

GLENN MCGRATH

Hungry like a wolf

REUTERS, Potchefstroom

Australia fast bowler Glenn McGrath sensed his side had the upper hand over India in their World Cup Pool A match on Saturday when Sachin Tendulkar started talking to him.

"After one pull shot he attempted I just mentioned to him 'make sure you pick the right one to have a go at' and he had a go at me for not bowling at the stumps," McGrath told reporters.

"I said 'Why should I bowl straight, you always smash them when I bowl at the stumps.'

"We get on well off the field but generally there is not a great deal said between us on the ground.

"For him to have a go at me for not bowling straight meant I was

frustrating him and doing my job well," he added.

Australia's ability to frustrate the leading run-scorer in World Cup history, restricting Tendulkar to 36 in more than two hours at the crease, typified the effective way Ricky Ponting's men have gone about their business.

A major reason for their fast start to the tournament, in which they have beaten Pakistan by 82 runs and India by nine wickets, has been McGrath's return to form and fitness.

The 33-year-old, Australia's second-most successful bowler in one-day cricket behind Shane Warne, suffered a side strain in late December and missed most of the triangular series against England and Sri Lanka.

The bad news for opposing teams is that McGrath's lay-off has left him raring to go as he showed with one for 39 against Pakistan and one for 23 from eight overs at Centurion Park, including three successive maidens, two of them to Tendulkar.

"The idea was always to ensure I was back to full fitness for the World Cup and be keen to go and that is exactly how it has turned out," he said.

"I got to spend some extra time with my family, which was a bonus, and now I am fresh coming over here after not a great deal of cricket."

That freshness means that although Ponting has hinted his top pace bowlers may be rested before the Super Sixes and the knock-out

stages of the tournament, that is not McGrath's preferred option.

"I would like to play in every game of this World Cup," he said.

"If it is in the best interests of the side for one of the quicks, myself included, to rest then that is fine by me.

"But I have just come off a month of not much cricket, I am fresh, keen and ready to go and with three or four days between each match there is plenty of time to recover.

"It is only about bowling 10 overs every game, even though it is a bit more intense than say a Test match, and I have been pulling up really well.

"If I played in every game and

SEE PAGE 15

No way back for Warne

INTERNET, Centurion

Australia will be allowed to replace Shane Warne at the World Cup. International Cricket Council (ICC) general manager Dave Richardson revealed the defending champions could bring a new player into the squad even though Warne's likely omission would be due to suspension, not injury.

Warne is still awaiting the result of his B sample after the A sample from a test performed in Sydney last month tested positive for a diuretic.

"That's the rule set out before the tournament," said Richardson.

"If they bring someone in they can't bring Warne back. They haven't told us what they are intending to do as yet. I guess they are still waiting for (Warne's) B sample results."

There had been conjecture about whether Australia should be permitted to replace Warne because he was being forced out by his decision - innocently or otherwise - to take the diuretic.

It was a different situation to the plainly unlucky injury that ended South African Jonty Rhodes' tournament.

Australian selectors are yet to name a replacement for Warne.

The matter of whether the ICC should allow Warne to be replaced, in light of his positive test, has been debated since his departure last week. Australian one-day captain Ricky Ponting called on the ICC and the ACB to make a prompt ruling, so as not to leave his squad one-man short as the tournament progresses.

Media wrath

REUTERS, Johannesburg

The recriminations were already underway in South Africa on Monday as Shaun Pollock's team faced up to the prospect of early elimination from the cricket World Cup.

The team's hopes, according to The Citizen newspaper, were "hanging by a thread" following Sunday's nine-wicket defeat by New Zealand at the Wanderers.

"The hosts' performance was a far cry from what is expected from a team tipped as one of the tournament's favourites," it added.

South Africa have now lost two of their three Pool B games. Crucially, those two defeats came against close rivals West Indies and the New Zealanders, whose victory was clinched by captain Stephen Fleming's fine 134 not out.

To qualify, the home side now have to beat group leaders Sri Lanka - they have eight points and two wins out of two - and hope West Indies do the same. Rain ruining their opponents' matches is the only other hope.

In effect, Pollock's men could be on their way out of the tournament as early as February 28, more than three weeks before the final, if Sri Lanka see off the West Indies in Cape Town.

That would reduce South Africa's game against the Sri Lankans on March 3 in Durban to little more than a wake.

"Polly's men staring down the barrel," was how Business Day referred to Pollock's side on its front page.

It pointed the finger at "a staggering display of short-pitched and misdirected bowling" by the hosts' bowlers, adding: "It all went horribly pear-shaped."

Pollock himself, while outwardly defiant, conceded after Sunday's defeat: "Things are now out of our control. We'll be watching a couple of games pretty keenly.

SEE PAGE 15

Vintage venom

REUTERS/AFP, Kimberley

Pakistan all-rounder Wasim Akram celebrated his record-breaking 34th World Cup appearance with a typically inspired performance to help his team to a crushing 171-run victory over Namibia on Sunday.

The veteran left-armed smashed his way through the feeble Africans' batting line-up and into the World Cup record books.

Wasim scored an unbeaten 20 off just 14 deliveries before ripping through their opponents' top order on the way to figures of five wickets for 28 runs.

Wasim, making a record 34th World Cup appearance, took his tally in cricket's showpiece to 50 as he and Shoaib Akhtar sent the

African minnows crashing to 84 all out at Kimberley.

Shoaib chipped in with 4-46 as the 1992 champions bounced back from their heavy defeat at the hands of Australia to record a 171-run win.

While the result kept Pakistan in the hunt for a place in the Super Sixes, the match was a personal triumph for Wasim.

Not only did he pass Steve Waugh and Javed Miandad's record of 33 World Cup appearances, but he also took his career total of 498 international wickets to one, well ahead of any other bowler in history.

Wasim's destructive spell was Pakistan's best ever at the World Cup, bettering the 5-35 by spinner Saqlain Mushtaq against

Bangladesh four years ago.

Pakistan had scored 255-9 from 50 overs after electing to bat in the Pool A match before Wasim and Shoaib careered through the Namibian order.

"It will be fun after 20 years to see how many bowlers have claimed 50 wickets in the World Cup," the veteran left-arm seamer Wasim said.

"If you play for 17-18 years and stay fit, you are bound to get records. The important thing is to enjoy the game which I am doing a lot.

"The guys all congratulated me for breaking the record but this was just like any other game for me," Wasim said.

SEE PAGE 15



WASIM AKRAM

They'll keep protesting

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's World Cup players Andy Flower and Henry Olonga are set to continue their black armband protest against the regime of president Robert Mugabe when their team plays India here on Wednesday.

The two men, who have kept their places in the team for the Pool A game, escaped punishment last week from the International Cricket Council (ICC) for their protest as well as for releasing a powerful statement condemning the conditions in the country, during the game against Namibia on February 10.

The two players, widely applauded for their brave stand, were not available for comment on Monday but a team source told AFP that the protest goes on.

"I doubt whether they will change their minds," the source said.

Although the ICC declined to take any action against Flower and Olonga, they did ask them to desist from displaying black armbands which the two said would be worn

SEE PAGE 14

Why minnows?

INTERNET, undated

The Netherlands, presumably the next bug on the windshield of Australia's World Cup juggernaut, haven't won a match in the tournament, haven't faced a bowler approaching Brett Lee's pace and haven't beaten Australia since 1964.

Accordingly, several former Test players have questioned the role of the minnow nations - Holland, Namibia, Canada and, despite their dubious Test-playing status, Bangladesh - believing their presence serves only to draw out the tournament.

Former South Africa captain Kepler Wessels said matches such as Australia versus Holland served little purpose and urged organisers to revert to the eight-team format instead of the 14-team competition.

"I think certainly a lot of these teams are out of their depth and I wonder how much it does for cricket," Wessels said. "I think it detracts a little from the tournament.

When there was an eight-team format, with the top four advancing to the next round, every game was meaningful. Now there are too many matches that don't mean much."

Jeff Thomson concurred, saying games against stronger nations merely eroded the confidence of cricket's minnows. But unlike Wessels, Thomson said teams such as the Roland Lefebvre-led Dutch squad deserved a place at the World Cup - albeit in a separate section of the draw.

By winning the ICC qualification tournament, the Netherlands qualified first among the three non-Test playing nations. Yet the majority of their domestic matches are played on artificial turf. And before the tournament, the team imported bowling machines in an attempt to feel, for the first time, the force of a 150-160 kmh delivery.

The Dutch squad is entirely amateur and most had to squabble with employers to gain time off work for the cup. Only the 40-year-old Lefebvre has first-class experience,

although opener Daan van Bunge has reportedly accepted an invitation to play in England next season.

"They should play in a little bracket that might qualify one or two of them for super sixes," Thomson said. "That would be better than us playing these obvious games where they're going to get their backsides kicked.

"If they played amongst themselves and the best two went through to the next group it would be better than everyone else ripping through them early. It gives two of them the chance to go further than they otherwise would. It gives them extra incentive. They'd have better games amongst themselves and it would be a better TV spectacle than a lopsided cakewalk."

Australian captain Ricky Ponting, though, believes minnows should play the tournament proper to assist the growth of cricket worldwide.

SEE PAGE 14

Shoaib thunderbolt



PHOTO: AFP

UNLEASHING THUNDER! Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar bowled the fastest ball (159.1 kmph against Namibia) ever recorded in a World Cup

AFP/REUTERS, Kimberley

Pakistan tearaway Shoaib Akhtar recorded the fastest delivery in World Cup history on Sunday, then said speed mattered little to him as long as he took wickets.

One of his deliveries was timed at 159.1 km/h, just under 100 mph, making it one of the fastest balls ever bowled. He hurled down the delivery to Namibian tail-ender Rudie van Vuuren during Sunday's 171-run romp in South Africa, in which he claimed four wickets.

"I am delighted to have bowled the fastest ball in the World Cup but I am here to take wickets and put my team on the right track to win the title," he told AFP on Monday.

The 27-year-old, dubbed the "Rawalpindi Express", holds the unofficial record of bowling the fastest delivery at 100.04 miles per hour during a one-day game against New Zealand in Lahore in May last year.

"For me the delivery I bowled in Lahore was the fastest," he said. "It's okay to hit the speedometer as long as I keep taking wickets."

"The four wickets I took on Sunday were very satisfying even if it was only against Namibia."

Soon after the game ended, the World Cup debutants from Namibia rushed to the Pakistani dressing room to seek Shoaib's autograph.

Shoaib and Australian Brett Lee, rated the fastest bowlers in the world, have both vowed not to indulge in a pace race during the World Cup, concentrating instead on taking wickets.

When the two squared off during Australia's 82-run win over Pakistan

SEE PAGE 14

'Irresponsible Ganguly'

INTERNET, Johannesburg

Slamming an 'irresponsible' Saurav Ganguly for India's humiliating World Cup loss against Australia, cricket legend Imran Khan said the Indian captain should follow the example of Steve Waugh and learn how to pull the team out of the woods.

"The captain should be leading by example, especially when the team is low on confidence," the cricketer-turned politician said.

"But you cannot describe the way Ganguly batted as a captain. It was a very irresponsible shot he played to get out. How can he expect the rest of his team to fight against the Aussies when he plays like that?" asked Imran, who led Pakistan to their only World Cup title in 1992 in Australia.

Indian batsmen, who struggled against Holland in their first match, could manage only 125 against Australia yesterday, which the world champions overtook in less than 23 overs losing only one wicket.

"If you look at the 1999 World Cup, it belonged to Australia captain Steve Waugh. He lifted the spirits of

SEE PAGE 15

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa batsman Herschelle Gibbs admitted here Monday that the team were still struggling to cope with the absence of former captain Hansie Cronje.

"His leadership skills made him the icon that he was," said Gibbs, speaking a day after his commanding 143 at the Wanderers had still not been enough to prevent a New Zealand victory.

"The passion with which Cronje played meant he was always keen and always believed we could win from any situation.

"Shaun (Pollock, the current South Africa captain) is quite new to being a captain and he's obviously still got a lot to learn," added Gibbs, speaking at the launch of 'Herschelle, A Biography'.

"But he was the guy who was vice-captain and the first guy that was obviously in charge after the stuff broke out."

"The stuff Gibbs was referring to was the corruption scandal Cronje lured him into which saw Gibbs suspended for six months and Cronje, who died in a June plane crash, banned for life.

However, in spite of the fact Cronje almost cost him his career, Gibbs added: "We do miss him and Jonty (Rhodes) and Allan (Donald) - two of Cronje's oldest international colleagues - made no mistake of making their feelings known about

that.

"I think his leadership skills and experience as a captain is something we do miss," said Gibbs after defeats by the West Indies and New Zealand had left South African hopes of qualifying for the tournament's second phase hanging by a thread.

But Gibbs insisted South Africa could still bounce back, despite their poor start and the huge expectation.

"Shaun (Pollock, the current South Africa captain) is quite new to being a captain and he's obviously still got a lot to learn," added Gibbs, speaking at the launch of 'Herschelle, A Biography'.

"But he was the guy who was vice-captain and the first guy that was obviously in charge after the stuff broke out."

"The stuff Gibbs was referring to was the corruption scandal Cronje lured him into which saw Gibbs suspended for six months and Cronje, who died in a June plane crash, banned for life.

However, in spite of the fact Cronje almost cost him his career, Gibbs added: "We do miss him and Jonty (Rhodes) and Allan (Donald) - two of Cronje's oldest international colleagues - made no mistake of making their feelings known about

ground of Newlands in Cape Town on February 28.

Gibbs, who was once caught smoking marijuana in Antigua, joked that he was not expecting Newlands groundsman Christo Erasmus to prepare a pitch favouring the West Indies quicks and exploit Sri Lanka's vulnerability against pace bowling.

"He hasn't shared a pipe with us before so I don't think he'll leave the grass on," Gibbs joked.

"On a serious note, he added: "We can only play for a bit of pride. We still believe we're in with a chance. It's never nice to be in the situation we're in but we've only got ourselves to blame.

"It doesn't happen very often that you get a big hundred and lose the game," admitted Gibbs after seeing his hundred topped by one from New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming.

"But Fleming's innings was a special one and you've got to give him a bit of credit."

And Gibbs said the hype surrounding South Africa had not got to him. "I'm not one to worry too much about the pressure. How you play is up to you.

"But I'm sure the guys are maybe feeling a bit down and a bit hot under the collar, a bit pressurised. But we can only wait and hope."



HANSIE CRONJE

tations of their home supporters.

"It was obviously very disappointing yesterday," said Gibbs of South Africa's nine-wicket defeat by New Zealand.

"It's never nice to have your fate lie with other teams," added Gibbs knowing that South African hopes of qualifying depend on West Indies beating Sri Lanka at his home

Kaif's house attacked

INTERNET, Allahabad

Dejected by continued failures of local boy Mohammed Kaif, fans threw used mobil oil and black paint at the cricketer's house to vent their anger on Sunday.

The same people who had fussed over and pampered their 'very own' Kaif for his superlative show in the NatWest Trophy final in England last year, could not resist from giving a vent to their frustration after India slumped to a nine-wicket defeat against Australia.

Saddled by a poor run of form, Kaif failed yet again scoring just one run before being dismissed by a Jason Gillespie delivery.

The front wall of Kaif's three-story house in Kydganj area was blackened by cricket fanatics when they hurled used mobil oil and black paint filled in polythene bags, Kaif's elder brother Mohd Saif said.

"The family members were fast asleep when the incident took place," said Saif.

Kaif's father Mohd Tarif was the first to notice the wall and inform the police.

The family has demanded security cover in the wake of the incident.

SEE PAGE 14

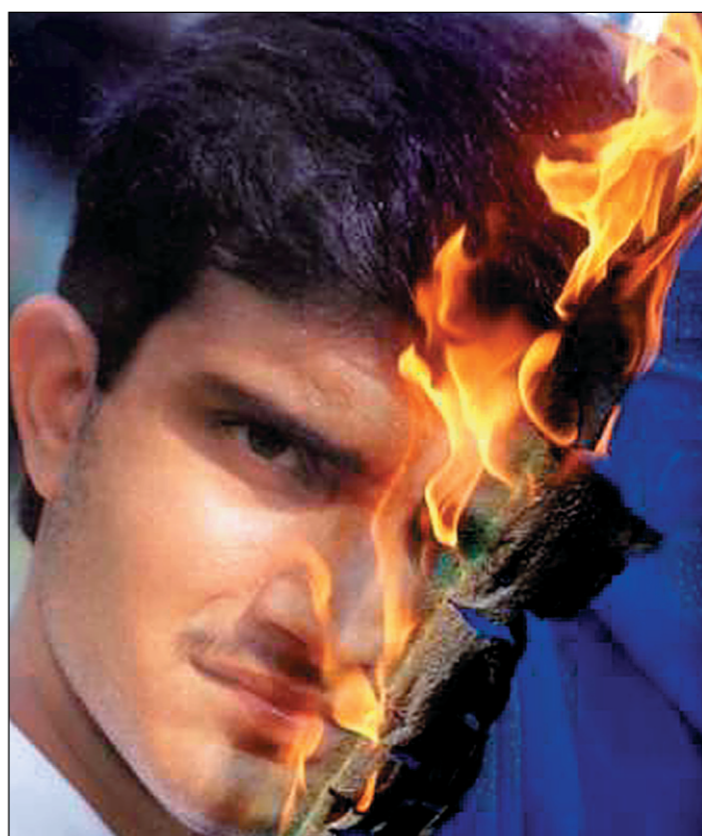


PHOTO: AFP

FEELING THE HEAT! Indian captain Saurav Ganguly's portrait being burnt by angry fans at Bombay yesterday.