

ENGLAND V NEW ZEALAND

Tourists want to rise up

AFP, Wellington

England team will hope to shrug off a disappointing start to their World Cup campaign with a confidence-boosting win against dark-horses New Zealand in Wellington on Friday.

A morale-sapping 111-run drubbing against title-favourites Australia in Melbourne left England seeking a big improvement against co-hosts New Zealand, who already have two wins under their belt.

But England captain Eoin Morgan insisted his side had not been scarred by their crushing loss to archrivals Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

"We're expected to win games of cricket after getting off to not an ideal start," Morgan said Wednesday.

"The guys are really disappointed, but we've dusted ourselves down and we look ahead to Friday's game."

England will want more from their batsmen against the Black Caps, with Morgan himself desperately short of runs, after making just two runs in his last five innings -- including four ducks.

"I believe it will work and when it does, hopefully, I can cash in on it and, hopefully, make it either a match-winning



England fast bowler Steven Finn, who bagged a five-for including a hat-trick in England's opening match defeat against Australia, sweats out in the nets yesterday ahead of Friday's Basin Reserve clash against New Zealand.

PHOTO: AFP

The Export Leader



THE SPIRIT OF CRICKET IS IN THE AIR
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5 facts

New Zealand have won their last four World Cup games against England, after losing the first three clashes

New Zealand have won nine of their last 11 ODIs at the Westpac Stadium, Wellington. England have lost on both of their visits, in 2002 and 2008

James Anderson (33) needs two wickets to pass Richard Hadlee (34) as the leading wicket-taker in ODIs between these teams

Brendon McCullum and Martin Guptill need to put on 70 runs to become the second pair after Nathan Astle and Stephen Fleming to score 2,000 ODI runs in partnership for New Zealand

Since the start of the 2007 World Cup James Anderson has bowled 152 balls to Brendon McCullum in ODIs, conceding 208 runs and taking three wickets

performance or build on somebody else's performance," said former Ireland batsman Morgan.

England also have to guard against batting slumps, having been bowled out 12 times in their last 18 matches and averaging, by modern standards, a relatively modest 58.80 in the final 10 overs.

By contrast, they conceded 105 runs in the last ten overs against Australia.

"There is a sense of frustration," admitted Morgan.

"The big games that we play, these first two games in particular, are great practice for the later stages in the tour.

"If we can get wins under our belt against good opposition it can breed confidence for later in the tour. Ideally, you'd build that before the big games, but it is just the way they fall."

Morgan refused to read too much into New Zealand's batting slump in their three-wicket win over Scotland on Tuesday while chasing a modest target of 143.

"It was a nice game to watch," said Morgan with a grin. "New Zealand chased them seven down when they were probably expected to chase them three or four down."

England have lost their previous four World Cup matches against New Zealand (second group game in 1983, 1992, 1996 and 2007). In all, New Zealand have won four of the seven World Cup games between the two countries.

Despite that record and their win on Tuesday, New Zealand expect they will have to be extra cautious in their first exposure to a four-pronged pace attack at this World Cup.

"It was a really good performance with the ball and in the field, but we need to improve on our batting," said New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum after the win over Scotland.

"It should be a great challenge when we play the next one as the surfaces and conditions will also change.

"We are going to have to play incredibly well. This is certainly the strongest side I have ever played in."

'Morgan will come good' 'Poor decisions are to blame'

AFP, Wellington

England's batting coach Mark Ramprakash insisted on Thursday Eoin Morgan's strength of character will see the struggling captain come good at the World Cup.

England will look to Morgan to give their batting a much-needed lift in their Pool A match against formidable New Zealand in Wellington on Friday after they lost their opener against Australia by 111 runs last weekend.

New Zealand have won both their opening games.

And Ramprakash, himself a steady batsman in first-class cricket, said Morgan has handled the World Cup pressure admirably.

"Look, he's aware of the fact that he wants more runs and it's important for the team that he plays his part," said Ramprakash of Morgan who has managed just two runs in the last five games, with four scoreless outings.

"But in terms of handling the tournament, the pressures of it, you couldn't really ask for a better character to be able to handle that."

Ramprakash, who played 52 Tests and 18 one-day internationals in an

international career which never hit the heights of his county exploits, denied he needed to exert pressure on Morgan.

"I would never say 'I think you should do this'. It's more throwing in the odd question and seeing how he feels. Seeing how he wants to go about business.

"He thinks about his own game. He knows his strengths. So the onus of responsibility is on him because of his experience."

Ramprakash heaped further praise on Morgan for handling the captaincy despite his lack of runs.

"I've been hugely impressed with the way Eoin's dealt with taking over the group but also the way he manages to differentiate between the captaincy and the leadership role with his own game," said Ramprakash of Morgan who took over as one-day captain after Alastair Cook was axed following a wretched run of form late last year.

"It's hugely encouraging to see him get what I thought was a wonderful knock at the SCG (Sydney)," said the batting coach of Morgan's hundred against Australia in the tri-series in January.

"The hundred he got there was a real testament to his character because he wasn't at his fluent best and the team were in trouble. Yet he showed all the resilience."

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum also backed Morgan to be back in the runs soon describing the batsman as a "tough bloke".

"He's a champion player. He's one of my better mates from around the world in terms of cricket. He's going through a bit of a tough time at the moment, but tough times don't last, tough blokes do," said McCullum.

"So hopefully at some point he'll come out of it. Hopefully tomorrow we're able to keep him quiet. But I am very confident at some point he'll bounce out of it because he's a quality player and a tough bloke too."

Meanwhile, Ramprakash believes his batsmen have the ability to tame New Zealand's impressive pace attack in Friday's game.

"Well, they've been going very well. What I like about their attack, it's got a good variety to it. Our players will certainly be preparing for the ball to swing early on."

STAR SPORT DESK

Javed Miandad wrote a column that appeared on the ICC's media zone yesterday, where he spoke about the Pakistan team. Miandad said the think-tank made some erroneous decisions which have led to a very poor Pakistan side.

"An ill-planned Pakistan went down against archrivals India, and alarm bells began ringing loud and clear. I can't remember a weaker Pakistan side playing in any of the past ICC Cricket World Cups than the one at this tournament. It's not because other teams have got stronger, but because Pakistan have ignored more deserving players like Shoaib Malik, Azhar Ali and Zulfiqar Babar.

"There seems to be a lack of planning from the Pakistan think-tank for such a mega event. It's not a bilateral five-match ODI series in which the team can experiment in one or two matches. Pakistan doesn't have much confidence in their batsmen and barring captain Misbahul Haq, the rest are still struggling to get used to the conditions in Australia and New Zealand."



JAVED MIANDAD

UAE demand more games

AFP, Nelson

The United Arab Emirates challenged the International Cricket Council to ensure more top-flight matches for Associate nations after narrowly losing to Zimbabwe in their World Cup clash Thursday.

"The more we play at the highest level the more we can improve our cricket," UAE captain Mohammad Tauqir said after Zimbabwe snatched victory in the Pool B clash.

Zimbabwe, a Test-playing nation, scraped home by four wickets with just 12 balls to spare after the amateurs from the UAE had posted 285-7 on the flat Saxton Oval wicket in Nelson.

It was the highest ODI score by a UAE side but it was not quite enough for Tauqir.

"Another 25-30 runs it would have been a different result," he said.

It was a game Zimbabwe should have won comfortably with their wealth of international experience and after putting up a credible showing when losing their opening tournament match to South Africa.

Instead they were made to fight all the way by a gritty UAE side with victory eventually set up by an 83-run stand for the sixth wicket by Sean Williams (76 not out) and Craig Ervine (42).

It was Williams's player-of-the-match performance that made the difference, according to Tauqir.

"If we had taken that wicket earlier it would have been different," he said.

"We had quite a few positives from the game. The batters batted well and the bowlers did a decent job, but it was definitely an opportunity missed," he said.

"It was a good game of cricket, it went to the wire and they won."

But Tauqir said his part-time cricketers, who are mostly expats from India and Pakistan living in the United Arab Emirates, would be more a more potent force if given more opportunities.



WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Australia's two-time World Cup winning captain Ricky Ponting Wednesday said India were a serious contender to retain the coveted trophy.

"India have got too many class players in their team to not be serious contenders at some stage. If they happen to play as well as they can, they are very dangerous," the former batsman was quoted as saying by bccvt.com.

"I think they will get better, it was a very encouraging start for them the other day, although I thought it was a pretty weak Pakistani side," Ponting said.

"India got into the World Cup after a tough time in the Test series and the tri-series. But I got a feeling that they got a bit of a downtime after that and started to build things up at the start of this tournament. I think Australia are favourites."

Shehzad may be axed

Following reports of three senior Pakistan players misbehaving with fielding coach Grant Luden, it is learned that opener Ahmed Shehzad may be sent home from the World Cup.

Luden is believed to have offered to quit after complaining to the Pakistan Cricket Board that Shahid Afridi, Ahmed Shehzad and Umar Akmal misbehaved with him during a training session on Tuesday.

The incident occurred when

Luden apparently urged Shehzad to try harder. Sources said Afridi defended his team mate and the situation got worse when Akmal complained to team manager Naved Cheema about the coach using abusive language.

The PCB, however, maintained that there is no rift in the team, though they did not confirm Luden's position.

But the way the evergreen Haddin has reinvented his career over the past couple of years, you could never write him off.

"I haven't really thought about when I'm going to pull the pin but it obviously looks like I haven't got many one-day games in front of me. From my point of view, I'm just enjoying this whole campaign of a World Cup. It would be good to be

SA coach backs Vernon

South Africa coach Russell Domingo detected enough bounce in the team's past game at the MCG, against Australia in November, to be confident wily seamer Vernon Philander will trouble India's batsmen in Sunday's heavyweight clash in Melbourne.

"There seemed to be a little bit of bounce here last time. Vernon thrives on wickets that offer a little bit, so hopefully there will be something in the wicket for him because he's a hell of a good bowler when there's something in the wicket for him," Domingo said.

Courtsiders at Manuka Oval

A man was caught courtsiding at the International Cricket Council Cricket World Cup match between Afghanistan and Bangladesh at Manuka Oval on Wednesday night, police said.

On Wednesday, the man - understood to be an Australian national - was thrown out of Manuka Oval after he was caught and issued with a ban notice by the ICC, since he breached the terms and conditions of entry.

The incident is the third case of courtsiding so far in the cup. Three men were evicted from the Sri Lanka and New Zealand match at Christchurch's Hagley Oval and one man evicted from the Ireland and the West Indies match at Nelson.

- COMPILED



These LED bails and stumps are being used in this World Cup.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Haddin's last WC?

This is the third World Cup for Australian star Brad Haddin, the 37-year-old wicketkeeper, so it comes as no great surprise that he may hang up his gloves from one-day cricket at the conclusion of this tournament.

around in a month's time at the MCG for the finale but I'm just enjoying this tournament," he said.

"Obviously it would be a great way to sign off from one-day cricket, but I haven't really thought about when I'm going to pull the pin.

"But it's getting close - definitely from one-dayers."