

Cup's firsts

STAR SPORT DESK

Sri Lanka's left-arm spinner Rangana Herath took the first wicket of the 2015 World Cup when he dismissed New Zealand dangerman Brendon McCullum in a Pool A clash at Christchurch's Hagley Oval on Saturday.

England fast bowler Steven Finn took the first hat-trick of the World Cup off the last three balls in Saturday's clash against Australia at MCG. With three deliveries left in the innings, Finn dismissed Brad Haddin for 31 first; then off the next ball he took Glenn Maxwell for 66 and after that he sent back Mitchell Johnson for nought.

Australia's Aaron Finch scored the first century of the World Cup at MCG on Saturday. Finch flicked Steven Finn off his hip to the boundary to raise his century off 102 balls with nine fours and two sixes as the local hero became the fourth Australian to score a century on World Cup debut.

CLEAR

NOTHING TO HIDE

TODAY'S MATCHES

South Africa v Zimbabwe

Time: 7:00am

Venue: Hamilton

India v Pakistan

Time: 9:30am



UP IN THE AIR: Aaron Finch punches the air after reaching his century which paved the way for Australia's win against England at the MCG yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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'We can win any game'

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Finch believes the Australians have a perfect blend in their team after they defeated England.

"You got Davey Warner, George Bailey, Glenn Maxwell, Mitch Marsh, Brad Haddin who can all play so many different roles.

"We can play in every scenario and that's what makes us a quality team at the moment."

Finch said he was proud of his sixth ODI century on such a big stage at the World Cup, before paying tribute to Steve Smith's mid-air screamer to dismiss Jos Buttler for 10.

On the other hand, Eoin Morgan defended England's team changes.

"We're not a precious squad. We changed the balance of the side but we played our best 11," Morgan insisted.

SCAN CEMENT

HEIDELBERGCEMENT

James Taylor probably batted closer to his natural position in the batting lineup than ever before. And Gary Ballance has had a fantastic 12 months of Test match cricket.

Once again Morgan was out for a duck but said he was confident of turning things around. While England were again outplayed by Australia, Morgan said the target remained reaching the quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka batsman Lahiru Thirimanne blamed sloppy fielding for their loss to New Zealand.

"We leaked 20-30 runs through poor fielding," said Thirimanne.

"We have to make an extra effort as a team. Crucial catches might cost you at the end of the game."

McCullum, after the win, was over-the-moon with his side's performance.

Then & now

The Great Southern Stand was newly inaugurated when the last World Cup game was played at the MCG, and in Australia. That was the 1992 final. Also fresh-faced then were Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell, who hadn't started school, and Mitch Marsh, who hadn't started to walk. On Saturday, they were the stars as the World Cup returned to the MCG. The southern stand, then the MCG's newest, now the oldest, was heaving again. But one element was unchanged; then, as now, the fall guys were England, bowing to Pakistan then, Australia now.

Finch raised the curtain with a century made with strokeplay as compact and stylish as Sachin Tendulkar's. Maxwell rang it down with a brutalist display of hitting. England's consolation prize was Steve Finn's bizarre hat-trick, obtained from the last three balls of Australia's innings. As he and England soon found, this prize was not redeemable for cash or points. Marsh, pitching the ball up, inviting the hoick and taking five wickets, made sure of that. A man protesting against the detention of asylum seekers darted past Australian fielders.

In 1992, there were only two 300-plus scores for the tournament and Pakistan's 6/249 was enough to stave off England in the final. This time, there were two 300-plus on day one; Australia's at the MCG and New Zealand's in Christchurch. England's reply in Melbourne and Sri Lanka's in Christchurch would have won them three-quarters of the 1992 group games. This day, they were losing scores by humiliating margins. Henceforth, 300 is the new 200. In 1992, the Moneyball play was a single. In the final, Pakistan hit a total of 18 fours, and England 11. On Saturday, at the same ground, Maxwell slathered 11 fours by himself, in fewer than 40 balls. Before him, Finch had creamed 12 fours and hoisted three sixes. Half of Australia's runs came from boundaries, this on the biggest ground in the country, each prompting kitsch puffs of flames from behind the sight screens.

Boundary, though, is an advised term. In 1992, the boundary was the fence. Then came a rope, and for this tournament, a second enclosing ring of hoardings. The effect is akin to barbed wire fortification of trenches in a distant battlefield. Modern batsmen are obliged only to reach or clear the first line. There were 66 instances this day.

Australia crashed 50 from the first six overs, 76 from the last six. Though there were lulls, the next spurt was never far away. When Australia began to maraud, England seemed lost for ideas to stop them. In such a profligate environment, fielding matters. On Saturday, England hardly took a chance until it didn't matter anymore. Australia didn't miss one until it didn't matter. At short cover, Steve Smith caught a ball he could hardly have seen.

If there was a downside, it was that after Australia had raised 9/342, all that followed was academic. James Taylor's marvellously impudent 98 not out counted for as much as Eoin Morgan's latest duck, the catch Smith took mattered as little as the one Finch dropped, and Marsh will have days when one wicket is as telling as his five this day. But as far as the crowd of nearly 85,000 cared, tell that to the judge.

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Men of Steel

Corey Anderson

It doesn't matter that he no longer holds the record for the fastest ODI century; he can still blow away any team, any day. Corey Anderson unleashed a powerful charge towards the end to erase whatever limited chances of victory that the Sri Lankans had. He came in at number six and hammered 75 off 46, smacking two sixes and eight fours. If McCullum and Williamson set the foundation, Anderson provided the icing on a brilliant opening win.

Aaron Finch

With three quick wickets England probably reckoned that they had Australia in the bag at the MCG. Little did they know that dropping Aaron Finch in the first over of the day would end up biting them on their back. Finch's 135 rescued the hosts from a precarious 70 for 3. He hit three sixes and 12 fours. Such was the class of his innings that many expected him to score a double immediately after he reached his century in the 30th over.

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KSRM

KABIR STEEL SINCE 1984

ICC confesses run-out error

AFP, Melbourne

The International Cricket Council said the match umpires had made a mistake after reviewing England's final dismissal in the World Cup against Australia on Saturday which potentially cost James Taylor a century.

While England were well beaten by 111 runs at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, there was some debate about whether the final dismissal should have been termed a "dead ball" and as a consequence James Anderson should not have been given run out.

Anderson's dismissal after a leg before wicket appeal on Taylor was overturned by the video umpire, meant that Taylor lost his opportunity to score a century as he was left stranded on 98.

The Australians had appealed for a run out on Anderson at the non striker's

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'Foes only on the field'

BISHWAJIT ROY from Melbourne

The clouds were hovering in the sky. It was drizzling. But going by the last few days one could tell that the gloomy atmosphere would soon disappear and that it would give way to a beautiful day of cricket. That is what happened later as the sun shone in all its glory soon after breakfast.

The sunshine had an effect on the streets as well. The calm and quiet roads eventually turned into festive zones as fans paraded towards the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to watch the second opening match of

the ICC World Cup between Australia and England.

There were smiles all around ahead of the high-voltage encounter, which witnessed 84,336 people at the MCG; so much so that the result of the game apparently didn't matter to some. "We are going there (MCG) to see England lose the match," an elderly English woman, accompanied by her husband, jokingly said at the hotel lift. She obviously wasn't blind. England's recent run barely swung the odds in their favour.

It wasn't just the match. For the thousands who gathered near the MCG, it was an occasion to celebrate the week-

end. Many reached the venue well before the match started. Children played tennis-ball-cricket at the Yarra Park, which surrounds Australia's sporting Mecca.

As the match began, the venue transformed into a human sea. In a way it was similar to scenes at Mirpur, where packed galleries tend to be the norm, but three times as big. Fans came not only from Melbourne but also from other cities. Peter Smith, a 26-year-old from Perth was one of them. "I'm excited. It's going to be an awesome experience to watch this match. Australia are one of the favourites but I

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SCOREBOARD

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R B 4s 6s

Guptill c Sangakkara b Lakmal

49 62 5 0

B McCullum c Mendis b Herath

65 49 10 1

Williamson c Karunaratne b Mendis

57 65 5 1

Taylor st Sangakkara b Mendis

14 28 0 0

Elliott c Thirimanne b Lakmal

29 34 2 0

Anderson c Lakmal b Kulasekara

75 46 8 2

Ronchi not out

29 19 4 0

Extras: (lb-2, w-8, nb-3)

13

Total: (For 6 wickets in 50 overs)

331

Did not bat: Vettori, Southee, Milne, Boult

Fall of wickets: 1-111, 2-136, 3-193, 4-193, 5-258, 6-331

Bowler

O M R W

Kulasekara

8 0 78 1

Malinga

10 0 84 0

Mathews

6 0 28 0

Herath

9 0 37 1

Dilshan

5 0 35 0

Lakmal

10 0 62 2

Mendis

2 0 5 2

SRI LANKA

R B 4s 6s

Thirimanne b Boult

65 60 8 0

Dilshan c & b Vettori

24 41 2 0

Sangakkara lbw b Boult

39 38 5 0

Jayawardene c Ronchi b Vettori

0 4 0 0

Karunaratne b Milne

14 21 0 0

Mathews c Vettori b Southee

46 52 5 0

Mendis c Ronchi b Milne

4 4 1 0

Kulasekara c Elliott b Anderson

10 21 1 0

Herath c Milne b Anderson

13 19 2 0

Malinga c Ronchi b Southee

0 1 0 0

Lakmal not out

7 17 0 0

Extras: (w-10, nb-1)

11

Total: (All out in 46.1 overs)

233

Fall of wickets: 1-67, 2-124, 3-125, 4-129, 5-163, 6-168, 7-196, 8-216, 9-217

Bowler

O M R W

Southee

10 1 43 2

Boult

10 0 64 2

Milne

10 0 56 2

Vettori

10 0 34 2

Elliott

2 0 11 0

Williamson

1 0 7 0

Anderson

3.1 0 18 2

Result: New Zealand won by 98 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Corey Anderson.

Toss: Sri Lanka.

AUS V ENG

R B 4s 6s

Warner b Broad

22 18 3 0

Finch run out (Morgan)

135 128 12 3

Watson c Buttler b Broad

0 1 0 0

Smith b Woakes

5 9 1 0

Bailey b Finn

55 69 3 0

Maxwell c Root b Finn

66 40 11 0

Marsh c Root b Finn

23 20 3 0

Haddin c Broad b Finn

31 14 5 0

Johnson c Anderson b Finn

0 1 0 0

Starc not out

0 0 0 0

Extras: (lb-2, w-3)

5

Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)

342

Did not bat: Hazlewood

Fall of wickets: 1-57, 2-57, 3-70, 4-216, 5-228, 6-281, 7-342, 8-342, 9-342

Bowler

O M R W

Anderson

10 0 67 0

Broad

10 0 66 2

Woakes

10 0 65 1

Finn

10 0 71 5

Ali

9 0 60 0

Root

1 0 11 0

ENGLAND

R B 4s 6s

Ali c Bailey b Starc

10 13 2 0

Bell c Starc b Marsh

36 45 4 0

Ballance c Finch b Marsh

10 13 2 0

Root c Haddin b Marsh

5 12 0 0

Morgan c Haddin b Marsh

0 6 0 0

Taylor not out

98 90 11 2

Buttler c Smith b Marsh

10 12 1 0

Woakes c Smith b Johnson

37 42 2 0

Broad b Starc

0 1 0 0

Finn c & b Johnson

1 6 0 0

Anderson run out (Maxwell)

8 11 1 0

Extras: (lb-5, w-11)

16

Total: (All out in 41.5 overs)

231

Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-49, 3-46, 4-66, 5-73, 6-92, 7-184, 8-194, 9-195

Bowler

O M R W

Starc

9 1 47 2

Hazlewood

6.5 0 45 0

Johnson

8 0 36 2

Marsh

9 0 33 5