



Australia players party with the Under-19 World Cup after defeating Pakistan in the final at the Bert Sutcliffe Oval in Christchurch on yesterday. Australia won by 25 runs.

Squash duo bids bye

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite winning first-round matches, both Masud Rana and Swapan Parvez of Bangladesh were eliminated from the singles quarterfinals of Squash in the 11th South Asian Games at Dhaka Club squash court yesterday.

Masud lost 3-0 to defending champion Amir Atlas Khan of Pakistan while Swapan conceded an identical margin to Farhan Mehrab of Pakistan.

Masud had earlier recorded a 3-2 victory over Bir Bahadur of Nepal while Swapan registered a straight 3-0 win over Nepal's Tak Kumar Tilija.

Cricket begins

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Two more matches will take place at the same venue as Sri Lanka will face Nepal on February 1 and Bangladesh will take on Sri Lanka the next day.

The other league matches will take place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur in Dhaka.

Top two teams will play the final which is scheduled for February 7 at Mirpur.

Zoran's boys

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Shooting only Bangladesh goalkeeper Aminul Haque to beat.

After resumption, Zoran sent on medio Zahed Parvez Chowdhury in place of SAFF Championship's highest-scorer Enamul Haque in a bid to strengthen the midfield, which looked a bit shaky in the latter part of the first-half and later on sent Mithun Chowdhury in place of the other striker Zahid Hasan Emily.

The move immediately paid dividend as Bangladesh regained control of midfield and doubled their lead in 87th minute with defender Mishu volleying on the corner taken by Mamunul.

Picking up a pass from fellow teammate, Mithun advanced into the box to beat an onrushing goalkeeper Bikash to push the ball home in the stoppage time of the second-half.

"It is not easy to play the first match of any tournament. But I am happy with the way the boys performed. The opponents were an experienced side, but our boys played with their heart and it is pleasing," said Zoran after the match.

The Serbian coach also praised the home crowd whom he termed his 12th man on the ground.

In the earlier match, Ashfaq struck the all-important goal six minutes from time to give Maldives a 1-0 win over Bhutan. The winning margin could have been even greater had Nasser Mukhtar not squandered a 12-yard spot-kick on the 85th minute.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH: Aminul Haque, Nasirul Islam Nasir, Wali Faisal, Mintu Sheikh Rezaul Karim, Atiqur Rahman Mithun, Yousuf (Mamun Mia), Mamunul Islam, Enamul Haque (Parvez Chowdhury), Emily (Mithun), Shakil Ahmed.

NEPAL: Bikas Malla, Sagar Thapa, Rohit Chand, Biraj Mahajan, Robin Shrestha, Nirajan Malla, Nirajan Khadga, Yogesh Shrestha, Chetan Chimire (Bhola Silwal), Anil Gurung, Jamanu Rai. Referee: Yousef Al Marzou.

Fifth & final ODI today

Pakistan look to avoid whitewash



CRICINFO, Perth

Avoiding humiliation is probably as great a motivator as anything and it is only the thought of preventing the second-ever 5-0 whitewash in their history that will spur Pakistan to seek their first win of a long and increasingly arduous tour of Australia. That the first came under the captaincy of Imran Khan, against West Indies in 1988, will be of little consolation.

Mohammad Yousuf's men have cut sorry, disparate figures as the tour has progressed since the Sydney Test. They were expected to put up a fight in the ODIs and though they have been in most of the games at various stages, 4-0 remains an accurate reflection of the gulf in class. Their batting has been shaky; only three fifties through the series and the middle order giants -- the two Y's -- have a paltry 145 runs between them.

Mohammad Asif apart, their bowling has missed as much as it has hit. Umar Gul is horrendously out of sorts; Navedul Hasan has been committed as ever, yet still gone for well over six an over. The death overs are a mess. Most damagingly, the spinners have been neutralised. Shahid Afridi and Saeed Ajmal have been picked off for five runs an over each and have seven wickets to show between them. Yousuf talks of the team having improved under him, but a more delusional assessment is not possible.

By contrast, Australia are shining and they haven't even played Mitchell Johnson yet. They've used three new-ball pairings and all are among the wickets. Ryan Harris has two consecutive five-fors, Clint McKay is taking wickets and Shane Watson, who has been rested for the Perth ODIs, still has more wickets than any Pakistani bowler.

Five of their top six have scored at least one fifty, they have the series' only century and even Nathan Hauritz joined the fun in the fourth ODI. The only blot is, of course, the ongoing concern over the captain's form. Ricky Ponting has struggled through the ODI series, with only 70 runs; as opposed to the Tests, he hasn't looked comfortable in any of the games.

'Test performance should inspire WT'



CRICINFO, undated

An encouraging performance in the Tests in Australia last year should inspire West Indies to challenge Ricky Ponting's team in the upcoming five-match ODI series, David Williams, the interim coach, has said. West Indies were beaten convincingly in the first Test in Brisbane, but fought back to draw the second in Adelaide before losing by a narrow margin of 35 runs in Perth.

West Indies, however, will be touring for the one-dayers with a depleted squad. Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Ramnaresh Sarwan are the two big names out due to injury; Adrian Barath, Darren Bravo, fast bowlers Jerome Taylor and Fidel Edwards and spinner Suleiman Benn are also missing.

"We are going there with a very positive attitude when we consider what transpired in the Test series. We have a very good squad, apart from losing a couple of our very senior players," Williams told reporters before his team's departure. "I think we need to play as a team. Every single member got to pull their weight in order for us to beat this Australian side.

"When you look at the squad, you got a lot of potential there, but I think we got to play smart. We got to play

But then it would be entirely in keeping with the Australian way for the captain to find form in the last game and lead his side to a whitewash.

Ryan Harris is Australia's man of the moment, having picked up two five-fors in two games and yet he still might not make the cut for the last game, such is Australia's strength in depth. Mitchell Johnson is expected to make a return but if Harris does play, there is little wrong he can do with the ball at the moment. Who would bet against him becoming only the second man to take three five-fors in a row after Waqar Younis?

One of the few bright spots on this tour for Pakistan -- and that too with qualifications -- has been Umar Akmal. It says much for the paucity of their batting strength that he has looked their best, most comfortable batsman every time he has walked to the crease and mostly he has done it with his side in trouble. He hasn't had the best luck in the ODIs and hasn't yet kicked on to a significantly big score, but there remains a sense that a big score is coming.

In keeping with their policy through the series, Australia are likely to bring in Mitchell Johnson in place of the one of their pacemen. The question is who would you drop though? Peter Siddle is likely to be rested after he suffered a sore back at the start of the series and the selectors have called up Shaun Tait as cover.

Pakistan called up Khalid Latif for the ODI series but have yet to play him, despite encouraging results in the last three games he played for them against New Zealand. Kamran Akmal's form with the bat as opener hasn't been great and Sarfraz Ahmed is there as a replacement, so logic would suggest such a change. But this is Pakistan, so it isn't likely.

TEAMS

AUSTRALIA (probable): Shaun Marsh, Brad Haddin, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Cameron White, Michael Hussey, James Hopes, Peter Siddle or Mitchell Johnson, Nathan Hauritz, Ryan Harris, Clint McKay.

PAKISTAN (probable): Sarfraz Butt, Kamran Akmal, Younus Khan, Mohammad Yousuf (captain), Umar Akmal, Fawad Alam, Shahid Afridi, Navedul Hasan, Iftikhar Anjum, Mohammad Asif, Saeed Ajmal.

Several of the West Indies players have been involved in the Regional Four-Day Competition, the first-class tournament in the Caribbean.

Though acknowledging the preparation ahead of the ODIs was inadequate, the impressive display from some of the younger members of the squad in the competition was reason for confidence, Williams said. "It is not the ideal thing. We just got to go with the itinerary that has been posted to us by the ICC, and there is nothing that we can really do about that.

Pakistan could revamp ODI squad

CRICINFO, undated

Iqbal Qasim, Pakistan's chief selector, has said 'major surgery' is required on the country's ODI outfit after they slumped to their fourth straight defeat in the five-match series against Australia. The reverse against the world champions comes on the back of a one-day series loss to New Zealand, and Pakistan have now been defeated in eight of their previous nine matches.

"No one can defend the team's pathetic performance in Australia and obviously a major surgery is the need of the time," Qasim told the Dawn.

Andy ready for Roger test

Men's singles final today

AFP, Melbourne

Andy Murray says he is fresher, physically stronger and ready to play the match of his life as he chases his Grand Slam breakthrough win against Roger Federer in Sunday's Australian Open final.

The young Scot is vying to become the first British male Grand Slam champion since Fred Perry in 1936 and said he will be better for the experience of playing the 15-time slam champion for a second time in a major final.

Murray went down in straight sets to the Swiss legend in the 2008 US Open final, but said he was now a better player to handle the big occasion pressure.

"Well, I was only 20. I mean, 20 was pretty young when I played my first slam final," Murray said.

"It's a year-and-a-half on, I just feel physically more mature, mentally more mature. Just a lot more experience in these sort of situations now."

Murray, who finished over the top of Croatian Marin Cilic in their semifinal, will have had an extra day's rest for the final after Federer steamrolled French former finalist Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in straight sets.

"It's a lot better than when I played him at the US Open, played three days in a row," Murray said. "I'd much rather have two days off in between and be physically fresh going into the match."

Murray faces an enormous challenge against the all-time greatest Grand Slam champion, who passed American Pete Sampras's record of 14 slams at last year's Wimbledon.

"His record in Grand Slams is great," he said. "His consistency is what has been so amazing the last seven years."

"I'm going to need to play my best match ever. I'll try and play my best. If I do I've got a good chance of winning."

Remarkably, Murray has won six of his 10 matches with Federer, although the Swiss top seed has won their last two encounters.

Eight-time major champion Perry was last British champion of the Australian Open in 1934, while Virginia Wade won the women's equivalent in 1972.

Federer, chasing his fourth Australian Open and into his fifth Melbourne final in seven years, said the pressure was all on the 22-year-old.

"He's in his second Grand Slam final now. I think the first one's always a bit tougher than the second one," he said.

"But now that he didn't win the first one, I think it doesn't help for the second

one around. "Plus he's playing me, who's won many Grand Slams prior to that, been able to win here three times so I know what it takes and how to do it, which is definitely an advantage."

Federer, 28, into an unprecedented 22nd Grand Slam final, will stay the number one ranked player even if he loses while Murray could return to his career-high second ranking if he wins.

"He was already an excellent player back then (the 2008 US Open final)," Federer said.

"I think now he has more matches in his body and he knows what to expect from the crowds, from the opponents, from the conditions."

"He knows his fitness more now, he knows more where he is now on a physical level. I think the last two years have given Andy many answers."

But Federer is supremely confident in his own ability to claim yet another Grand Slam title on Sunday.

"I usually don't play bad matches anymore. If I do, it's maybe a few games here and there like everybody else," he said.

"I don't feel like the pressure's really on me having to do it again, because I did it before. I think he really needs it more than I do, so I think the pressure's big on him."

BKSP clinch

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30 off 53 balls that contained four boundaries and a six. Opener Samiul Alam was the other notable scorer with 27-ball 35 that had six boundaries and a six.

In reply, Willes Little Flower were bundled out for 135 runs in 44.1 overs with opener Sadman Islam making 31 off 61 balls.

Siratun Nabi and Sajid Akhter picked up two wickets each while three batsmen became victims of run out.

Hosts' winning

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enter the box before letting loose a fierce hit past Bangladesh keeper Kiron.

After the breather, Bangladesh looked more organised and controlled the midfield to threaten the solid backline of Sri Lanka. Five minutes into the second half, Mullafer almost found the back of Bangladesh net again with a clever hit, but Mamun made a goaline save.

Bangladesh then stepped up the attack to go close twice before Mamun converted a penalty corner to give Bangladesh the lead again in the 55th minute. After going down, Sri Lanka went all out, but could not create any chances, in spite conceded a third goal in the 60th minute.

This time, Mahmud let loose a hit from just outside the pocket to Kamruzzaman who pushed the ball home to make the result safe.

In the day's first match, favourites India thumped Nepal 21-0 after dominating the first half 10-0 at the same venue.

Captain Ajitesh scored five, Mohammad and Yuraj netted three each, Hamza, Ragnath and Promod scored two each and Belsajar, Innocent, Dhramv and Roshan struck one goal apiece.

Greatbatch new NZ coach



AFP, Wellington

New Zealand ended a three-month global search for a national cricket coach Saturday with the appointment of former local Test batsman Mark Greatbatch.

The 46-year-old replaces Andy Moles who stepped down as Blackcaps coach last October amid player appeals for his dismissal.

Greatbatch, who played 41 Tests for New Zealand, will also continue his role as a Blackcaps selector while Vettori will continue his involvement in team selection, tactics and strategy.

"Over the past 12 months the Blackcaps team, under the captaincy of Daniel Vettori, has made significant advances in terms of developing a culture of individual accountability," Vaughan said.

"I know Mark is strongly supportive of the way the team has progressed and will complement Daniel well."

The Greatbatch announcement came a day after New Zealand Cricket said Ross Taylor would step in as captain should Vettori be unable to lead the side during the upcoming series against Bangladesh and Australia.

The role was previously filled by wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum.

Aussie Open Serena's

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service games lasting eight minutes each.

Henin had her chances to break but it was the Belgian who cracked first, losing her next service game to love to give Williams the advantage.

Henin had more opportunities to break back and she finally took one at 2-4 to put the set back on serve.

Games went with serve until 4-5 when Henin sent down two double faults to give Williams set point, which she took when a backhand from Henin clipped the net cord and landed wide.

Williams came out attacking in second but it was Henin who struck first, breaking to love then holding for a 2-0 lead.

But the American broke right back to level the set at 2-2, only for Henin to attack again at 3-3 and break the defending champion again.

She then held to love and

Dravid has surgery

CRICINFO, undated

Rahul Dravid's participation in the Test series against South Africa looks increasingly unlikely after doctors advised him two to three weeks' rest following surgery on his cheekbone in Bangalore on Friday. He had injured his upper left jaw earlier this week after ducking into a short ball from Shahadat Hossain during the second Test against Bangladesh.

"Rahul Dravid suffered a depressed fracture of the left cheek bone (left zygomatic arch bone) and this was corrected using a standard open approach," the hospital's medical head said. "He will be discharged from hospital and can resume normal activities in about 2 days."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP E P G H K P E P M S Q V R M Q W G H I S R M M Q E G T R G V S E P T E V J Y V K J V C V W T J E O G E P G I M , V E B G H I S Y B M Q R M J G O H Q O G Y M .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MUSICAL IN WHICH PEOPLE AUDITION FOR A ROLE IN ACTRESS LEACHMAN'S NEW FILM: "A CLORIS LINE." Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals H