

Leggies alive & kicking

AFP, Dhaka

The success of Shahid Afridi and Imran Tahir at the World Cup has laid to rest fears that the art of leg-spin had died with the retirement of the charismatic Shane Warne.

Warne, probably the greatest leg-spinner to grace the sport, fooled batsmen with his wizardry and guile before retiring in 2007 with 708 Test and 293 one-day wickets for Australia.

But his legacy lives on with Pakistan captain Afridi, South Africa's Tahir and even Canada's portly Balaji Rao proving wrist spinners remain a force to reckon with in limited-overs cricket.

The inspirational Afridi has zoomed to the top of the World Cup bowling charts with 14 wickets in three matches, including two five-wicket hauls and a return of 4-23 in the third.

Pakistan-born Tahir, who was drafted in for the World Cup after qualifying to play for South Africa, has met with immediate success with seven wickets in his first two matches for the Proteas.

Even Rao, who turned out for Tamil Nadu in Indian domestic cricket before migrating to Canada, has starred with six wickets with his crafty mix of leg-spin and googly.



India's part-time bowler Yuvraj Singh (2nd from R) celebrates one of his five wickets against Ireland with teammates during their World Cup match in Bangalore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



KENYA V CANADA: NEW DELHI

Pride, prejudice at stake

AFP, New Delhi

Kenya and Canada contest a battle of no-hopers on Monday, but both are determined to prove that the decision to drive them into the World Cup wilderness is wrong.

The two non-Test playing teams are languishing at the bottom of Group A without a point after having lost three games each.

Their performances have added weight to the International Cricket Council's decision to chop the number of teams to 10 from 14 for the next World Cup.

However, Kenya wicketkeeper Maurice

Ouma believes the ICC will be throwing money away by its decision.

"They have pumped in huge money with its High Performance Development Programmes. With this decision, their entire programme will go to waste," he said.

The middle-order batsman said the ICC should work towards creating more opportunities for the minnows to play leading nations on a consistent basis.

"The associate nations should be given more opportunity to play Test playing countries on a regular basis and not once in four years," said Ouma.

"We really deserve to be there considering the fact

that we consistently played in the last five World Cups. We have qualified for the World Cups more than any other nation."

Ireland are the only associate nation who have

KENYA V CANADA	
Matches: 13	Kenya win: 8
Canada win: 4	No result: 1
First meeting: Feb 15, 2003, Cape Town - Kenya won by 4 wickets	Last meeting: July 10, 2010, Rotterdam

managed to throw the form book out of the window and script an upset win, against England in Bangalore last week.

Canada had a golden

chance to imitate Ireland against Pakistan when they bowled their rivals out for a below-par 184 following some inspired bowling led by medium-pacer Harvir Baidwan.

But the opportunity was squandered with Ashish Bagai's men folding up for 138 in 42.5 overs despite being comfortably placed at 104-3 at one point.

Bagai refused to play the minnow card when explaining his team's 46-run defeat and accepted that his side had no answers to the leg-spin of Shahid Afridi, who picked a match-winning 5-23.

"Our batting let us down, we just played poorly during our chase," said Bagai. "It was a good toss to lose as

the wicket had become better as the game progressed but Afridi took it away from us.

"Ireland played pretty bravely against England and that's why losing against Pakistan was more disappointing."

Kenya were whacked by 10 wickets by New Zealand before being hammered by Pakistan and Sri Lanka in one-sided encounters.

"Our big concern is we are not batting out our 50 overs," Kenyan captain Jimmy Kamande said.

"That's the one area we want to work on very, very hard because you can't win matches without batting your full quota of overs."

'We have to qualify, no matter how'

AFP, Colombo



Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara insisted that the loss of another point in Saturday's washout against Australia will not damage their World Cup dream.

Sri Lanka had already been beaten by Pakistan before facing the defending champions and now have five points from four games, the same tally as Australia who have played a game less.

Pakistan, with a perfect six points from three matches, lead the way in Group A from where the top four teams qualify for the quarter-finals.

"One point is better than no point," said Sangakkara after his team won the toss and had reached 146-3 in 32.5 overs before rain halted play at the R Premadasa Stadium on Saturday.

"It doesn't matter as long as you qualify [for quarters]."

Sangakkara said Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, needed to win their two remaining group games against Zimbabwe and New Zealand.

"If you lose a game, you lose a game; if you win, you win. That's how we look at it, so it doesn't really matter where you finish," said Sangakkara.

"We need to beat every single good team to get into the final and to win the World Cup, so that's where we are at the moment and the defeat against Pakistan is behind us," said Sangakkara of the narrow 11-run loss last week.

Sangakkara, whose 73 not out had led his team's recovery after being 75-3, said his team was in the game when rained spoiled a potentially good match.

"The game was really well-poised, 18 overs to go and we

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Long waits bore Ricky

AFP, Colombo



Skipper Ricky Ponting believes his team needs more exposure to the cut and thrust of the World Cup following lengthy interludes and a rained-off match against Sri Lanka.

The defending champions waited eight days to play Sri Lanka in their third match of the tournament and must kick their heels for another seven days before tackling Kenya in Bangalore next Sunday.

"It's not ideal, but we have known there was a chance of that happening right the way through, before the tournament even started," said Ponting after Saturday's Group A match against Sri Lanka ended in no result.

Sri Lanka, who batted after winning the toss, were 146-3 after 32.5 overs before heavy rain forced the match to be called off at the R Premadasa Stadium.

Australia had beaten Zimbabwe by 91 runs in their opening match before winning their second against New Zealand by seven wickets, games in which their middle order had little exposure.

"If you look a bit deeper than that, some of our middle-order players haven't got much exposure. We will have to think about what's going to be the right thing for us to do as far as our team composition is concerned.

"I don't want to be tinkering with things too much and changing things around too much, but after a game like on

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Kuyt treble rips MU

AFP, Liverpool



Dirk Kuyt scored a hatrick to blow the Premier League title race wide open as Liverpool cruised to a 3-1 win over leaders Manchester United at Anfield on Sunday.

United went into the game knowing that victory would earn them a six-point lead over nearest rivals Arsenal at the summit with nine games remaining.

But Kuyt's treble condemned Sir Alex Ferguson's side to back-to-back Premier League defeats for the first time in two years after their midweek loss at Chelsea.

United are locked on 18 domestic league titles with Liverpool but the Merseyside club were clearly in no mood to help their bitter rivals towards a record 19th success.

Kuyt put Liverpool in control with two goals in five minutes towards the end of the first half and he scored his third in the 65th minute before Javier Hernandez's late effort for United.

And Liverpool, who climb to sixth in the table, were able to give their £35 million

signing Andy Carroll his long-awaited debut as the striker, fit after a thigh injury, came on for the final 15 minutes.

United were missing their first-choice central defensive pairing of Nemanja Vidic, who was suspended, and Rio Ferdinand, who was injured, forcing Ferguson to field Wes Brown alongside Chris Smalling.

And the inexperienced partnership was immediately tested as Luis Suarez, twice, and Maxi Rodriguez both had efforts before Dimitar Berbatov was denied by the post in what was United's first serious attack in the 16th minute.

Up until that moment the game had been fairly even but the hosts took control in an explosive finish to the half.

Kuyt's opening goal in the 34th minute was down to the brilliance of Suarez, the Uruguay forward leaving Rafael da Silva and Michael Carrick chasing shadows before squaring for the Netherlands international to score his first ever goal against United.

His second followed five minutes later courtesy of an error by Nani, the Portuguese

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Liverpool's Dutch forward Dirk Kuyt (C) is over the moon after scoring a magnificent hatrick against English Premiership leaders Manchester United at Anfield yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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