

Bailey's tips for Lanka

Get Gayle out cheaply or face defeat

AFP, Colombo

Australia captain George Bailey warned Sri Lanka to get Chris Gayle out cheaply in the World Twenty20 decider or face defeat after the West Indian's remorseless power-hitting dominated Friday's semifinal.

Bailey acknowledged Australia were left "helpless" as Gayle smashed six sixes on his way to an unbeaten 75 as West Indies totted up 204-5, their best ever score. Australia fell for 131 all out in reply.

"Were we helpless? Probably Chris Gayle can do that to you. When he did go, he went beautifully," Bailey said. "In hindsight you can do things differently, but the fact is that we just got outplayed."

"There are no excuses. The best team absolutely won the game tonight. There is a gap between your best and worst cricket, and we did not play good cricket at all."

"Anything can happen in this game. You can bowl full tosses and get hit down mid-wicket's throat, or the good ball will go for a six."

Gayle was not the only contributor as Marlon Samuels made 26, Dwayne Bravo swatted 37 and Kieron Pollard hit 38 off 15 balls. But Bailey said once Australia failed to dismiss Gayle early, they knew they were in danger.

"The plan always was to get Chris out early. His record speaks for itself, so the key is to get him out early," he said.

Asked who will be his favourites to win Sunday's final, Bailey said: "If Sri Lanka can get Gayle out for under 20, they will win. But if they don't, the West Indies will prove too strong."

"With the West Indies attack, you can chase down 160. I am sitting on the fence a bit. But the two best teams got into the final."

Shoaib reasons match fixing

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

Controversial former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar said on Friday the cricketers are being tempted into fixing matches because they are underpaid by their board.

"Fixing happens in our culture because there's less money, there are even lesser opportunities. Cricketers victimised by their boards return [to the team] to mint money," Akhtar, 37, told the Headlines Today news channel.

"In 2008, I had no money to even buy a car. I had to borrow money from a friend. I handled it, others go astray."

"Your friends ditch you, [the cricket] board doesn't back you. They all run you down. So when you return you think 'let me teach them a lesson'. Some are corrupt, but some cricketers are turned into criminals by the system."

Three Pakistani stars -- Test captain Salman Butt and paceman Mohammad Aamer and Mohammad Asif -- were jailed last year after being found guilty of spot-fixing during the 2010 Lord's Test against England.

It was the first time international cricketers were handed prison sentences, a scandal described by then-ICC chief executive Haroon Lorgat as the worst corruption case since the Hansie Cronje episode.

Former South African captain Cronje, who died in 2002, was banned from the game for life in October 2000, six months after New Delhi police accused him of taking money from a bookie during his team's Indian tour that year.

"We [in Pakistan] don't have much money in cricket. I wasn't playing for India you know. I was an elite star, still after playing for 14 years I only made seven-eight crore rupees [1.35-1.54 million dollars]," said Akhtar.

Akhtar, whose career was marked by allegations of drug abuse and ball-tampering, bagged 178 wickets in 46 Tests and 247 in 163 one-day internationals between 1997 and 2011.

"I was cleared on all drug charges," he said.

Gayle glad to carry bat

REUTERS, Colombo

Chris Gayle's primary job as an opener is to throw caution to the wind and give West Indies a flying start but the Jamaican said he enjoyed sharing the strike and batting till the end in Friday's World Twenty20 semifinal against Australia.

Opening the innings, Gayle faced only 41 balls to remain unbeaten on 75 but West Indies still posted 205 for four -- highest score of the tournament -- as Marlon Samuels (26), Dwayne Bravo (37) and Kieron Pollard (38) destroyed the Australian attack.

"It was actually a slow track. So to be there to the end was helpful, so the rest of the guys can come and play around me," Gayle told reporters.

"It was a slow start. I didn't get the actual strike, which was needed actually in the first six overs. But more important for me was not to panic and lose focus," said Gayle who was adjudged man of the match for his entertaining knock that included six sixes.

"They had a plan, the more I will be off strike, bit of better for them. More so they loved to get me out as quickly as possible."

Marlon Samuels came and played a few boundaries, and then took off pressure from me. That partnership with Bravo really helped a lot and [the one with] Pollard..."

Pollard provided the late charge by hitting three successive sixes in the final over of the innings before being dismissed for a 15-ball 38.

Gayle said to get the best out of Pollard, all he needed was to remind the all-rounder of his 18-ball 54 against New South Wales in the 2009 Champions League Twenty20.

"What I said to him when he came in... for today I need old Pollard back. He came in and did play up his part," Gayle said.

"Hopefully he can give us that boost again and take us to the trophy," said Gayle, who broke into "Gangnam Style" dance on Friday, imitating the moves from South Korean singer Psy's music video.

"It depends on what type of mood I am in... It's a good dance, I enjoy it and everybody enjoys it," he added.



PHOTO: AFP

Maria Sharapova of Russia celebrates after winning her China Open semifinal match against hosts' Li Na at the National Tennis Centre in Beijing yesterday. Sharapova won 6-4, 6-0.

Murray bites the dust

AFP, Tokyo

London Olympic gold medalist and US Open champion Andy Murray was sent crashing out of the Japan Open tennis tournament on Saturday in a shock semifinal defeat by Milos Raonic of Canada.

The final set the Briton squandered a 4-1 lead and missed two match points in the 12th game before going down 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (4/7) to the 21-year-old Canadian.

In the final on Sunday, Raonic will play local favourite Kei Nishikori, who defeated Marcos Baghdatis of Cyprus 6-2, 6-2.

"I played better in the second and third sets, but I was obviously disappointed not to close the match up. He played better on one or two points," said Murray, whose match-winning streak since the US Open ended.

"I hit my passing shots very well in New York [beating Raonic in three sets], but today I don't think I passed him well, so he came to the net more. Certain thing is he can do easier."

Pioneer League from today

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

The DCC 21st Pioneer Football League, a breeding ground for future footballers, is set to be inaugurated today at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina giving her consent to declare the 81-team meet open.

Some 2000 footballers are expected to take part in the league and the organisers hope at least 100 booters will enter the mainstream leagues like the third, second and first divisions through the competition which has 'today's youth is star of future' as its slogan.

"Some 100 teams enlisted their names for the league but we have chosen 81 teams on the basis of their capacity and capability," said Pioneer League Committee chairman Arif Khan Joy at a press conference yesterday.

"Besides, we strictly determined the age of the players and placed priority on their education, heights, behaviour, etc. through the medical committee," informed Joy adding that for the first time, the Pioneer League is going to be held under the BFF sub-committee instead of the Dhaka Metropolis Football League Committee (DMFLC).

On the opening day, a friendly match between BFF President's XI and the Pioneer League XI will be held while the main competition will get underway from tomorrow.

81 teams split into five zones will play the round-robin matches in ten venues and four teams from each of the five zones will advance to the 20-team Super League.

Pioneer League Committee vice president Bijoy Barua informed that they were trying to provide good pitches to booters but there might be poor conditions at two to three venues.

It's Djokovic v Tsonga

Sharapova meets Azarenka in women's final

Tennis

AFP, Beijing

Novak Djokovic brushed aside Florian Mayer in the China Open Saturday to set up a final against Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, as Maria Sharapova and Victoria Azarenka made it to the last two of the women's event.

The world number two from Serbia furthered his aim of finishing the year top of the ATP rankings with a simple straight-sets victory, maintaining his unbeaten record at the Beijing tournament which stretches back three years.

Top-seed Djokovic defeated the 29th-ranked Mayer of Germany 6-1, 6-4.

The 25-year-old, second to Roger Federer in the rankings, has won the China Open on the two occasions he has entered -- in 2009 and 2010 -- and will aim to make out three out of three against France's Tsonga on Sunday.

Tsonga marched into the final when Spain's Feliciano Lopez retired during the second set of their match.

The world number seven thrashed Lopez 6-1 in the first set and was 4-1 up in the second when the left-handed Spaniard called it a day, citing an injury to his left wrist.

"I played really well and I felt really good on the court," Tsonga said. "I didn't know before he was a bit injured. I'm just happy today with my game."

The Frenchman has enjoyed an easy progression to the final of the Beijing tournament since needing three sets to overcome Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin in the first round.

The 27-year-old received a walkover in the second round after Nikolay Davydenko withdrew and beat Russia's Mikhail Youzhny in straight sets in the third.

"During this week my level has got better and better," Tsonga said.

"I have played maybe some of my best tennis here. I haven't played like this in couple of months and maybe a couple of years now and that's why I think I can win the final

tomorrow."

In the women's draw, Sharapova overcame home favourite Li Na in straight sets.

The 25-year-old Russian defeated Li, Asia's only Grand Slam winner, 6-4, 6-0, to reach the final for the first time in five attempts, but it took the French Open champion a while to break into her stride.

Lisp to an early 3-1 lead due to some poor serving by Sharapova, including three consecutive double faults in one game, but the Russian fought back, winning three games in a row before taking the set with a break.

"It was a really high-quality first set with a few ups and downs and obviously she [Li] had the lead," Sharapova said.

"In those first few games I thought my percentage of first serve was low."

"Against someone like Li Na who likes to serve in and take the ball early, I think I put a lot of pressure on myself to have to hit too many second serves."

"My goal after that was just to get my first serve percentage much higher than it was in the first three or four games," she added.

"I came back and then I broke her in that last game of the first set. It was important for me to take that momentum going into the second."

And continue her momentum she did, taking six games without reply to steamroll Li -- who has never won her home tournament -- in little over half an hour.

"She had a better performance than I did and she had better control of the match, but I think I played pretty well today," Li said.

World number one Azarenka from Belarus beat ninth seed Marion Bartoli 6-4, 6-2.

"I felt the first set was really close and could have gone either way," Bartoli said.

"Vika [Victoria] is probably the best returner in the game and it's not like I was serving badly. She was breaking me because she was returning too well and that's why I couldn't win the points," the world number 10 added.

"Maybe she could have missed one or two but she didn't. That's the way it is."

Hosts ready for a party

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aggressive West Indies and lift the trophy.

"Definitely, it's a proud moment for the entire country for host nation to be in the final. It has been a great couple of weeks for the entire country, people have embraced that well, they've been fantastic and they have enjoyed some good cricket. It's one of the best World Cups I have been involved in, when it comes to matches being close or competitive, and the best teams being in the last eight," said Mahela, alluding to the fans' mad scramble for tickets.

"When we started the tournament expectations were the same -- they wanted us in the final and that hasn't died down," he added.

The stadium was jam-packed during the hosts' semifinal against Pakistan and backed by an electrifying crowd. Mahela's men won the battle by 16 runs. It can be expected that they will get the same support from the stands today as they attempt to create history, but West Indies skipper Darren Sammy issued a warning that they were ready to spoil

the home party.

"Definitely we would like to spoil Sri Lanka's party. That is what we have been looking to do. We left home on a mission. We are at the top of the mountain. Sri Lanka are undefeated. We are peaking at the right time. We want

to have our own party. Caribbean people know how to infectious smile.

So, Sunday night will see a party, the question remains whether it will feature Caribbean or Lankan beats.

U-14 booters

FROM PAGE 16

Afghanistan and JFA Academy-1 on Tuesday before playing against Bhutan and India on Wednesday and Thursday respectively.

"After the completion of the first phase of the tournament, the players will be taken to the Eastern part of Japan in a bid to show the area they recovered from the Tsunami," said team leader Fazlur Rahman Babul at a press conference yesterday at BFF House.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

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