

BEYOND THE BOUNDARY

(Sach) A Night To Remember!

SHAKIL KASEM

Confession time, I am sorry the Pakistan-Sri Lanka match sort of passed me by because of a social commitment, and also because Manchester United were pounding Wigan. Ferguson's formations haven't always met with my approval, but this time he delivered. Hernandez was awesome. I believe Misbah and Afridi were too, but loyalty lay elsewhere. Sorry chaps.

The England-India match of course was a different kettle of fish altogether, giving no indication though of how it would turn out to be. India with its juggernaut of a batting machine and England post Ashes on a high, albeit somewhat circumspect after the ODI series Down Under, promised fireworks. And so there were, plenty of it. For a start the maestro seized the here and now and yawn, yawn helped himself to another of his customary hundreds. Predictably awesome again, how boring. 37 years young, 47 hundreds old, Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar is still giving Johnnie Walker a right royal run for his money. He has been treating the World Cup over the last two decades like a slot machine, hitting a jackpot of runs every four years. Every little detail is addressed and ever conceivable tossed e with e signa-disdain typical him. st as a of course and a force of habit.

One suspects he is even a trifle self-conscious about it and more than a little embarrassed. Mellowed somewhat by age, but losing none of his uncanny sense of the temporal, he unleashed an array of shots that have been his trademark for so many years. Boundaries rained all across the park and having discovered there are no fielders in the air, he went for the stratosphere depositing five more sixes into his overbulging kitty of runs. In the end India only managed 338 runs because in the darkness following his departure the rest of the batting lost its way.

One of the facts of life for India is that it has a fielding side somewhat creaking at the limbs and a bowling which is not quite upto par to defend anything less than 350 plus. England, professional to the core had the right concoctions of grit, determination and discipline (well, atleast for the major part of their run chase) to make a match of it. India generally prefers to bat first and bat big. To run down 338, England needed a substantial deposit of runs at the top, which they managed. Kevin Pietersen upped in the order provided the early impetus before being a victim to left arm spin. All across the world left arm spinners worth their salt have Pietersen in their crosshairs and more often than not the safety catches are off. It was left to Andrew Strauss to play a monumental innings to keep England in the hunt and India on the run. The form of Strauss and Bell had England cruising comfortably to the relative safety of the shores before the aging warrior struck mortal body blows. Zaheer Khan proved once again that old age and treachery are not to be trifled with. Three ultra quick wickets ripped the innards out of the middle order and the rest of the batting just curled up and died. England did expect every man to do his duty, which they did to the point where they were a run short.

In the end adjectives flew from all quarters, but both sides were secretly relieved that it could have been even worse for either of them. Teams do not plan and play for a tie, it is thrust upon them, more than usually because one or both of them have run out of ideas when it mattered. So for the record, points were shared and the scorebook would show for posterity no one won. But for sure someone had to lose that night. Who might that be other than Eden Gardens! But then one may argue, they were bowled out by the ICC long time ago!

Test captain Salman Butt and seamers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer were banned for corruption barely two weeks before the World Cup which depleted Pakistan's bowling options.

But Akhtar said the loss of the trio has helped unite the squad.

"We are a hurt side so we are here to hurt others. It's better that it happened to us because every time a controversy happens it gathers us together and what better situation than before a World Cup," Akhtar said.

Pakistan, rated as dark horses in the most open World Cup in its 36-year history, inflicted a narrow 11-run defeat over co-hosts Sri Lanka in their last match after seeing off Kenya by 205 runs.

Akhtar, 35, admitted he was missing Aamer -- banned for five years -- and Asif -- banned for seven -- but said others have stepped up.

"Obviously without Aamer and Asif we have suffered badly, they were the best with the new ball, it's unfortunate what happened to them. Had they been with us it would have been the most lethal bowling attack," said Akhtar.

"But the way [Umar] Gul and [Abdul] Razzaq have been bowling, the way [Wahab] Riaz is bowling, we can still do a much better job as we have variety in our attack."

Akhtar hoped Pakistan -- who next face Canada in Colombo on March 3 -- will not get complacent after beating Sri Lanka.



IN FULL FLIGHT AGAIN: Sri Lanka paceman Lasith Malinga steams in and hurls one during their practice session at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday. The slinger is available for selection in their clash against Kenya today after sitting out the first match through injury.

PHOTO: AFP

SRI LANKA V KENYA: COLOMBO

Double trouble for Kenya

AFP, Colombo

Kenya face double trouble ahead of their all-important World Cup Group A match against Sri Lanka here on Tuesday, as they counter formidable opponents and differences between players and coach.

Kenya have lost both their matches at the tournament, going down by 10 wickets against New Zealand, after being shot out for just 69, before slumping to a 205-

run loss to Pakistan.

Adding to their problems, reports have emerged of internal divisions within the squad.

Cricket Kenya chief Samir Inamdar on Sunday blamed differences between the players and West Indian coach Eldine Baptiste for their lacklustre performances.

But Kenya captain Jimmy Kamande brushed aside the reports, saying his team is united.

"There is no fighting, no worries," said Kamande. "Maybe there is

miscommunication, but I can assure you we are all here as a family and are happy. We will show some improvement in future games."

Kenyan cricket has been dogged by political problems since the famous run to the 2003 World Cup semifinals.

SRI LANKA V KENYA

Matches: 5
Sri Lanka win: 4
Kenya win: 1
First meeting: March 6, 1996, Kandy -- Sri Lanka won by 144 runs
Last meeting: April 6, 2003, Sharjah -- Sri Lanka won by 129 runs

It was in that World Cup where Kenya beat Sri Lanka in Nairobi, but that is their only win in five clashes between the two nations.

Kenya have four survivors from that match -- Steve Tikolo, Collins Obuya, Thomas Odoyo and Peter Ongondo -- but the team looks a pale shadow of that side at the current tournament.

Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara urged his team not to panic after slipping to defeat against Pakistan.

"We have Kenya, followed by Australia, so we will look

back on the defeat and learn from our mistakes which is very important," said Sangakkara.

"There are a few things we can learn. Bowling a better line and length is important and when we bat partnerships are important and we shouldn't panic," added the skipper, who scored 49 against Pakistan.

The top four teams from each group will qualify for the quarterfinals and Sangakkara stressed the need to keep improving as the tournament progresses.

Wait for more from England

AFP, Bangalore

Ian Bell has insisted there is plenty more to come from England at the World Cup following their thrilling tie with co-hosts India that breathed new life into the group phase of the tournament.

England, set an imposing 339 to win, finished on 338 for eight after Bell, who made 69, helped captain Andrew Strauss put on 170 for the third wicket in a match where the skipper went on to a career-best 158.

Although England conceded their highest World Cup total during Sunday's match, having gone for 292 in their opening six-wicket win over the Netherlands, Bell said bowling was hard work on flat subcontinental pitches and that the team would improve during the course of this event.

"We haven't played our best cricket yet and we have just tied with India, chasing 338," said Bell ahead of their return to the Chinnaswamy Stadium for Wednesday's match against Ireland.

"That has got to be a good sign. We just need to make sure that we play better cricket as this tournament goes on -- there is no point playing it now."

He added: "Our batting unit has been playing well, certainly Strauss, and that is exciting for us."

Bell had the best view in the ground for much of Strauss's innings, the highest score by an England batsman in a World Cup match, and he was in no doubt about the quality of the left-handed opener's effort.

"It was probably the best knock I have seen for a long, long time and probably the best knock I have ever seen from an England player."

Aussies not on Bayliss's mind

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka coach Trevor Bayliss was trying on Monday not to think about the mouth-watering World Cup clash against his Australian compatriots, opting to concentrate on Kenya instead.

The 1996 champions went down to Pakistan by a narrow 11-run margin in their Group A match on Saturday and Bayliss is more concerned about not slipping up against Kenya on Tuesday.

"Our thoughts are on the Kenya match tomorrow," said Bayliss.

"But looking forward to Australia [March 5], our guys are reasonably confident because we had a good tour of Australia in November where we beat them in a one-day series."

Bayliss, who took over as coach after Sri Lanka finished runners-up to Australia in the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean, said his team needed to show consistency on Tuesday against a Kenya side who have lost both their matches.

Bayliss said Australia will be difficult but not unbeatable.



Zimbabwe's diminutive batsman Tatenda Taibu hurries for a cheeky single during his 99-ball 98 against Canada at The Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium (VCA) in Nagpur yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Hurt Pakistan to hurt others

AFP, Colombo

Maverick paceman Shoaib Akhtar on Monday said Pakistan were hurting from the cricket corruption scandal, but his rejuvenated team will take their frustrations out on their World Cup rivals.

Test captain Salman Butt and seamers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer were banned for corruption barely two weeks before the World Cup which depleted Pakistan's bowling options.

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Pakistan, rated as dark horses in the most

AFP, Nagpur

Tatenda Taibu just missed a maiden World Cup century while Raymond Price grabbed three early wickets as Zimbabwe crushed hapless Canada by 175 runs for their first win in Group A on Monday.

Zimbabwe were indebted to former captain Taibu (98) and Craig Ervine (85) for posting 298-9 before dismissing Canada for a paltry 123, with left-arm spinner Price finishing with 3-16 off eight tight overs.

The African nation, who

lost to Australia in their opener, virtually reduced the match to a no-contest when Price, sharing the new ball for a second successive game, took three wickets in his opening three overs.

The spinner bowled John Davison, the oldest player in the tournament at 40, before accounting for 16-year-old Nitish Kumar, the youngest player to feature in a World Cup, and skipper Ashish Bagai as Canada teetered at 7-3.

Kumar, who needed permission from his school to take a month off for the event, contributed just one before offering a return

catch.

Leg-spinner Graeme Cremer (3-31), and off-spinners Prosper Utseya (2-24) and Greg Lamb (2-29) then built on Price's superb effort as Canada continued to struggle against spin to suffer their second successive defeat.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Group A match between Canada and Zimbabwe on Monday:

ZIMBABWE
Taylor/lbw b Chohan 0
Coventry/lbw b Baidwan 4
Taibu c Davison b Rao 98
Ervine c Bagai b Rao 85
Chigumbura c Bagai b Cheema 5

Williams c Bagai b Rao 30
Lamb b Rao 11
Utseya c Hansra b Chohan 22
Cremer b Baidwan 26
Price not out 10
Mpfu not out 3
Extras: (lb-2, nb-1, w-1) 4
Total: (For 9 wks in 50 overs) 298
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-7, 3-188, 4-193, 5-201, 6-219, 7-240, 8-281, 9-284

Canada
CANADA
Davison b Price 0
Kumar c and b Price 1
Gunasekera b Lamb 24
Bagai c Williams b Price 0

Hansra st Taibu b Utseya 20
Cheema c Cremer b Utseya 14
Surkari st Taibu b Lamb 26
Gordon lbw b Cremer 7
Chohan lbw b Cremer 8
Baidwan not out 13
Rao b Cremer 1
Extras: (w-9) 9
Total: (All out in 42.1 overs) 123
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-7, 3-7, 4-50, 5-50, 6-66, 7-78, 8-97, 9-122, 10-123

Bowler O M R W
Mpfu 5 1 12 0
Price 8 4 16 3
Utseya 7 0 24 2
Lamb 8 0 29 2
Cremer 9 1 31 3
Williams 5 0 11 0
Result: Zimbabwe won by 175 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Tatenda Taibu.