

WEST INDIES V NETHERLANDS: NEW DELHI
WI's fight for survival

AFP, New Delhi

Injury-ravaged West Indies will have plenty to play for when they take on an inspired Netherlands in a crucial World Cup league match on Monday.

Reeling under a seven-wicket defeat to South Africa at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium on Thursday, West Indies were dealt another blow when key all-rounder Dwayne Bravo was ruled out of the tournament with a knee injury.

Up against Netherlands next, the former world champions must overcome the twin setbacks if they are to put back their campaign on track.

"Bravo was in good form and getting injured in such a way, it's really sad," said West Indies coach Ottis Gibson. "We can't do much with these injury situations. We have got to move on."

"We are still a big team. We have got history behind us. We still believe we have

got much left in us and we are ready to prove that on this big stage."

"We had [Kieron] Pollard, [Dwayne] Bravo and myself, we could have got to 270. We created opportunities but we didn't capitalise on them."

The West Indies can hardly afford another slip-up when they take on the Dutch in the day-night match at the same venue which appears to have passed its sternest test by playing true till the end during Thursday's game.

The ground is coming off a 12-month suspension after a one-day international between India and Sri Lanka was abandoned in December 2009 due to a dangerous playing surface.

The Netherlands proved their grit despite having just four professionals in the squad when they gave England a mighty scare in Nagpur.

Led by an attacking 110-ball 119 from Essex all-rounder Ryan ten Doeschate, the Irish racked up 292-6 before England scraped to victory with just eight balls to spare.

WEST INDIES V NETHERLANDS

Match: 1

West Indies win: 1

Netherlands win: 0

No result: 0

Only meeting: July 10, 2007, Dublin –



ADJUSTING TO DIFFERENT BOUNCE? Tamim Iqbal (R) and Mushfiqur Rahim plays tennis yesterday on the second day of Tigers' rest. Tamim was confirmed of no serious damage to his injured left hand.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



HE WILL SMILE IF THE BAT TALKS: West Indies superstar Chris Gayle checks his bat prior to a training session at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

It's another
Bravo

AFP, New Delhi

Darren Bravo will be delighted to be regarded as a Brian Lara clone if it helps West Indies defeat the Netherlands in the World Cup on Monday.

Bravo, 22, showed sparks of brilliance in making 73 off 82 balls, studded with eight fours and a one-handed six, during his team's seven-wicket defeat to South Africa at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium on Thursday.

His knock, to some extent, justified the pre-tournament hype which concentrated on his likeness to record-breaking batsman Lara who happens to be his cousin.

The stance, batting style, gait, personality -- the uncanny similarity between the two Trinidadians has fuelled expectations of Bravo leading a West Indies revival.

Bravo himself is quite modest despite the comparison.

"It's a great feeling when you hear that," says the left-hander.

BOOST MOMENT OF THE DAY

BOOST

MOMENT OF THE DAY

Friday Night Fever?

MOHAMMAD ISAM



The scene of the Bangladesh team bus wading through thousands of ecstatic fans at snail's pace on Friday night will remain one of the iconic moments of this World Cup. The almost hour-long ride from the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium to Sheraton Hotel demonstrated the incomparable public support to the Tigers, but the recklessness of some was not missed by even the members of the national team.

Naeem Islam, one of the heroes that night, was one of them who saw bike-riders tagging along the bus throughout the ride. Though Naeem didn't know about the tragic death of young Azad who died after his truck toppled near Banani, 14 others were injured, he said that controlled celebrations have more appeal to him.

"I felt great about the celebrations. Our ride from the stadium was something unique, I never knew that people of Bangladesh are so cricket-crazy," said Naeem yesterday. "But definitely people should be careful and controlled with their celebrations. When we were on the bus, we saw some guys riding desperately on

their bikes. It was quite scary actually."

After Bangladesh's dramatic 27-run win over Ireland, the outpour of joy was unrestrained but such scenes were hardly expected. Apart from processions coming out from the different streets of capital, there were instances of fire-breathing, spraying liquid colours as well as youths taking fun rides on the back of pick-up trucks and motorcycles across Dhaka.

"I think as a country we don't get many opportunities to celebrate so when we won, people become very happy. Of course we want everyone to be happy but not at the cost of someone's life," said Naeem, who picked up

two wickets in the game and struck 29 runs at a crucial time against Ireland.

While the lack of occasions is one of the major reasons for the unabated celebrations that went deep into the night, several other factors could also be pointed out. The nature of the victory (Bangladesh coming back from a desperate position), the win being the first in this World Cup and the unifying

tendency of cricket also contributed to the reaction.

According to S Aminul Islam, professor of sociology at the Dhaka University, the lack of big occasions and the cultural limitation on festivity also make cricket such a cross-culture event.

"Generally, excessive celebrations are not encouraged in our society. The elders would tell you to tone down if you get too excited. But cricket has the uniting factor and everyone simply jumped at the chance to celebrate," said Aminul.

Particularly in the capital, there is no single centre to celebrate together like other cities around the world, observed the expert. "If there was a single spot, there wouldn't be any sporadic incidents," he said, adding that safety should be considered during any big event.

Interestingly though, other cities in the country had large gatherings in a single spot. Shahab Bazar in Rajshahi, Bogra's famous Shatmatha roundabout, Zinda Bazar in Sylhet and the industrial belts of Khulna metropolitan were

thronged by thousands of people minutes after Shaiful Islam took the final wicket. Processions from different neighbourhoods came to the city centres with workers and vendors in Khulna shutting down shops and mills to spend a few hours to rejoice the victory.

The victory against Ireland was Bangladesh's sixth in the World Cup and three more in this tournament would confirm them a place in the quarterfinals. Naeem believed that if all three departments come together against West Indies on March 4, the Tigers have a major chance.

"It's not that the batting will click everyday but I am sure it'll be better against West Indies. If we can bring everything together in that game, I think we have a good chance," said Naeem, who struggled with both bat and ball in the opening match against India.

"I didn't do much in the previous match so it was a fantastic feeling to make a contribution. I was trying to cross the 200-mark because we knew they couldn't chase this total as they haven't done it before in Bangladesh," he said, adding that his father was very happy as the team remained in hunt for a last eight place.

ZIMBABWE V CANADA: NAGPUR

Match of enthusiasts

AFP, Nagpur

Zimbabwe and Canada, whose World Cup ambitions were always modest, are already planning for the future despite having five more matches to play in this marathon event.

The two teams meet on Monday in Group A having both lost their opening games.

They are already facing a virtually impossible task of reaching the quarterfinals with Pakistan, Australia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand widely expected to progress.

Canada, who lost by 210 runs to Sri Lanka, insist they have a bright future in the sport and believe they can even achieve Test status.

"Our plan is to develop the game and by 2015 or so to become a full member. Cricket is growing in Canada in a big way. Lots of South Asians are moving in there," said Canada coach Pubudu Dassanayake.

Zimbabwe are also looking ahead after years of political turmoil.

After a five-year self-imposed exile from Tests, they will return to the big time in May with a tour of Bangladesh and hope to host New Zealand and Pakistan later in the year.

Zimbabwe lost their opening match in

the World Cup when they slipped to a 91-run defeat to champions Australia in Ahmedabad, but they impressed with their spin bowling, which made up for their batting.

They were found wanting against Australia's quality pace attack, led by Mitchell Johnson, who finished with 4-19. He was brilliantly backed by fast bowlers Shaun Tait and Brett Lee, who shared three wickets.

So Zimbabwe will again rely on spinners to keep the pressure on Canada after an eye-catching show by Ray Price, Prosper Utseya and Graeme Cremer against a strong Australian batting line-up.

Left-arm spinner Price, off-spinner Utseya and leg-spinner Cremer did not allow the Australian batsmen to dominate, conceding 127 runs in a combined tally of 30 overs.

"I think it's going to be a game of spinners. They have got a couple of good spinners bowling early overs and if we can get through those overs and score at a consistent rate we can do well," Canada skipper Ashish Bagai said.

"It's the same with our bowling. If we can get our spinners to fire on the day, hopefully it will work for us. We have a diverse bowling attack and we bowl within ourselves. There is no express pace."



Canada captain Ashish Bagai (L) and teammate Amabir Hansra jog ahead of their practice session at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur on Sunday.

Lloyd thinks the world of the West Indies

AFP, New Delhi

West Indies legend Clive Lloyd remains confident the Caribbean side has a bright future despite seeing the former kings of cricket plummet alarmingly down the rankings.

Under Lloyd the West Indies, helped by their fearsome pace attack, became the top team in world cricket, winning the first two World Cups, but a relentless decline has seen them tumble down the pecking order.

West Indies have not beaten a Test side in a one-day international since June 2009 and their opening World Cup defeat to South Africa saw them slump to a dismal ninth in the ODI rankings, below Bangladesh.

The team's familiar weaknesses were on show in New Delhi on Thursday as they let promising positions slip, going down to a seven-wicket defeat, with the one bright spot being a dazzling 73 by the promising Darren Bravo.