

ICC T20 World Cup 2022

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Adelaide Oval

Zimbabwe

David Houghton

Post Match Media Conference

Netherlands - 120/5, Zimbabwe - 117

Q. David, obviously a disappointing result for your team. Not enough runs on the board. Is that too simplistic?

DAVID HOUGHTON: No, that's exactly right. We've been quite fragile with our batting throughout the tournament. It's been really our bowling and fielding, catching that's kept us in it.

Unfortunately it's let us down in a game like this, which would have been huge if we'd won it because we'd go into the next game with just an outside possibility.

Since I've been in charge of this side for the last 4 1/2 months, we've had an incredible journey and played some really good cricket, and this is the probably first time I've seen a bit of doubt creep into our game. Hopefully it will be the last time for a while as well.

Q. When you say doubt, was that, I guess, what was hanging on the result? Did that affect it?

DAVID HOUGHTON: I think so. We just got a little bit in front of ourselves thinking what the possibilities might be. One of the things I've tried to encourage to the team, even if our batting is a bit fragile, to be positive and play with a bit of fearlessness.

There was a bit of movement in that wicket, and we needed to do something about it. We needed to be batting a bit more positively, using our feet, going down the wicket at the seamers, and we didn't. Seeds of doubt just kept us stuck to the crease, and unfortunately it cost us.

Q. You've still got one game to go, but effectively your campaign in this World Cup is over. What would be the biggest positives to come out of it for you and the team?

DAVID HOUGHTON: The biggest positive for me is we started four months ago in Bulawayo, still having to qualify to even be here in the first place. That was a tough little tournament for us as well, and we won it quite



convincingly. Then we had to come here and qualify again to get into the next phase.

We went through two tough qualifying tournaments and played under extreme pressure at times, even though they were against lesser sides, that got ourselves to this stage.

If you'd told me in June when I started that we'd end up being sort of two games away with a possibility of getting to a semifinal, I'd have bitten your hand off for it.

It's been a positive journey for us all the way through. It's just a pity for us today that we chose this game to actually have our worst game. All credit to Holland. They bowled fantastically well at us.

Q. I just want to take you to the last match. You had two spinners bowling those last two overs. You had a really good shot at winning, and then all the drama. When you say doubt, does that also add to the doubt that you bring into this game?

DAVID HOUGHTON: No, I don't think so. We had the doubt here, I think, because it was a new surface. We took a couple of days off between the two games because our guys are so tired I just couldn't make them practise again. So that might have sown a little bit of the doubt that they hadn't actually been to the ground.

And the occasion. We knew we needed to win one of the games over Bangladesh and Holland. We lost closely to Bangladesh and thought we need to beat the Holland. So I think that little bit of extra pressure plus the fact we hadn't been down here before sowed those seeds of doubt.

Q. You played cricket in a lot of places. Have you ever experienced that a match is done and you had to go back and finish it?

DAVID HOUGHTON: No, but when I was in the middle of our flight from Brisbane to here, I was thinking to myself why didn't I retire Blessing in between? He had one swing and missed and maybe put the next guy in. Maybe he would have hit. That would have been interesting for everyone to talk about.

Q. Because you didn't have the time and it happens and it's just a whirlwind. Did you have any chat with Blessing?

DAVID HOUGHTON: We didn't because after the game was effectively done the first time, we were busy shaking everybody's hands and congratulating people and commiserating with others, and Blessing walked straight into the changing room and had his kit off.

When he was told he had to bat again, it was a huge rush and straight out, and I didn't get to see him. I didn't even see him get back out on the field.

Q. How did they ensure those same fielders were in the same place?

DAVID HOUGHTON: I have absolutely no idea. It didn't make much difference because he missed it.

Q. Just one of the things I'm sure you would have liked to have done is kept the Netherlands winless, but now every team in this group has won a match. Just wonder how you see that as a reflection on where T20 cricket is right now internationally?

DAVID HOUGHTON: Look, there's obviously a huge gulf, I think, between the top four or five sides in the world and the rest of us. But what T20 does show you, and it showed up in our game against Pakistan, is if you have a really good day and the other side slips up slightly, you can beat sides. And everyone can beat everyone. It's that sort of game.

If you're playing test cricket against each other, there's a 99 out of 100 you're going to lose those games, but in T20 it's such a short format, you only have to have a good afternoon and the other side has a bit of a slip-up and you can lose and the underdog can win.

I'm not happy that we lost today, but I'm thrilled for Holland. They're an up and coming associate country as well, and they've got a good side there now.

Q. Do you think that also conditions have played a part in evening up things, perhaps bringing the bowlers into the game more, the Kookaburra, the one bat that they're using, has done a little bit more? Do you think that's more important rather than seeing as we often do bowlers who become basically bowling machines on concrete tracks?

DAVID HOUGHTON: I'm a big fan of the game being a contest of bat and ball, so I like to see fairness on both sides of it.

This has been an interesting tournament because, I don't know about the other side, I thought we were coming to Australia summer, and I've probably been colder here than I have been most places of my life.

The ball has swung and swung quite a lot, and the seamers have come into the game a lot. Over the years,

I'm sure the statistics will tell you, that the spinners have better quality and better wicket taking, but in this tournament it's been about the seamers.

Q. As you said taking over four months ago and talking about that journey, what was, I guess, the most challenging part of getting this side turned around and to the point where they are now? And what's impressed you the most?

DAVID HOUGHTON: The most challenging part was trying to get them to play this confident, fearless cricket. I call it fearless cricket, but it's basically not reckless, not throwing your life away, but it's actually taking the attack to the opposition and not just standing back and hoping they'll have a bad day.

That was the biggest challenge for me because the team had not been winning when I arrived. I obviously have had a lot to do with some cricket over the years and I've been there with domestic cricket, and I've seen the talent that's available, not just in this team, but throughout the country. There's some very, very skilled and talented players that I've really enjoyed watching. All I wanted to get them to do is bring that skill and talent to the table in a national game.

So it took them a little while to get them into it, but once they got into it -- I'll refer here to the three one-day series against Australia, where there's a huge gulf between the two sides, but we walked up there with every intention of winning.

When we played the first game, we were 190/3 with ten overs to go. We tried to bat it through because it wasn't a particularly good wicket, and we got bowled out and lost the game.

The second game we tried to be positive from the start and lost wickets all the way down and were 90/0 and lost that game. The problem is we lost two tosses and were put in first.

The third game, we won the toss, and we bowled them out and knocked them off.

When you look at that, from our point of view, we came to win that series 3-0. Then Zimbabwe against Australia, that's unheard of. It wasn't we wanted to win a game in Australia. We honestly believed that, if we played well, we could win that series.

Q. Bearing that in mind, are you disappointed that the World Super League is going to be dumped and perhaps you might not get as many opportunities to play sides like Australia?

DAVID HOUGHTON: Yeah, I think most of the sides in our position and associate member sides, we always ask

and request for more games against the big sides. The only way you're going to get better is if you're testing yourselves against the best on a slightly more often basis.

We've talked about in the past in Africa being anybody who's coming to play South Africa, because they obviously attract the big nations, surely they can come via us and play a game or two with us. Just little things like that, either on the way in or on the way out, it would help us play games against bigger sides.

But I think every side from us and below would say the same thing. We need more games against the big nations.

Q. Finally, we've been seeing how much people have enjoyed the grounds and we've been seeing clips on social media of people back home like enjoying this. There was a version back home to celebrate the win against Pakistan. Can you describe how much it means for people back home for people across race divides coming back together to enjoy cricket?

DAVID HOUGHTON: It has meant a helluva lot to the people at home. Not just people at home, but Zimbabweans all around the world. The message we get on a regular basis from everybody has been unbelievable.

We've had quite a few night games in this tournament, and we get back to the hotel at half 11:00, and I'm still answering messages at 4:00, 5:00 in the morning. It's been unbelievable. We know how it's been taken at home.

The thing is they've enjoyed the way we play. They've enjoyed the fact that we are able to come out and stand toe-to-toe with some of the best. And even though we have lost today, they will still have enjoyed watching us, and they'll still be proud of us.

I said to the guys after the game, win or lose, our crowd's behind us, and you guys have brought the game back to life in Zimbabwe.

Q. Going into the Super 12s, you talked about doing damage against some of the bigger teams. You did that against Pakistan. How frustrating was it then after that, after that high, to then lose to Bangladesh and to Netherlands? And how damaging was that in terms of your bid to qualify for the next World Cup?

DAVID HOUGHTON: I haven't looked that far ahead about the you qualifying for the next World Cup. It's not damaging to us to lose matches. It's disappointing.

As I said, the game against Bangladesh, I thought we did pretty well to get into the game. It was a very tight game,

down to the last ball. We could have won it. And we've been outplayed today by Holland. It's not the end of the world for us.

For me, we're actually playing some really good cricket, and I'm looking forward to the next challenge, which I believe is Afghanistan next month when they come to our place.

Q. Just a quick follow-up as well. You did move around, especially at the top, especially moving around ridges. Can you just give us some insights into what was your thinking in terms of playing around with that top order in the Super 12?

DAVID HOUGHTON: I think the biggest reason for playing around with it is we're not getting enough runs out of various players. We've been literally living on some runs from Sean Williams and Raza for the last short while and one or two contributions from Wessly and occasionally from Craig Ervine. So it's been difficult.

We're having to move people around to adjust the order a little bit to make life easier, so hopefully we get bigger contributions from everyone.

As I said right at the start of this interview, our batting has been brittle throughout this tournament, so we've done incredibly well to get to where we've got to.

Q. My question is after playing Pakistan and giving a tough fight to Bangladesh, you played against Netherlands today, what do you think are the columns that you will fill in for the next matches and for qualifying for the next World Cup? What are the columns you need to fill in? Like batting department unit to work on? What do you think?

DAVID HOUGHTON: When you're a side like ours, you're developing all the time. Obviously batting is one of the areas we need to really focus on. We've got quite a good and strong domestic tournament going on in Zimbabwe nowadays, and we've got some overseas players playing in every team that we have.

So there's a lot to work on over the next four to five months, and I don't know towards the next qualifying thing, but certainly batting is going to be our biggest problem and one that we need solving.

Q. After the game set, you guys were a bit split on what to do after winning that toss. So with hindsight, would it have been a good toss to lose? And second one, Sikandar bowled just one over. Any specific reasons behind that?

DAVID HOUGHTON: The first one, it's so easy after you lose a game to try to point a finger to the toss, but I'm sure, as the Dutch guys will tell you when they're next up

here, the ball was still moving around when they batted. We passed the edge of their openers many times with the ball.

So I don't think the toss is the reason. Batting first has always been the way we like to play. It just didn't work today unfortunately. We didn't bat well.

Sikandar Raza not bowling any more than the one over was pretty simply because there was a lot in the wicket today for the seamers. The ball swung around throughout the game, and it nipped a little bit off the grass.

So I think Craig in the middle probably thought his best chance to win this game was to take ten wickets, and the seamers were the best chance to do that.

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