



**Pakistan all-rounder Shahid Afridi will desperately look to hit form against Zimbabwe at the Gabba in Brisbane today.**

PHOTO: AFP

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**ENGLAND V SRI LANKA**

**Not many options**

AFP, Wellington

England are determined to restore their World Cup credibility in a crunch Pool A match Sunday against an improving Sri Lanka.

Eoin Morgan's men return to Wellington's Westpac stadium for the fixture, scene of a humiliating eight-wicket loss to New Zealand on February 20.

That defeat, a day-nighter in which England folded so quickly that ground staff did not need to turn on the floodlights, followed a 111-run drubbing by Australia in their opening match.

A subsequent win over minnows Scotland was greeted with relief rather than jubilation, and opening batsman Moeen Ali said England needed to make a statement against Sri Lanka.

Ali said victory against the 1996 champions would restore the battered self-belief of the team, which has been flayed in the British media.

"[It's] a very important game, if we can win that it will give the team a lot more confidence of being a very good one-day side and a major side in the competition," he said.

Sri Lanka made a shaky start to their own campaign, suffering a 98-run loss to New Zealand and a real scare against Afghanistan.

But they clicked in a 92-run win over Bangladesh last Thursday which included centuries for Tillakaratne Dilshan and Kumar Sangakkara.

Sri Lanka defeated England 5-2 on home

soil late last year in a series that prompted Morgan's predecessor Alastair Cook to be axed as one-day captain.

But paceman Steve Finn said England would not be dwelling on that series as conditions in Wellington would be completely different.

"We got beat by Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka so it's important we go out there and try to stamp our authority in conditions that should favour us," he said.

Finn said England's poor start meant they were treating all their remaining pool fixtures -- against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan -- as must wins.

"It's very important for us and these three games are almost each like a quarterfinal, but we thrive on that sort of pressure and hopefully it will bring the best out of us."

After three matches, England are placed beneath Bangladesh and Afghanistan on the Pool A table.

A loss to Sri Lanka would leave them facing an early exit if the group throws up any upset results.

Former Sri Lanka great Muttiah Muralidaran said the schedule was "not ideal" preparation for a dangerous encounter against an England side keen to prove a point.

But he said Sri Lanka's batting looked "ominous" against Bangladesh and sling-arm fast bowler Lasith Malinga finally appeared to be finding form.

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**PAKISTAN V ZIMBABWE**

**Make or break for Pakistan**

AFP, Brisbane

Pakistan's calamity-hit World Cup campaign stops off at Brisbane on Sunday where they will look to get their first points on the board and so keep their quarterfinal hopes alive against a bruised and battered Zimbabwe.

On the field, 1992 champions Pakistan have been mauled by 76 runs by bitter rivals India and suffered a 150-run rout at the hands of the West Indies.

Off it, the squad have been in turmoil with eight players fined for breaking a curfew, reports of a bust-up in training and chief selector Moin Khan being sent home in disgrace for visiting a casino.

Zimbabwe, meanwhile, go into the game on the back of a four-wicket win over the UAE, a 62-run loss to South Africa and a 73-run defeat by the West Indies in a game where Chris Gayle made the first double century in World Cup history.

The African side have found it hard to restrict

opposition batsmen -- West Indies feasted on their bowlers to the tune of 372 for two while South Africa helped themselves to 339 for four. Pakistan haven't played since February 21 but despite the break, giving them plenty of time to

2013, although they did lose the opener by seven wickets with Hamilton Masakadza (85 in that game), Brendan Taylor (43) and Sean Williams (39) all likely to play at the Gabba on Sunday.

Zimbabwe's only other two wins came way back in 1995 in Harare and 1999 in Sheikhpura.

Pakistan skipper Misbahul Haq, who enjoyed innings of 83 and 67 in the 2013 series in Zimbabwe, said it was crucial to get the defeat against the West Indies out of their system and concentrate on rebooting their faltering World Cup campaign.

Pakistan opener Ahmed Shehzad has been cleared to play in the game despite suffering an ankle injury, an official said Friday.

Zimbabwe have two points from three Pool B games with skipper Elton Chigumbura demanding his bowlers match the promising form of the team's batsmen.

"We feel like we're going towards the right directions, and with [coach] Dav Whatmore, since he took over, up to now we've been playing positive cricket," said Chigumbura.

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chew over over their problems, they will be buoyed by knowing they traditionally hold the upper hand against Zimbabwe.

They have won 27 of their 30 ODI meetings, taking their most recent series 2-1 in Harare in



**Can England opener Moeen Ali (C) score his second successive World Cup century today?**

PHOTO: AFP

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**WORLD CUP COCKTAIL**

M.S. Dhoni can crack a joke with a straight face even before one realises it, as one photo journalist learnt on Friday.

A senior photographer said, "Mahi, you are not the same person you used to be in 2004-05. You used to give poses for such amazing compositions."

Dhoni said, "Ahh, don't lie. You didn't know me in 2004."

The photographer jogged his memory and said, "I was there in Bangladesh during your debut series." Dhoni, however, confused him saying: "Who told you that I made my debut against Bangladesh? "You don't even know," said Dhoni with a wry smile (he made his debut against Bangladesh in December 2004).

"Then was it in Zimbabwe that you made your debut," said the photographer.

Dhoni smiled back and said, "See, that's why journalists can't be trusted."

**Crowe inducted into Hall of Fame**

New Zealand great Martin Crowe was inducted into Cricket's Hall of Fame on Saturday, the terminally ill former batsman describing it as a "great honour" and prompting a standing ovation from 40,000 fans at Eden Park.



Known as one of the game's most stylish batsmen, the 52-year-old became the third New Zealander behind Richard Hadlee and Debbie Hockley, and 79th in the world, to

receive the honour.

"I am pleased to get this prestigious award, especially joining my friend Richard Hadlee," said Crowe, after being awarded his commemorative cap from International Cricket Council (ICC) director and chairman of Cricket Australia, Wally Edwards.

Crowe dedicated the award to his father Dave and mother Audrey.

Crowe made his international debut against Australia in Wellington in February 1982 at the age of 19. He retired 13 years later.

**McCullum bruised but okay**  
Brendon McCullum is expected to be fit to lead New Zealand against Afghanistan next weekend, after a scare during his hectic half century at Eden Park tonight.

The blockbusting New Zealand skipper took a fierce blow on his left forearm from Australian quick Mitchell Starc in the third over of their cliffhanging chase for 152.

On 22 at the time, it took McCullum a few minutes to recover and his arm quickly swelled. He was bandaged before he continued and then remained with the team rather than going for scans.

"I think he's OK," Kane Williamson said. "Obviously it was a bit of a concern, when a ball that fast hits you on the arm. But he's a tough competitor and a strong leader and I'm sure he'll be fine."

**'Do not take fruits out of Eden Park'**

The crackdown on the Queensland fruit fly moved to Auckland's Eden Park yesterday.

Dozens of workers were out to make sure the unwelcome visitor wasn't part of the Cricket World Cup clash between New Zealand and Australia and wouldn't take flight from the venue.

A total of eight Queensland fruit flies have been found in the suburb of Grey Lynn in New Zealand.

A large message was even displayed on the giant screen for the game to remind cricket fans not to take fruit and vegetables outside the controlled area, while security kept a tight watch. --COMPILED

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**MITCHELL STARC**

So here's how the day panned out for several viewers around the world yesterday. After watching New Zealand cruise to 78 for 1 in seven overs, the ordinary viewer, switched off the TV and decided to get involved in the daily duties of life, which at that moment, seemed a lot more interesting. The shock that jolted many an hour later, when the scores popped up on the laptops and mobile phones however, compelled them to run-back to their sofas, switch the TV back on and sit at the edge of their seats. Such was the effect that Mitchell Starc's bowling had all over the world. His toe-crunchers and nasty bouncers surprised the Kiwis in their own den. His 6 for 28 almost achieved the unthinkable for Australia.