

Pollard powers WI

AFP, Mohali



A Kieron Pollard-inspired West Indies stifled a brave fightback by Ireland on Friday to win by 44 runs and put one foot in the World Cup quarterfinals.

Pollard hammered 94 off just 55 balls and shared an 88-run stand with Devon Smith, who hit a maiden ODI ton, as West Indies posted 275 before bowling out the Irish for 231 in 49 overs at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium.

Pollard also took a blinder of a catch to send back dangerman Kevin O'Brien for five off seamer Darren Sammy, who had impressive figures of 3-31 off his 10 overs.

The win took West Indies to six points from four Group B outings and virtually assured them of a place in the last eight.

Ireland, with one win from four matches, must now beat South Africa and the Netherlands in their remaining league matches to stand any chance of progressing to the knockout round.

"We bowled where we wanted to and that got us the victory," said Sammy, adding that his side had done well to stick to the basics.

Man-of-the-match Pollard said: "This innings is for the people who have supported me. Good game for us, important to keep the momentum going."

The Irish began their chase cautiously after losing opener Paul Stirling in the second over to towering left-arm spinner Sulieman Benn (4-53).

Sammy was rewarded for creating pressure by bowling three maiden overs in a row when Ireland captain William Porterfield (11) chipped tamely to substitute fielder Ravi Rampaul.

Benn bowled Niall O'Brien for 25 before Ed Joyce steadied the innings with a 91-run stand for the fourth wicket with Gary Wilson (61).

Joyce, who played for England in the 2007 World Cup, completed his fourth one-day half-century and kept Ireland in the hunt until he was bowled by Andre Russell for a 106-ball 84, containing nine fours.

Wilson took the fight to the West Indies but once he was dismissed in the 42nd over by Sammy, it was all over for the Irish.

Smith earlier laid the foundation for a big West Indies total with a mature innings of 107 off 133 balls after the Caribbean side were sent in to bat on an easy-paced track.

Smith added 89 runs with Shivnarine Chanderpaul, opening the innings after

Chris Gayle was ruled out on the morning of the match with an abdominal strain.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Group B match between the West Indies and Ireland at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium on Friday:

WEST INDIES			
Smith b KO'Brien			107
Chanderpaul c Porterfield b KO'Brien			35
Bravo b KO'Brien			0
Sarwan c Mooney b Dockrell			10
Pollard c Rankin b Mooney			94
Sammy c Dockrell b KO'Brien			4
Thomas c NO'Brien b Rankin			2
Russell b Mooney			3
Miller not out			5
Benn run out			2
Roach c Stirling b Botha			1
Extras: (w-3, b-3, lb-6)			12
Total: (All out in 50 overs)			275
Fall of wickets: 1-89, 2-89, 3-130, 4-218, 5-222, 6-228, 7-267, 8-267, 9-272.			

IRELAND			
Porterfield c sub (Rampaul) b Sammy			11
Stirling c Sammy b Benn			5
Joyce b Russell			84
NO'Brien b Benn			25
Wilson lbw b Sammy			61
KO'Brien c Pollard b Sammy			5
Cusack st Thomas b Benn			2
Mooney b Roach			6
Botha run out			0
Dockrell b Benn			19
Rankin not out			5
Extras: (w-3, nb-1, lb-4)			8
Total: (All out in 49 overs)			231
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-42, 3-86, 4-177, 5-187, 6-199, 7-199, 8-201, 9-215, 10-231.			

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Result: West Indies won by 44 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Kieron Pollard.



HURRICANE IN FULL FORCE: West Indies batsman Kieron Pollard hoicks one during his 55-ball 94 against Ireland at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium in Mohali yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SA want repeat

AFP, Nagpur

South Africa are hoping for a repeat of Nagpur magic when they meet India in a World Cup Group B clash on Saturday as the Proteas attempt to get their campaign back on track.

Last year, South Africa thrashed India by an innings in a Test, with paceman Dale Steyn playing a key role with 10 wickets in the match.

"I think our bowlers have had a good amount of success against India. We know each other pretty well after playing them the whole summer (at home). This is the ground where our bowlers have had success," said captain Graeme Smith.

South Africa, with four points from three matches, will be keen to post a victory in Saturday's game to boost their chances of making it to the quarter-finals.

Their hopes suffered a dent last weekend when they failed to chase 172 for victory against England in Chennai.

"Right now, it is about qualifying and having confidence going into the knockout phase. So tomorrow is obviously an important game for both teams in the terms of confidence," added Smith.

When asked how they felt being called favourites and then chokers after their six-run loss to England, Smith said: "To be honest, the sanity within the squad is keeping all the outside influences out. Coming into the tournament no one said we were favourites."

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Which has been the most exciting team in this World Cup so far?

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Porterfield slams ump

AFP, Mohali

Angry Ireland captain William Porterfield slammed a controversial umpiring decision that he said cost his side the match against the West Indies on Friday.

Batsman Gary Wilson was adjudged leg before wicket by on-field umpire Asoka de Silva when he was cruising at 61 and the decision was referred to TV umpire Bruce Oxenford.



BTV/STAR Sports/STAR Cricket
ICC Cricket World Cup
India v South Africa
Live from 3:00pm
TEN Action+
La Liga
Real Madrid v Hercules



Day's Event
Bangladesh League
Muktijoddha v Ctg Mohammedan
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal

INDIA V SOUTH AFRICA: NAGPUR

Litmus test for Proteas today

AFP, Nagpur



South Africa face a tough test of their World Cup credentials against unbeaten India on Saturday as they look to get their campaign back on track.

The Proteas started the tournament impressively with a comfortable win over the West Indies and an overwhelming victory over the Netherlands but they lost narrowly to England when they came under real pressure for the first time.

India, with seven points after four games, including three wins and a dramatic tie against England, are virtually assured of a quarterfinal slot but South Africa's hopes hang in the balance.

Following the defeat to England, by just six runs, South Africa captain Graeme Smith hit back at claims his side had 'choked' again at the World Cup in a match that raised fresh questions about their nerve in tight games.

"That's not predictable at all, is it?" said a sarcastic Smith, when questioned about South Africa's composure.



India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (R) wields his willow as his South Africa counterpart Graeme Smith (L) walks behind during a training session at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur yesterday ahead of today's crucial Group B clash between the two sides.

PHOTO: AFP

"Pressure? We've handled ourselves in some tough situations over the last few years. I don't think pressure is our weakness."

Smith has always insisted that his team's fighting credentials were proved beyond doubt in 2008/09 when he led South Africa to their first Test series win in Australia.

Paceman Morne Morkel said South Africa were now looking beyond the match in Chennai against England.

"It's a big game of the tournament now against India and we also want to get the momentum going. We've learnt our lessons," he said.

Morkel is one of the key cogs in an impressive bowling line-up that gives Smith a range of dangerous pace and spin options.

But South Africa suffered a blow ahead of Saturday's game when leg-spinner Imran Tahir became a doubtful starter after fracturing his left thumb during the England match.

The pitch in Nagpur is expected to favour batsmen. South African pair Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers, ranked numbers one and two in the world ODI rankings, have impressed but Jacques Kallis has yet to shine.

Kallis, the only South African to have completed 10,000 runs in both Test and one-day cricket, has so far contributed just 21 runs in his side's three matches.

"I don't think there is any concern. Jacques is a world-class player. He has been the rock of the team for the last 15 years. If he hasn't scored it is not a concern. We all know what to expect," said Amla.

INDIA V SOUTH AFRICA	
Matches: 65	South Africa wins: 39
India wins: 24	No result/Tied: 2
First meeting: Nov 10, 1991, Kolkata	-- India won by three wickets.

Dhoni banks on openers

AFP, Nagpur



India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni said he was looking to openers Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar to fire at the top of the order as the host nation eyes the quarterfinals.

"If our openers can bat as long as possible, it will be good for us because from what we have seen, if Sachin and Sehwag get going it is difficult to stop them," Dhoni said on the eve of his Group B match against South Africa.

"I am just hoping that in coming games we have slightly bigger partnerships so that the middle and the lower middle order can use the explosive power well."

"We rely on momentum and if we get a good start, our lower order can really cash in on the platform that is provided to us."

The explosive Sehwag and Tendulkar are capable of dominating any attack but their highest stand in the World Cup so far has been 69.

When asked whether India would be wary of South African paceman Dale Steyn in Saturday's clash in Nagpur, the Indian skipper said: "Not only Steyn. All of them are talented and can get batsmen out and you have to be at your best."

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