

Afghanistan collapse

Gayle leads WI past UAE

HARARE, March 6, (AFP): Chris Gayle hammered his 23rd one-day international hundred to lead the West Indies to victory in their opening World Cup qualifier against the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, while Afghanistan collapsed to defeat by Zimbabwe.

Windies opening batsman Gayle struck 11 sixes in a blistering 91-ball 123 in Harare as the two-time World Cup winners racked up 357-4 in their Group A clash, with the UAE falling 60 runs short.

Afghanistan's hopes of taking one of the last two places for next year's tournament in England and Wales are hanging by a thread, after following Sunday's shock loss to Scotland with an agonising two-run defeat by the hosts.

Elsewhere, Ireland and Scotland both made it two wins from two by seeing off Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong respectively.

The 38-year-old Gayle became only the third batsman in ODI history after Hashim Amla and Sachin Tendulkar to score hundreds against 11 different countries.

After captain Jason Holder elected to bat first, Gayle quickly got into his stride alongside big-hitting youngster Evin Lewis in an opening partnership of 88.

Lewis fell for 31, but Shimron Hetmyer outdid even Gayle, plundering 127 to score his maiden international ton.

The UAE, who had beaten Papua New Guinea in their opening match, never threatened a famous run chase after slipping to 69-3, but an excellent unbeaten 112 from Rameez Shahzad carried them to a respectable 297-6.

Windies skipper Holder ensured his side got off to a winning start, taking 5-53 after fast bowler Shel-

don Cottrell's day was cut short by injury.

Afghanistan came into the qualifiers as favourites to qualify alongside the West Indies, but will now probably need five consecutive wins to have any chance of reaching a second straight World Cup.

With the defeats against Scotland and Zimbabwe set to count in the Super Six stage, should Afghanistan get there, their chances are all but over.

Rashid Khan and co put in a much-improved display with the ball as they limited Zimbabwe to 196 all out in Bulawayo.

Teenage stand-in captain Khan took 3-38 to reach 90 wickets in ODIs, while 16-year-old fellow leg-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman finished with 3-49.

But Brendan Taylor's 89 and 60

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from Sikandar Raza proved crucial as Zimbabwe won in dramatic fashion.

At 156-3 with almost 17 overs remaining, Afghanistan were cruising to victory, but the pressure proved too much as they lost six wickets for only 21 runs.

Last-wicket pair Dawlat Zadran and Shapoor Zadran dragged the Asian outfit to within four runs of their target heading into the final over, but the latter was caught behind off Brian Vitori to secure Zimbabwe's second win.

Ireland and Scotland look set to challenge the West Indies and Zimbabwe for qualification, after both moved to the top of their groups.

Captain William Porterfield's 111 steered Ireland to a four-wicket win over Papua New Guinea, who had managed 235 thanks to a stunning 151 from opener Tony Ura.

Scotland survived a middle-order collapse to successfully chase down 92 to beat Hong Kong, with skipper Kyle Coetzer making 41 not out.



Gayle

Sri Lanka beat India in tri-nation opener



Sri Lankan cricketer Kusal Perera plays a shot during the opening Twenty20 international cricket match between Sri Lanka and India of the Nidahas Trophy tri-nation Twenty20 tournament at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on March 6. The Nidahas Trophy tri-nation Twenty20 tournament involves Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India. (AFP)

Moscow fails to provide evidence

IAAF maintains Russia ban over doping

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom, March 6, (AFP): The governing body of world athletics said Tuesday it was maintaining Russia's ban from the sport over mass doping, saying Moscow had failed to provide evidence it was adequately testing Russian competitors.

Despite Russian athletes being allowed back into Olympic competition, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) said the country's anti-doping body RUSADA had met some of the requirements to be reinstated, but not all.

The IAAF's medical expert Rune Andersen said the sport's anti-doping task force had "recommended to the IAAF Council and the Council accepted that RUSAF (the Russian athletics federation) not be reinstated".

"Because while many reinstatement conditions had been met, there are several that still have not been satisfied," Andersen told a press conference in the English city of Birmingham.

"For example, RUSAF and RUSADA have still not provided a test distribution plan for 2018 that shows an adequate amount of testing of Russian athletes."

Andersen also said RUSAF had not demonstrated "that it has fixed previous legal issues that meant it was unable to enforce provisional doping bans".

The International Olympic Committee lifted its ban on Russia at the end of the Pyeongchang Winter Games last month.

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Russia had been banned from the Olympic movement over allegations it put in place a huge system of state-sponsored doping culminating at the 2014 Russian-hosted Sochi Winter Games.

A team of 168 Russians competed in Pyeongchang under the banner of Olympic Athletes from Russia, but a Russian curling medalist tested positive for a banned substance.

Dmitry Shlyakhtin, the head of Russian athletics, said he would seek a meeting with IAAF President Sebastian Coe and Andersen to argue his case.

"We've sent them all the materials and the documents (they asked for)," he said, adding that the IAAF task force "has not been in touch with us since October".

Sergei Shubenkov, Russia's 2015 world 110m hurdles champion, said the IAAF's decision was incomprehensible.

"I just have no idea how to take all this," he told R-Sport agency. "For a long time now I have not understood what's going on at these (IAAF) meetings and their decisions."

"In any case there's no choice (for us athletes) and I'll continue training and preparing."

Several Russian athletes competed as neutrals in last week's World Indoor Championships in Birmingham, including the winners of the women's and men's high jump competitions, Mariya Lasitskenskaya and Danil Lysenko.



This file photo taken on March 1, shows Authorised Neutral Athlete, Danil Lysenko celebrating after the winning clearance in the men's high jump final at the 2018 IAAF World Indoor Athletics Championships at the Arena in Birmingham. (AFP)

Victim of smear attempt: Wiggins

LONDON, March 6, (AFP): Former Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins says he is the victim of a "malicious" attempt to smear his reputation, vehemently denying he has cheated during his glittering career which also features five Olympic gold medals.

A damning report by lawmakers on Monday said Wiggins and Team Sky had crossed an "ethical line" by using drugs to enhance performance and not just to treat medical need.

It comes after Russian computer hackers revealed in 2016 that the British rider had applied for therapeutic use exemptions (TUEs) to have injections of the powerful corticosteroid triamcinolone before three of his biggest races, including the 2012 Tour de France, which he won.

But Wiggins said in an interview with the BBC that he only used prescribed drugs for valid medical reasons and when asked if he categorically denied cheating, added: "A hundred per cent. Never, throughout my career."

"This is malicious," said the five-time Olympic champion, who was the first British cyclist to win the Tour. "This is someone trying to smear me. These allegations, it's the worst thing to be accused of."

"It's also the hardest thing to prove you haven't done. We're not dealing in a legal system. I'd have had more rights if I'd murdered someone."

The Commons digital, culture, media and sport committee report centred around the team's use of triamcinolone.

Triamcinolone, used to treat asthma, is an anti-inflammatory steroid that can also help cyclists shed weight without losing power.

Wiggins, 37, denied the team had crossed an ethical line by using the medication.

He said he had only used triamcinolone on one occasion other than the three TUEs, which had already been made public, but the report said he may have taken it nine times in four years.

"I don't know where that's come from," Wiggins said. "I really would like to know. This is an anonymous source, this is an anonymous person who has said this."

"I refute that 100 per cent. This is malicious. This is someone trying to smear me."

Wiggins said he had adhered to the rules in place at the time and had been granted permission by cycling's governing body to take the drug.

When asked if he would have won the Tour de France without it in 2012, he replied: "Well, had I had an asthma attack, no, probably not. No."

Team Sky said they took full responsibility for mistakes that were made but strongly refuted the claim that medication was used to enhance performance.

Wiggins said he would try to repair his damaged legacy.

"I don't know how I'm going to pick the pieces up with the kids and stuff, and I'm left to do that as well as trying to salvage my reputation from this," he added. "I wouldn't wish it on anyone."

ICC suspends Indian curator

COLOMBO, March 6, (Agencies): Kusal Perera struck a belligerent 66 off 37 balls to set up a five-wicket victory for hosts Sri Lanka against India in the Twenty20 Tri-Series opener at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on Tuesday.

Chasing 175 for a win in the first match of the tournament, which also features Bangladesh, Sri Lanka lost their way in the middle overs but ultimately reached their target with nine balls to spare.

Put in to bat first, India got off to a wobbly start but recovered through a fine 90 from opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan to post a challenging 174 for five in their 20 overs.

Sri Lanka lost Kusal Mendis for 11 in the second over of their chase but Perera and Danushka Gunathilaka put the Indian bowlers to the sword during a 58-run second-wicket stand in just 3.3 overs.

India seamer Shardul Thakur conceded 27 runs in the third over of the innings with Perera smashing five fours and a six in that over to wrest momentum for his side.

The left-hander completed his half-century in 22 balls

and hit six fours and four sixes in his knock before being out stumped to off-spinner Washington Sundar.

Sri Lanka also lost Upul Tharanga to leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal cheaply to suffer a minor hiccup before all-rounder Thisara Perera hit 22 off 10 balls to take the side home.

Earlier, India's batting got off to a false start with the fall of stand-in captain Rohit Sharma and Suresh Raina in the first two overs.

Leading the side in the absence

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of the rested regular captain Virat Kohli, Rohit fell without scoring and it was left to Dhawan and Manish Pandey to lift the side through a third-wicket stand of 95.

Gunathilaka dismissed the dangerous Dhawan, who hit six fours and an identical number of sixes in his 49-ball knock, while Pandey made 37.

The second match of the tournament will be played between Bangladesh and India at the same venue on Thursday.

Meanwhile, cricket's world governing body on Tuesday banned a leading Indian groundsman for six months for failing to report a corruption approach before a one-day international last year.

Pandurang Salgaonkar, who looks after the ground at Pune, was the subject of an undercover sting by the India Today TV channel, which alleged he agreed to doctor the surface before a one-day international between India and New Zealand in October 2017.

"Salgaonkar was charged with a failure to report an approach but no evidence was found of him actually having been engaged in corruption and therefore no charges were laid against him on that basis," said an International Cricket Council statement.

The ICC decision said there was no evidence that the 68-year-old former player had agreed to accept a bribe when he met the journalists.

ICC anti-corruption manager Alex Marshall said, "I am satisfied that Mr Salgaonkar has no case to answer on the broad allegations of corruption made by India Today."

"Mr Salgaonkar has accepted that he has committed the offence and has received a six-month suspension."

The ban was backdated to Oct 25, meaning he will be free to work again on April 24.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India suspended Salgaonkar after the TV channel showed him promising a favourable wicket for New Zealand to reporters who posed as bookmakers.



Sri Lankan cricketer Dushmantha Chameera (second left), celebrates with teammates after he dismissed Indian cricket captain Rohit Sharma during the opening Twenty20 international cricket match between Sri Lanka and India of the Nidahas Trophy tri-nation Twenty20 tournament at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on March 6. (AFP)

Sri Lanka vs India T20 Scoreboard

SRI LANKA		INDIA	
R. Sharma c Mendis b Chameera.....0		R. Sharma c Mendis b Chameera.....0	
S. Dhawan c Perera b Gunathilaka90		S. Dhawan c Perera b Gunathilaka90	
S. Raina b Pradeep.....1		S. Raina b Pradeep.....1	
M. Pandey c Gunathilaka b Mendis37		M. Pandey c Gunathilaka b Mendis37	
R. Pant c Pradeep b Chameera.....23		R. Pant c Pradeep b Chameera.....23	
D. Karthik not out.....13		D. Karthik not out.....13	
Extras (lb, lb3, w6).....10		Extras (lb, lb3, w6).....10	
Total (5 wickets, 20 overs).....174		Total (5 wickets, 20 overs).....174	
Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Sharma), 2-9 (Raina), 3-104 (Pandey), 4-153 (Dhawan), 5-174 (Pant)		Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Sharma), 2-9 (Raina), 3-104 (Pandey), 4-153 (Dhawan), 5-174 (Pant)	
Did not bat: V. Sundar, V. Shankar, S. Thakur, J. Unadkat, Y. Chahal		Did not bat: V. Sundar, V. Shankar, S. Thakur, J. Unadkat, Y. Chahal	
Bowling: Chameera 4-0-33-2 (w1), Pradeep 3-0-38-1 (w2), Dananjaya 4-0-37-0 (w1), Perera 3-0-25-0, Mendis 3-0-21-1 (w2), Gunathilaka 3-0-16-1		Bowling: Chameera 4-0-33-2 (w1), Pradeep 3-0-38-1 (w2), Dananjaya 4-0-37-0 (w1), Perera 3-0-25-0, Mendis 3-0-21-1 (w2), Gunathilaka 3-0-16-1	
SRI LANKA (target 175)		SRI LANKA (target 175)	
D. Gunathilaka c Pant b Unadkat.....19		D. Gunathilaka c Pant b Unadkat.....19	
K. Mendis c Dhawan b Sundar.....11		K. Mendis c Dhawan b Sundar.....11	
K. Perera c Karthik b Sundar.....66		K. Perera c Karthik b Sundar.....66	
D. Chandimal b Chahal.....14		D. Chandimal b Chahal.....14	
U. Tharanga b Chahal.....17		U. Tharanga b Chahal.....17	
D. Shanaka not out.....15		D. Shanaka not out.....15	
T. Perera not out.....22		T. Perera not out.....22	
Extras (lb4, nb1, w6).....11		Extras (lb4, nb1, w6).....11	
Total (5 wickets, 18.3 overs).....175		Total (5 wickets, 18.3 overs).....175	
Fall of wickets: 1-12 (Mendis), 2-70 (Gunathilaka), 3-98 (Chandimal), 4-127 (Perera), 5-136 (Tharanga)		Fall of wickets: 1-12 (Mendis), 2-70 (Gunathilaka), 3-98 (Chandimal), 4-127 (Perera), 5-136 (Tharanga)	
Did not bat: J. Mendis, A. Dananjaya, D. Chameera, N. Pradeep		Did not bat: J. Mendis, A. Dananjaya, D. Chameera, N. Pradeep	
Bowling: Unadkat 3-0-35-1 (w2), Sundar 4-0-28-2 (w1), Thakur 3-3-0-42-0 (nb1, w1), Chahal 4-0-37-2 (w1), Shankar 2-0-15-0 (w1), Raina 2-0-14-0		Bowling: Unadkat 3-0-35-1 (w2), Sundar 4-0-28-2 (w1), Thakur 3-3-0-42-0 (nb1, w1), Chahal 4-0-37-2 (w1), Shankar 2-0-15-0 (w1), Raina 2-0-14-0	
Toss: Sri Lanka		Toss: Sri Lanka	
Result: Sri Lanka won by five wickets		Result: Sri Lanka won by five wickets	
Umpires: Ranmore Martinez (SRI), Raveendra Wimalasiri (SRI)		Umpires: Ranmore Martinez (SRI), Raveendra Wimalasiri (SRI)	
TV umpire: Lyndon Hannibal		TV umpire: Lyndon Hannibal	
Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG)		Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG)	

Taylor expected to be fit for 4th England ODI

WELLINGTON, March 6, (RTRS): New Zealand's troubled middle order is likely to be boosted by the return of Ross Taylor from a quadriceps injury for the crucial fourth one-day international against England in Dunedin on Wednesday.

Taylor, who appeared to hurt himself while diving to avoid a run out in the second game at Mount Maunganui, missed the third game in Wellington, which England won by four runs to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

The 33-year-old said he had been hit several times by the ball while batting, which prevented him from turning fast enough after some superb fielding by David Willey cut off his chances of running a quick single.

"Should be fine for tomorrow. It's nice to

be ready to play," he told reporters in Dunedin ahead of the game at University Oval. "I've had massages on it, acupuncture, stretching and swimming."

"I got hit during the game in Hamilton, then hit on the same spot in training twice. The leg was saying it had enough then Willey got me."

His return would be a timely boost for the side. Apart from Taylor's century in the first game and Kane Williamson's 112 not out in the third, New Zealand's middle order and all-rounders have struggled to produce consistently during the series.

Auckland batsman Mark Chapman, who was an injury replacement for Williamson and then Taylor, scored one in the second game and then threw his wicket away for eight in

Wellington.

Henry Nicholls has scored a total of one run in three matches, while Tom Latham, who helped Taylor to New Zealand's three-wicket victory in the first game in Hamilton with 79, scored just 22 and a golden duck in the next two matches. Colin de Grandhomme has had scores of two, 38 and three.

Mitchell Santner, batting at number eight, has been the only player in New Zealand's middle order to score consistently.

He belted 45 not out in Hamilton, top scored with 63 not out in Mount Maunganui then was unluckily run out for 41 in Wellington as he and Williamson looked well set to win the game after New Zealand lost five for 23 in the middle stages.