

Runs on the up for Smith

AFP, Kolkata



South Africa captain Graeme Smith believes his World Cup batting woes are about to end after the Proteas cruised into the quarterfinals.

Smith, whose side became the first team from Group B to make the last eight with a 131-run win Ireland, said he was confident of regaining the form that has brought him over 6,000 runs in one-day internationals.

"I'd like to have some runs. I think a good performance is round the corner and I'm looking forward to contributing," he said.

Smith's best score in five innings at the World Cup is the 45 he made in the opening win over the West Indies. Against Ireland, he was run-out for just seven.

Smith believes the team's best is yet to come after a league campaign which has seen four wins in five matches with their lone defeat coming against England by a narrow six-run margin.

"In every game there's probably something we haven't done well. The first 10-15 overs against India with the ball and then we didn't finish the game against England. We are trying to put up a complete performance," said Smith.

But his team did well under pressure in the last two matches, posting a three-wicket win over India in a close finish and then defeating Ireland after being in an early spot of bother.

South Africa were reeling at 117-5 following superb bowling and fielding displays by the Irish side before recovering to post a challenging 272-7, thanks to JP Duminy's solid 99.

When asked whether it was a worry or a positive sign that the lower order had rescued South Africa, Smith said: "I think it's a positive. We got ourselves into trouble

with some stupid run-outs [against Ireland].

"But the guys responded well and managed to keep the run-rate at a decent level. JP held the innings superbly, so I think it's a positive."

Duminy added 87 for the sixth wicket with Colin Ingram (46) and 65 for the next with Johan Botha (21 not out) to pull his team out of trouble.

"I think it's nice when everybody is contributing to the team and you don't have to rely on a few people. Whenever we've been in trouble, we've responded well and hung in there when we needed to," said Smith.

"We were a bit unsure about a good total because the wicket was different from the traditional Eden track. It was a bit up and down and I think I'd have happy with anything around 250."

Smith said he wasn't thinking about potential quarterfinal opponents at this stage of the tournament.

"I don't think it really matters who you play in the quarterfinals as you've still got to win the game. We needed to win this game [against Ireland] to qualify and it was all about winning for us," Smith said.

"We'll go to Bangladesh [for the last league match on Saturday] with a mindset to win. Obviously, you want to keep up the winning habits and confidence within the group."

The South African skipper said they were relieved after qualifying from the tough group with one game still to go.

"It's a fantastic feeling to have qualified. Our group is going to be pretty tense this week and it's nice to move out of that situation," said Smith.

"A lot of teams can win this World Cup and it all depends who plays best on the day."



Canada captain Ashish Bagai is hit on the body by a bouncer from Australia fast bowler Mitchell Johnson during their World Cup match at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Irish hold heads high

AFP, Kolkata



Irish skipper William Porterfield has said his team will take a lot of positives from the World Cup after emerging as the best of the non-Test sides.

"We've done a lot of good things in this World Cup. We've gained experience and will be taking back a lot from this tournament," Porterfield said after his side's 131-run defeat against South Africa in Kolkata on Tuesday.

The loss ended Ireland's slender chances of making it to the quarterfinals, but they won plenty of hearts with their impressive showings.

Their biggest moment came when they pulled off the upset of the tournament by defeating England in a high-scoring game in Bangalore.

It was Ireland's second big win in successive World Cups, having shocked Pakistan in the 2007 edition in the Caribbean.

"Beating England was the highlight of the World Cup for us. Our bowling and fielding have been right up there with anyone," said Porterfield.

Kevin O'Brien played a crucial role in Ireland's win over England, smashing the fastest World Cup century off just 50 balls as his side successfully chased a 328-run target.

"We have been in several winning positions. We were right in the game against the West Indies and should have won the match against Bangladesh," said the Irish skipper.

Ireland faltered in the later stages against Bangladesh before losing by 27 runs and then gave a scare or two to the West Indies in a 44-run defeat.

They also caught the eye with their tight bowling and fielding display against South Africa, one of the strong favourites for the World Cup, when they reduced them to 117-5.

South Africa recovered to post 272-7, a total which eventually proved too big for Ireland as they were bowled out for 141 in 33.2 overs.

The Irish captain said the inability to build a big partnership severely affected his team's chances against South Africa. "I don't think the total was a big problem, but we just kept losing wickets after we bowled and fielded well. What we lack is strong partnerships," said Porterfield.

The highest stand of Ireland's innings was 41 for the fifth wicket between Gary Wilson (31) and Kevin O'Brien (19).

Ireland also kept pressure on South Africa with their superb fielding, with Porterfield and John Mooney having a hand in the run-outs of Jacques Kallis and skipper Graeme Smith.

Ireland, with two points from five matches, will clash with the Netherlands in their last game at the Eden Gardens on Friday.

SPORTS POLL

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

| | |
|----------|-------|
| England | 35.5% |
| Ireland | 34.1% |
| Pakistan | 30.3% |

TOTAL VOTES: 211

WEEKLY QUESTION

Which big team will miss out in the World Cup quarterfinals?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast your vote

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Inter stun Bayern to reach last 8

AFP, Munich



Holders Inter Milan reached the Champions League quarterfinals after a dramatic 3-2 win at Bayern Munich in Tuesday's Last 16 second-leg clash put them through on the away-goals rule.

It ended 3-3 on aggregate after goals by Bayern's Mario Gomez and Thomas Mueller were cancelled out by Inter's Samuel Eto'o and Wesley Sneijder before Goran Pandev scored the Italians' crucial third in the 88th minute.

"We have played too passively and made too many mistakes at the end," said a visibly disappointed Gomez.

"We didn't finish our chances to counter-attack, we could have led 4-1 or 5-1 at half-time if we had."

"You can't do something like that against a team like that without being punished."

Dutch winger Arjen Robben was just as stunned by the result.

"It is unbelievable, I don't know how it came to this," said Robben.

"We made individual concentration errors, but it could still have been 4-1 at half-time."

"It doesn't seem possible that we could concede three goals against a side like that."

"I do not know how we can save the season, apart from making sure we qualify for the Champions League next season."

The slender first-leg lead Bayern had worked so hard to earn was cancelled out after just four minutes when the Munich defence unwisely allowed Eto'o a free run at goalkeeper Thomas Kraft.

The 30-year-old Cameroon star needed no second invite to plant his shot firmly in the back of the net for his 32nd goal of the season to level on aggregate.

But Bayern refused to panic, as they have so often done this season, and worked hard to turn their possession into chances.

They made it 1-1 on the night when Dutch winger Arjen Robben fired in a cross which Milan goalkeeper Julio Cesar fumbled and the ball into the path of Germany striker Gomez.

The Bayern star, the scorer of the goal in the

first-leg, shielded the ball with his body before flicking it over his head and into the empty goal on 21 minutes.

It was his eighth Champions League goal of the season and his 29th in all competitions.

Then with half an hour gone, Bayern took the lead when Robben threaded a pass through the Milan defence for German international midfielder Mueller to give Bayern a 2-1 lead.

It should have been 3-1 in the 34th minute when French winger Franck Ribery beat his marker and was left to sprint unhindered into the Inter area, but he fired over both Cesar and the crossbar.

And somehow the ball stayed out when Mueller lunged in a goal-mouth scramble with Cesar and hit the post before bouncing back into

play leaving a dismayed Mueller to contemplate what might have been.

With half-time approaching Sneijder fired just over the Bayern net from a direct free-kick in a frantic first 45 minutes.

The game's tempo dropped after the break, but Bayern kept up the pressure as Gomez fired at Cesar with an hour on the clock.

Sneijder then put his side level on the night in the 63rd minute when Eto'o squared the ball for the Dutchman to drill his shot into the back of the Bayern net from the edge of the penalty area.

Pandev scored the winner with two minutes left when Eto'o squared the ball into the path of the Macedonian striker whose shot gave Kraft no chance.



Inter Milan players celebrate after defeating Bayern Munich in their Champions League second round encounter at the Allianz-Arena on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

JP doesn't rue 99

AFP, Kolkata



South Africa's JP Duminy put the disappointment of missing out on a World Cup century behind him, saying he was happy his innings of 99 had helped his side seal a quarterfinal berth.

The middle-order batsman looked set for his third one-day hundred on Tuesday but fell agonisingly short in the last over of South Africa's innings against Ireland, caught by Kevin O'Brien off seamer John Mooney.

"I am not disappointed over missing out on a century as I tried to get as many runs as possible for the team," Duminy said after the 131-run win in the day-night match at Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

"I was trying to hit the ball out of the ground at the end. You never know when a few runs might make all the difference in the game."

Man-of-the-match Duminy said his knock was not the best of his one-day career even though it helped his team recover from a shaky 117-5 to 272-7.

"It was not the best, but surely one of my better knocks considering the circumstances," said Duminy, who has scored 2,174 runs with two hundreds and 13 half-centuries in 76 one-day internationals.

He added 87 for the sixth wicket with Colin Ingram (46), playing his first World Cup match, and 65 for the seventh wicket with Johan Botha (21 not out).



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