

## AFRICAN TREATS

AL-AMIN from Johannesburg

The Wanderers stadium is definitely the premier cricket centre in the world. The 'bullring' in the heart of Johannesburg is renowned for generating an atmosphere that at times can be intimidating and also unforgettable.

There was no exception when a lesser team like Bangladesh played their final match against Kenya at the imposing venue. The atmosphere was electrifying with a huge holiday South African crowd cheering every run the Kenyans scored.

Not to be outdone some hundred or so Bangladeshi supporters tried their best to pump up the volume in their own 'unique way.'

The beauty of the venue's design is the small lush green stand on the western side that provides children with an ideal place to play.

That's not all. Each time there is a break in play, the

powerful in-field sound system rocks the audience with popular Queen number 'We will rock you.'

The modern four-storied Wanderers houses a variety of snack-bars on either side of the stands. Besides, souvenir-hunters can find items of their choice on every team that has played here during the competition.

No matter what happens on the field a visit to the Wanderers is always special.

### WOOLMER FOR BANGLADESH?

Bob Woolmer is a regular visitor to every Kenya game. The high-profile former South African coach is nowadays also helping the three other ICC associate member nations - Canada, Namibia and the Netherlands develop the game.

However, the ex-England cricketer was the first to admit he knew little about Bangladesh while talking to journalists yesterday.

On whether he was interested to take over as Bangladesh coach, the charismatic coach gave a vague answer.

"I have got all the time in the world. But I have not been approached. I'm also hearing a lot of stories."

### GOOD BOWLING BUT TERRIBLE FIELDING

At long last the Bangladesh's limited attack made an impact. Young Taposh Baisya bowled his heart out in company with Manjurul Islam. Experienced Khaled Mahmud also was brilliant when it was his turn to operate.

Unfortunately the same could not be said of the fielding.

The butter-fingered fielders spilled as many as five catches. Captain Khaled Mashud had a nightmare behind the stumps twice dropping the ball.

So instead of picking up four wickets medium-pacer Mahmud

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# Tale of two cities

REUTERS, New Delhi/Islamabad

Cricket-crazy fans throughout India and Pakistan were glued to their television sets on Saturday as the two countries played in what has been billed as the "Clash of the Centurion".

The two hostile neighbours, who nearly went to war last year over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, were in action in a World Cup group game with deep political undertones at Centurion Park in South Africa.

"An India-Pakistan match is war. It's the best way for the two countries to fight without people getting killed," said businessman Rahul Rathi in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta.

In Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore, marketing executive Asad-ul-Haque, 31, said he would not miss a second of the match. "Work is going to take a backseat no way I'd miss this match."

Cricket is like a religion in both countries, which have gone to war three times since independence in 1947, twice over Kashmir, but it reaches fever pitch when they play each other.

The last time the countries played was in June 2000 in the Asia Cup in Dhaka when Pakistan triumphed. The Indian government has banned all bilateral cricket with Pakistan since then because of tensions over Kashmir.

Streets and markets on both sides of the border were deserted as young and old watched the action and some fans painted their faces in the colours of their national flags.

In New Delhi, cinemas abandoned movies and screened the match instead. Earlier in the day, people on both sides of the border prayed at temples, mosques and churches for their countries to win.

In Muslim-majority Indian Kashmir, where a deadly revolt against New Delhi's rule has raged since 1989, fans with divided loyalties clustered outside television shops showing the match.

"Me, my sister and my mother are big supporters of Pakistan but my dad supports India," said 23-year-old Tahira Kounser in Srinagar, summer capital of

Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan are the runaway leaders in battles between the two sides with a 52-29 head-to-head record but they have never beaten India in three previous World Cup encounters and India entered Saturday's game as favourites on current form.

Still, Pakistani fans were hoping their team would overpower India. "I'm really sure (fast bowler) Shoaib Akhtar will deliver," said Raheela, an Islamabad college student, who had gathered with friends to watch the match.

But the intense passions have a darker side and authorities on both sides of the border said they had stepped up security in case the mood of fans turns ugly.

"Who cares about the World Cup. India had better win this match!" said New Delhi cricket fan Saket Rai.

Just two weeks ago, irate fans in India were berating their country's cricketers after their poor World Cup start.

Captain Saurav Ganguly was given a mock funeral in Calcutta while black paint was hurled at middle-order batsman Mohammad Kaif's house in the northern Indian city of Allahabad.

"In case Pakistan lose, we could see a 1996 World Cup-like situation when losing to India in Bangalore sparked a wave of agitation against Wasim Akram who was the skipper then," Abdul Mohi Shah, a sports commentator, said in Islamabad.

## NZ hit by injuries

INTERNET, Benoni

New Zealand's preparations for their last World Cup Pool B match against Canada suffered a double setback on Friday with injuries to batsman Lou Vincent and fast bowler Kyle Mills.

Vincent will definitely miss the match after injuring a finger and Mills is struggling with a hamstring problem.

"Vincent dislocated his left

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PHOTO: AFP

WHO NEEDS TO GO TO SOUTH AFRICA! An Indian father and son watch the match against Pakistan on a giant screen at a beach in Madras yesterday.

# Lightning Lee

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

Australia fast bowler Brett Lee believes his World Cup spell against Namibia was his quickest ever, but he still thinks he can bowl faster.

Lee bowled two balls recorded at 158.8kph (98.67mph) during his six-over stint against the part-timers in Potchefstroom on Thursday, sending an ominous message to Australia's next opponents England ahead of their Pool A match on Sunday.

"That was probably the quickest spell I have ever bowled consistently," Lee said on Friday.

"I think only two balls were less than 148 kilometres an hour (91.96) and most balls were in the 150s which was pleasing."

"I'm more mature as a fast bowler, my body is filling out more and I feel I can bowl quicker and quicker each match."

"Whether that means I can bowl at 160 kilometres an hour we will have to wait and see but I think I can bowl faster."

Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar has already broken the 100mph (160.9kph) barrier at this World Cup but Lee's current form will only intensify media speculation about which of the pair really is the fastest bowler around.

For Lee, however, the question is not really relevant.

"Most important is taking wickets for Australia and that is the key to work on," he said.

"It is great that Shoaib has broken 160 as we are great mates and I know what it meant to him to finally achieve it."

"But if it was a case of taking three or four wickets for Australia or breaking 160, I'd take the wickets every time."

Lee's recent exploits suggest he is returning to the sort of form he

showed when he first emerged on the international scene in 1999-2000.

The New South Wales fast bowler took 42 wickets in only seven Tests before he was sidelined by first a back injury and then a freak accident when he broke his right elbow fielding, an injury that required surgery.

That happened in January 2001 and by June he was back in the Australian side on the Ashes tour, but his form was not at the consistently high level it had been before the injuries.

"It has taken a while to get back," said Lee. "After the operation on my elbow I expected to come back too soon, after just six months."

"I had a good chat with Shane Warne and he said 12 to 18 months would be more realistic."

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PHOTO: AFP

WELCOME BACK! Pakistan opener Saeed Anwar acknowledging the applause from the stands after reaching his hundred against India yesterday.

# Streak starts to plot against history

AFP, Bulawayo

Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak on Saturday began plotting the downfall of Pakistan who stand in the way of his team and a place in the next round of the World Cup.

But his men will have to buck the trend of history if they are to defeat Waqar Younis' side in Tuesday's make-or-break clash as Zimbabwe have only won two of the 31 one-dayers they have played against Pakistan with their last win coming over three years ago.

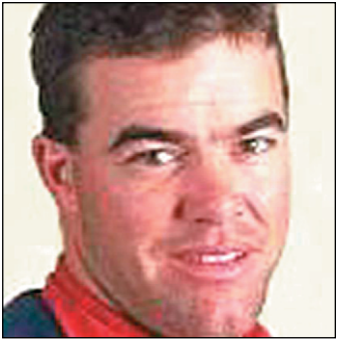
"We got off to a slow start against the Netherlands on Friday and we can't afford to do that against a team like Pakistan," said Streak after the 99-run win over the Dutchmen kept them on course for the Super Sixes.

"Our top order will have to be much more confident, even dominating, so that the pressure is taken off our middle order."

"Several of our batsmen made good starts but only a couple went on to convert them into decent scores. Andy Blynnat played a major cameo role and he helped us reach 300 runs," said the skipper who played in his country's last win

against Pakistan in Sheikhupura in 1999.

He took 3-40 as his team wrapped up a six wicket win that day but ever since it's been one



HEATH STREAK

long tale of woe with 11 defeats on the trot.

Streak should also be able to welcome back Grant Flower who missed the win over the Dutch because of a finger injury which required five stitches.

"The selectors thought they would risk giving him a rest against

the Netherlands because we need him as a specialist fielder, to bowl ten overs and bat as well."

Overall, Streak thinks that his team are peaking at the right time for the crucial clash at the Queens Sports Club.

"We needed to win against the Dutch and win well and we did that. Against Pakistan that will be a big game but we will take a lot of positives from the game into Tuesday."

"Everything's looking good and the team is working hard. The bowlers are delivering it on the right length and we want to carry that on and give Pakistan a hard time."

Meanwhile, Dutch skipper Roland Lefebvre said they had had no qualms about going to Zimbabwe unlike England who dithered and dithered until they announced a boycott of their scheduled match in Harare earlier in the tournament.

"The ICC said it was safe and so it has proved. We were quite comfortable and the wicket was the best we have played on in this tournament."

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## Harper to quit after the Cup

INTERNET, Cape Town

Roger Harper yesterday confirmed he will not be the West Indies coach when his present contract expires.

Speaking at the team's hotel, the Cullinan Waterfront in Cape Town, Harper, whose three-year contract expires at the end of the World Cup, said he did not apply for the job and did not do so because of personal reasons.

"The reason is a simple one," said Harper. "I want to spend more time with my family. I want to be more settled. The travelling is too much for me. It is difficult for my family, and for me, when they are at home and I am on the other side of the world so often."

The former Guyana and West Indies offspinner wants to remain in cricket, however.

"Cricket is my life," said Harper, "it has always been my life, and I hope that I can stay in the game in one area or another."

One of the people who applied for the job is former England offspinner Jack Birkenshaw, and although the West Indies Board is tight-lipped about it, news out of England suggests that he may be the new West Indies coach.

Two days ago, the British newspapers reported that Birkenshaw

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# Jayasuriya knew it all the way

REUTERS, Cape Town

Sri Lanka captain Sanath Jayasuriya said he was always confident his team would bounce back from their shock loss to Kenya and beat West Indies in Friday's crunch World Cup Pool B match.

Sri Lanka's hopes of making the Super Sixes were left hanging by a thread after the Kenya defeat but they recovered to edge out West Indies by six runs and virtually assure themselves of a place in the next round.

"It is a big relief for us, especially after the disappointing result in Nairobi," Jayasuriya told a news conference. "We didn't do well in the last match so there was a lot of pressure on us."

"It was a big match, there was a lot of pressure, but we played well."

Sri Lanka briefly looked to be in trouble when they finished with a modest total of 228 for six after winning the toss, but they picked up wickets at vital stages to restrict West Indies to 222 for nine.

"When we got 228 we thought it was good total with our bowlers," Jayasuriya said. "We lost a few early wickets which stopped us getting more runs but we thought it was enough."

Sri Lanka, world champions in 1996, have already been one of the surprises of the tournament.

They came into the event after unsuccessful tours of South Africa and Australia but cruised through their first three matches against New Zealand, Bangladesh and C a n a d a

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Sanath Jayasuriya

## Proteas picking up

REUTERS, Durban

A good performance from World Cup hosts South Africa is just around the corner, according to their coach Eric Simons.

The South African squad are in Durban to prepare for their Pool B match against Sri Lanka on Monday, a game they must win if they are to progress to the Super Six stage.

South Africa have looked tentative and nervous in the first three weeks of the tournament, losing to West Indies and New Zealand and on Thursday failing to dismiss a dogged Canadian side in a distinctly unconvincing victory.

However, Simons says the players are determined to turn their fortunes around at Kingsmead on Monday.

"Lance Klusener said that if you could choose a venue to play Sri Lanka anywhere in the world it would be Kingsmead, so we want to take that positive and build on it," Simons told reporters at the team hotel on Friday.

"Nothing unites the guys better than having their backs to the wall."

There is a sense in the team that a really good performance is just around the corner."

The area in which South Africa

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CAN'T DO ANYTHING BUT PRAY NOW: West Indies skipper Carl Hooper (R) makes a point to chief selectors Vivian Richards at Cape Town recently.

## Unrepentant Hooper

AFP, Cape Town

West Indian captain Carl Hooper, contemplating an early departure from the World Cup, said he had no regrets about a controversial policy to select only three specialist bowlers.

"We've employed this policy for the past year. If I had to do it all over again I'd do it the same way," said Hooper after a six-run defeat by Sri Lanka at Newlands Friday almost certainly put the West Indies out of the tournament.

"I'm very disappointed. It all looked so promising," added the captain of a campaign which started on a high when his team beat South Africa in the opening

match at the same ground on February 9.

Hooper said there had been no temptation to include more than three fast bowlers in order to take advantage of Sri Lanka's vulnerability against pace on a pitch with good bounce.

He said the fact that Sri Lanka had scored only 228 for six after winning the toss justified the tactics.

"Chasing a score like that, we should have got it," he said.

The West Indian captain refused to blame the fact that his team had to bat second under the floodlights

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