

Final revives 'underarm' memories

AFP, Melbourne

Whatever happens in Sunday's World Cup final between Australia and New Zealand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, it will have to go some way to matching the bitter fall-out from another one-day international clash between the two countries at the MCG back in 1981.

What might have been a forgettable third final of the one-day series produced one of the most controversial finishes of all-time when, with New Zealand needing six to tie off the last ball, Australia captain Greg Chappell instructed younger brother Trevor to role the ball underarm along the ground.

Angry New Zealand tailender Brian McKechnie, who was on strike, threw his bat away in disgust and Greg Chappell's decision brought forth a torrent of criticism.

New Zealand's then Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, said the delivery was "an act of true cowardice and I consider it appropriate that the Australian team were wearing yellow".

Meanwhile former Australia captain Ian Chappell, Greg and Ian's older brother, said: "Fair dinkum, Greg. How much pride do you sacrifice to win \$A35,000?"

Trevor Chappell said he "thought (the underarm) delivery was a pretty good idea at the time" even though "obviously it wasn't in the spirit of the game".

Last year, Trevor Chappell, who after he retired took up coaching roles with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Singapore, as well as in Australian schools, told the Cricinfo website: "People probably wouldn't remember me (if the underarm incident hadn't happened)."

But Greg Chappell, who has often spoken of his regret at involving Trevor, said the first time he realised the impact of his decision was shortly after match ended.

"One little girl ran beside me and tugged on my sleeve and said, 'You cheated,'" he recalled. "That was (when) I knew it would be bigger than I expected."

Greg Chappell said the 'underarm' had come about because of the pressure he felt arising from Australia's relentless schedule in the years immediately after the split with media businessman Kerry Packer's 'rebel' World Series Cricket came to an end.

"The underarm had very little to do with winning that game of cricket, because, in fact, we'd won the game," said Chappell, now Cricket Australia's national talent manager. "They weren't going to get six off the last ball of the game."

"It was my statement. My cry for help was: 'You're not listening. This might help you sit up and take notice,'" added Chappell, whose post-playing career was marked by a controversial spell as coach of India.

But while it did little for Greg Chappell's cause, McKechnie, speaking to New Zealand's Television Three, on Thursday, said the incident had helped establish cricket's place in a rugby-mad country -- something he was well-placed to appreciate as a dual international who kicked a winning penalty late on for the All Blacks against Wales in Cardiff in 1978.

"All of a sudden it's a game unlike '92 when we weren't expected to win that game whereas this one there's an expectation now because of the way this team is playing," said McKechnie.



Whether or not Dhoni has lost his knack of pulling out a win in tough situations, the doubts around his ODI retirement were put to rest by the man himself.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

Fans accept India's end

REUTERS, Mumbai

India's notoriously volatile fans showed rare maturity in accepting the end of their team's reign as world champions after Thursday's semifinal defeat against co-hosts Australia in Sydney.

The defending champions struggled during their build-up, losing a four-test series 2-0 against Australia and then failing to win a single match in the following tri-series, also involving England.

But expectations soared after they won all their six pool matches and easily defeated Bangladesh in their quarter-final, taking all 70 opposition wickets in the process.

The Hindustan Times newspaper summed up the mood of the nation with their front page headline which read "Heartbreak, but young team does India proud".

"Overall, quite happy with where we were," said India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, while addressing reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground after

the 95-run loss.

"At the start of the tournament, a lot of people didn't really think we'll come so far."

"He tried" ran the main headline on the front page of the Indian Express newspaper with a picture of the Indian captain walking back with his head bowed after being run out for 65.

While security was beefed up at Dhoni's residence in Ranchi, there was no incident of stone pelting like in 2007 when India bowed out of the tournament in the group stage after a humiliating loss to Bangladesh.

The disappointment, though, led to fans taking to social networking sites initially, venting their anger against star batsman Virat Kohli, who made one off 13 balls, and his Bollywood actress girlfriend, who was present at the SCG.

But it was soon over-ridden by people, including former India captain Sourav Ganguly, slamming

those taking digs at the duo and blaming them for the defeat.

One national television channel flayed the team for their efforts in the semi-final but was criticised on social media for sensationalism.

Fans were, however, in unison in agreeing that India's juggernaut screamed to a halt against a superior team in the form of Australia.

Former captain Rahul Dravid had no qualms in accepting that the best two teams have reached the final while Ganguly felt India were "outplayed".

"India were outplayed by a much better team," said Ganguly, who captained India in the 2003 World Cup final loss to Australia.

"First it was a good toss to win for Australian captain Michael Clarke. Second, it was the pressure of the target of 329, the pressure of chasing a big total that did India in."

"Third, Australia had a better bowling attack."



WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Indian fans are selling off their tickets to the Cricket World Cup final after being knocked out of the tournament. Kiwis who have booked flights to Melbourne on a whim to support the Black Caps at the final were in with a chance to snap up some last minute tickets.

Indian fans have taken to Facebook to sell their tickets and have also shown their support for the New Zealand team.

Hundreds of people posting to the Facebook event page for the Cricket World Cup final were offering their tickets for sale. One fan posted: "Indian fans don't sell your tickets lol turn up and #BACKTHEBLACKCAPS!".

Not all cricket fans were happy with the response by Indian supporters.

Australian fan Samuel Dissinas posted on the page saying the Indian fans shouldn't be flogging their tickets. "Suck it up and stop being sore losers."

Cash from big catch going to wife

Sunjay Ganda sounds like one of those all round nice guys.

Not only is he relaxed about sharing \$1 million with six others in Tui's Catch a Million promotion it's had running during the Cricket World Cup, but he plans to give it to his wife, Krystel, so she can extend her maternity time at home after giving birth to their second child, Mila, five months ago.

Mr Ganda, a development manager with Canterbury Hockey, believed every mother or parent should have the opportunity to spend longer with their child at home when it was first born.

As for having to share the prize pool with six others, Mr Ganda didn't seem fazed and believed it all happened for a reason.

"The thing that I have tried to take in ... to take a catch and have it all

happen there's so many things that have to align that literally someone's looking down on you if you take a catch." He initially thought three or four would end up in the final pool, but didn't mind sharing and said each of the "catchers" had their own story about how they made the catch.

The lucky seven are Sunjay Ganda, Travis Committie, Jamie Gough, Sajjad Ahmad, Stu Chapman, Arjun Bhadwaj, John Raynor

- Currently each has pocketed \$107,142 from the \$750,000 semifinal pool.
- Pool gets upped to \$1 million if NZ win, lifting winnings to \$142,857.
- Means each catcher gets a \$35,715 bonus.

Dharmasena set to make history



Sri Lanka's Kumar Dharmasena was on Friday selected to officiate the final of the cricket ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 on Sunday, thereby becoming the first person to feature in the quadrennial tournament final as both an umpire and player. English umpire Richard Kettleborough, rated as the world's best umpire for the past two years, was unsurprisingly chosen to be in the centre at (MCG), reports the

Sydney Morning Herald. Dharmasena, who won the (ICC) umpires' award in 2011, was a surprise -- not because of the Sri Lankan's general standard of officiating but because of his role that saw England's James Taylor stranded two runs short of a maiden century for England. The elevation of Dharmasena, 43, comes 19 years after he played in Sri Lanka's 1996 triumph against Australia. South African Marais Erasmus has been appointed video umpire, with Englishman Ian Gould to serve as fourth umpire. The ICC's most senior match referee, Sri Lankan Ranjan Madugalle, will fill that role on Sunday.

Kiwi fans excited for the 'greatest game'

A group of men who have been cricket enthusiasts since their schooldays in Hamilton are reuniting to attend the final in Melbourne.

Greg Stewart and his mates from high school cricket days are meeting in Melbourne to watch the game.

Mr Stewart, 34, said most of the group now live and work in Australia, but a couple were making the trip across the Tasman for the game.

"We took a bit of a gamble, we bought our tickets before the tournament hoping New Zealand would make it because we thought they had a pretty good chance," he said.

The group of mates had been to several big cricket games, including test matches at Lord's in England, but said this would be one of the greatest they'd ever seen.

He said he was pleased that New Zealand was facing Australia in the final and it would be "more satisfying" than facing India.

Simon Botherway and three friends bought tickets to the final last year the minute they went on sale, and got "a huge bonus" when the Black Caps qualified for the final. -COMPILED

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