

Arthur wants to summon 'cornered tigers' spirit

AFP, Manchester

Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur has vowed to remind his players of the "cornered tigers" spirit which Imran Khan instilled in his team-mates to win the 1992 World Cup.

An 89-run defeat by arch rivals India in Manchester on Sunday has left Pakistan's hopes of qualifying for the semi-finals hanging by a thread, with only minnows Afghanistan below them in the 10-team table.

Yet Pakistan now find themselves in exactly the same position as when they won the 1992 World Cup -- a tournament which, like this one, featured a round-robin group phase.

They now have three points from five matches with only one win -- a surprise success against hosts England -- three defeats and a no-result.

As happened in 1992, Pakistan started this World Cup with a defeat by the West Indies. But 27 years ago they had a famous rained-off match

against England at Adelaide and that single point gained from the washout helped Pakistan sneak into the semi-final.

Then they beaten minnows Zimbabwe and lost to South Africa and India before defeating Australia, Sri Lanka and New Zealand in their last three group matches.

Pakistan also had to rely on Australia beating the West Indies to claim the last semi-final spot, where they downed co-hosts New Zealand before upstaging England in a Melbourne final.

Khan, now the prime minister of Pakistan, had famously worn a T-shirt with "cornered tigers" written on it and said at the toss he wanted his players to play like tigers.

Arthur lamented Pakistan's start to this World Cup by telling AFP: "It is disappointing to be in such a position.

"We can't change the past but can influence the future and I will

definitely remind my players of the spirit of 'cornered tigers', the experienced South African coach added.

But Pakistan's task will be tougher than in 1992 as they have to not only win their last four matches but also improve their inferior net run-rate of minus 1.93.

They will also have to hope other results go their way.

Pakistan next play South Africa at Lord's on Sunday before facing New Zealand, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Arthur, whose contract will be reviewed after the World Cup, said he will do his best to lift the team.

"I will be doing everything I can and using all my experience to make this happen," he said.

Arthur, who guided Pakistan to the 2017 Champions Trophy title, said: "I love this team. I love Pakistan so I will definitely use all my experience to inspire this team."

'I DON'T LIKE TALKING ABOUT MYSELF'

He had to duck as he walked through the doorway of the press box at the Coopers Associate County Ground. Everyone else looked up as batsmen once had when Curtly Ambrose sent down thunderbolts for West Indies from 1988 to 2000. "Don't try to trick me," said Curtly, as intimidating as a 55-year-old as he was galloping in as a 28-year-old. A reporter approached him for a two-minute interview, saying that he would ask about cricket and Curtly's life. "My life won't take two minutes and I don't like talking about myself. We can talk about the World Cup," the soft-spoken but hard-glaring Antiguan said. In the end, he gave 10 minutes, speaking on fast bowling, Bangladesh and West Indies cricket, and the World Cup to The Daily Star's Sakeb Subhan and a group of journalists. The following are excerpts of the conversation.

Question (Q): What are your thoughts on the two teams playing out there?

Curtly Ambrose (CA): Both teams have a lot of work to do in order for them to move up the ICC rankings. They have to beat the top teams on a regular basis.

Q: Bangladesh are lucky to have Courtney Walsh, your former bowling partner, as their bowling coach.

CA: Courtney Walsh is a legend. He's got a lot of knowledge. He can only serve the Bangladeshi bowlers for the future. As long as they're willing to learn, he's got a lot to offer. So I am sure that these guys will get better as long as Courtney's there.

Q: How do you see Bangladesh's progress?

CA: Their cricket has improved. When they came into international cricket first, everyone used to beat up on them, but now they are a much better cricket team. They are very competitive, especially in the ODIs and T20Is. They've still got a bit of work to do in the Test matches because over five days is a long time. But they are much more competitive and teams who are playing against them nowadays, it's not an easy walkover like before. West Indies, the last nine games we played against Bangladesh, Bangladesh have won seven, so that says a lot.

Q: Does it hurt to see West Indies struggle?

CA: Of course it does. Once upon a time you were the best team in the world for many, many years. I used to play. I know what it's like to be the best team. But the talent is still there, we just need better structure so that we can nurture the talent. As we speak that is being set up. I am hoping that in a few



West Indies legend Curtly Ambrose (L) caught up with current Bangladesh bowling coach Courtney Walsh in Taunton yesterday. PHOTO: ICC

years West Indies will be a force again in world cricket.

Q: In these days of T20 cricket, is fast bowling in decline?

CA: I wouldn't say that. If you look at all the teams these days, they've still got at least two good fast bowlers. The problem I see over the years is that pitches are so slow that most teams turn to spinners. Nowadays the pitches are getting better, like this World Cup for instance. Many of us came here thinking that it is going to be a high-scoring World Cup. That is not so, the pitches are a bit helpful for the fast bowlers, hence we see a lot of fast bowlers doing well. And the

is to be able to bowl a proper line and length consistently and do something with the ball, and then you'll get wickets.

Q: Has Test cricket declined since your days?

CA: I don't think Test cricket is declining too much as some people are saying. The advent of T20 is very exciting and everyone loves it. But I am still seeing some wonderful Test matches. What I think needs to be done in terms of Test matches is make it more attractive. Sometimes teams sit there for two days and grind out 500 and the game peters out into a draw. Maybe they need to find some rules where they have to score a certain amount of runs in a certain amount of overs and make it more exciting and we will see better Test cricket.

Q: Would you have liked to play T20s?

CA: I would, because I'd only have to bowl four overs (laughs). But on a serious note, it will be a challenge. Because T20 is primarily a batsman's game. Shorter boundaries and everyone wants to see sixes and all that stuff. It would have been a challenge and I thrive on challenges. And I believe I would have done well.

Q: Still involved in music?

CA: Music is going very well. Still with the 'Spirited' band. Who knows, it's getting better and better, maybe we can go international.

Q: It was always hard to get Curtly to do an interview...

CA: No, I won't say it was hard. When I was playing I tried to stay away from interviews because I don't like talking about myself. I believe journalists and commentators shouldn't write or say what they see I don't feel. Now I am

not playing anymore. I still don't care to do much interviews, but if I have to do it, I won't be talking much about myself, I would just be talking about the present-day cricketers.

Q: Who, apart from West Indies, do you see winning the Cup?

CA: The way they [West Indies] are going now, it is going to be really, really tough to get into the semifinals. They have to win today, they have to beat Bangladesh today and beat them handsomely and hopefully get a few wins under their belts. Because with the weather we are having, you never know what can happen. There might be some upsets along the way, there may be weather interventions, so they have to keep winning. Most of the cricket pundits figure that the top four teams are Australia, India, New Zealand and England and everyone expects them to be in the semifinal. I am hoping to see some upsets to be honest, to keep the World Cup interesting. You don't want it to be a straightforward World Cup. I am hoping West Indies make the semifinals.

Q: Who was better: Walsh or Ambrose?

CA: Who was the better bowler, me or Courtney? What do you think?

Q: If you won't talk about yourself, talk about Walsh.

CA: Talk about Walshie? Well, Walshie is a very good friend of mine. Everyone knows that we were great as a bowling partnership and we maintain our friendship and we are like brothers, so I won't talk about him as a bowler, we all know what kind of a bowler he was. We all know what kind of a bowler I was, so there is nothing to talk about, myself or him.

BEST QUOTE

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Look over to Afghanistan's nets and they are practising against quicks, while we're practising against spin. It's a challenge for both.

Eoin Morgan, England captain

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Kumar out for up to 3 games

AFP, Manchester

Bhuvneshwar Kumar could be out of India's next three games after injuring himself in Sunday's win over Pakistan.

Kumar opened the bowling in Pakistan's chase of 337, but had a hamstring problem and left after 2.4 overs.

"Bhuvneshwar has a slight niggle, he slipped on the footmarks," Kohli said. "It doesn't look too serious and hopefully he will be ready in a few games, the maximum is three games.



Rain may have stayed away during Bangladesh's World Cup game against West Indies in Taunton yesterday, but the weather in England was not exactly pleasant elsewhere. The Worcestershire County Cricket Club was an unfortunate victim of inclement weather, getting completely flooded, in perhaps an ominous sign for the World Cup. PHOTO: TWITTER

'Getting Babar out was the best delivery'

AFP, Manchester

India's Kuldeep Yadav admitted bowling Pakistan batsman Babar Azam in the World Cup with a magical delivery that tossed and turned was a "dream" for any spinner.

Yadav returned figures of 2-32 with his left-arm wrist spin to play a key role in India's 89-run victory via DLS over Pakistan in Manchester on Sunday.

Yadav got Azam bowled -- the ball nipping between bat and pad.

"Getting Babar Azam out was the best delivery for me in this tournament. I got him out in the Asia Cup as well," Yadav told reporters. "After the rain break I went back and watched that delivery. It had drift and turn, so any spinner will love that delivery.

"It's a proper dream delivery and a proper Test delivery. Deceiving the batsman in the air and making him commit the mistake. A perfect delivery."

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There was a lot of talk about the probable threat from 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle ahead of Bangladesh's World Cup clash against West Indies. It is widely known how devastating Gayle can be on his day, especially on the small ground in Taunton. So it was assumed that the hard-hitting left hander would play a big role against the Tigers. However, from Bangladesh's point of view it was indeed a happy moment when pacer Mohammad Saifuddin had the left-hander caught behind on a duck, giving much relief to the Bangladesh camp and also to the millions of supporters. Gayle was shaky from the start of the innings and faced twelve deliveries. However, he was unable to open his account as he struggled to middle the ball with the sweet spot of his bat. Eventually the big man tried to open up a bit to play a drive away from his body but he paid the ultimate price.

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