



South Africa pacer Dale Steyn (L) is congratulated by teammates after he dismissed Australia batsman Shane Watson during their warm-up match at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Lanka prefer 7-4

CRICINFO, Colombo

Trevor Bayliss, the Sri Lanka coach, has given some insight into the XI his side will field during the World Cup, saying they would stick to a combination of seven batsmen and four bowlers, since it has served them well in home games. Sri Lanka experimented with playing six batsmen and five bowlers on their 2010 tour of Australia, with all-rounders Angelo Mathews and Thisara Perera batting at Nos. 6 and 7, but reverted to a seven-four formula for the home series against West Indies.

"We've got eight batters [in the 15-man squad] and in the last two or three years we've played a seven-four combination with (Angelo) Mathews in the top six being a bowler as well," Bayliss, who will quit the Sri Lanka job after the World Cup, said. "I can't see it changing just at the moment. In Australia we played six-five but seven-four seems to be the way we play our best cricket in Sri Lanka."

That means Thisara Perera may not find a place in the XI, since he has been a bit inconsistent with the bat, and may not make the cut as a seamer ahead of Nuwan Kulasekara and Dilhara Fernando. Bayliss, however, said Perera would play some part in the campaign. "Thisara Perera's been very impressive through the Asia Cup and the tri-series we played before Christmas, up in Dambulla, against India and New Zealand. Ever since then he is taking wickets."

"He is a big fellow, very athletic in the field, got strong arms and as you know he can whack the ball out of the stadium. He is an important part of our squad and I am sure that at some stage during this World Cup he will find form."

The other decision Sri Lanka have to make is which four bowlers to play. Lasith Malinga and Muttiah Muralidaran are the two sure starters, if they are fit, while Fernando and Kulasekara are the two other fast-bowling options with Rangana Herath and Ajantha Mendis the other two spinners in the fifteen.

Fernando took four wickets in Sri Lanka's 158-run win in the warm-up match against Netherlands, and while Bayliss was satisfied with his performance, he suggested he may only be used in a three-seamer attack. "Dilhara is a guy who cops a little bit of criticism but if he can bowl more like the way he did [in the warm-up match] more often I am sure that criticism will disappear. That's the type of bowling we want to see from him in this World Cup and if he does that and backs up Lasith Malinga and Nuwan Kulasekara then we'll be putting in very good bowling performances."

In the home series against West Indies, Sri Lanka opted for two spinners, and Bayliss said Mendis and Herath would have to battle it out for the second spot. He explained Muralidaran's absence from the warm-up game by saying, "Murali is getting towards the end of his career and we want to make sure that he is mentally and physically fresh to play the game we want him to play."

Sri Lanka are being touted as one of the favourites to win the World Cup, with their one possible weakness being the inexperience in the middle order, but Bayliss was quick to defend his batsmen. "The middle-order guys get a bit of a raw deal. They are asked to perform when the top order don't. You've got seven batters in the team and it is up to every one of those seven to do their job in the line-up and that includes the openers, the top order and the middle order."

Australia 217 all out

AFP, Bangalore

Paceman Dale Steyn grabbed three wickets as South Africa restricted Australia to 217 in a World Cup warm-up match on Tuesday despite half-centuries from Michael Clarke and Ricky Ponting.

The fast bowler finished with 3-21 off eight probing overs after Clarke (73) and skipper Ponting (55) boosted their team's hopes of setting a challenging target with a 122-run stand for the third wicket.

But Australia failed to build on those impressive efforts, losing their last eight wickets for just 89 runs in the day-night match at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore.

Steyn received strong support from left-arm spinner Robin Peterson, who removed both top run-scorers before accounting for Steven Smith to finish with 3-45.

Clarke, who fell for a duck in his team's defeat at the hands of India in their previous practice game, made amends with a responsible knock under pressure, playing some handsome shots to outscore his captain.

Ponting fell soon after completing his second successive half-century, caught by Hashim Amla at long-off off Peterson. The Australia captain, who made 57 in the previous warm-up game, hit seven fours in his 84-ball knock.

Clarke was caught behind while attempting to cut Peterson after hitting six fours in a 96-ball innings but the remaining batsmen faltered against South Africa's spin-pace combination.

Australia earlier made a poor start as in-form opener Shane Watson fell for a fourth-ball duck, trapped leg-before by Steyn in the opening over.

Brad Haddin also failed to open his account before being run out, leaving Australia struggling with two wickets down and just six runs on the board.

Steyn tested the Australian batsmen in his disciplined four-over opening spell, conceding just three runs for one wicket before later dismissing John Hastings and Jason Krejza.

Four-time World Cup champions Australia open their campaign against Zimbabwe in Ahmedabad on February 21, while South Africa meet the West Indies in their first match in Delhi on February 24.

Australia are in Group A with Pakistan, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Canada and Kenya while Group B comprises India, South Africa, England, the West Indies, Bangladesh, Ireland and the Netherlands.

Four teams from each group will advance to the quarter-finals.

Getting richer everyday

AFP, Dhaka



World Cup contenders are set for a financial bonanza with a record prize money of eight million dollars on offer for cricket's latest showpiece event.

It marks a rise of three million dollars from the previous 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean, which itself was a five-fold increase from the 1999 edition in England.

The World Cup has come a long way since it was first held in England in 1975 with eight teams contesting just 15 matches over five playing days.

Clive Lloyd's West Indians earned 4,000 pounds for winning the inaugural tournament, and took home 10,000 pounds after retaining the World Cup four years later.

When Australia won their third successive title in the Caribbean in 2007, they carried home 2.2 million dollars, while losing finalists Sri Lanka pocketed a cool one million dollars.

When the champions of the 43-day, 2011 edition are crowned one-day kings at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on April 2, they will receive 3.25 million dollars for their efforts.

The losing team can console itself

with 1.5 million dollars.

With an additional 30,000 dollars kept aside for the winners of each first round match, the champions stand to gain another 180,000 dollars if they win all their six preliminary games.

The two losing semifinalists will take home 500,000 dollars each, while teams that are knocked out in the quarterfinal stage will get 250,000 dollars each.

The prize money does not include the share of the profits the International Cricket Council dishes out to all the 14 participating teams from its joint revenue pool.

The financial bonanza for the February 17-April 2 event should not surprise anyone.

India, co-hosts of the six-week tournament with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, are regarded as cricket's financial powerhouse generating nearly 70 per cent of the sport's world revenues.

Former Indian cricket chief Inderjit Singh Bindra said South Asia beat a joint bid by Australia and New Zealand for the 2011 event by promising higher profits.

"We assured them a profit of 400 million dollars," Bindra, who was one of the chief architects of the Asian bid and now works as an adviser with the ICC, told AFP.

"No one can make money for cricket as India can."

With the ICC expected to spend around 50 million dollars on the event, the tournament is already assured of a healthy balance sheet even before the first ball is bowled.

Cricket, with just 10 full member nations, is no match for football's money power where a prize fund of a whopping 420 million dollars was handed out for the last World Cup in South Africa.

But officials at the ESPN-Star Sports network, who paid a billion dollars to be the ICC's official broadcasters from 2007 to 2015, are not complaining.

"There is nothing bigger in the world of cricket than the World Cup and when it is held in the subcontinent it evokes passion and excitement like none other," said the network's managing director Manu Sawhney.

"We have not only roped in several big sponsors like Pepsi, Sony, Nokia, Maruti Suzuki and Philips, but have received a positive feedback from other advertisers."

ESPN-Star Sports have syndicated the coverage to 200 networks around the world, with all the 49 matches to be broadcast live in the High Definition (HD) format for the first time.

Netherlands upset Kenya

AFP, Colombo



Ryan ten Doeschate hit a brilliant 98 not out to guide the Netherlands to

a two-wicket upset win over Kenya in a World Cup warm-up match here Tuesday, sending a timely warning to tournament rivals.

Ten Doeschate's 92-ball knock, spiced with four sixes and three fours, helped the Netherlands chase a challenging 264-run target after being down and out at 130-7 with part-time spinner Steve Tikolo taking four wickets.

Serene Waters had scored a brilliant 126 not out for Kenya.

Ten Doeschate added an invaluable 66 runs for the eighth wicket with Aste Buurman (29).

And even when his partner was out with 52 still needed, he did not lose heart, putting on 52 for an unbroken ninth-wicket stand with Mudassar Bukhari who finished on 20 not out.

The 30-year-old all-rounder's effort overshadowed Water's innings in the morning which had lifted the Kenyans in the final overs with a fifth-wicket

stand of 129 with Rakep Patel.

Waters carried his bat and hit twelve boundaries during his 150-ball knock. Patel made a 59-ball 64 with seven boundaries.

The Netherlands lost wickets at regular intervals with only opener Alex Kervezee (49) negotiating the pace-cum spin attack of Kenya, before Ten Doeschate turned the tables.

The defeat gives Kenya, who also lost their first warm-up match against the West Indies by 61 runs on Saturday, much to think about ahead of their first World Cup match in Group A against Pakistan at Hambantota on February 23.

The Netherlands, who were thrashed by Sri Lanka by 156 runs in their first warm-up, go into their World Cup opener against England at Nagpur on February 22, high on confidence.

The Netherlands utilised injured captain Peter Borren in their batting line-up after initially deciding not to risk him as a bowler in case he aggravated an abdominal muscle injury.

Borren made just one. Afp adds from Nagpur:

Andre Botha and Kevin O'Brien hit resolute half-centuries to carry Ireland to a final over, four-wicket victory against Zimbabwe on Tuesday.

Botha top-scored with 79 and O'Brien hit an unbeaten 62 as Ireland chased Zimbabwe's competitive 244-8 with three balls to spare in the thrilling match at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur.

The duo upstaged Zimbabwe skipper Elton Chigumbura, who slammed eight fours and three sixes in an unbeaten 103 off just 81 balls to lift his side from a shaky 74-4 after they had won the toss and elected to bat.

Former captain Tatenda Taibu chipped in with a valuable 45 up the order after the early dismissals of openers Brendan Taylor and Charles Coventry.

Ireland seamers Trent Johnston and Botha picked up two wickets each in what was their last practice match ahead of the tournament beginning in Dhaka on Saturday.

Ireland's victory was creditable as they rested key batsmen Ed Joyce and William Porterfield to give the other members of their squad a look-in ahead of

their tournament opener against Bangladesh on February 25.

They had lost to New Zealand in their first warm-up despite a spirited chase in a high-scoring match, also in Nagpur.

For Zimbabwe, it was their second defeat on the trot after losing to South Africa in their first match.

Zimbabwe and Ireland have been placed in different groups for the mega-event.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Kenya-Netherlands
KENYA: 263 for 5 (Waters 126 not out, Obuya 20, Ouma 20, Patel 64; Doeschate 2-47)
NETHERLANDS: 264 for 8 (Kervezee 49, Szwarczynski 26, Cooper 22, Doeschate 98 not out, Buurman 29, Bukhari 20 not out; Tikolo 4-39)
Result: Netherlands won by two wickets.

Zimbabwe-Ireland
ZIMBABWE: 244 for 8 (Taibu 45, Ervine 27, Chigumbura 103 not out, Utseya 26; Johnston 2-9, Botha 2-58)
IRELAND: 245 for 6 (Cusack 47, Botha 79, White 19, O'Brien 62 not out; Masakadza 2-39, Price 2-37)
Result: Ireland won by four wickets.

'Go back to go forward'

REUTERS, London



Kevin Pietersen must go back in time and start constructing his innings as he did at the start of his international career in order to ignite England's World Cup challenge, according to former teammate Geraint Jones.

"In the World Cup you need your big guns to fire," Kent wicketkeeper-batsman Jones told Reuters in an interview. "Kevin did that for the Twenty20 World Cup triumph last year and will no doubt look to do the same this time."

"I was in the side when he came into the one-day team in South Africa in 2005 and he got three hundreds in the series. It was exciting to watch him play there, the way he went about it."

"He built his innings and then used his power. I think that's potentially an area he needs to get back to," added Jones, a member of the Ashes-winning team six years ago.

England launch their World Cup campaign against Netherlands in Nagpur on February 22 and Jones said the management team would be massaging Pietersen's ego to get his batting back on track after a poor series in the recent 6-1 one-day defeat in Australia.

"He seems now to want to be ultra attacking from ball one and you just can't do that," said the 34-year-old. "You have to assess match conditions and pitch conditions and England need Kevin to bat long innings."

"If he does that and he's there at the back end of an innings, whether we bat first or second, we are going to win games."

"I'm sure [coach] Andy Flower and [captain] Andrew Strauss will be talking to Kevin and saying, 'Listen, you are our main player and we want you to bat a long time because if you do there is no doubt you'll score big hundreds,'" Jones added.

The keeper, who appeared in 34 tests and 49 one-dayers for England between 2004-06, said it was especially important for Pietersen to fire on the sub-continent after Eoin Morgan was ruled out of the World Cup because of a broken finger.

"Morgan's injury is a massive blow," said Jones. "He changes matches. If you bat first he can belt 100 in 50 balls ... and when you are chasing targets he has shown how calm he is under pressure."

"That position he bats in the middle order is crucial because you have to be calm to finish off a game or set up a big total for the bowlers to defend. (Replacement) Ravi Bopara is a good player but I don't think he's quite the player Eoin is."

Casting his expert eye over the keeper-batsman role, Jones was delighted with Matt Prior's recall for the one-day series in Australia.

"I wasn't surprised when they chose Matt because he has played so well in the test arena over the last 18 months and I think he's one of the best wicketkeeper-batsmen in the world," said the Papua New Guinea-born player.

"I don't have any qualms about choosing him, more the timing of it. To bring him in for the second one-dayer against Australia for Steven Davies ... they should have realised how well Matt was playing and played him right from the start."

"The wickets out there shouldn't bounce as much and if he can get in, he is capable of big scores. He's a powerful, destructive batsman and I would have him opening for sure," added Jones.

"To play two spinners at the World Cup, which we have to do, we need flexibility in the batting order and Matt should give us that."

Jones may be approaching the final bend in his own career but he has not ruled out altogether the idea of getting another international call.



Netherlands' Bernard Loots (R) celebrates with teammate Atse Buurman after bowling out Steve Tikolo of Kenya during their World Cup warm-up match at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

The Dutch in Borren scare

AFP, Colombo

The Netherlands captain Peter Borren missed another World Cup warm-up game with an abdominal injury on Tuesday, giving his team serious worries just a week before their first match in the tournament.

The injury is causing the 27-year-old pain while bowling, and he struggled in nets on Monday ahead of his team's second and last warm-up match against Kenya in Colombo.

He also missed his side's first warm-up match against Sri Lanka on Saturday, which the hosts won by 156 runs.

Team manager Ed van Nierop said no final decision had been made on Borren and only the medical team would be able to say whether he will be fit for the team's World Cup opener against England in Nagpur on February 22.

"It is the same injury Stuart Broad suffered," van Nierop told AFP.

"The medical team has continued to assess him, but the problem is that the two MRI scans have shown nothing."

England's frontline pacer Broad suffered an abdominal muscle injury after the Adelaide Test in the Ashes series against Australia last year, which forced him to miss the last three Tests and the one-day series.