

RUNS	B	HO	FOW	RUNS	WKTS
SOUTH AFRICA					
TO WIN					
NEED 22 RUNS					
OFF 1 BALL					



The infamous 1992 World Cup semi-final at Sydney: (left) the scoreboard displays South Africa's revised target after a 10-minute rain-delay; (right) South Africa's Brian McMillan is disgusted by the interpretation of the rain regulation while Allan Lamb fails to see what the fuss is about.

to win at any stage of the game, irrespective of how many interruptions there are, since all that matters is the overall run-rate, and both teams know that they effectively have one wicket available for every five overs. Because of this averaging of wickets, both teams are well placed to pace themselves uniformly throughout their innings. All that they need to focus on is the run-rate. Currently it is not possible to foresee what will be required if there are further interruptions to play.

In the aforementioned Australia v West Indies World Series final, West Indies would have been set the target of 119 runs off 20 overs with only four wickets (five batsmen) available, or 90 runs off 15 overs with three

wickets. In the England v South Africa semi-final, South Africa would have needed five runs off the last ball to win. The only question that remains is how to reduce the number of wickets fairly, in particular which batsmen should be chosen as ineligible.

Originally it was suggested that the unavailable batsmen should be selected by a random or lottery process. This came under criticism, from the ICC, in that, in the interests of public entertainment, one or more of the top players may be deselected from batting in a shortened innings. The public, though, would prefer to see a fairer contest, and in any case some of these top-order batsman may not get a turn to bat in a shortened match.

This criticism can, however, be entirely avoided by simply taking the unavailable wickets off the bottom of the batting order for both sides. The best batsmen will then be most likely to bat, and the public will know *a priori* who is likely to bat in the event of rain interruptions.

In summary our wicket averaging method is extremely simple to understand, for players and spectators. Also, since all batsmen are now subject to very similar playing conditions, batting averages, strike-rates, etc. are meaningful again, and the pressure is taken off the tailenders to score at the fastest run-rate as is currently the case, or expected in other systems. One may even consider doing away with fielding restrictions at the start of an innings. **E**

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