

Gary sees a dark mist hanging

Cricket

REUTERS, Johannesburg

South Africa's continued failure to win a major international limited-overs title hangs over the team like a "dark mist", coach Gary Kirsten said on Thursday after his team's premature exit from the Twenty20 World Cup.

The world's top-ranked Test side, who have never won a 50 or 20 overs title despite starting as one of the favourites each time they enter a global tournament, lost all their Super Eights group matches in Sri Lanka.

Kirsten told a news conference after his team's return it was time for the current crop of South Africa players to shed the "choker" tag.

"It was a highly pressurised tournament in Sri Lanka but we were fully aware of that. The legacy that sits with South Africa cricket over these World Cup events continues to sit there, it's a dark mist that sits over the team and it

will be our responsibility to at some point to overcome it," Kirsten said.

"I'm fully confident in the resources we have in this team and the guys who have to make those plays when we need to make them. But it's a collective mist that sits with us and it's our responsibility as custodians of the game of cricket in this country to overcome.

"We have to honour the people that support us so passionately in this country and say to them we are going to pull out a win at some point. We have three of these events coming up; the Champions Trophy next June in England, then the World T20 and then the World Cup. There are quite a few coming through and hopefully this is a good stepping stone for us to be able to at some point cross the line in those events at some point."

Captain AB de Villiers said it was important that the Proteas learned to finish opponents off.

"We have the players to do it. During the game against Pakistan we had them

70 for seven but we did not have that killer instinct. It is an area where we need to get better at," he said.

"As a captain I would like to get better at knowing exactly who to turn to and when. There are so many different situations you're confronted with in a cricket game and it's important to pick on the right guys at the right time. Eleven guys, all different players, different people who deliver under different circumstances. For me to get that right is really important moving forward."

South Africa's next assignment is a three-Test tour of Australia in November and Kirsten said that his team would not be disheartened by their poor performance in Sri Lanka.

"It's another key series for us, we've become number one in the world in Test cricket but I think there's a real desire for us to stay there. To win that series in Australia is a good stepping stone. Everyone is looking forward to it. There will be a lot of hype around it with two quality teams," he said.

Eng women go one better

AFP, Colombo

Former champions England eased into the women's World Twenty20 final with a seven-wicket win over out-classed New Zealand at the Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Thursday.

In a one-sided semifinal played in front of near-empty stands, New Zealand were restricted to 93-8 after being sent in to bat and England surpassed the modest target with 16 deliveries to spare.

Skipper Charlotte Edwards led the charge for the 2009 champions with 33 off 37 balls, while Sarah Taylor remained unbeaten on 21 which included the only six of the match.

England await the winners of Friday's second semifinal between defending champions Australia and the West Indies in the final on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 93-8 in 20 overs (Amy 30; Danielle 2-15, Holly 2-15)

ENGLAND: 94-3 in 17.2 overs (Charlotte 33, Sarah 21 not out)

Result: England won by 7 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Charlotte Edwards

Shuttler

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which was formed to look into the issue regarding a player's general diary against a few federation officials as well as the players' objectionable statements against the federation.

"After talking to the players, we have solved the problem and they will play the Federation Cup," said BFF vice president and inquiry committee chief Enayetul Islam Saikat yesterday, adding that Enayetullah, Tushar, Hannan and Shapla registered their names for the Federation Cup, a raking tournament.

A chance

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stages, you have to play the best you can," he added.

The Australian skipper was also very much conscious of the West Indian spin attack as Sunil Narine, Samuel Badree and Marlon Samuels can be a vital force for Sammy on the Premadasa surface.

West Indies were named favourites by many prior to the tournament and while they haven't always played like the team to beat, the Caribbean cricketers have done enough to justify expectations while the brand of cricket Australia, who are no longer the unstoppable force it used to be across all formats, have played for most of the tournament -- their big loss to Pakistan in their last Super Eights match being the exception -- clearly showed that they are here to add another feather to their cap.

While Australia have not yet translated their erstwhile dominance in Tests and ODIs to the newest format, West Indies have not won a world event, save for the 2004 Champions Trophy triumph, since 1979 when they won the second of their ODI World Cups.

So today is the day for either team to take a step towards ending their respective droughts.

PIETERSEN'S SWIFT REINSTATEMENT

Move on, says Strauss

Cricket

ANI, London

Former England captain Andrew Strauss said he is surprised that controversial batsman Kevin Pietersen has been brought back into the England fold so swiftly, but added that if the South Africa-born batsman is selected for the India tour, he can single handedly win Test matches for the team.

Strauss urged the team management, Pietersen and his teammates in the dressing room to move on from the long-dragging saga.

"I didn't think it was going to happen this quickly. I don't know how the meetings have been going with the ECB and Andy [Flower, the England coach], but they obviously feel that they've been given assurances," the Telegraph quoted Strauss, as saying.

"Once he's back in the side it's very important that people move on. It's obvi-

ously been a difficult situation for everyone really. If Andy and Cooky [Alastair Cook] and the ECB think the time is right now then obviously we all need to get behind them," he added.

"We all know what Kevin is capable of. He can show that in India and help them win some Test matches," he said.

Strauss made it clear that Pietersen's return to the England squad is just the first step towards building bridges with the rest of the team.

"I think a lot of what should happen now is that people have to sit down and be honest with each other, saying how they felt and getting it out of their systems and then clearing the way to move forward," Strauss said.

"That's a big part of it. But also, it's about commitment to England and the principles and standards by which the team operates. That's an important part of it and hopefully those issues have been addressed now," he added.

Schumi to retire at the end of season

AFP, Suzuka



Seven-time Formula One world champion Michael Schumacher on Thursday said that he will retire at the end of the season, bringing a definitive close to a stellar career after a less-than-successful comeback.

The 43-year-old, who previously quit the sport in 2006 before returning two years ago, said he had decided to call time on racing after it was announced last week that McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton would move to his Mercedes team next year.

British star Hamilton, 27, won the drivers' world championship in 2008.

Schumacher's decision effectively brings down the curtain on a hugely-successful 21-year career in the sport and more than 300 races, during which time he has become one of the world's most recognisable and successful sportsmen.

"I have decided to retire at the end of the season," the German driver told an emotional press conference in Suzuka, where the Japanese Grand Prix will be held on Sunday.

"I still feel I am capable of competing against the best but the time sometimes comes to say goodbye and this time it might be forever."

Local flavour in curtain raiser

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lack of preparation.

Defending champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club have roped in their only Nigerian striker Sunday Chizoba, who played for Mohammedan last season, while they are waiting for the international transfer certificates for four other Nigerian recruits, who have been practicing with the Dhanmondi-based outfit.

Sheikh Jamal will also have to play without key local players Ariful Islam and Monaem Khan Raju who have been recovering from injuries.

Team BJMC are almost set to play the group-stage matches without foreign players as their four foreign players, who played for them last season, are trying to get Bangladesh visas.

Abahani were also without foreign players until yesterday but the Sky Blues are expecting to get all of their foreign players from the last season before their tournament opener against Jessore DFA Ekadash.

Mohammedan is also likely to depend on only attacking midfielder Wasio of Benin as Nigerians Augustine, Damien, Morison and Cameroonian defender Bayeback, who played for Team BJMC last season are trying to process players' visas and a depleted Muktiyoddha will have to play long-standing foreign defender Dami Emmanuel.

However, Sheikh Russel are in advantageous

position with Haitian Sony and Moroccans Kaushem and Tarik who are set to play from the first match.

"It is an unexpected opportunity for the local players and they will have to prove themselves on the pitch in order to cement their places in the starting eleven," said Mohammedan coach Saiful Bari Titu who hopes his foreign players will be able to join the squad from the knock-out stage.

"When it is a game between locals versus locals, nothing can be predicted," said Abahani football manager Satyajit Das Rupu adding that they are aiming to regain their Federation Cup title following their elimination from the quarterfinal stages in the last edition of the Federation Cup.

"As a title contenders side, our preparation has not been satisfactory but we are hopeful to break the title-drought of Sheikh Russel," said coach Maruful Haque.

Most of the participating teams expect to be able to include foreign players in their ranks from the knock-out phase but it is yet to be seen whether the international players will be in match-fit condition.

On the opening day, Mohammedan SC take on Rampur Boys Club of Feni, Sheikh Russel play against Bangladesh Police at the BNS while Team BJMC face Khulna Abahani at Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium.

Our bowlers

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"It was not a winning score but a challenging one on this kind of wicket. We were 15 to 20 runs short but we picked up wickets at regular intervals, which helped us to win this tough match. Everybody is happy and in the end hard work paid off," went on Mahela.

He also admitted that it was a tough call to play left-arm spinner Rangana Henth, who picked up three vital wickets at crucial times to restrict Pakistan at 123, in place of Akila Dhananjaya but their decision finally proved to be a correct one.

"If you go through the records you see Rangana has a good record against Pakistan. It was a tough call for us. As you know, today is the birthday of Akila," explained Mahela.

The Sri Lankan skipper also believes that this current team is better than the 2009 one that lost the final against Pakistan.

"The boys are now experienced enough to respond to different situations of this format and that's why it is a better team than the one in 2009," he observed.

Pakistan skipper Mohammad Hafeez said that Sri Lanka played great cricket and they deserved this victory.

"They played great cricket and they fully deserved this win. I think our middle-order could not do well which was the main reason behind this defeat. The target of 140 should have been chased down though it was not easy to bat on this wicket," rued Hafeez.

"True, we are disappointed with today's loss but I'm happy with my team's overall performance in the tournament," he added.

Top women get thru'

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Top seeds Victoria Azarenka and Maria Sharapova reached the last eight of the China Open Thursday, both recording their third consecutive straight-sets victories, but there was a shock in the men's draw with Richard Gasquet losing.

World number one and first seed Azarenka dispatched Russian qualifier Elena Vesnina 6-3, 6-3 to set up a quarterfinal tie with Switzerland's Romina Oprandi.

The 23-year-old from Belarus has yet to drop a set in the tournament, defeating France's Alize Cornet 6-1, 6-0 in the first round and Sabine Lisicki of Germany 6-4, 6-2 in the second.

"It was a little bit of a challenge today, for sure," Azarenka said.

"I felt like I could have been a bit more aggressive and not hesitate so much."

"When I won that last point, I was relieved and happy to finish the match in two sets."

Second-seed Sharapova, number two in the WTA rankings behind Azarenka, defeated Slovenian qualifier Polona Hercog, ranked 90th in the world, 6-0, 6-2 at the capital's National Tennis Stadium.

Sharapova, 25, had beaten Romania's Simona Halep 7-5, 7-5 in the first round and Sorana Cirstea, also of Romania, 6-2, 6-2 in round two.

"I had a long first round, even though it was

two sets, but today and yesterday was definitely a little bit quicker," Sharapova said.

"I played really well in the beginning and got a little tense in the second set, but I felt like I really needed that challenge."

"It's nice to be in the quarterfinal stage of this tournament."

Sharapova will face her first real test of the Premier Mandatory event in the next round when she takes on either fifth seed Angelique Kerber of Germany or former world number one Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark.

The China Open is the fourth and final compulsory tournament of the women's calendar, behind only the Grand Slams and season-ending WTA Championships in prestige.

In the men's section, fifth-seed Gasquet of France suffered a second-round loss to Chinese wild card Zhang Ze in three sets.

Ze defeated Gasquet, who won the Thailand Open last week to end a two-and-a-half-year title drought, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

The Frenchman admitted afterwards that his exploits in Bangkok had left him tired but said Ze, cheered on by an excited home support, had been the better player and deserved his victory.

"Last week I played a big tournament. I'm not physically 100 per cent, but it's not the reason I lost," Gasquet said.

"He's talented, he played aggressive and fast, and at the end he played better than me. He deserves this victory."

Ramu-torn Cox City

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take part in the Federation Cup to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Wednesday, following the incidents in ramu that rendered them unable to organise club activities and training.

"We are nervous about how to handle the club in such a situation and take part in the Federation Cup," said Mosharaf. "Besides, we are also struggling to manage the donors as we are supposed to pay the players before October 10 and subsequently decided not to take part in the Bangladesh Premier League."

Having sought to allow Cox City FC to play in the second-tier professional football league, Mosharaf said that they would accept whatever decision the BFF takes.

An emergency meeting of the professional football league committee yesterday decided to serve a show-cause notice on Cox City FC asking them why the federation should not take action against them.

BFF senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murshedy hinted that they might play the professional football league with nine teams after Cox City's withdrawal and would promote two teams to the Bangladesh Premier League from the Bangladesh Championship League. On the other hand, one team will be demoted from the first-tier Premier League this season.

DIC win 6-0

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Imperial College recorded a 6-0 win over Kabi Nazrul Islam College in the 15th Delta Life Women's College/University Handball Tournament at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday.

In the day's other match, Dhaka Cantonment Girl's Public School & College defeated Lalmatia Women's University College 8-2 while Eden Women's College thrashed Mirpur Girl's Ideal Laboratory Institute 15-0.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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| ACROSS | 36 Out of play | 2 Sap- poro sash | 22 Needle holder |
| 1 Standard anatomical egg holder | 37 Founded (on) | 3 In medias — | 23 Swine |
| 8 "Wow!" | 38 Geth-semame, e.g. | 4 Near-sighted vessel | 24 Ate in style |
| 12 Do as you're told | 41 Coffee vessel | 5 Pop | 26 Insisted on |
| 13 Man-mouse link | 42 Elliptical | 6 Exist | 27 Flight formations |
| 14 Thought | 43 Catas-trophe | 7 Live-it-up type | 28 Great Lake |
| 15 Mess | 48 Clinton's veep | 8 Paid | 29 McNally's partner |
| 17 Soccer score | 49 Before | 9 Smell | 31 46-Down, e.g. |
| 18 Pod dweller | 50 Unctuous | 10 Member-ship | 34 Confused |
| 19 Wine city north of Lisbon | 51 Unpaid | 11 Head light? | 35 Captor's cash |
| 21 Luke-warm | 52 Old man | 16 Scar-let | 37 Lingerie item |
| 24 Two-way related | 53 Same (Fr.) | DOWN | 38 — |
| 25 Ear-related | 1 Affirma-tive | 20 Treaty | 39 Acknowl-edge |
| 26 Find | action? | 21 Frog's cousin | 40 Exceptional |
| 30 Summer mo. | Solution time: 21 mins. | | 41 Second-hand |
| 31 Doctrine | S P A L A M A S C O D | | 44 Play-wright Levin |
| 32 Historic time | A R T E N A C T O B I | | 45 Cravat |
| 33 One who takes your gun | C O M M A N D E R M O E | | 46 Shade source |
| 35 Harness part | T V E R E A M E D | | 47 "Catcher in the —" |
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CRYPTOQUIP

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LSY UZFY, ENK QCCQGYFLUW
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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE THESE GUYS ON THE ANNUAL CANOEING TRIP ARE TALKING NONSTOP, ARE THEY KAYAKING IT UP?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals I