

Even going at Centurion

CRICINFO, Centurion

Pakistan's batsmen came out looking for an early knockout; India's under-pressure pace bowlers took the blows, lost the first round, but came back to lead on points halfway through the innings as the former reached 108 for 3 in their Champions Trophy match here on Saturday.

Pakistan's middle-order, muddled in its thought process, undid an explosive and entertaining start wherein they fell from 51 for 1 in seven overs to 65 for 3 in 15.

This was the first time the two teams were playing each other in an international match in close to a year and a half, and both Kamran Akmal and Imran Nazir could hardly wait. The action was breathless in first seven overs as both launched into India's left-arm opening bowlers. A diving and exuberant Virat Kohli, playing Pakistan for the first time, saved boundaries in the first over, but RP Singh didn't enjoy the same luck as Ashish Nehra did.

In the next six overs, Nazir drove on the up, punched down the ground and through covers, and also cut in front of square to beat Kohli and Suresh Raina. Akmal drove on the up too, and pulled emphatically. Those six overs yielded nine boundaries, and one gift from an over-zealous Nazir who top-edged while pulling Nehra. Akmal counterattacked pulling out the same shot twice, but when he was kept away from strike from a comparatively mellow Younis Khan, he too looked to manufacture a shot. Like Nazir, he mistook a ball for shorter than it was, and dragged Nehra onto the stumps.

Nazir scored 20 off 17, Akmal 19 off 22, and both were in the dressing room even before the end of the first Powerplay, watching the middle order going into its shell. Ishant Sharma cashed in on the batsmen not looking to rotate the strike, and slipped in back-to-back maidens. MS Dhoni also brought the previously unimpressive RP Singh back, who

took out Younis with one that held its line from round the stumps.

Two wickets taken, and the momentum wrested, Dhoni looked to get in a few overs from his part-time bowlers, and delayed the introduction of his trump card, Harbhajan Singh. Mohammad Yousuf looked more fluent than Shoaib Malik, and looked to unsettle Kohli. Yusuf Pathan, though, extracted sharp turn from the pitch, and kept the batsmen quiet. At the halfway mark, Yousuf and Malik had added 43 runs for the fourth wicket in 10.2 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard during Pakistan's innings in the ICC Champions Trophy match against India at SuperSport Park in Centurion on Saturday:

PAKISTAN	
Nazir c Harbhajan b Nehra	20
K Akmal b Nehra	19
Younis c Dhoni b RP	20
Malik not out	84
Yousuf not out	63
Extras: (lb-1, w-10)	11
Total: (For 3 wks in 40 overs)	217
To bat: U Akmal, Afridi, Naved,	

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PHOTO: AFP
Pakistan's opening batsman Kamran Akmal (C) plays a defensive shot against the bowling of Ashish Nehra of India during their high-voltage match of the Champions Trophy at SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday.

Johnson lifts Aussies

AFP, Johannesburg

Mitchell Johnson was unbeaten on 73 as a late run rush lifted Australia to 275-8 off 50 overs in a 2009 ICC Champions Trophy match against West Indies at the Wanderers on Saturday.

It was the highest ODI knock for a man better known

for his ability with the ball and virtually assured the defending champions of a winning start in Group A which includes India and Pakistan.

After some mid-innings wobbles saw Australia slump to 171-7, Johnson tormented the tiring West Indies attack and his 47-ball spell at the crease yielded eight fours and three sixes.

Australia lost Shane Watson

off the first ball of the match as Kemar Roach made an instant impact with a late swinging yorker on his return to the team in place of Tino Best.

Skipper Ricky Ponting steadied the innings with a 79-run stand that included nine fours and one six before being stumped by Chadwick Walton off the bowling of Nikita Miller.

West Indies, lacking their first-choice players because of a long-running contract dispute, need to score at a rate of 5.52 runs per over to win and cause the biggest upset of the 11-year tournament.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard after Australia's innings in the ICC Champions Trophy match against West Indies at Wanderers on Saturday:

Australia				
Watson b Roach				0
Paine c Walton b Bernard				33
Ponting st Walton b Miller				79
Hussey c Fletcher b Bernard				6
Ferguson b Roach				20
White b Miller				4
Hopes c Walton b Sammy				5
Johnson not out				73
Lee run out				25
Hauritz not out				7
Extras: (lb-8, w-10, nb-5)				23
Total: (For 8 wks in 50 overs)				275
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-85, 3-				
120, 4-148, 5-162, 6-164, 7-				
171, 8-241				
Did not bat: Siddle				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Roach	10	0	73	2
Tonge	10	1	54	0
Sammy	10	0	53	1
Bernard	10	0	63	2
Miller	10	1	24	2

WEST INDIES: Richards, Fletcher, Smith, Dowlin, Reifer, Bernard, Sammy, Walton, Miller, Roach, Tonge.

Toss: West Indies.
Umpires: Tony Hill and Asad Rauf.



PHOTO: AFP

Australia's lower-order batsman Mitchell Johnson plays a pull-shot during his unbeaten knock of 73 against the West Indies in their Champions Trophy clash at the Wanderers in Johannesburg yesterday.

A cricketers begin tour today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh A cricket team, captained by opener Hannan Sarkar, begin their tour of India today by taking on the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) under-22 team in a three-day warm-up game in Nashik.

The second-string Bangladesh team went to Maharashtra on the return tour after the MCA team visited Bangladesh in May to play two four-day matches, three one-day matches and as many Twenty20 games.

Faisal Hossain Dickens was included in the squad at the last moment after left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak opted out citing personal reasons.

After the warm-up game, the visitors will face the Ranji Trophy side, Maharashtra, in

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Bollinger, Franklin can play

AFP, Johannesburg

Australia's Doug Bollinger and James Franklin of New Zealand were given the all-clear to take part in the Champions Trophy on Friday by the International Cricket Council.

Bollinger will replace seamer Nathan Bracken who was forced out of the squad with a right knee injury while Franklin comes in for Jacob Oram who has a strain to his left hamstring.

Bollinger, the 28-year-old left-arm fast bowler from New

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England confident

AFP, Centurion



Skipper Andrew Strauss has said England will not be short of confidence in their Champions Trophy match against South Africa today.

England, beaten 6-1 by Australia in a recent home one-day series, began their campaign in this tournament on an impressive note when they posted a six-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in Johannesburg on Friday.

Their lone win against Australia came in the last match.

"This game more than the final game against Australia was a pretty professional performance with the bat," Strauss said after his team's win.

"You take a lot of confidence from these sort of performances, guys standing up and actually playing to their potential and not playing with fear."

"If we play like that, we are a dangerous side. We are not going to be touting ourselves as the winners of the competition at this stage, but if

we can keep getting better, then we are going to be hard to beat."

Sri Lanka and South Africa have one win apiece from two matches, while England have played only one game. New Zealand have lost their first match. The top two sides will make it the semifinals.

Strauss said he was pleased with his team's all-round performance against Sri Lanka on a lively track.

England were indebted to pacemen James Anderson (3-20), Stuart Broad (3-49) and Graham Onions (2-58) for seizing the initiative as the trio played a big role in restricting Sri Lanka to a modest 212.

Eoin Morgan (62 not out), Paul Collingwood (46) and Owais Shah (44) then built on their bowlers' efforts to see their team home.

"It's very satisfying. It was a good toss to win, but I thought the way Jimmy Anderson bowled, particularly in the first 10 overs, really put Sri Lanka on the back foot," said Strauss.

"I was happy with the intent the batsmen showed. They did not let the spinners bowl at us. Collingwood and Shah played valuable

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Kiwis' last chance

AFP, Johannesburg



New Zealand enter the 2009 ICC Champions Trophy last-chance saloon today when they face unpredictable Sri Lanka at the Wanderers.

Nothing less than victory will keep the 'Black Caps' in the hunt to win the second most important one-day national team tournament after the World Cup and collect a record two-million-dollar first prize.

England, Sri Lanka and South Africa have two points each in Group B and New Zealand are pointless having been outplayed by South Africa as convincingly as the five-wicket margin suggests.

Winners of the second edition nine years ago in Kenya, New Zealand entered this tournament with a large question mark hanging over the ability of the batsmen to build match-winning partnerships.

And the worst fears of skipper Daniel Vettori were realised with only the fourth-wicket stand of Ross Taylor and South Africa-born Grant Elliott matching expectations.

The Kiwi batsmen never got to grips with the pace of Wayne Parnell and Dale Steyn, and the spin of Roelof van der Merwe also tied them in knots they could not untangle.

It is unlikely to get any easier against Sri Lanka, who lost by six wickets against England Friday after surprising South Africa by 55 runs in a rain-shortened tournament opener three days before.

Master spinner Muttiah Muralidaran is due a good performance having failed to capture a South Africa wicket and taken just one against England while conceding 106 runs in the two matches.

Fellow spinner Ajantha Mendis will also want to enhance a reputation gained with a 3-30 haul against South Africa only to be tarnished after a 0-35 return against England.

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BCB names U-16 squad

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced a 16-member squad for the upcoming home series against England Under-19 and Zimbabwe Under-19 in October and November as part of their preparation for the ICC Under-19 World Cup to be held in New Zealand in January next year.

All-rounder Mahmudul Hasan, who has the experience of playing the World Cup in Malaysia in 2008 and also leading the side in the one-day series win against England earlier this year, has been named captain while left-handed batsman Amit Majumder will be his deputy for the two series.

The England U-19s are scheduled to arrive in the capital on October 8. The series starts with a four-day over October 16-19 in Chittagong followed by seven 50-overs matches between October 23 and November 4 at Chittagong, Fatullah and Mirpur.

The Zimbabwe U-19s then come here to play five one-day matches between November 13 and November 21.

SQUAD

Mahmudul Hasan (captain), Amit Majumder (vice-captain), Saikat Ali, Immanuel Hossain, Tasamul Haque, Sabbir Rahman, Mominul Haque, Abul Hasan, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Arman Badshah, Alauddin Babu, Mobassher Khan, Shaker Ahmed, Nur Hossain, Anamul Haque (wicketkeeper) and Nurul Hasan (wicketkeeper).

Gentleman's game indeed

AFP, Johannesburg



Sangakkara has praised his England counterpart Andrew Strauss for recalling his batsman after he was run out during a Champions Trophy match on Friday.

Sri Lankan Angelo Mathews turned England fast bowler Graham Onions to square-leg and completed a first run comfortably but collided with the bowler going for a second.

Wicketkeeper Matt Prior effected the run out after receiving the throw.

Mathews stood briefly at the pitch before walking back to the pavilion, but Strauss called the batsman back in a rare sporting gesture.

"It was an excellent gesture of sportsmanship and in the spirit of the game. It

might have been an accident but, at the end of the day, the right thing was done," said Sangakkara.

The England skipper justified his decision.

"I didn't see it because I was watching the ball at the time. I then had a chance to look at the replay and the umpires said 'Well, it's up to you if you want to call him back'," said Strauss.

"My feelings on it were that it just didn't look right. I also thought he was going to get back for the two quite comfortably if he hadn't collided."

"I would certainly say that I don't think Onions did anything wrong. There was no malice there at all. Other captains would be quite within their rights to not call him back."

Following a similar incident last year at the Oval, former England captain Paul Collingwood was criticised

for not calling back New Zealand batsman Grant Elliott who had collided with paceman Ryan Sidebottom.

"But I just felt, possibly having seen Colly castigated for doing it a couple of years ago, it probably wasn't the right thing to do," said Strauss.

Collingwood, named man of the match for his impressive 46 in his team's six-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Friday, said he was not involved in the decision.

"I tried to keep out of it," said Collingwood.

"I just left him to make his own decision. But he was straight in there, had a look at the replay and said 'We'll bring him back'."

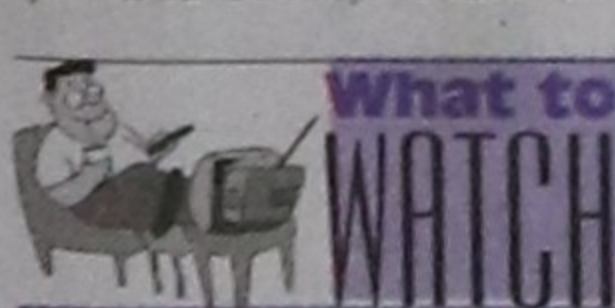
Mathews, who was then on 51, failed to make the most of the opportunity as he added just one more run to his score before being caught behind off Luke Wright.



PHOTO: STAR
Left-handed batsman Mehrab Hossain takes a diving catch as his mates look on during a fielding practice at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.



Former England goal machine Gary Lineker's final-year school report told him he needed to devote less time to sport if he wanted to become a success.



ESPN
ICC Champions Trophy
New Zealand v Sri Lanka
Live from 2:30pm
STAR Sports
English Premier League
Sunderland v Wolves
Live from 10:00pm
STAR Cricket
ICC Champions Trophy
South Africa v England
Live from 7:30pm