



Action from the SA Games football match between India and Afghanistan at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

D/N Test worries Clarke

Tennis

CRICINFO, undated

Michael Clarke has raised doubts over the types of balls that could be used for day-night Tests and outlined his concerns about batting under lights. Cricket Australia is trialling pink and white balls in domestic Second XI games this week as it attempts to find ones that can last for 80 overs.

The organisation is desperately trying to prove it can host Tests that finish in the dark in an effort to lift crowds and television ratings, but the move is worrying some current players. "I would like to see the day-night Test matches?" Clarke, Australia's vice-captain, said in the Australian. "Batting under lights in one-day cricket is much harder than batting during the day."

"Conditions will dictate that, and they will have to try the day-night games in first-class cricket before Test cricket. I am interested to see how it pans out. If it can work it would be great for the game. The public would certainly find it easier for the games played during the week to come out and watch after work."

Simon Katich, the opener, said he was a traditionalist who preferred Tests during the

day. "I guess the biggest issue playing in the afternoon and twilight period is the conditions can change a fair bit, particularly with a red ball," he said in the Daily Telegraph. "Obviously that won't be used, but they have to get the ball right because the contest is all about seeing it."

Katich made his Sheffield Shield debut at the Gabba in a day-night game when orange balls were trialled in the mid-1990s. "It was really good to see and it stayed really hard, which was only a drawback in conditions like Perth and the Gabba where wickets have a bit of life," he said. "But the orange ball was fine and I'm surprised it hasn't been mentioned to be used. There never seemed to be too many complaints with it."

Clarke and Katich were also against the idea of extending the domestic season by taking games to other parts of the country to accommodate a longer Twenty20 tournament. "The strength of Australian cricket since I've played the game for either New South Wales or Australia has been the first-class system," Clarke said.

"For me the priority is to make sure we don't touch that or we don't lose anything from that. If things are altered or improved that's fantastic, but the first-class system we have is fantastic and that's why we are so strong in all three forms of the game."

'Smith & batting key'

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Kepler Wessels is convinced a strong batting line-up and Graeme Smith's "strong personality" will hold South Africa together and help them tide over the coaching crisis on their tour to India. Only four points separate the top two Test teams -- if South Africa manage to win the two-match series they will displace India to go No. 1 -- and Wessels believes they will pose a stiff challenge for the hosts in what has been billed as a world championship bout.

"Graeme Smith is a very strong personality so he is not going to have too many problems in dealing with the situation," Wessels told Cricinfo on the eve of South Africa's departure to India. "I've been through these things before. In a place like India cricket is so important, so that is what everybody in the group should be focusing on."

Wessels, South Africa's first Test captain after their readmission into international cricket, was appointed to the twin positions of interim selector and as batting consultant to Corrie van Zyl, the interim coach in the wake of Mickey Arthur's sudden resignation earlier this week. A resolute mind with an unflinching personality, Wessels was known for his ruthlessness as a leader who put his players through the tough grind and would not accept defeat at any cost. Players like Allan Donald might not have liked the rigid approach at times, but acknowledge it was necessary to ingrain such a discipline for South Africa to become a revered opponent.

Many in South Africa now believe Wessels is in the right position once again to help South Africa become the best in all forms of the game. For the moment, Wessels feels his role is a very simple one. "I'm there to assist Corrie van Zyl in the best possible way that I can. One of the specialties that I have is as batting coach and I have worked with a number of players before, so it would be a natural progression of some of the work that we have done," he said.

Considering that most of the South African batsmen have toured India previously, the last time in 2008, Wessels was confident they could adapt to the challenge more quickly. "The South African line-up is very strong and has performed very well over the last couple of years under all conditions," he said. "So they

have a got an established and very experienced batting. Playing in India is always challenging but they have done well about a year ago so it should be quite exciting."

None of his 41 Tests was in the subcontinent, but Wessels felt the secret to succeed as a batsman in India was simple. "If you get a start you have got to try and convert that into a big score because when you do that you forge partnerships and pitch your team into a good position. So there is nothing new as far as that is concerned but that is clearly what we need to do."

According to him an important advantage that South Africa have were heavy scorers like Smith, Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers and Hashim Amla, all of whom have hit big centuries across the world. And that assessment is accurate; in the 2008 series even if Kallis had a lean run by his standards, four of the top five run makers in that three-Test series, which was shared 1-1, were South Africans. Neil McKenzie, their top scorer on that tour, is not part of the squad this time.

This time around one of the openers, Ashwell Prince, has proved to be a reason for worry. van Zyl has already admitted he will work closely with Prince to help him settle down in his new position as an opener, especially after a weak series against England. Another batsman whose form has been shaky is JP Duminy, who after a spectacular debut series in Australia has scores of 20 or less in ten of his last 14 innings, including two ducks in a row against England. Still, Wessels was not too fazed by Duminy's form. "JP is exactly the same guy and it is just a matter of time before he gets back into top form, so I'm not concerned," he said.

Asked if the absence of Rahul Dravid could hurt India's chances, Wessels agreed partially but pointed that the hosts had able replacements to breach the vacancy. "It is unfortunate that Rahul won't be there so I suppose that will be a disadvantage," he said. "But India have a lot of depth in their squad on home soil so there would be some good player coming in clearly."

Wessels refused to predict a series victor considering India were walking into the contest with handsome series victories over Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as opposed to South Africa, who struggled to level the series against England at home. "Every series is a new event, what happened before doesn't really matter," he said. "Both teams are very strong and probably are the two top teams in the world at the moment. So we should in for a real mouth-watering contest."

The show begins with a bang

FROM PAGE 17 cultural show began. Students from different schools danced to songs while display at the gallery changed its colours to the tune of the songs. Songs ranged from folk to patriotic theme as display depicted rural Bengal in quieter times, martyred intellectuals, seven Bishreshthas and above all the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Ila Mitra and her followers in their movement against the British colonialism. Members of defence forces too entertained the crowd with colourful and disciplined displays. But all these were a mere precursor to the entertainment that ensued. As the evening set in the lights went off, sound of thunder and hailstorm created the atmosphere of great calamity. The incidents before and during the War of Liberation were portrayed masterfully through a simultaneous projection of light, sound and laser. The aquatic displays at the western gallery were complemented by the background music and laser show. The spitting flames and the fountains created played ideal background to tireless performers on water. As the music and the dance crept building up to the ultimate crescendo, the fireworks went on and on leaving everyone present bemused. Even the bright full moon must have been awestruck by the spectacle that was being staged below.

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U-16 school cricket final today

SPORTS REPORTER

The final of the Standard Chartered Young Tigers under 16 National School Cricket Competition will be held at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium today.

Willes Little Flower School will take on Bangladesh Krira Shiksha Protisthan (BKSP) in the final. The 50 overs match starts at 9:45am.

United champs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

United Club became champions in the 5th Bangabandhu Cup cricket tournament defeating PK Club by eight wickets at the Sathkira Government College ground yesterday.

Sent in to bat, PK Club could score only 75 runs before being bowled out in 23.2 overs. The target of 76 never looked too far for United as they raced to 81 in just 7.3 overs, and eight wickets standing.

Good thing about the match was a large number of cricket lovers turned up to watch the game as both national and local cricketers played in the final. State Minister for Labour and Manpower Begum Monnujan Sufian was present as chief guest.

Taylor made 'stand-by' captain

CRICINFO, undated

Ross Taylor has been named as 'stand-by' captain for the upcoming Bangladesh and Australia series, giving him a more senior role with the national team. A statement by New Zealand Cricket said Taylor was not vice-captain but will take over as leader if Daniel Vettori is unavailable for any match over the home summer.

Brendon McCullum was Vettori's deputy till last October but was relieved of his duties soon after Andy Moles stepped down as national coach. Geoff Allott, NZC's general manager of cricket, said both McCullum and Taylor were potential captains and that the latest move was an effort to polish Taylor's leadership skills.

"The Black Caps have deliberately not named a vice-captain in recent times as we wish to allow development of a broader leadership group," Allott said. "We are fortunate to currently have two outstanding individuals in Ross Taylor and Brendon McCullum, who could both assume the captaincy in the event Daniel Vettori was not available."

The elevation marks a rapid rise for Taylor, who made his international debut less than four years ago. "Brendon has recently fulfilled the role of stand-by captain, and Ross now gets his opportunity this summer," Allott said. "Both players have offered on-field support and assistance to Dan during recent tours and it is anticipated that this will continue."

Taylor's appointment should not be seen as a demotion for McCullum, said Justin Vaughan, the NZC chief executive. "This by no means is saying the Ross is number two and Brendon is number three -- that isn't the case," he said. "Brendon will play the stand-by captain's role in future series."

Australia make it 4-0

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Australia mercilessly ripped through a feeble Pakistan at the WACA to keep alive the prospect of inflicting upon the tourists their second 5-0 whitewash in ODIs. Michael Hussey and Nathan Hauritz starred with the bat, before Ryan Harris tore through the batting with a second successive five-for to set up a crushing 135-run win. Remarkably, given how poor Pakistan have been in this country, this was Australia's first win over them in an ODI in Perth.

Pakistan's tour has been one long, dark and miserable spiral since the fourth day of the second Test in Sydney and it continued with another spirited, stuttering performance. They did battle in the field but let Australia get away at a critical stage once again, and contrasting fifties from Michael Hussey and Nathan Hauritz then took them to 277.

For much of the innings, control was a loose concept. Every time Pakistan struck, an Australian partnership settled. But every time the batsmen threatened to take over, Pakistan struck, so that momentum never rested decisively with either side. The final shift, however, came after the 40th over as an 80-run partnership between Hussey and Hauritz propelled Australia to the kind of total Pakistan haven't looked like chasing down at any point this summer.

Australia were 6 for 190 at that point and James Hopes had just been dismissed by the excellent Mohammad Asif. Hussey had hung around unnoticed from the 22nd over, stealthily keeping Australia afloat. Hauritz frustrated Pakistan with the ball through the Tests and today he did so with bat, swinging four sixes with all the freedom of a man no longer trying to prove himself in a 39-ball 53.

Hussey had hit one boundary in his fifty, but timing is everything and as he did in Adelaide, he utilized the PowerPlay beautifully, ensuring that sixty runs came in the last six overs. Death bowling was once Pakistan's trump card, but on this tour it has cost them.

Pakistan had shaded the start, much of the groundwork laid in a fine opening spell from Asif, who immediately hit the length that makes him so dangerous, not allowing

batsmen to drive or to defend back with any great ease.

Brad Haddin provided Australia with some momentum but just when he was looking dangerous, he went. Michael Clarke was undone in a manner in which he has sent back so many batsmen -- a smooth direct hit from over running him out. Ricky Ponting scratchily tried to soldier on as Pakistan giving him plenty of pulls. It wasn't convincing and it didn't last, as Shahid Afridi got one to go across him; now Pakistan were on top.

Camera White initially looked every inch a man averaging 60 in the series when he came in. But as the heat picked up and Saeed Ajmal came in, he had to fight. The doosra wasn't picked but he didn't get out to it and there were plenty of singles to keep things moving.

Ajmal's spell through the middle overs was crucial; only two boundaries came between overs 22 and 36, but only one wicket fell. That was White, frustrated despite having sneaked into the 40s. It should've been Pakistan's

innings from there, but Hussey and Hauritz had other ideas.

The chase was never on. Pakistan have long been renowned for producing fast bowlers, but that assembly line is no match for Australia. They have been without Brett Lee for a while, Ben Hilfenhaus is also injured and they chose to rest both Mitchell Johnson and Doug Bollinger for this game. Ryan Harris and Peter Siddle were their third new-ball pairing of the series and they've hardly missed anyone progressing towards, potentially, a whitewash.

Harris bustled in Adelaide a few two nights ago and coolly picked up a maiden five-for and he did much the same here. He bowled at the brisk pace all Australian pacemen seem to have, in the mid-140s kmp/h, and curved the ball considerably away from the batsmen. Salman Butt was fed a few coming in, before the inevitable one angled across him got the edge. Younis Khan has had time off from the game but his form seems no

closer to coming back to him and he was soon gone, fishing uncertainly at another outswinger.

Siddle was more erratic but carried with him the menace he has done through a luckless summer. If his two wickets were gifts, no one has deserved them more. Umar Akmal and Fawad Alam steadied the ship, as they did in Adelaide, and Afridi swung carelessly, but Harris bulldozed his way through, returning for a double-wicket maiden to essentially finish things off.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the fourth one-day international between Australia and Pakistan at Western Australia Cricket Association Ground in Perth on Friday:

AUSTRALIA				
Marsh c K Akmal b Asif	12			
Haddin b Navedul	32			
Ponting c K Akmal b Afridi	30			
Clarke run out	10			
White c Asif b Ajmal	44			
Hussey c Younis b Ajmal	67			
Hopes b Asif	16			
Hauritz not out	5			
Harris c Afridi b Asif	4			
McKay not out	0			
Extras: (lb-2, w-6, nb-1)	9			
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	277			
Did not bat: Siddle				
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-55, 3-77, 4-110, 5-159, 6-190, 7-270, 8-275.				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Asif	10	1	42	3
Navedul	10	0	70	1
Anjum	10	0	64	0
Afridi	10	1	44	1
Ajmal	10	0	55	2

PAKISTAN				
Butt c White b Harris	0			
K Akmal c Haddin b Siddle	17			
Younis c Haddin b Harris	6			
Yousuf c Haddin b Siddle	10			
U Akmal b Harris	38			
Fawad run out	2			
Afridi c Hauritz b McKay	29			
Navedulc Haddin b Harris	0			
Anjum c Haddin b Harris	5			
Ajmal b Hauritz	7			
Asif not out	0			
Extras: (lb-5, w-3, nb-1)	9			
Total: (All out in 37.5 overs)	142			
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-14, 3-38, 4-39, 5-99, 6-125, 7-125, 8-131, 9-140.				

Result: Australia won by 135 runs and led the 5-match series 4-0. Man-of-the-match: Ryan Harris.



Australia pacer Ryan Harris follows through on a delivery in the fourth one-day international against Pakistan at the Western Australia Cricket Association Ground in Perth yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Booters ready

FROM PAGE 17 SAFF Championship's highest-scorer Enamul Haque said that they were instructed to put up spirited show and rush together in both attacking and defending.

Zahid Hasan Emily said that they were determined to display better show putting behind the disappointing performance of the SAFF Championship.

Bangladesh and Nepal have met each other seven times in the event so far, with Bangladesh winning four times and losing two. The other match ended in a draw.

India were

FROM PAGE 17 Dhoni also got a near century but more than that the manner in which he plays with the lower order batsmen with him is admirable.

Zaheer led the bowling pack and it was his variety and pace that got him wickets on such placid pitches. Ishant bowled well without much luck and his rhythm looked good which is a good sign for the ensuing South Africa series. The disappointment was Harbhajan who seemed out of sorts and like Sehwa's case it is hoped that he has kept his gunpowder dry for the Proteas.

The fielding showed improvement with some terrific catches being taken by Karthik and Vijay and all in all, India were simply too good for Bangladesh.

Having beaten the bottom team in such an emphatic manner, the battle between the number one and number two teams is intriguingly set up and should be a humdinger indeed.

Khulna thrash

FROM PAGE 17 the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong ended in a draw.

Dhaka declared their second innings on a mammoth 440 for 9, thanks to a 134-run knock from Shamsur Rahman that ended when Faisal Hossain got him caught behind.

Rajshahi ended the fourth day on 105 for three resulting in the first draw of the season. Rajshahi's prolific batsman Zahurul Islam was not out on 66.

Fed unbeatable: Tsonga

AFP, Melbourne



The Grand Slam of Asia/Pacific

Stunned Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga had bad news for Andy Murray on Friday -- no one can beat Roger Federer.

The 10th seed was blown off court by the world number one 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 in just one hour 28 minutes in their Australian Open semi-final with the Swiss great now facing Scotland's Murray for his 16th Grand Slam title.

Tsonga said that the form Federer was in, he was unbeatable.

"I think nobody," he said, when asked if any player could get the better of him.

"He was good, he was good. He took the ball earlier than me, and he was just better than me."

"Sometimes you play the guy and the guy plays well, but not so good. And sometimes you play against him again and he plays just unbelievable."

"Each day is different, but today he was really good."

His advice to Murray in Sunday's final? "Be ready to run."

Before this tournament Tsonga had never played a competitive five-setter in his life, but here he played two, including his epic quarter-final win over Novak Djokovic, and it caught up with him against Federer.

Tsonga, who lost the 2008 final to Djokovic, admitted he was tired, but was happy with what he had achieved.

"Yeah, of course, I was tired, because of my tournament, that's it," he said.

"I learned maybe I have to play better."

"I had a good tournament, I beat some good players. I played two five-set matches which was the first time for me."

"So it's more experience for me. I think it's good for me, even if I lost in the semi. Next time I will try to do better."

"Hopefully I'll be able to pull that tennis out again."

The two finalists are the most determined players in women's tennis and although they often speak of their respect for each other, neither will let the other win without a battle.

"It's a special occasion, but I see it as an opportunity to play the number one player in the world in a Grand Slam final," Henin said.

"It's more than a dream for me, it's a perfect challenge and I love this kind of situation."

"We had great battles in the past, we played our best tennis when we played each other," Henin added.

"I think it's going to be really mental, I mean, the one who wants it more will probably win."

Williams agreed that the mental side of the contest would be crucial.

"I think that's a really good point," she said.

"It definitely will be mental and who wants it more and who's willing to go the extra step."

"I think we both want it, you know, but we'll just see who's playing better on Saturday."

"I feel like I really, really peaked against Sam Stosur (in the fourth round) -- I played amazing," Williams said.

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Roger-Andy

FROM PAGE 17 always have to deal with how your opponent plays and sometimes he plays exactly the way you want, so it's nice going through a match like this," Federer said.

"It won't be the same story in the next match I play here."

"Against top players it's always a huge bonus if you can win the first set because after that it always becomes more difficult."

"Maybe he was more mentally fatigued than physically, and that showed at the end."

Tsonga appeared to be physically struggling after his back-to-back five-setters against Nicolas Pietrangeli and Novak Djokovic and Federer quickly capitalised.