



PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand all-rounder Scott Styris sends down a delivery during the World Twenty20 warm-up match against West Indies at the Providence Stadium in Guyana on Wednesday.

Windies need Gayle to fire

AFP, Providence

West Indies captain Chris Gayle struck Australia fast bowler Brett Lee for 27 runs in one over at last year's World Twenty20 so Ireland's attack could be forgiven for fearing the worst.

Hosts West Indies face Ireland, looking for yet more giantkilling success, on the first day of this year's World Twenty20 here on Friday.

One consolation for Ireland is that the form of the West Indies in general and Gayle in particular is far from consistent.

But if Gayle, whose 117 against South Africa in the inaugural 2007 edition remains the only century at a World Twenty20, does find his form then Ireland's bowlers will be hard pressed to keep him in check.

This month the West Indies beat Ireland by six wickets on the Duckworth/Lewis method in a one-day international in Jamaica but trying to apply conclusions from other forms of cricket to Twenty20 is fraught with risk.

Logically, West Indies should win but Ireland have enjoyed upsetting the odds on the world stage.

At last year's World Twenty20 they beat Test nation Bangladesh and at the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean they knocked former champions Pakistan out of the tournament.

Ireland relish their role as underdogs on the big stage but for the home side are under pressure.

Greatest night

FROM PAGE 17

lines. They made it very hard for us."

Inter Milan midfielder Javier Zanetti praised the character of his side after they overcame an intimidating atmosphere at the Nou Camp.

"This result was down to the spirit we have. We worked hard to deal with the tough reception that we received and we were able to cope. Now we are in the final and we can concentrate on that," said the Argentine.

Inter striker Samuel Eto'o admitted it took something special to beat the side he left last summer.

"It was extremely difficult and it felt like it was never going to end but we're greatest night of my life' always knew what we wanted and how to beat a fantastic team like Barcelona. We managed to win against the best team in the world."

Barcelona midfielder Yaya Toure was critical of the Italian style.

"We couldn't do anything with the way the opposition played and the referee didn't help us, he is human and can make mistakes," he said.

"Inter stayed back and defended and the result is sad for the fans and the team."

I'll never

FROM PAGE 20

"We didn't want the ball because when Barcelona press and win the ball back, we lose our position - I never want to lose position on the pitch so I didn't want us to have the ball, we gave it away," he said.

"I told my players that we could let the ball help us win and that we had to be compact, closing spaces," he added.

Afghans upbeat

AFP, Bridgetown



PHOTO: AFP

Afghanistan cruised to a five-wicket win over Ireland in their World Twenty20 warm-up on Wednesday, showing that they are ready for their world championship debut.

Ireland made 133-9 off their 20 overs with John Mooney top-scoring with 42 but debutant seamer Dawlat Ahmadzai grabbed the headlines with 4-15 before Afghanistan reached their target with three balls to spare in Guyana.

When they battled, Afghanistan showed their all-round mettle with Ashghar Stanikzai and Mohammad Nabi adding 66 for the fifth wicket in six overs.

"Any team wants a jump start, no matter who you are playing against," said Afghanistan coach Kabir Khan.

"Ireland are one of the best Associate teams and as a coach the promising thing is that the boys are fighting hard and they are coming back into games which is not very easy in Twenty20."

Afghanistan begin their World Twenty20 campaign on Saturday against India.

A fine unbeaten 61 from Chamara Kapugedera was in vain as Sri Lanka slumped to a five-wicket defeat to South Africa with three balls to spare in Barbados.

Kapugedera and veteran Sanath Jayasuriya helped Sri Lanka post 137 for 8 before a 61-run partnership between Mark Boucher and Johan Botha allowed South Africa to squeeze home in the final over.

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Charl Langeveldt then struck twice to remove Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene as Sri Lanka slipped to 22 for 3.

Dinesh Chandimal and Angelo Matthews soon followed as Sri Lanka, runners-up to Pakistan in the 2009 Twenty20 final, collapsed to 42 for 5 in the ninth over.

But Jayasuriya (33) helped steady the ship before Kapugedera gave his side a fighting chance with three fours and five sixes.

South African skipper Graeme Smith was dismissed by Nuwan Kulasekara in the first over for one before Loots Bosman hit a quick 20.

Botha and Boucher put South Africa on their way, scoring at more than 11 runs an over.

At the same venue, England eased past Bangladesh by seven wickets.

Bangladesh were limited to 126-7 with slow left-arm Michael Yardy taking 3-20 before Ravi Bopara hit 62 from 48 balls to steer England to victory in the 18th over.

West Indies lost by seven runs to New Zealand in a warm-up later in Guyana.

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Yardy, Bopara batter Tigers

CRICINFO, undated



PHOTO: AFP

England maintained their 100 per cent record in international fixtures against Bangladesh as they launched their World Twenty20 preparations with a comfortable seven-wicket victory at the Kensington Oval on Wednesday.

Left-arm spinner Michael Yardy was the star of the show with 3 for 20 in his four overs, before Ravi Bopara marked his return to the national side with a calm 62 from 48 balls, to seal the contest with 17 balls to spare.

Having recently completed their tour of Bangladesh, England knew exactly what to expect from their opponents, and were rarely less than in control of the contest -- even though they started a touch sloppily.

Imrul Kayes slammed his second ball of the innings from James Anderson over midwicket for six, only to be reprieved by Stuart Broad in the same over.

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Mohammad Ashraful top-edged a pull to be caught by the wicketkeeper, Craig Kieswetter, but Kayes fell soon afterwards, caught at third man off Anderson for 14, before the introduction of the spinners cemented England's dominance.

Yardy claimed his first international wicket for almost three years when Ashraful was caught down the leg-side, and he doubled his tally as Aftab Ahmed holed out to Tim Bresnan for 8. In his next over, captain Shakib Al Hasan was bowled for 7, and when Mushfiqur Rahim was crassly run out for 2, the backbone of the innings had been broken, even though Mahmudullah hung around for a useful 38 not out from 31 balls.

The run-chase was launched by two Twenty20 debutants, Kieswetter and Michael Lumb, who are set to be England's 16th opening pairing in 26 matches when their tournament proper gets underway against West Indies on Monday. Lumb, however, wasn't able to mark his moment in style -- he reached 8

from 10 balls before carving Syed Rasel to point.

Kieswetter gave a hint of the fireworks that could follow later in the competition when he blazed a massive six over the imposing 3Ws stand, but on 22 he was bowled neck and crop by a ripper from Shakib that lured him down the track and spun viciously past his falling bat.

But Bopara and captain Paul Collingwood guarded against any mishaps in a dominant but measured third-wicket stand of 71 in 56 balls. The only anticlimax from England's point of view came when Bopara ran himself out with the scores level, but by then the job had been done.

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