

Younus quits T20 cricket

AFP, London

Pakistan captain Younus Khan announced his retirement from T20 internationals after leading his side to victory in the 2009 Twenty20 final against Sri Lanka at Lord's here on Sunday.

"This is my last Twenty20 game (for Pakistan), so I am retiring from T20 internationals," Younus said after Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets.

"I am now 34, I am old for this kind of cricket. The good thing is we have a couple of good youngsters like Shahzaib (Hasan) and Ahmad Shahzad."

However, gifted batsman Younus -- who has appeared in 60 Tests and 186 one-day internationals -- is set to continue his international career in the longer formats of the game.

Younus invites world to come to Pakistan

AFP, London

Pakistan captain Younus Khan urged the international cricket community to return to the troubled Asian nation after leading his side to victory in the World Twenty20 final against Sri Lanka.

Sunday's eight-wicket success at Lord's came just months after armed militants attacked the Sri Lanka team bus on the way to a Test in Lahore.

That March 3 incident, which saw six policemen and two civilians killed, plus seven Sri Lankan squad members injured, led to the suspension of international cricket in Pakistan.

Shuktara take

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Chittagong Mohammedan Blues 3-0 and beat Narsingdi GRC by 1-0 goal at the Cox's Bazar Stadium to reach the semis.

On the other hand, Feni Soccer Club made it to the final eliminating hosts Shaheed Mukti Juddha Moin Smriti Sangsads 3-2 in tie-breaker in the first semifinal at the Jessor Stadium on Friday.

Earlier, in Group D matches, Feni smartly reached the last four crushing Jhenidah Peul Smriti Sangsads 6-1 and upsetting Dhaka Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool 3-0, both at the Jessor Stadium.

The two finalists so far maintained all-win run in the tournament.

Deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar will be the chief guest in the final.

Hero Afridi

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"Why is he the most popular Pakistani player? He has a heart of gold ... so apart from his cricketing abilities he is loved for his deeds," said Khan.

The all-rounder also helped with relief work in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, visiting far-flung areas with aid workers.

"Whenever I have time, I go for relief work and it gives me immense pleasure and satisfaction. It touches me how people suffer and if I can do anything for them it's great," Afridi has said.

Afridi's batting form had dwindled since the inaugural World Twenty20 in South Africa two years ago where he finished as "player of the tournament." Pakistan, however, lost the final to India by a five-run margin.

He was also part of Pakistan's team which lost to Australia in the 50-over World Cup final at Lord's in 1999.

Fans enjoy big

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international players and Brazilian international players in South Africa?"

Outside the stadium, groups of desperate fans waited in the slim hope of tickets.

"This is going to be a World Cup vibe," said 26-year-old Pretoria accountant and Italy fan Nicholas Giacinti said before kick-off.

"It was like you never thought you'd get to see them live, so it's like once in a lifetime."

Outside the stadium, volunteer Paul Maesela, who has assisted at three matches, was directing arriving fans into the demarcated area before the security check.

"This is the busiest of them all (of the matches)," he said.

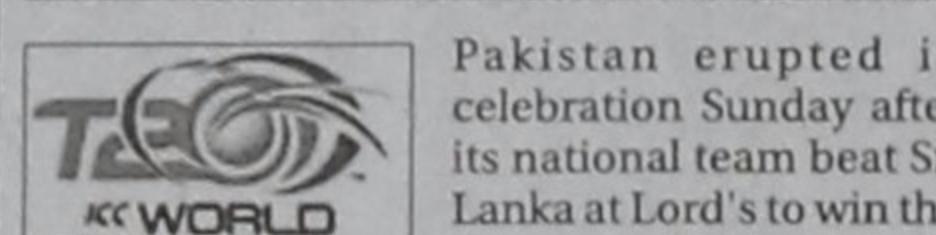


PHOTO: COURTESY

Kids are seen engrossed in painting at the Conference Room of the National Sports Council yesterday. Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) organised the painting competition as part of its three-day programme to mark the Olympic Day, which will be observed worldwide today. The BOA is also staging the traditional Olympic Day Run in all divisional headquarters of the country to mark the august occasion.

Pakistan party

AFP, Karachi



Pakistan erupted in celebration Sunday after its national team beat Sri Lanka at Lord's to win the Twenty20 Cricket World Cup, a rare moment of joy amid the gloom of the country's bloody unrest.

Pakistan reached a modest, 139-run target for the loss of two wickets with eight balls to spare to win their first major trophy since 1992, when Imran Khan led them to victory in the 50-over World Cup in Australia.

People danced in the streets late into the night after following the match played in London, watching on big screens set up in parks and stadiums across the country.

As Pakistan scored the winning run with Shahid Afridi at the crease, people danced with joy, lit firecrackers and celebrated by distributing sweets.

"We are proud of our team as they gave us a rare moment of joy," said Suleiman Siddiqui, who watched the match at a stadium in Karachi.

Former captain Ramiz Raja said the win would help lift the gloom besetting the war-torn country.

"This is the greatest moment in Pakistan cricket, greater than 1992 because people (are now) in gloom and previously had nothing to cheer about," said Raja, a member of 1992 team that beat England in the Melbourne final.

Pakistan has been hit by civil unrest and its army is fighting an increasingly deadly insur-

gency in the North-West Frontier Province.

Earlier this month a suicide bomb blast killed over dozen people in Peshawar, some 30km from Mardan, the hometown of captain Younus Khan.

Hundreds of people gathered outside Khan's home Saturday night to watch the game and celebrate the win.

"We lost so many people in the blasts recently. The military is fighting a war in Swat but we forgot all the gloom with this cricket win," Abdulla Khan told a local television channel after the win.

People also thronged paceman Umar Gul's house in Peshawar.

"We have a tradition of hosting our guests and Sunday's final was watched by hundreds of people outside our house," Gul's elder brother, Mairaj, told AFP.

In Islamabad, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari announced a cash prize of 500,000 rupees (6,500 US dollars) for each member of the winning team and double that for Afridi, the final player of the match with an unbeaten 54.

"We are proud of you," Zardari said in a statement. "You have given a moment of joy and the whole nation is celebrating the win."

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani also congratulated the team and invited them to attend a reception at his official residence after their return from Britain, his office said in a statement.

"The country is proud of their superb team play, which held aloft Pakistan's flag in the field of cricket," the statement said.

Yousuf, Razzaq return

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international cricket after he replaced injured all-rounder Yasir Arafat and appeared in the World Twenty20, which ended Sunday with Pakistan lifting the Twenty20 Cricket World Cup.

They beat Sri Lanka at Lord's in London, and will now play three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 match on the Sri Lanka tour.

Yousuf, 34, was declared the best Test batsman in 2007 after scoring a world record 1,788 runs in the previous calendar year.

Yousuf and Razzaq joined the ICL after being left out of the team which finished runners-up in the inaugural World Twenty20 held in South Africa two years ago.

All-rounder Shahid Afridi, declared man-of-the-match in Pakistan's semifinal and final win in the World Twenty20, will skip the Test leg of the Sri Lanka tour but will be available for the limited over matches.

USA pull it out of hat

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On 30 minutes Guzan plucked a goalbound chip from Mohamed Aboutrika out of the African air as Egypt pressed to get back on terms, moving the ball fluently through midfield.

As news filtered through from Pretoria that Brazil had reached a 3-0 lead in the Egypt qualifying on goal difference which they almost improved on 39 minutes when Hosni Abd Rabbo hit the crossbar.

Six minutes into the second half and Hani Said pull off a crucial goalmouth save when Altidore's shot escaped El Hadary with the Zamalek defender using his body to extinguish the danger.

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fine diving save to stop Ahmed Abdellah's attempt.

The defender limped off injured just after to be replaced by Mohamed Aboutrika.

Against the run of play the US doubled their advantage on 63 minutes after Bradley, the coach's son, toed in a Donovan cross from the left, wrongfooting El Hadary.

That put the CONCACAF Gold Cup winners bang in contention themselves as another goal would see them pip Italy and Egypt on head-to-head.

And sure enough up popped Fulham's Clint Dempsey to head home Jonathan Spector's cross in the 71st minute for a famous victory.

Fairytale turnaround

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a third goal we had a chance to go through. It was great to get the third but it wasn't until I saw the bench at the end that I knew we'd made it."

Bradley put his team's remarkable change in fortune in part down to the F factor.

"We've been impressed with Egypt against Brazil and Italy but time is short between games in this competition and we knew fatigue could play a part if

we could get an early lead.

"That's what we failed to do against Brazil."

"The most important thing in that game was we didn't start well. We allowed them to have the edge that put us in a defensive mode."

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Austrian

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agency APA Monday Inter are due to meet representatives from Twente this week.

But whether any deal is signed or not is uncertain.

Groener admitted the ankle injury suffered by Arnaudovic last month, which doctors initially said could keep him out between four and six months, remains a problem.

"No one knows for how long he will be injured. Inter, of course, want to buy a player who is 100 per cent fit," said Groener.

Also returning to the squad is paceman Abdur Rauf, who played four one-day matches last year but was never selected for the Tests.

Pakistan starts the current tour on June 29 with a three-day side match in Colombo. The first Test starts at Galle from July 4.

The other two Tests will be played in Colombo (12-16 July and 20-24 July) followed by one-day series and the Twenty20 match.

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