

'Just another game' for India

India's coach insisted Tuesday that there was "no room for emotions" on the eve of the highly anticipated grudge match against great rivals Pakistan at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup.

"Such sentiments can cost us the match as you will not be playing for the points. There is no doubt that this will be yet another good match-up, but we aim to take it as just another game," Indian coach Harinder Singh said.

Going into Wednesday's clash, India -- the reigning joint champions -- are third in the standings with seven points with two matches to go. Old foes Pakistan are one place and one point behind from the same number of games.

Matches between the neighbours in any sport are always fierce, but the showdown in Ipoh, in northern Malaysia, has taken on extra significance as both sides chase a place in the next round.

It will be the 149th meeting between the two giants of hockey since 1956, but Pakistan have the edge if records are anything to go by -- they have 74 wins compared to India's 49. A total of 25 matches ended in draws.



Pune Warriors bowler Mitchell Marsh (L) celebrates the wicket of Sunny Sohal of Deccan Chargers during their IPL encounter at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ganguly's notable return

Pune wallop Deccan

AFP, Hyderabad

Mitchell Marsh grabbed four wickets and Sourav Ganguly hit an unbeaten 32 on comeback as Pune Warriors beat Deccan Chargers by six wickets in the Indian Premier League on Tuesday.

Australian paceman Marsh, 19, finished with 4-25 as Pune restricted Deccan to 136-8 before achieving the target with 10 balls to spare for their fourth win in 11 matches of the Twenty20 tournament.

Former India captain Ganguly, who went unsold at the player auction before being signed up by Pune as a replacement for injured seamer Ashish Nehra, looked impressive during his 32-ball knock, hitting one

six and three fours.

Opener Manish Pandey top-scored for Pune with 49, while New Zealander Jesse Ryder smashed a 20-ball 35 with the help of two sixes and five fours.

Both the teams are virtually out of contention for a place in the semifinals, with Pune having secured eight points and Deccan six.

Mumbai have already made sure of a place in the last four with 16 points. They are followed by Chennai (14), Kolkata (14), Bangalore (13), Rajasthan (11), Kochi (10), Pune (eight), Delhi (eight), Deccan (six) and Punjab (six).

Marsh, son of former Australian opener Geoff Marsh and younger brother of batsman Shaun, and left-arm spinner Yuvraj Singh were instrumental in restricting Deccan to a modest total.

Deccan made a strong start after

electing to bat when Ravi Teja (30) and Shikhar Dhawan (24) put on 51 for the opening wicket before skipper Yuvraj struck with his fourth delivery.

The spinner broke the stand when he bowled Dhawan before finishing with 2-17 off four overs.

Marsh also got a wicket in his opening over when he bowled Teja before dismissing South African JP Duminy (30), Sunny Sohal and Amit Mishra in the space of five balls in his fourth and last over.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DECCAN CHARGERS: 136-8 in 20 overs (Duminy 30, Teja 30, Dhawan 24; Marsh 4-25, Yuvraj 2-17)
PUNE WARRIORS: 137-4 in 18.2 overs (Pandey 49, Ryder 35, Ganguly 32 not out; Christian 2-21)
Result: Pune Warriors won by six wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Mitchell Marsh.

Dhanmondi clubs stroll

SPORTS REPORTER

Lata and Ayesha fashioned an easy Abahani win of seven wickets against Gulshan Youth Club in the 3rd Women's Club Cup cricket tournament at the City Club ground yesterday.

After Lata took four wickets to help bowl out the Gulshan side for 126 in 35.3 overs, Ayesha struck a quickfire 57 off 56 balls as Abahani reached the target in 25.2 overs.

In the day's other match, Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club crushed Dipali Jubo Sangha by ten wickets. At the Gulshan Youth Club ground, Dipali were kept to 82 for seven in 20 overs after the match was forced to a late start due to a wet outfield.

Sheikh Jamal openers Reshma and Panna then took just 12.2 overs to knock off the target. Panna made 45 off 35 balls with the help of eight boundaries.

Sylhet U-14 champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet prevailed in a low-scoring final over Khulna by 39 runs in Mymensingh yesterday to become Young Tigers National Under-14 champions.

Batting first in the rain reduced encounter, Sylhet were bowled out for 99 runs but Khulna failed with the bat too, being shot out for just 60 runs in 33 overs.

Oli, who made 44 out of Sylhet's 99, and four-wicket hero Raihan were jointly given the men-of-the-final award.

Sri Lanka's challenge in England is its conditions

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka will have to adjust quickly to the Test format as well as different wickets if they are to challenge England in their backyard, batting coach Marvan Atapattu said Tuesday.

"The biggest challenge is to adjust to English conditions," Atapattu said as the bulk of Sri Lankan touring party left for England for a two-month tour.

Senior players Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, as well as a few others, will join the squad later after completing their commitments in the Indian Premier League, a lucrative franchise-owned Twenty20 competition.

The IPL players will hardly get time to acclimatise as they will arrive just ahead of the second and last practice game against England Lions from May 19.

With a new skipper in Tillakaratne Dilshan and an overhauled team management, the task will be cut out for the Sri Lankans against a side whose last Test outing saw them thrash Australia in the Ashes.

Sri Lanka last held a test series at home against the West Indies in November-December 2010 but all the three games were ruined by rain.

"We are playing a Test series after a gap of a few months. Winning the Test series in England is our aim," Atapattu added.

The Sri Lankans are set to play three Tests, a Twenty20 international and five one-dayers during the England tour, which begins with a three-day practice match against Middlesex at Uxbridge from May 14.

The first Test in Cardiff begins on May 26. "A [Test] win will make it easier for our preparation work for the one-day and T20 games," said Atapattu, a former Sri Lankan skipper.

The away side are also without retired spin great Muttiah Muralidaran who shaped the team's win in a one-off Test at the Oval in 1998 with a rich haul of 16 wickets.

Sri Lanka are yet to win a Test series in England with their best result so far being a 1-1 draw in 2006.

It was Muralidaran again who starred for Sri Lanka in that series, taking eight wickets in the second innings of the second Test at Trent Bridge to shape a 134-run win for his team.

Atapattu however played down the absence of the spin legend, saying the tour offered a fine opportunity for fringe players like Farveez Maharoof and Kaushal Silva to prove their credentials.

Maharoof, currently playing county cricket for Lancashire, made an impressive start to the season with a hundred on his debut against Somerset at Liverpool.

Silva, 24, is uncapped but has an impressive first-class average of 45 and has been picked up as a back-up for Prasanna Jayawardene.

Afridi denies any rift

FROM PAGE 16

Twenty20 World Cup," said Afridi.

Afridi played down reports that he is at loggerheads with Waqar, saying "The tournament [World T20] is our most important assignment of the future which is why we have to make solid preparations.

"All issues can be resolved. What the team

needs is better coordination and everybody should be ready to play his role to ensure that we give our best in the mega-event," he said.

"The tournament [World T20] is our most important assignment of the future which is why we have to make solid preparations.

There is no time to waste because we have to begin right away." Pakistan lost to Australia in the semifinals of the 2010 event in the Caribbean. "We have immense talent and I am sure that with proper preparations, we can win the title again," he said.

If Pakistan win it'll be history

Cricket

AFP, Providence

Pakistan are looking to become the latest international side to create history on Caribbean soil, when they begin their search for a maiden Test series victory against West Indies, starting on Thursday at the Guyana National Stadium.

On six previous visits, starting back in 1958, the Pakistanis have come awfully close, but they have failed each time.

The visitors share the unenviable record of being one of the two Test-playing nations not to hold a Test series victory in the Caribbean along with Sri Lanka.

Pakistan have won just four of the 21 Tests they have played in the Caribbean, but there is huge optimism that Misbahul Haq's side, brimming with confidence having won the preceding one-day international series 3-2, can put this little matter to rest.

The Pakistanis have far fewer concerns about their line-up than their opponents.

Though they have lost former captain Younis Khan to a family bereavement, there are strong signs that the batting still has backbone with the likes of Misbah, Mohammad Hafeez, and Umar Akmal.

The visitors' bowling has been boosted with the arrival of Umar Gul, whose fast bowling will give the attack a greater edge, but the spin bowling of Saeed Ajmal and Abdur Rehman, as well as Hafeez could prove decisive against typically leaden-footed West Indies batsmen.

All of this means that West Indies will

have their hands full trying to protect their cherished record at home against the visitors -- and the internal turmoil that has bedevilled the side will not make things any easier.

The Windies have not won a Test series, let alone a Test, in just over two years, and it would require an amazing performance, or an incredible change of fortune for them to turn the tide against Pakistan.

The hosts trimmed their squad to 13 following a warm-up match over the weekend, and predictably, fast bowler Fidel Edwards has been recalled following a two-year absence, and veteran left-hander Shivnarine Chanderpaul has also been included.

Edwards was sidelined by a career-threatening back injury that required surgery, and returned to serious competitive action this year, taking 22 wickets for his native Barbados in the WICB Regional first-class championship.

He has not played a Test since the ill-starred tour of England two years ago, and is playing his first international match since the World Twenty20 Championship later that same year.

Chanderpaul has been embroiled in a public war of words with the West Indies Cricket Board, following his exclusion from the ODI series, which he claimed followed his refusal to retire from that form of the game.

The durable left-hander will have a major challenge though. He roundly criticised West Indies coach Ottis Gibson for interfering with his approach to batting, so the relationship between the two will be closely monitored.

Australia-born left-hander Brendan Nash, the vice captain, has also been included.

He has been pigeon-holed as a player for the longer format of the game, and has not played an international match since the weather-ravaged Test series in Sri Lanka last year.

The return of Marlon Samuels to Tests for the first time in three years, following a two-year international ban for inappropriate contact with an alleged Indian bookie, will also be closely followed.

He warmed-up for the task with double hundred in the practice match over the weekend, but his batting during the ODIs seemed to betray him.

Since the ground opened four years ago just ahead of the 2007 World Cup, the pitch plays typically slow and low, but Sri Lanka, batting first, piled-up a big first innings total, and pressured West Indies for the remainder of the only Test that has been played here, resulting in a 121-run victory.

As always, the match will be contested with one eye on the skies due to Guyana's famously fickle weather, with a 60 percent chance of scattered thunderstorms predicted in the long-range weather forecast.

SQUADS

WEST INDIES (from): Darren Sammy (captain), Brendan Nash, Devendra Bishoo, Carlton Baugh Jr, Darren Bravo, Shiv Chanderpaul, Fidel Edwards, Ravi Rampaul, Kemar Roach, Marlon Samuels, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Lendl Simmons, Devon Smith.

PAKISTAN (from): Misbahul Haq (captain), Abdur Rehman, Asad Shafiq, Azhar Ali, Hamad Azam, Junaid Khan, Mohammad Hafeez, Mohammad Salman, Saeed Ajmal, Tanvir Ahmed, Taufiq Umar, Umar Akmal, Umar Gul, Wahab Riaz, Younis Khan.

Trott backs the divide

AFP, London

Jonathan Trott has hailed England's decision to opt for three separate captains as a "forward thinking" move.

England will go into their upcoming home season with Andrew Strauss still captain of the Test team but, having retired from one-day internationals, it will be down to Alastair Cook, his opening partner in the five-day game, to lead the side in 50-over cricket.

Meanwhile Stuart Broad, despite a lack of senior captaincy experience, has been drafted in by the selectors to replace Paul Collingwood as captain of England's world champion Twenty20 team.

Conventional cricket wisdom has it that one captain across all three international formats is the ideal set-up.

Liza, Eva

FROM PAGE 16

Sharmin defeated Zakia Sultana yesterday. In the other matches of the day, Mahmuda Haque beat Dilara Jahan and Masuda Begum beat Jahanara Haque.

ICC to examine SI tapes

Cricket

CRICINFO

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is in the process of procuring tapes from Sports Illustrated India after the magazine published a story in its May edition on the illegal bookies network in India. The tapes include 400 minutes of conversations the magazine had with people involved in bookmaking -- in some cases, the conversations are actually part of police operations.

One of the main points of interest to cricket investigators is likely to be a conversation the magazine recorded with a bookie in which he alleges that he has taped conversations of him with an international player

in which he is detailing a fix. He also claims to have another taped conversation with the same player after the arrangement fell through, which the magazine claims to have heard (but doesn't have access to).

"Our official line is if anybody offers evidence of any wrongdoing, we will of course look at it and evaluate it," an ICC official told ESPNcricinfo. The ACSU will then take over and study the tapes further.

The BCCI said they cannot take any action unless there is "concrete evidence" at hand. "So far we have not received anything from them [Sports Illustrated]. They are saying they will give us the tapes, but so far they haven't," BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla told Mail Today. "Unless there is concrete evidence, we can't take action in this issue."



The victorious Sylhet team pose for a photo after overcoming Khulna in a low-scoring final of the Young Tigers National Under-14 Championship at Mymensingh yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "Dragnet" star Jack New-comer to society
8 Winged
12 Verbal
13 Raw mineral
14 Hindu princess
15 Aware of
16 Seizing (from)
18 Jason of football
20 Rural steps
21 — Hari
23 Verily
24 High standing
28 Not medium or well-done
31 Actor Harrison
32 "Get — on!"
34 "Ben-Hur" author Wallace
35 Grand story

37 Tending to excrete
39 "Quiet!"
41 Hum-dinger
42 Get Holly plants
49 Inquiry
51 Alpha follower
52 Grecian vessels
53 Joke
54 Grandson of Adam
55 Initial stake
56 Timecard abbr.
57 Nebr. neighbor

2 Sea eagle
3 Shower alternative
4 Becomes a flower
5 Period of inactivity
6 Goof up
7 Honey bunch?
8 More Bohemian
9 Muham-mad's
10 Bancroft or Boleyn
11 Fixes emcee
17 Pigpen
19 — -tat-tat

22 Galore, in disco-era jargon
24 Before (Pref.)
25 Agent, for short
26 Current
27 Twilight times
29 Gun the engine
30 Female sheep
33 Donkey (Ger.)
36 Gliding dance step
38 "Jeopardy!"
40 Smack
42 Blue shade
43 Rotate
44 At hand
46 TV's "Warrior Princess"
47 Harrow rival
48 Back talk
50 Rowing tool

Solution time: 24 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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JFG ZXANEYV ZESV JFGK
HXCG, SEYWC KEY VXX JFGK
ZXQXJGC JFG BAEHNVG?
Saturday's Cryptoquip: BODILY STRUCTURES THAT SERVE TO SUPPORT THE HEADS OF YOUR BLOOD RELATIVES: NECKS OF KIN.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals D