

WI suffer twin blow

AFP, New Delhi

With a day to go before India kick-off the World Cup against Bangladesh, former champions West Indies on Friday became the latest side to be struck by the injury curse affecting the marathon tournament.

Exciting opener Adrian Barath and wicketkeeper Carlton Baugh were ruled out, bringing to 10 the number of players forced to withdraw ahead of the 49-match sporting showpiece -- tipped to be the most open for years.

But two-times winners the West Indies have been forced to rethink their plans with less than a week to go before their opening match against South Africa in New Delhi.

"Medical specialists have determined that in both cases the players will not be able to resume training for two to three weeks," the West Indies Cricket Board said in a press release, referring to Barath and Baugh.

Kirk Edwards, an uncapped batsman from Barbados, and Antigua wicketkeeper Devon Thomas were named as replacements, subject to approval by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

So far the ICC has approved eight replacement players for teams in the World Cup.

Middle

FROM PAGE 19

inconclusive, aside from the fact that more work remains on the drawing boards. Hopefully, the team had not been too distracted by the Mashrafe saga and has its battle plans ready. In Tamim, the Bangladesh line up has a more than competent counterpoint to the aggression of Sehwaq. It is of importance that the rest of the order stands up to be counted. While there may be an agenda to have Mushfiquar at number 4, it escapes me at the moment. With Rakibul, Shakib, Ash (what I won't give to have this man fire again on the biggest stage of them all), Junaed, and possibly Riyad to follow, it's a decent batting order.

The bowling, while certainly not likely to set the Buriganga on fire, is spin dependent and perhaps a little too predictable. Much is expected of Shafiu and early breakthroughs are the key for the rest of the day.

The Tigers are up against a thoroughly professional side who have been around in this kind of rarified atmosphere of the game. More importantly, do they have a point to prove? Not really, they go about their business, not necessarily unobtrusively, but certainly with conviction. And what of the Tigers? In the Sunderbans and where they come from, once a man eater, always a man eater. Wishful thinking perhaps. Not so the fact, teams taking on the Tigers nowadays need to play at their best to get the better of them. Grudging or otherwise, the Tigers have earned the respect of their opponents. Even before the first ball is bowled, this itself is a victory of sorts.

Shakil Kasem will resuscitate his famous Beyond the Boundary column for the course of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011.

Shafiu

FROM PAGE 19

while Rokibul has gone past the controversy of his sudden retirement.

"When my mother went to the stadium area last night (Thursday), it was like a Mela, or like Eid day, everyone was having fun and being very proud of the country," said Shafiu, a virtual unknown two seasons ago. Now, his first ball will be as big as those bowled for the last 36 years.



PHOTO: AFP

England batsman Paul Collingwood cuts the ball during their World Cup warm-up match against Pakistan at the Khan Saheb Osmani Stadium in Fatullah yesterday.

Charming Fatullah

SAKEB SUBHAN



After the rigours and hectic pace of Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Fatullah is a sigh of relief. The ground is reached through a narrow road that trails off from the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway, lending the approach an almost rustic feel.

Yesterday, as the World Cup warm-up match between England and Pakistan started, hundreds lined that narrow road waiting to get into the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium. The going was slow because of the security checks, but the people did not seem to mind, happily chatting away among themselves as the line inched forward.

"The Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium has always been peaceful," said Shagor, an employee of Minar Group of Industries. "I had a voucher, and I picked up my ticket from the Jubo Shangha, and it was all very disciplined. The only disappointment was that we were not allowed to bring in bottle caps, which is very inconvenient," added Shagor who was walking with a full, two-litre water bottle without a cap.

Tickets were also available for sale at the Jubo Shangha. Shohagh and Sohail, two local businessmen, bought the tickets and were happy with the arrangements. "We had no problems, everything went

smooth. The queue was long, but we expected that," said Sohail.

Although the tickets started selling from nine in the morning, by the time the game started, the ground was at best half-full. As England's innings wore on, the gallery continued to fill up, and by the twenty-fifth over of their innings it had reached near-capacity, which reflected the people's passion for the game. It was also the first time that a match was played under lights at Fatullah.

The ground has a quaint setting, including the surrounding landscape through its low galleries instead of excluding it, as most modern venues do. The low galleries allow the surrounding areas to be seen, forming a very intimate atmosphere. Fatullah has real character, and presents a simpler picture of Bangladesh's passion for cricket.

When asked whether he would like to see international cricket back at Fatullah, Mustafizur Rahman, a local student of under-graduate level said, "I am very happy that the World Cup is being hosted in Bangladesh. But of course, I would like to see international cricket back at Fatullah because it is my home." Judging by the passion and love for the game coupled with the ground's intimate atmosphere, international cricket will be richer for it. It certainly is a far cry from Dhaka's madness.

'Tough to axe veteran duo'

AFP, New Delhi



Sri Lanka's chief selector Aravinda de Silva has spoken of his tough decision in omitting fellow 1996 World Cup winners Sanath Jayasuriya and Chaminda Vaas from the squad.

All three players were in the team that beat Australia to lift the trophy for the first time in Pakistan 15 years ago but de Silva said he could not justify including the two veterans in the 15-man squad for the 2011 tournament.

"It was a very difficult decision and a very emotional moment for me when it was decided that Sanath Jayasuriya and Chaminda Vaas have to be left out from the World Cup squad," he wrote in the Times of India.

"They've been my team-mates for such a long (time) and they are such fabulous players with great records.

"But at the end of the day, as a selector, I have to do the right thing. I have to pick 15 of the best available players on current form. Taking that into account, I don't think it would have been possible to include them."

Hard-hitting batsman Jayasuriya, 41, has notched 13,428 runs and taken 322 wickets in 444 one-day internationals but last played in an ODI in 2009.

Left-arm paceman Vaas, 37, has taken 400 wickets in 322 one-day internationals, last appearing in 2008.

Both players were included in Sri Lanka's preliminary 30-man squad for the World Cup in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which starts on Saturday.

De Silva said the tournament was evenly poised with all the top teams in with a chance to lift the trophy, adding that Sri Lanka, among the favourites, had a good chance.

De Silva scored 107 not out and took 3-42 as Sri Lanka beat Australia by seven wickets in the 1996 final in Lahore.

The Broad and Colly show

SAKEB SUBHAN



Stuart Broad with the ball, and Paul Collingwood with both bat and ball put in dominant displays as England beat Pakistan by 67 runs in their final warm-up match at Fatullah yesterday.

Set 274 to chase, Pakistan got off to a disastrous start as Stuart Broad ripped out the heart of their batting, getting Kamran Akmal (18) caught at slip, trapping Mohammad Hafeez (0) leg-before, and bowling Umar Akmal (2) by the time the score reached 34. The required run rate had swelled to above six by the time the fourth wicket, Asad Shafiq (12) fell to Collingwood with the score on 74.

Younis Khan (80) then strung together two forty-plus partnerships with Ahmed Shehzad (26) and Misbahul Haq (25), but Andrew Strauss never let them run away with the momentum, using Collingwood's slow cutters cleverly on a slow pitch,

allowing James Anderson to pick up Shehzad, while Collingwood accounted for Misbah.

Broad then picked up his fourth wicket, snaring the all-important scalp of Younis, caught behind by Prior to leave Pakistan at a hopeless 187 for 8. Bresnan then got rid of Akhtar, and Broad picked up his second five wicket haul when he took the last wicket of Wahab Riaz.

Earlier, England's innings hinged on key contributions from two men whom they have often depended on in the past. Kevin Pietersen, promoted to open, steadied the innings after losing captain Andrew Strauss (5) and in-form Jonathan Trott (9) with the score reading 37.

Pietersen played an assured innings, with neither the pace of Shoaib Akhtar nor the spin of Saeed Ajmal bothering him much. A faultless innings was cut short when substitute Abdur Rehman had him stumped for 61 when the England batsman charged him. That ended a partnership of 80 between Bell and

Pietersen. When Bell (39) left soon after, Paul Collingwood, who had been suffering a prolonged lean patch arrived to the crease.

That it was to be his day was evident when he came down the wicket to Shoaib in the first over of the fast bowler's second spell and lofted him over mid-on for four.

After Bopara, who showed glimpses of his talent with a scooped flick over short fine leg off Junaid, fell for 35, Prior (24) and Collingwood (65) carried on before both fell within an over of each other, leaving the tailenders to be poached by Riaz and Junaid, who picked up three wickets apiece as England were bowled out two balls short of fifty overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: 273 (Pietersen 66, Bell 39, Collingwood 65, Bopara c Younis 35, Prior 24; Junaid 3-44, Riaz 3-52, Ajmal 2-50)

PAKISTAN: 206 (Akmal 18, Younis 80, Shehzad 26, Misbahul 25; Broad 5-25, Collingwood 3-48)
Result: England won by 67 runs.

Aliul Islam passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Former cricketer and chief selector Aliul Islam passed away yesterday. Aliul died at the city's Lab Aid hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest.

He was 64 and has left behind his wife and three daughters.

Aliul was a dashing opener and wicketkeeper who captained Abahani club in the 1970s till the early 1980s. He was the chief selector after Bangladesh gained the Test status.

Several former national players including the Tigers manager Tanjeeb Ahsan Saad rushed to the spot upon hearing the bad news.

Bangladesh Cricket Board extended their heartfelt condolence to the family of Aliul.

Musa piques

FROM PAGE 16
determination, teamwork and the way I worked the mechanism. I tried to impress upon them that mountaineering is like cricket," he added.

Musa reached the summit on May 23 last year, an unthinkable achievement for someone coming from Bangladesh. "If anyone can climb to the top of Mount Everest, why can't a boy from the plains? I told them that you must believe in what you want to achieve," he said.

Portuguese leave it late

REUTERS, Berne



Substitute Fredy Guarin gave former European champions Porto a late 2-1 Europa League win at Sevilla on Thursday while their old rivals

Benfica beat VfB Stuttgart by the same score.

Russian champions Zenit St Petersburg, who won all their group stage games, lost to a stoppage time goal at Young Boys in another round of 32 first leg tie.

However, their compatriots Spartak Moscow were on the right end of a comeback away to Swiss opponents as they bounced back from 2-0 down to win 3-2 at FC Basel.

Ajax won 3-0 at Anderlecht while fellow Dutch side Twente Enschede were among several teams who endured freezing conditions in eastern Europe, beating Rubin Kazan 2-0 in Moscow where the temperature hovered around minus 15 Celsius.

Lille were held 2-2 at home after a late rally by PSV Eindhoven in a meeting of the French and Dutch league leaders.

Porto, beaten only once in 34 outings in the Portuguese League and Cup and Europa League this season, went ahead in the 58th minute when Rolando stabbed

himself one minute later as the Dutch side came from behind after Idrissa Gueye and Tulio De Melo gave the French a 2-0 halftime lead.

Aiming to shed tag

AFP, New Delhi

South Africa can shed their reputation as World Cup chokers, batsman JP Duminy insisted on Friday.

The Proteas have yet to win the sport's biggest one-day prize following a series of misfortunes since the country's return to international cricket.

Duminy believes that having a 15-man squad that boasts 11 World Cup debutants means a campaign free of the baggage of failure.

"We know that tag (as chokers) haunts us quite a bit but there are a lot of new faces in the team," Duminy told cricinfo.

"Hopefully that tag won't bother us too much in going all the way in this tournament. It's a young-looking side but it's not necessarily a bad thing."

After 21 years of apartheid-induced isolation, South Africa made the semi-finals in 1992 only to be undone by a bizarre rain rule that left them needing 22 runs off one ball to beat England.

In 1996 a side led by the late Hansie Cronje and coached by the innovative Bob Woolmer established themselves as favourites in India and Pakistan, sweeping through the group stage only to be beaten in the quarterfinals by a West Indian team that had struggled to qualify.



PHOTO: AFP

Benfica striker Oscar Cardozo (R) is challenged by Stuttgart defender Serdar Tasci during their Europa League encounter at the Luz Stadium in Lisbon on Thursday.