet Town Secondary School in the final tomorrow at the BNS.

State run television channel Bangladesh Television (BTV) will telecast the match live from 5pm.

Vettori thinks

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But Dhoni, who in common with many of those taking part at the World Twenty20 has just finished a lucrative stint in the IPL, said there was no danger of India, who beat Pakistan in a thrilling World Twenty20 final two years ago in Johannesburg, losing their edge.

"When you are playing for your country the motivation level is high," he said. "It's a cruel game, the moment you relax, that's the biggest mistake."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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An Akram in the making?

AFP, Karachi



When Pakistan won the 1992 World Cup, Mohammad Aamir was not even born.

But the country's newest pace sensation has a precious memento, a videotape of the glorious moments of Pakistan's famous triumph in Australia and he knows what it takes to become a champion.

"I was born two weeks after Pakistan won the World Cup but I watched the 1992 World Cup on tape and especially Wasim Akram's bowling," said Aamir, who modelled his style on the legendary left-arm paceman.

The 17-year-old is the latest addition to Pakistan's pace armoury and has impressed everyone, including former skipper Wasim, with his pace and swing.

"I have watched him more than once and he's impressive with over 140kmh speed and can swing the ball both ways," Wasim told AFP, predicting the rookie paceman can be a "revelation" in the World Twenty20.

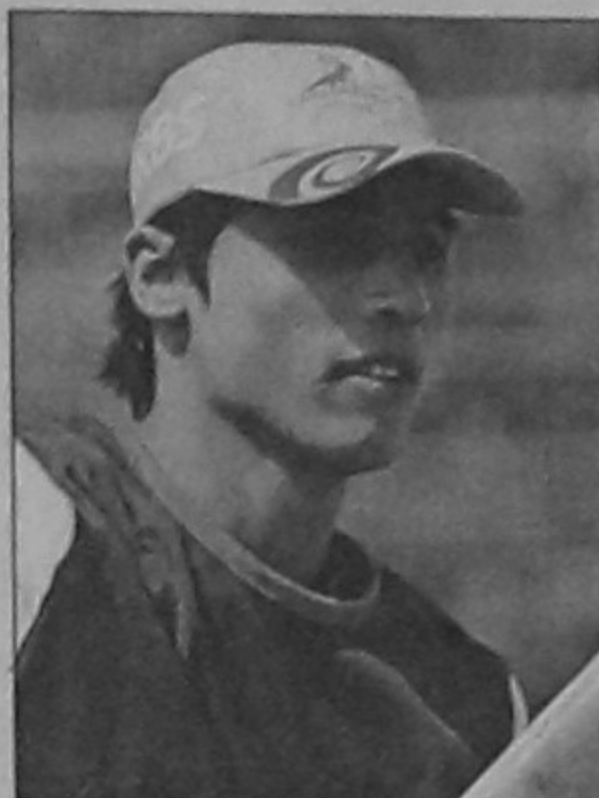
Wasim came across Aamir in a talent-spotting programme, paving his way for selection for the Pakistan

Under-19 tour to England in 2007.

Aamir took eight wickets, including a match-winning 4-30 in the third one-day win.

He also anchored Pakistan's win in the tri-nation Under-19 series in Sri Lanka, taking four wickets each against the hosts and England.

He was tipped to help Pakistan defend their Under-19 World Cup title in 2008 but a dengue virus cut short his tournament, eventually won



MOHAMMAD AAMIR

by India.

Aamir hails from the small town of Gujjar Khan, some 30 kilometres from the capital Islamabad.

He grew up in an academy and could easily have become a soldier, like his father.

"I was never interested in joining the army. I was attracted by cricket and by Wasim Akram," admitted Aamir, who learned the basics of the game at the Bajwa academy.

Spotted and helped by cricket official Shakil Shaikh, Aamir gradually progressed to make an impressive first-class debut last year.

He took 56 wickets in just ten games, which earned him a call for Pakistan's tour to Bangladesh in March.

"Aamir's strong point is that he can judge a batsman after a few deliveries and then plan his deliveries. His swing and pace can come in handy," said Shaikh.

However, his international debut was delayed after Bangladesh postponed their planned one-day series because of security concerns.

But his chance could come sooner rather than later after Shoaib Akhtar was withdrawn from the Twenty20 squad due to injury.

Aamir is ready to grab his opportunity.

"My aim is to have success like Wasim's in 1992," said Aamir of Wasim, who finished as player of the 1992 World Cup tournament with 18 wickets.

"I want a fairytale success, and will do my best for it."



A scene from yesterday's Citycell National School Football Championship semifinal match between Victoria High School of Moulvibazar and Govindaganj Bahumukhi High School at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Younus happy to play

AFP, London



Pakistan captain Younus Khan said the upcoming ICC World Twenty20 in England had a special significance for his side after their country had become a virtual 'no-go zone' for international cricket.

A terror attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in Lahore in March saw seven of their players and English assistant coach Paul Farbrace injured.

Eight Pakistanis, including six security force personnel, were killed.

With no international side willing to travel to Pakistan, Younus's men recently returned to international action in the United Arab Emirates against Australia, where they lost 3-2 in a one-day series but won the lone Twenty20.

"It is special to be back on the world stage, especially in Twenty20 and in England, the media are here so lots of hopes are here," the talented batsman told reporters at Lord's here on Sunday.

"We are suffering from not playing regularly, and no-one is coming to Pakistan," he added.

Pakistan endured a nailbiting defeat at the hands of arch-rivals India in the 2007 World Twenty20 final in South Africa and Younus would love nothing more than for his team to go one better this time.

"My confidence is that I'll take this trophy to Pakistan," he said. But such has been Pakistan's relative lack of international cricket that he added: "It will be an achievement for us to finish in the top four."

Reflecting on the 2007 final, Younus said: "The finishing touches were not there. We needed only five runs. But it was fantastic to be a part of that team in the final."

"Some guys were crying at the end, but hopefully we'll have the finishing touches," Younus said.

Twenty20 tends to put a premium on big-hitting batsmen at the start of the innings but Younus, whose team face England and the Netherlands in Group B, said it was not necessary to start going for big shots right from the off.

Tigers lose fighting

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The fourth over went for 16, with Haddin and Watson each slamming sixes, and the sixth cost 22. By this time Watson and Haddin both were using their feet and wrists excellently. Watson dumped offspinner Naem Islam for four and six in consecutive deliveries as Australia reached 87 in seven overs. Watson raised his half-century in just 21 balls with another swipe over midwicket, the most profitable shot on this track.

Mahmudullah struck in a double-wicket over during which both openers picked out fielders in the deep. Enter Andrew Symonds and three sixes over midwicket, but after racing to 27 from just 14 balls,

Symonds fell to Mahmudullah in the 13th over. Three deliveries later Mahmudullah ended Ricky Ponting's scratchy innings of 14 and Australia had a new pair at the crease again. Where his team-mates all suffered, Mahmudullah returned figures of 4 for 37 and his role was instrumental in roping Australia in from what seemed a massive total.

Michael Hussey and Michael Clarke came together at 144 for 4 and immediately tried to lay into the bowling. The short boundaries and a slew of half-trackers helped their cause and the pair hit hard and timed the ball at will, lapping 52 for the fifth wicket off 27 balls. There was the usual flurry of heaves, hoicks

and wickets during the final overs as Bangladesh finished with a tidy last three overs. Australia lost their way a bit after that century opening stand in eight overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: 219 for