



Cricket fever gripped the Formula1 world, with tracks at the British Grand Prix being turned into cricket pitches yesterday. Here, Dutchman Max Verstappen shows off his unorthodox batting technique. PHOTO: TWITTER

# Lord's window cleaner returns as finalist coach

ICC Gary Stead once scrubbed the windows of Lord's pavilion -- nearly three decades on he wouldn't mind seeing some of his big-hitters breaking them.

The New Zealand coach spent a happy summer in his late teens working on the MCC's ground staff, cleaning, selling scorecards and honing his love of the game at the home of cricket.

Now, as he prepares to lead the Black Caps into Sunday's World Cup final against England, you could forgive him a pinch yourself moment.

But Stead is dialling down the pressure on his side, seven of who were losing finalists four years ago to Australia.

"When you strip it back, it's just another game of cricket," he said, while acknowledging the support of a nation half a world away, pulling all-nighters to cheer the team.

"We're excited about the opportunity ahead of us and we start the game with a 50/50 chance, we just need to be that bit better than England. We know the force they've become and that's why they start the game as favourites.

"You can do all the scenario training you want but you can't



replicate what goes on in a big moment like this. There is pressure on both teams because neither have ever won a World Cup. It's about how you handle it.

"I know both teams will play the game hard in the middle and have a beer afterwards. As I team we came here with three goals, we've achieved two -- just one to go."

Stead succeeded Mike Hesson last June and has remained committed to the brand of cricket he pioneered alongside former captain Brendon McCullum, a style of play Eoin Morgan's England took as a blueprint for their ascent to the top of the world rankings.

But he is playing a textbook forward defensive to talk about the

lessons of 2015, when New Zealand lost by seven wickets in a low-scoring final in Melbourne.

"We'll talk about expectations and pressure, we'll lean on those experiences but I just want to keep it as real as we can," he added.

"We just turn up and try to get better every day, we understand you don't need to play the perfect game of cricket every time."

Stead praised how his side 'stood up under pressure' in a 'war of attrition' with India, a thrilling semi-final win in Manchester that sent reverberations around world cricket.

"It doesn't matter how you get there. There's a fight and steeliness about the way we play and I'm pleased how we've adapted to conditions," he added.

Martin Gupthill, whose brilliant run out of MS Dhoni turned the semi-final, has struggled for runs in recent weeks but looked fluent and free-scoring in the nets. Henry Nicholls, who picked up a hamstring injury in the semi-final, also went through an extensive work-out.

"He was batting for two hours and everything was good," added Stead. "He'll have a thorough fitness test on Saturday and we'll make a call then. If he's ruled out then we've other guys in the squad that can step up."

## Warne slams Aus players' poor performances

AGENCIES, London Sky Sports commentator Shane Warne has slammed members of the Australian Cricket World Cup team after the side were convincingly defeated by England in the second semifinal.

Australia failed to win a World Cup semifinal for the first time in eight attempts, unable to defend a total of 223 after being reduced to 14-3 after winning the toss.

Rating the squad's individual performances in an article for Sky Sports, Warne called out various players for their weak outings.

Peter Handscomb's performance was deemed the lowest of the side with a shameful 3/10 from Warne, who believed the Australian batsman "should not have been in the team in the first place".

"He did not look like making a run," wrote Warne, a 1999 World Cup winner who took 1001 test and one-day wickets. "He should have been out three or four times during his brief innings" of 4 off 12 balls.

Aaron Finch, David Warner, Marcus Stoinis and Jason Behrendorff were all deemed a 4/10 by Warne, who wrote the usual stars would likely be very disappointed with their outings.

"It is pretty hard to judge someone who gets out first ball to a good delivery. [Aaron Finch] captained pretty well and tried hard. It was not a good day for him and he will be disappointed but at least he won the toss," Warne wrote.

"[Jason Behrendorff] needs conditions to go his way. If you get him on a flat wicket like this, he doesn't look that threatening, and I was very surprised he bowled the first over. Starc should have done it to try and set the tone."

Alex Carey (7/10) and Steve Smith (8/10) were awarded the highest scores of the clash by Warne.

Carey hit a 70-ball 46, while Smith anchored the innings almost till the end and scored 85.

"Smith was fantastic. Without him, Australia would have struggled to make 150. I thought he batted really well when wickets were falling around him. It was tough going for him," Warne wrote.

# Strauss emotional after England 'obliterate' Australia

AFP, Birmingham Former England director of cricket Andrew Strauss was overcome with emotion after the team he helped build "obliterated" Australia to reach the World Cup final on Thursday.

England booked their first World Cup final appearance for 27 years with an eight-wicket rout of holders Australia at Edgbaston.

Eoin Morgan's side will face New Zealand at Lord's on Sunday as they bid to win the World Cup for the first time.

It was a big moment for former England captain Strauss, who was drafted into the newly-created role at the England and Wales Cricket Board after the team's dismal World Cup flop four years ago.

Strauss was the man behind the appointment of England head coach Trevor Bayliss and urged the ECB to place more emphasis on white-ball cricket during his tenure, which has seen them rise to the top of the one-day international team rankings.

He stepped down from the position in October 2018 to spend more time with his family after his wife was diagnosed with lung cancer.

"That was England's best performance of the World Cup," Strauss told broadcaster Sky Sports.

"England absolutely obliterated Australia with bat and ball. The way (Chris) Woakes and (Jofra) Archer set the tone was fantastic.

"And with the bat, I mean it was just outstanding batting from (Jason) Roy in particular. Now is not the time to talk about the Ashes but the way he lined up (Mitchell) Starc, I thought he was fantastic.

"It was the ultimate performance. England will go into that final with just incredible spirits, huge confidence and they will be

confident they can put New Zealand away as well.

"I was getting quite emotional watching that today. All I ask from this England team is to play the same way on Sunday." Meanwhile, Australia legend Shane Warne admitted England were deserved winners and backed the hosts to take the title.

"Disappointing from a Australian point of view, but they were outplayed by England from

the word go," Warne said.

"England showed their class, I thought Eoin Morgan was world class. He manipulated his bowlers well, he could have easily backed off but he didn't. He brought Archer back earlier to go for it and (Adil) Rashid was the real ace for Morgan today.

"England seem to be peaking at the right time and that's what you have to do to win World Cups."



England fans erupted into cheers after their side defeated archrivals Australia and sealing a spot in the World Cup final after 27 years on Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Rashid made captain in all formats

AFP, Kabul The Afghan CricketBoard (ACB) named leg spinner Rashid Khan captain across all the major formats Friday, despite a disappointing World Cup for the Twenty20 sensation.

Asghar Afghan was also appointed vice-captain, the ACB said in a statement announcing the decision.

Khan came into the World Cup as cricket's hottest property after catching the eye with his leg spinners for minnows Afghanistan.

But the Twenty20 star, who played a leading role for many sides in franchise cricket across the globe, claimed only six wickets in nine games as the Afghans returned home without notching up a single win.

At a news conference announcing his new role, Khan acknowledged the responsibility on his shoulders and expressed hopes for the team's future.

"We all play as one team and play only for the country. Whatever I am today, is because of this country and this team," Khan said.

Gulbadin Naib, who skippered Afghanistan for the World Cup, defended his spinner after their final loss to West Indies, saying "he gives 100 percent".



New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson has been anchoring their innings since the start of the tournament and he will hope he can keep the trend going into the World Cup final at Lord's on Sunday. PHOTO: REUTERS

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