

Star SPORT



West Indies batsman Kieron Pollard smashes one on the on side during their World T20 semifinal against Australia at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Neymar dresses as a cow

When you're an extremely talented young footballer, it's quite normal to have promotional obligations. Why? Because money. And sometimes those promotional obligations can put talented young footballers in ridiculous situations just because they can. This is Neymar in one of those situations.

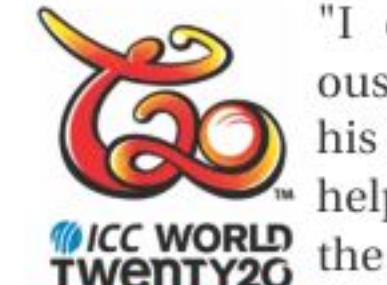
Dressed in a series of goofy yet vaguely unsettling costumes, Neymar was supposedly endorsing ice cream that may or may not have been laced with mescaline. Here's the case for "may have"...

It appears that ice cream bar has propelled Neymar into a world of



Driven by impulse

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo



ICC WORLD TWENTY20 SRI LANKA 2012

"I do everything spontaneously," Chris Gayle stated after his devastating knock of 75 helped West Indies to reach the final of the ICC World Twenty20 with an emphatic 74-run victory over Australia in the second semifinal at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium last night.

"You know in Calypso culture everything comes spontaneously and I am also like that," said Gayle explaining that his well-documented Gangnam Style dance moves also materialised out of inspiration. "I just go to the middle and try to enjoy the game; that's it," added the explosive batsman often lauded as the poster-child of the T20 format.

And enjoy it we did.

The Gayle-led West Indies displayed ruthless attacking batting to demonstrate just why they were named favourites by

BEST TOTALS IN WORLD T20

Sri Lanka 260/6 v Kenya Sep 2007
India 218/4 v England Sep 2007
South Africa 211/5 v Scotland Jun 2009
South Africa 208/2 v West Indies Sep 2007
West Indies 205/6 v South Africa Sep 2007



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many prior to the T20 mega event. Historically, West Indies and Australia are the standard-bearers of cricketing excellence but it was a terrible night for the Aussies who will be haunted by this 74 run hiding for a long while yet. For the West Indies, the emphatic victory ensured their first appearance in the final of ICC's latest global event.

The murderous batting from Gayle (75 off 41 balls with five fours and six sixes), Marlon Samuels, Dwayne Bravo and Kieron Pollard left the Aussies befuddled but it was sheer enjoyment for the fans as a total of 14 sixes and 13 boundaries featured in the West Indies' innings.

"We applied extra-power in this slow track and got good partnerships in the middle which helped us to cross the 200-mark. In T20 cricket you can also build your innings and can generate pace gradually as I did today," explained Gayle in his post-match briefing.

"We didn't expect such a total in this surface but we capitalized on the bad balls

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Still much room for improvement

Cricket

NAIMUL KARIM

A tension-filled four-wicket victory for Bangladesh A marked the end of the home side's battle against the young West Indian High Performance Team. The series also concluded Stuart Barnes' short stint with Bangladesh A team.

The Englishman, who has been in charge of the second-string team for almost a year, said that the attitude and character of a number of players towards the game needs a major overhaul.

"Players need to understand that 50s or 60s don't win matches. They either don't know how to become world class cricketers or they are just comfortable playing at the current level," said Barnes.

The recently concluded series at home saw majority of the Bangladeshi players struggle against the West Indian pace attack. The home side may have won two series' out of the three that were played, but a closer look at the A team's performance, according to Barnes, shows a different picture.

"We performed inconsistently. If you have a look at the games in more detail, we did make similar mistakes throughout the series. I am pleased that we won the four day game, but moving forward, the players need to try and alienate the mistakes that

they are making," said the coach.

Barnes' statement was mostly directed towards the poor technique used by the batsmen. The Bangladesh A team crossed the 200 mark, in an innings, just once in the recently concluded series against the West Indian HP team; a statistic that should be a worry for the national selectors.

"None of our players scored a century in the entire series... If I remember right, in all my time here, I only saw one batter scoring a 100 and that was Mominul Haque. The batters need to be more ruthless, be hungrier for runs..." he claimed.

Despite a rather disappointing series, the coach had some good words for all-rounder Naeem Islam, who according to the Englishman, 'stood out with the bat' in the series.

"It's the way he adapted to the versions of the game. He batted the most balls in the four-day game. He had a strike rate of 90 in the limited overs... he is quite good at changing the way he bats in the different formats."

Barnes, like many of his predecessors, believes that there are a number of talented players in the pipeline for Bangladesh. He however stated that in order to convert the potential to skill, these players need to re-set their goals and aims at a much higher level.

Retirement on Sachin's mind

AFP, New Delhi

Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar admitted on Friday that he is contemplating retirement and said he would reassess his future next month.

In an interview to be broadcast on Indian television Friday, the 39-year-old said he would decide on a "series by series" basis as he acknowledged that the clock was running down on his record-breaking career.

"I am 39 and I don't think I have plenty of cricket left in me," he told The Times Now station.

Asked if he has been thinking of retirement, he replied: "Of course, I have been."

"I am 39 plus and it is not abnormal for me to think of it. At that moment, I will go by what my heart says. At this moment, my heart says I am okay. But you will have to look at series by series."

Any talk of dropping Tendulkar -- the highest run-scorer in Tests and the first player to score 100 international centuries -- had been taboo in India.

But some commentators

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A team outplay West Indies HP

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A edged past the West Indies High Performance team as they chased down a below-par total of a 105 with two balls to spare and four wickets in hand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

As the first game of the series was abandoned due to rain, the lone win helped the home side clinch the series 1-0.

Chasing a target of 105, the home side got off to a slippery start as they lost both their openers within the first Powerplay.

A third wicket stand of 44 runs, between Naeem Islam and Shamsur Rahman steadied the ship for a brief period before some excellent fielding brought the visitors back into the lead.

Shamsur was caught by Sheldon Cotterrell who ran all the way from the third man region to deep square leg after fast bowler Miguel Cummins induced an edge of the batsman.

Naeem also lost his wicket thanks to a brilliant diving catch Kyle Hope at Point in the 15th over. The brilliant catches, however, went in vain for the visitors, as Ziaur Rahman and Sabir Ramman shared a 30 run partnership in good time to calm the nerves and eventually take Bangladesh home.

Earlier, the visitors who were put to bat, had the worst possible start after they lost a wicket in the very first delivery of the day.

Andre Fletcher was bowled by Forhad Reza. The visitors once again struggled to read the Bangladeshi spinners and lost wickets at regular intervals.

Spinners Enamul Haque Jr and Nazmul Apu shared six wickets between them and ran through the West Indian middle order.

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Akmal fined

AFP, Colombo

Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal was fined 50 per cent of his match fee for an "offensive" snub of the umpires' authority during his team's 16-run defeat to Sri Lanka in the World Twenty semi-finals on Thursday.

The incident took place in the 17th over of Pakistan's innings when Umar, who was the non-striker, ignored both on-field umpires' request and went ahead to change his batting gloves.

"Respect for the umpires is integral and is something which we always emphasise and encourage," said match referee Jeff Crowe.

"In this incident, Umar showed blatant disregard to both the umpires' requests, which was offensive and unacceptable from an international cricketer and contrary to our unique spirit, hence a level two charge was laid."

"Umar, when pleading guilty, apologised and regretted his action."

Umar was found to have breached the ICC code of conduct, article 2.2.11, which relates to "conduct contrary to the spirit of the game".

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Plain sailing for big guns

SPORTS REPORTER



It was smooth sailing for all three favourites -- Sheikh Russell SC and Team BJMC -- in the opening day of the Grameenphone Federation Cup held at two different venues yesterday.

On the opening day of the 15-team season's curtain-raising tournament, the focus was obviously on the moneybags Sheikh Russell SC who showed their character to post an emphatic 5-0 win over Bangladesh Police under floodlights at the Bangabandhu National Stadium. There were also highlights from a youthful Mohammedan SC who overwhelmed Rampur Boys Club of Feni 4-0, thanks to a hat-trick from Benin's hitman Oladipicpo Wasio Olalekan at the same venue.

Things were not nearly as comfortable for Team BJMC, as last year's runners-ups recorded only a single-goal win over Khulna Abahani Ltd. Khulna are playing in the top-level tournament for the first time in three years after being relegated from the second edition of the professional football

league in 2008.

The strict immigration requirements imposed all international footballers, especially from Africa, made the tournament a veritable showground for local talent. Many took the chance with both hands. Takish Ahmed, for example, struck the decisive goal two minutes into the second half to give Team BJMC a winning start at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium. Local stars Zahid Hossain Emily, winger Zahid Hasan, defender Ashraf Mabnum Linkon and Anwar Hossain also struck in their first match for the star-studded Sheikh Russell.

Still, it was left to a small contingent of foreign players who had managed to make their way into Bangladesh to light up the venues with their performances. Under the floodlight, Sheikh Russell's Haitian attacking midfielder Sony Norden, who also played for Mexican side San Luis FC's U-20 squad, impressed all with his technique, control on ball and shooting capacity as the former Haitian international struck one goal and assisted one.



Mohammedan striker Olalekan (R) scores one of his three goals against Rampur Boys Club Feni during their Grameenphone Federation Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Farah again Europe's best

AFP, Paris

Britain's double Olympic champion Mo Farah has been voted the European Athlete of the Year for the second straight year.

Farah, who pulled off the 5,000/10,000 metres double in London, is just the second athlete to win back-to-back European Athlete of the Year awards after Swedish triple jumper Christian Olsson in 2003 and 2004.

The 29-year-old Somali-born distance runner defended his European 5000m title in Helsinki to become the first man to win consecutive gold medals over the distance at the European Athletics Championships.

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