



West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo (R) checks his blade while talking with spinner Sunil Narine during a practice session in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Gayle's gift on his 33rd

AFP, Colombo

Hard-hitting West Indies opener Chris Gayle celebrated his 33rd birthday on Friday by telling batsmen how to hit sixes during the ongoing World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka.

"It takes a bit of strength and once the ball is in your slot you go for it," Gayle said ahead of the West Indies' first match against Australia in Colombo on Saturday.

"It's instinct to be honest. You have to let the mind and body flow together. You don't want to get stuck in a two-minded situation.

"You just try and be natural out there and things will actually flow for you in the end," Gayle was quoted as saying by the West Indies Cricket Board in a statement.

Left-handed Gayle, whose 27 sixes are a tournament record in the World Twenty20, is one of the most feared batsmen in all formats of the game with a penchant for big hits against both pace and spin.

His rapid-fire 117 off 57 balls with 10 sixes and seven fours against South Africa

in the inaugural World Twenty20 in 2007 remains the highest individual score in the competition.

"The key is balance. You have to have good balance to be able to hit a lot of sixes," said the Jamaican, who also has two triple-centuries in Test cricket to his credit.

"I pay special emphasis to my balance. You have to realise that bowlers are not always going to make it easy for you. You have to create the shots, so you have to make sure you do it well."

Gayle said he looked forward to playing against Australia, who thrashed Ireland by seven wickets in their first game on Wednesday.

"The first game is vital," he said. "You don't want to play catch-up cricket in T20, so it's a very big match for us. It will also get our confidence going."

"In our team we bat right down, and bowling-wise we have spinners and fast bowlers. The key for us is to get to the second round and try and take it step by step."

The West Indies, one of the pre-tournament favourites, play Ireland on Monday.

KP confident of NZ recall

AFP, Colombo

Axed England batsman Kevin Pietersen hopes to be playing again for England by the time the tour of New Zealand starts in February next year, he said on Friday.

In a Twitter conversation with New Zealand rugby union star Dan Carter, Pietersen wrote: "Hoping alls sorted & I'm on the NZ tour in Feb. If so I'll bring you a gun of a bat!"

Pietersen was cast into international exile after sending text messages to South Africa players that contained criticism of then England skipper Andrew Strauss during the recent Test series.

With reports circulating that Pietersen had also fallen out with several of his teammates, he was also axed for the ongoing World Twenty20 in Sri Lanka and next month's tour of India.

England are due to play three Tests, three ODIs and two T20s in New Zealand next February and March.

England's new Test captain Alastair Cook said on Thursday that Pietersen remained in talks with England cricket board officials as the controversial batsman fought to save his international career.

LOCAL snippets

SPORTS REPORTER

Narayanganj and Netrokona emerged venue champions to qualify for the semifinals of the Walton Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Gold Cup football tournament beating their respective rivals yesterday.

Narayanganj defeated Munshiganj 2-1 to emerge Manikganj venue champions where Javed scored both the goals for the winning side while Milon pulled one goal back for Munshiganj.

At the Netrokona Stadium, hosts Netrokona beat Mymensingh 2-0 in zonal final with Tapu scoring a brace for the hosts.

1st Div hockey

Uttara Hockey Club thrashed Bachelors SC 4-0 in the Green Delta Insurance First Division Hockey League at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Rista struck twice while Krishna and Rana scored one goal each for Uttara Hockey Club.

In the day's other match, Victoria and Mukto Binhanga played out a 1-1 draw as Robin cancelled Victoria's lead after Saiful Islam had put the Old Dhaka Outfit ahead.

U-14 tennis

Shah Safina and Prity Afrana Islam pair emerged champions in the girls' doubles event of the Asian U-14 Series Tennis Competition beating Sumon Rusna Binta and Rebeka Sultana 6-4, 6-1 in the final at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

Bangladesh's Rubel Hossain and Pakistan's Kaleem Syed Nofi moved into the final of the boys' singles as Rubel beat compatriot Kawsar Ali 6-3, 6-1 while Nofi defeated Bangladesh's Kahan Reza Khan 6-3, 6-0 in the semifinals.

In the girls' singles, Bangladesh's Shah Shafina and Prity Afrana Islam moved into the final after beating

Football returns to Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The first division football league returns to Sylhet today after a five-year absence when Abahani Kira Chakra take on Lauwai Kira Chakra under the floodlights. The last league was held in Sylhet in 2007. Fifteen teams will be participating in the league this time.

Bangladesh Football Federation president Kazi Salahuddin Ahmed will formally inaugurate the event, the league committee chairman and Sylhet city corporation mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran informed at a press conference held at a city hotel yesterday afternoon.

The BFF president is also scheduled to visit the Sylhet Football Academy in the morning to assess the requirements of the project.

Nat'l school madrasa sports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

41st Summer National School Madrasa Sports Competition kicks off in the port city of Chittagong today. A total of 424 students from all over the country will participate in seven events including football, handball, kabaddi and swimming. Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid will inaugurate the five-day competition at 10am at city's MA Aziz Stadium.

Bangladesh National School Madrasa Sports Association is organising the competition with the management of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Chittagong.

SA aim

FROM PAGE 16
player," said Jayawardene of Murali, whose 800 Tests and 534 one-day wickets are the highest in the world.

"It's going to be tough for these youngsters to say they're going to be the next Murali. What we encourage them to be is the best they can be. If they can do good job for Sri Lanka over the next 10 years, then that will be great."

Jayawardene hoped his team keeps the winning momentum.

"It's a big tournament. That itself is big motivation for the guys to make sure that intensity levels are up. We want to keep the momentum going into the next round," said Jayawardene.

The Sri Lanka captain praised South African all-rounder Jacques Kallis, who recorded the best figures for his country in all Twenty20 with 4-15 against Zimbabwe.

"I don't think anyone would disagree that Jacques would be the best all-rounder in our generation in all forms of the game. He's improving everyday and that's because of the hunger that he has and the competitive edge," he added.

Taylor hits out at sloppy Zim

AFP, Hambantota

Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor has described his team as "sloppy" and "below par" after they crashed out of the World Twenty20 with a ten-wicket thumping by South Africa on Thursday.

Zimbabwe were no match for the formidable South Africans as they were reduced to a paltry 93-8 in their 20 overs before seeing their opponents overhaul the low target without losing any wicket with 7.2 overs to spare.

Zimbabwe lost the first group C game against Sri Lanka by a big 82-run margin.

"We came here to win games, and to end on the note we have is very disappointing," said Taylor after the match.

"The sun comes up tomorrow, and unfortunately we head home. There's a long way to go

for us and there's a lot of cricket to be played next year. We just want to keep trying to improve and improve in different conditions."

Taylor regretted his team was below par in a major event.

"We went wrong in all three departments. We dropped chances and were sloppy in the field, leaked runs with the ball and didn't score many runs with the bat," said Taylor whose batting was rocked by Jacques Kallis's 4-15.

"You're not going to win games than that. All in all our cricket was way below par, and against quality opposition you're not going to stand a chance," said Taylor, who promised a swift comeback.

"We'd love a couple more games just to prove that we are a far better side. But that's not to be. World Cups are tough cricket, but we'll go home with our heads held high and bounce back strongly next time the World Cup comes around."

AUSTRALIA V WEST INDIES

Battle for ascendancy

AGENCIES, Colombo


ICC WORLD
TWENTY20
SRI LANKA 2012

Having registered a comprehensive win in their World T20 opener, Australia would aim to seal a Super Eight berth when they take on the flamboyant West Indies in a Group B encounter at the R Premadasa Stadium on Saturday.

However, it won't be an easy task for George Bailey's boys as they are up against a formidable Caribbean side which boasts of big-hitting Chris Gayle and mystery spinner Sunil Narine in their ranks.

Led by Shane Watson's heroics, with both bat and ball, Australia made easy work of an unpredictable Irish side as they cruised to an easy win in the campaign-opener. But come Saturday, the contest is definitely going to be more intense.

The Darren Sammy-led West Indian side has got enough arsenal in its armoury to derail any side.

However, the West Indian batsmen had failed to impress during their first warm-up game against Sri Lanka, in the absence of Gayle, and were scratchy in the second warm-up match against a resilient Afghan

side, barring the Jamaican giant.

But that in no way gives Aussies the license to take them lightly.

West Indies' prowess in the shortest format of the game is well known and Australia would undermine them at their own peril.

The Kangaroos, however, can take some heart from their recent performance against the Caribbeans.

They won comprehensively against Sammy's boys in one of the two T20 games during their recent visit and came close to snatching the second one, losing by just 14 runs.

Australia can be in with a chance in tomorrow's game as well if their bowlers manage to get the better of West Indies' unsettled opening pair, which may have looked to be the soft belly of Sammy's brigade.

Their discomfort against quality spin bowling is the other aspect which Bailey and Co. might try to exploit and with Xavier Doherty expected to be back for the game against the Calypso Charmers, Australia may well field two spinners tomorrow.

Veteran chinaman bowler Brad Hogg would be the other tweaker in the line-up.

The Australian batting looked good

against Ireland and with Cameron White spending some time in the middle, they can boast of a formidable middle-order.

However, they will certainly come under scanner against Narine, who was recently adjudged the ICC Emerging Player of the Year for 2012.

Although the spinner has been ineffective against the Aussies on previous two meetings but that doesn't lessen his aura.

Australia will also have to be on guard against speedster Fidel Edwards who can surprise the batsman with his pace and has the ability to bowl in the block hole with some consistency.

TEAMS

WEST INDIES: Darren Sammy (captain), Dwayne Bravo, Samuel Badree, Darren Bravo, Johnson Charles, Fidel Edwards, Chris Gayle, Sunil Narine, Kieron Pollard, Denesh Ramdin, Ravi Rampaul, Andre Russell, Marlon Samuels, Lendl Simmons, Dwayne Smith.

AUSTRALIA: George Bailey (captain), Shane Watson, Daniel Christian, Pat Cummins, Xavier Doherty, Ben Hilfenhaus, Brad Hogg, David Hussey, Michael Hussey, Clint McKay, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Cameron White.

Nehwal signs mega-deal

REUTERS, Mumbai

Top Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal has signed a three-year deal worth a reported 400 million rupees (\$7.4 million) with a sports management company, underlining badminton's growth in the otherwise cricket-crazy country.

The only non-Chinese in the top five of women's badminton, Nehwal won a bronze in this year's London Olympics and capped the celebrations by signing a contract with Rhiiti Sports that makes her India's highest paid sportsperson outside cricket.

"With Rhiiti's background and credibility, they know how to balance things and that is a big plus point," Nehwal said in a media release.

According to Wednesday's Indian Express newspaper, the three-year deal with the company which also manages cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, is worth 400 million Indian rupees.

"We're very thrilled with the base amount and it's an honour since she's the first non-cricket athlete they've taken on," Nehwal's father Harvir Singh told the newspaper.

"We are proud to be associated with someone who is not only a youth icon for women in the country but has also done a lot for badminton as a sport," said Arun Pandey, chairman and managing director of Rhiiti Sports.

"She has placed India on the world map for badminton and changed the outlook of people in India towards the sport."

4-day game

FROM PAGE 16

and two Twenty20 matches between the two teams.

With the main West Indian team scheduled to arrive in late October, the tour will be a good opportunity for players to be considered for a spot in the national side.

The Tendulkar

FROM PAGE 16

arrived at some point. It may have had a bearing on the second innings. So it did not surprise me (Bangladesh bowling first). When they bowled, the ball was kissing off quite nicely. In the end the pitch was pretty true and the short boundaries at one end really helped," explained McCullum.

Siddikur

FROM PAGE 16

in the month that the Bangladeshi golfer has missed the cut.

Home favourite Hiroyuki Fujita was in the lead on 10-under-par (132) round lead with compatriot Koumei Oda, Australia's Darren Beck and Juvic Pagunsan of Philippines in second position, one shot behind.



Russian tennis player Maria Sharapova speaks at a programme in Tokyo where she is to take part in the Pan Pacific Open which starts tomorrow.

PHOTO: AFP