



PHOTO: AFP
Pakistan batsmen Misbahul Haq (R) and Wahab Riaz celebrate their victory over West Indies in the third ODI at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown on Thursday.

Tillakaratne alleges of match fixing

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's former cricket captain Hashan Tillakaratne has claimed that his country had been fixing games since 1992, once again raising the spectre of corruption in the sport.

The left-handed batsman, who played 83 Tests and 200 one-dayers for Sri Lanka during his 15-year career, said he was prepared to back up his allegations by naming some of those involved.

"Match fixing is something which has been in this country over a period of time. This has spread like a cancer today," Tillakaratne was quoted as saying by Sri Lanka's Daily Mirror newspaper on Friday.

"According to my knowledge, it happened since 1992.

"There were threats of this issue being exposed at various times. But it was pushed down by giving money to various people."

Swann's caution

FROM PAGE 16
get a chance to pit his wits against this new England side during the summer. Technically, though, I don't think it helps him much to know a few of our players, because there's so much footage available that you can work anybody out."

Even James Anderson, who Swann believes could be the key against India, played only 16 of his 57 Tests under Fletcher. "If the ball swings like it did last year and Jimmy bowls as well again, there's no team in the world that can touch us," Swann said. "I think we will give India a very good run for their money, if not beat them."

Botha shines

FROM PAGE 16
Ambati Rayudu (11) before Warne put more pressure on Mumbai when he had Rohit Sharma (13) caught by Botha at long-off.

SCORES IN BRIEF
MUMBAI INDIANS: 94-8 in 20 overs (Symonds 17; Botha 3-6, A. Singh 2-14, Menaria 2-20)
RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 95-3 in 18.1 overs (Botha 45, Watson 26; Patel 2-18)
Result: Rajasthan Royals won by seven wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Johan Botha.

Siddikur

FROM PAGE 16
yesterday to snatch the lead from Damien McGrane of Northern Ireland who dropped to 6th position by the dayend.
World number one Lee Westwood shot a four-under-par 68 to end the day six shots off the lead.

Captains want more from batsmen



CRICINFO

Shahid Afridi, the Pakistan captain, while elated with the series win over West Indies, has stressed the need for his batsmen to step up. Pakistan took an unassailable 3-0 lead over West Indies in Barbados by chasing down 172, but they had to survive a top-order wobble as the first three wickets fell for 12. Misbahul Haq, the man-of-the match, stabilised the innings and with support from Umar Akmal, Hammad Azam and Wahab Riaz sealed a three-wicket win with 29 balls to spare.

"There are still some problems, and I'm sure the management and coaches will come at us hard in the meetings," Afridi said with a chuckle. "The way the boys delivered in the series was good.

"The batsmen need to spend some time [in the middle]. We all know we made mistakes." Pakistan's batting, however, had come good in the first two ODIs where they chased down targets of 221 and 222 with considerable ease.

For West Indies, who are rebuilding after three of their senior-most players were left out, the problems with the bat were far more serious. In each of the first two games their batsmen were unable to build on starts, while in the third the middle and lower orders fell apart with the last six wickets falling for 21. The hosts fought hard with the ball, seamer Ravi Rampaul and legspinner Devendra Bishoo sharing seven wickets, but the runs on the board were inadequate.

"We as a batting unit, myself included,

have to take more responsibility like Bishoo does with the ball," their captain Darren Sammy said. "It's about getting the formula right; we have had good starts but we haven't capitalised on it.

"The way forward is to gain experience. This group is not short on talent, we need to play and get more consistency. The selectors will meet now, maybe the team will stay the same [for the remaining matches in the series] but whatever happens we need to do well in the middle phase."

Misbah displayed lots of patience while steering his team out of trouble with an unbeaten 62 off 109 balls. At 148 for 7, the game was still wide open but Riaz, who had picked up three wickets, supported him well, finishing the game with two sixes.

"The pitch wasn't easy for us as there was bit more bounce and pace. I thought I have to bat till the end and we can win," Misbah said. "The ball gets soft as it gets old and you can handle it easily.

"I was telling Wahab to play his normal game. When just 10 runs were required, I told him, you can now go for one or two big hits."

Pakistan are currently ranked No. 6 in the ICC ODI team rankings, and will remain there even if they complete a whitewash. The system offers little rewards for wins against lower-ranked teams, and Afridi was critical of the concept. "I can't understand this system. There should be some advantage for the visiting sides as winning a series is never easy for them no matter who they're playing against," Afridi told Express Tribune before the third ODI got underway. "It's really difficult to prosper under the current ranking system. I have little clue what it is based on."

Milan a step away

AFP, Rome



AC Milan can wrap up an 18th Serie A crown on Sunday with three games to spare if they beat Bologna at home and reigning champions Inter Milan fail to take three points at Cesena.

Milan lead their arch rivals by eight points with just 12 left on offer knowing that victory would leave them needing only one more point from their last three games should Inter win -- Milan have the better head-to-head record and hence need finish only level on points with Inter to be champions.

What had been building up into a thrilling three-way fight for the title could end with a whimper, three weeks before the end of the season.

Milan took a decisive lead over Inter earlier this month when they beat the nerazzurri in the city derby and when Inter then lost 2-0 at Parma a couple of weeks later, they looked out of it.

Napoli then appeared to be capable of taking Milan down to the wire but lost their last two games against Udinese and Palermo and sit nine points back, also with an inferior head-to-head record.

It means that Milan can get the champagne ready, even though they are wary of beginning the celebrations too soon.

The rossoneri could have slipped up last week at Brescia but goalkeeper Christian Abbiati made a crucial late stop to hold onto their 1-0 advantage.

Abbiati has been showered with plaudits since then and the shot-stopper believes he has had one of the best seasons of his life.

"I don't know if it's the best season of my career because in 2008 I definitely had a great year but then I got injured," he said.

"This is a great season because the team is playing well and we've almost arrived at our

final goal."

If he wasn't willing to proclaim victory, Milan's rivals certainly have conceded defeat.

Inter's Giampaolo Pazzini says they lost the league in the first half of the season and left themselves too much ground to make up.

Inter trailed Milan by 13 points with a game in hand in mid-December before Rafael Benitez was fired and replaced with Leonardo.

They closed that gap to just two points before the derby but Pazzini, who only joined the club in January, says the fightback took too much out of them.

"We did a lot to get back in the race. From January onwards we had to win every game," he told Inter Channel.

"We did a great job but when we needed to be at our maximum we were visibly drained.

"You could already see it against Lecce when we won with difficulty (to close the gap to two points) but then there was the international break.

"I'm not saying the plug was pulled out but there wasn't time to recover physically and then we had these two games that destroyed us (losing 3-0 to Milan and 5-2 to Schalke 04).

"Speaking to the other guys we asked where it went wrong and the consensus was that most of all it was in the first half of the season.

"There were eight or nine games in which we earned eight or nine points out of 24 or 27."

At the other end of the tale, Sampdoria will try to continue their bid for safety when they host second-bottom Brescia.

A defeat for Brescia could leave them needing to win their last three games to survive.

Samp, who condemned Bari to relegation last week, are above the drop zone on a better head-to-head record against Lecce.

In the race for fourth spot, Lazio host Juventus, Udinese travel to Fiorentina while Roma are at Bari.

Pakistan seal series



AFP, Bridgetown

Misbahul Haq dug deep and dragged Pakistan to a series-clinching, three-wicket victory over West Indies in the third One-day International of the best of five match series here on Thursday.

Misbah led the way with four fours and one six in an unbeaten 62 from 109 balls, Hammad Azam supported with 36, and Umar Akmal made 30, as the Pakistanis, chasing 172 for victory, reached their target with 29 balls remaining at Kensington Oval.

The Pakistanis were left reeling on 12 for three, following an opening burst from Ravi Rampaul, who also had Akmal caught behind to leave the visitors on 49 for four in the 12th over, finishing with four wickets for 32 runs from nine overs.

Azam joined Misbah and put on 78 for the fifth wicket to put Pakistan back on track before Devendra Bishoo took three for 42 from nine overs to trigger a slide that left the visitors wobbling on 148 for seven in the 36th over.

But Wahab Riaz joined Misbah to edge the Pakistanis over the finish line

five overs later, when he swung a short ball from Dwayne Bravo over deep backward square leg for six.

Earlier, Saeed Ajmal had captured three for 29 from 8.4 overs and Wahab took three for 38 from eight overs to enhance Pakistan's chance of victory, as they dismissed their opponents for 171 in 43.4 overs after choosing to field.

The Pakistanis appeared to be under pressure, when West Indies duo Lendl Simmons and Darren Bravo comfortably added 86 for the second wicket in a volley of strokes before Ajmal and Wahab brought Pakistan back into the match, which was reduced to 45 overs-a-side.

Saeed held a return catch in the 21st over to dismiss Simmons for the West Indies top score of 51, and Mohammad Hafeez trapped Darren Bravo lbw for 47 in the 28th over to leave the home team on 118 for three.

But Saeed and Wahab ensured there was no fight-back from the remaining batsmen, as they all failed to offer any substantial scores before a disappointed holiday crowd.

Pakistan played an unchanged lineup, but West Indies made two changes, replacing Anthony Martin and

wicketkeeper/batsman Carlton Baugh Jr with fast bowlers Andre Russell and Rampaul.

Play began an hour and 45 minutes later than scheduled, after rain delayed the start of the match on the day that the island celebrates their national heroes, including legendary former West Indies all-rounder Sir Garfield Sobers.

The victory meant that Pakistan have now won their last eight ODI against West Indies spread over the last four years, including their 10-wicket victory in a recent World Cup quarterfinal in Bangladesh.

The fourth ODI will be played next Monday at Kensington Oval with the final match of the series three days later at the Guyana National Stadium.

SCORES IN BRIEF

WEST INDIES: 171 all out in 43.4 (Simmons 51, Bravo 47, Samuels 18, Edwards 18; Hafeez 2-31, Riaz 3-38, Ajmal 3-29)

PAKISTAN: 177 for 7 in 40.1 overs (Misbahul 62, Akmal 30, Azam 36; Rampaul 4-32, Bishoo 3-42)

Result: Pakistan won by three wickets and lead five-match series 3-0
Man-of-the-match: Misbahul Haq.

Pataudi moves court

CRICINFO

Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, the former India captain, has moved the Bombay High Court, seeking the appointment of an arbitrator in relation to what he claimed was the BCCI's failure to abide by its contract with him while he was a consultant with the board as well as a member of the IPL governing council. He has also claimed an amount of Rs.1.16 crore as fees for services rendered.

According to the application filed by Pataudi in the High Court, his agreement with the BCCI came into effect in October 2007 and was to last for a period of five years, where he would be paid Rs 1 crore annually. In the event that one of the parties chose to terminate the contract, as stated in Pataudi's application, they would have to invoke the agreement's arbitration clause.

Verdasco ends draught



AFP, Estoril

Second seed Fernando Verdasco put an end to a frustrating series of losses by battling to a 6-1, 7-6 (7/5) second round win over Portugal's Frederico Gil at the ATP-WTA Estoril Open Thursday.

Verdasco had lost his opening match at four of his last five ATP tournaments, prompting the Spaniard to drop from ninth to 15th in the rankings.

However the 27-year-old, playing at the event for the first time in eight years, turned the page by booking a quarterfinal against South African seventh seed Kevin Anderson, who defeated Romanian Victor Hanescu 6-4, 6-2.

Verdasco had to fight for his win over Gil, who was swept away in the first set but laid on a fighting rally in the second trailing 2-5.

He broke Verdasco twice to get back into the match, finally taking it into a tiebreaker which he narrowly lost.

French fourth seed Gilles Simon eliminated Argentine Carlos Berlocq 6-2, 6-1 to set up a meeting with on-form Canadian Milos Raonic, a 6-3, 6-3 winner over Portugal's Joao Sousa.

Simon erased some bitter memories of his last visit to Portugal, when he missed on a match point in his quarter-final with eventual champion Albert Montanes.

The number 22 is hoping to put his experience to use against Raonic, ranked 27th

and the breakout competitor of this ATP season.

"He's the player with some of the best for this season," said the Frenchman.

"He's playing well but he doesn't have that much experience on clay. I think it might be better to play him now instead of for the first time when he may be in the Top 15.

"I'm pleased with how I played today, it was a good match for me. I managed to work on some things in my game as well."

Number 27 Raonic reached his first career quarter-final on clay, with the fifth seed learning all he can in his first spring on the surface as prepares to play as a seed at Roland Garros starting May 22.

"I'm happy with how I'm executing. This has been a good week so far, but I'm not looking far ahead. I don't go through the draw, I just look at who I play next," said the Canadian.

"I feel I'm making progress every week, I never expected it to go so well so quickly on clay so of course I'm very pleased."

In women's play, all top three seeds were beaten in the quarter-finals.

German Kristina Barrois upset number one Alisa Kleybanova of Russia 6-4, 6-2 and will next face Swede Johanna Larsson, who put out Russian Alla Kudryavtseva 6-2, 7-5.

Romanian Monica Niculescu stopped second seed Jarmila Gajdosova of Australia 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 while Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues upset number three Czech Klara Zakopalova 6-3, 7-5.

Williams sisters back in shape



AFP, Washington

Serena and Venus Williams have shaken off injuries that have sidelined them from competitive tennis, but whether or not they will be ready for next month's French Open remains uncertain.

"The French Open is a great tournament. It's a fun event. We definitely want to be there," Venus Williams said.

"We're taking it week to

week right now.

"Our goal is sooner than later."

Speaking Thursday before they served as instructors at a Washington youth clinic, the Williams sisters showed no signs of the setbacks that have kept them off the court.

"One thing we have learned from being away from the game is how much we love it," Venus Williams said.

"The good part is we both get better every week."

Serena, a 13-time Grand Slam singles champion, has

not played a top-level match since winning last year's Wimbledon title after cutting her right foot on broken glass last July, an injury that required two operations.

She also suffered a pulmonary embolism in February that led to an emergency operation to remove a blood clot from her lung, a health concern she called the scariest moment of her life.

"It was really scary," Serena said. "I'm doing much better now. I'm feeling better."

When she might be well

enough to return to WTA or Grand Slam play remains unclear.

"I'm just starting to feel better and going back onto the court," Serena said. "I'm taking it slow. Sometimes it's slower than I would like. But it will all work out."

While she posted a Twitter message last month saying she was back on court, Serena has not said when she would return to competition. She would need to be ready by June 20 to defend her Wimbledon title.

Serena was atop the WTA rankings until being passed last October by current World No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark. Serena, 29, is now ranked 10th despite her long layoff while sister Venus, 30, is ranked 16th.

Venus, a seven-time Grand Slam champion with five Wimbledon titles, has not played since she pulled out of the Australian Open in January with abdominal pain and a sore right hip.

S Africa

FROM PAGE 16
to repair the damage and steadied the ship associating 136 runs in the third wicket stand.

Captain Mohammad Ashraf broke the partnership taking a return catch of Elgar who made 66 runs off 84 balls that saw six fours and a six.

Vaughn van Jaarsveld was the other notable scorer with a 40-ball 50 that contained four boundaries and two sixes.

Bangladesh A had not opened their innings when the report was last filed.

The Williams sisters, Venus (L) and Serena pose for photographs at the 'Tennis Ball Gala' event at the in Washington on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

