

Lift fielding: Afridi

AFP, Colombo

Jubilant skipper Shahid Afridi hailed Pakistan's impressive World Cup win over one-day powerhouse Sri Lanka as a huge boost for his team but demanded an improvement in fielding standards.

Pakistan beat Sri Lanka by 11 runs on Saturday before a capacity 35,000-crowd in Colombo, with Afridi starring with figures of 4-34 to slow the home team's run chase at R. Premadasa stadium.

The win, after Pakistan scored 277 for seven, leaves them at the top of Group A after two victories, including their crushing opening win over Kenya, ahead of defending champions Australia.

"It's a very big win for us," said Afridi. "Beating Sri Lanka before a capacity crowd, and a strong team which has been playing well."

The skipper said the nature of the victory at the home of one of the top sides in one-day cricket, would help lift players for future games.

"I think this will raise the morale of the players. It should, and that will help us prepare in a better way for the future games," said Afridi, whose team next faces minnows Canada on March 3, also in Colombo.

Despite the win, Pakistan were poor in the field, with wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal spurning stumping chances and catches

going to ground.

Kumar Sangakkara (49) and Chamara Silva (57) gave Pakistan a scare but Afridi's men held their nerve to complete their seventh win against Sri Lanka in all World Cups, maintaining their proud record of never having lost to their opponents at cricket's showpiece.

"I think when we go ahead in this tournament our destination will become tougher and tougher, and if we commit the same mistakes and field like that, then we have to return to Pakistan sooner rather than later," said Afridi.

"I think we must improve or else such fielding will not help our cause. Our fielding has been improving since the New Zealand tour, but I don't know why in this match we dropped catches and failed to get run out chances," he added.

Afridi said he was pleased at the responsible innings played by Misbah-ul-Haq and Younis Khan.

"It's important that seniors have taken responsibility. Younis and Misbah are the backbone of the team," said Afridi of Misbah, who made an unbeaten 83, and Younis, who scored an attractive 72.

"It's also important that the captain performs well and sets an example for others."

Afridi passed the milestone of 300 wickets during the match, his 314th one-day international, saying it was "one of my goals."

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1



REGISTERED TRADEMARK: Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi raises his arms in celebration after dismissing Sri Lanka's Tillakaratne Dilshan in their World Cup Group A match in Colombo on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Abahani go top

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Abahani moved to the top of the Grameenphone Bangladesh League with a 3-1 victory over Feni Soccer Club as the professional league resumed after a 13-day break.

After an insipid first half, Abahani took the lead in the 57th minute through Ghanaian midfielder Yusuf Aminu as he escaped his marker before placing the ball on the far post.

The lead was doubled six minutes later when Aminu's compatriot Twum Frank converted a spot-kick, that took the lethal striker top of the goal-scorer's chart.

Abahani kept up the pressure and found a third in the 72nd minute when skipper Pranotosh Das hit the back of the net with low header.

Tahidul Alam's powerful header in the 80th minute reduced the margin for the club from Feni but could not avoid another embarrassing defeat.

Feni are second from bottom with only four points from nine matches while Abahani have 20 from same number of matches.

'Dislikes' spread for Magath

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

Schalke 04 coach Felix Magath seems to have failed in his Facebook charm offensive after Royal Blues fans gave him the thumbs down during their 1-1 German league draw with Nuremberg.

Earlier this month, Magath reached out to Schalke fans by setting up a Facebook page to try and win over supporters upset at what they perceive to be Magath's dictatorial style and his transfer policy.

In a little over a fortnight, Magath has collected more than 140,000 friends, who have clicked the 'like' -- thumbs up icon -- on the social-networking website to show their approval for the Schalke boss.

But after his side were held at home by resurgent Nuremberg, hardcore fans held up a banner at Gelsenkirchen's Veltins Arena saying: "Felix: we don't like you any more" next to a large picture of a down-turned thumb.

To reinforce their message, home fans chanted it during the second half.

Barca win as Real draw

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona moved seven points clear in La Liga after Real Madrid showed plenty of effort but insufficient invention as they drew 0-0 against a well-organised Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday.

After Barcelona's 3-0 win over Mallorca earlier, the pressure was on Real who went into the late game in confident mood after three consecutive wins.

From the start though it was evident that it would be a

tough task as Deportivo defended deeply and appeared to be battling for their lives. Cristiano Ronaldo was a constant threat but most of Real's shots came from distance.

Their best openings came in a grandstand finish when first substitute Emmanuel Adebayor and then Ronaldo hit the post but they were unable to find the all important goal.

Barcelona had shrugged off claims that they were starting to feel the strain as a

makeshift team overcame Mallorca.

Barca had not been at their best as they lost to Arsenal in the Champions League and then struggled to beat Athletic Bilbao.

Injuries to Xavi Hernandez, Carles Puyol and Victor Valdes suggested that the exertion was starting to take its toll.

With Dani Alves also suspended it was an unfamiliar looking Barça side but after Messi opened the scoring with a header following hesitation in the

penalty area, they never looked back.

David Villa may have been narrowly offside as he raced clear of the defence to increase the lead and then Pedro Rodriguez completed the scoring.

After the game coach Pep Guardiola admitted that they were finding it difficult to break down Mallorca until the first goal.

"It is not easy to come in if you don't play every week but if you have the personality of Seydou (Keita) then it is a lot simpler. He along with Andres (Iniesta) were vital to us in the first half and I will remember this match as the toughest for us to score," he said.

RESULTS
Atletico Madrid 2 (Koke 47, Reyes 76)
Sevilla 2 (Negredo 41, Rakitic 66)
Sporting Gijon 0 Real Zaragoza 0
Espanyol 4 (Estrada 42-og, Sergio Garcia 54, Callejon 81, Marquez 90+1)
Real Sociedad 1 (Estrada 43)
Real Mallorca 0 Barcelona 3 (Messi 38, Villa 57, Pedro 66)



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern get yellow fever

AFP, Munich



Borussia Dortmund coach Jurgen Klopp said his side have proved their title credentials after their impressive 3-1 win at defending Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich.

The defeat leaves Bayern 16 points behind Dortmund and, with 10 games left, Dortmund are firmly on course for their first German league title since 2002.

Dortmund's young team -- their

average age is just 22 years -- proved their status as Bundesliga winners-in-waiting with victory in Bayern's backyard and their second win over Munich this season.

Goals by Germany defender Mats Hummels, Paraguay's Lucas Barrios and Turkey midfielder Nuri Sahin sealed Borussia's 18th win from 24 league matches, while Luiz Gustavo scored what proved to be Bayern's first-half consolation goal.

With second-placed Bayer Leverkusen playing Sunday, Dortmund are 13-points clear at the top of the table and this was their first win in Munich for nearly

20 years.

"It was obvious to us that Bayern would repeatedly have chances over the 90 minutes and our defence would be tested more than in other games," said Klopp.

"We also knew that if any team can withstand this pressure then we are it."

"I am pleased for the boys."

"It was a huge day for us, this game was screened in 198 countries, so it's a very special win."

"Our last victory here was 19 years ago, so we are delighted."

"The boys have given so much to win today, but it wouldn't have worked with anything less."

Bayern coach Louis van Gaal was gracious in defeat, but said his team's 1-0 win at Champions League holders Inter Milan in midweek had taken its toll.

"Dortmund scored at just the right times," said the Dutchman.

"We dominated the second-half time, but we couldn't make it pay at the right moment."

"The first few goals against us were initiated by our own individual mistakes, but Dortmund forced us into making them."

"We expected Dortmund to play the way they did, but we were not smart or fresh enough and we made individual errors."

Borussia Dortmund midfielder Nuri Sahin (R) celebrates after scoring a stunning goal in their top of the table Bundesliga clash against Bayern Munich at the Allianz Arena on Saturday.

RESULTS
Schalke 04 1 (Raul 52)
Nuremberg 1 (Hegeler 37)
Hoffenheim 1 (Alaba 83) Mainz 05 2 (Ivanschitz 23, Soto 86)
Cologne 1 (Podolski 88) Freiburg 0
Kaiserslautern 1 (Hlousek 18)
Hamburg 1 (Jansen 54)
St. Pauli 0 Hannover 96 1 (Schulz 89)
Bayern Munich 1 (Luiz Gustavo 15)
Borussia Dortmund 3 (Barrios 9,

AFP, London



Manchester United moved four points clear at the top of the Premier League as Javier Hernandez's double strike inspired a 4-0 rout of struggling Wigan on Saturday.

With second placed Arsenal preparing for Sunday's League Cup final against Birmingham, Sir Alex Ferguson's side were able to cement first place thanks to goals from Hernandez, Rooney and Fabio Da Silva at the DW Stadium.

Ferguson opted to leave Dimitar Berbatov on the bench as Hernandez started up front alongside Rooney and the Mexican striker

repaid his manager's faith with the opening goal in the 17th minute.

Nani raided down the left wing and curled over a cross that Hernandez poked in at the near-post for his 12th goal of the season.

Rooney had earlier angered Wigan when he caught James McCarthy with an elbow to the back of the midfielder's head, but referee Mark Clattenburg decided not to punish the United forward.

United were indebted to goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar for several crucial saves before Hernandez killed off second bottom Wigan with a typically predatory strike in the 74th minute.

Rooney's 84th minute goal and Fabio's strike three minutes later ensured United head into this week's crucial fixtures at Chelsea and Liverpool on a high.

RESULTS
Aston Villa 4 (Young 49-pen, 82, Hanley 62-og, Downing 64) Blackburn 1 (Kalinic 81)
Everton 2 (Beckford 8, 39)
Sunderland 0
Newcastle 1 (Nolan 13) Bolton 1 (Sturridge 38)
Wigan 0 Manchester United 4 (Hernandez 17, 74, Rooney 84, F Da Silva 87)
Wolverhampton 4 (Jarvis 2, O'Hara

Frings set to quit Bremen

AFP, Bremen

Ex-Germany star Torsten Frings is set to quit Bundesliga strugglers Werder Bremen at the end of the season, according to Sunday's edition of German daily Bild.

The 34-year-old is reported to have informed the club he will not be extending his contract which expires in June, with Bremen currently just above the relegation zone.

Frings joined Bremen from Bayern Munich in 2005 and won 79 caps for his country, scoring 10 goals.

He played in both the 2002 World Cup final and the Euro 2008 final for Germany, but was dropped by national coach Joachim Loew in October 2008.

Bremen play Bayer Leverkusen at home on Sunday in the Bundesliga.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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Zimbabwe v Canada
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