

Fergie can't take it!

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson has launched a scathing broadside against what he described as the "bragging" of Premiership leaders Arsenal.

Ferguson, a past master in turning up the psychological heat at the decisive end of the season, made it clear he had been deeply irritated by the confidence his Arsenal opposite number, Arsene Wenger, has displayed all season.

The Frenchman has made no attempt to hide his belief that his side will deservedly retain their league crown.

After Arsenal moved eight points clear of United with their win over Charlton on Sunday, Wenger's confidence appeared to be justified.

But Ferguson insisted his side, due to face Leeds on Wednesday night, would be ready to exploit any slip-ups by their rivals.

"When you are over-confident, as Arsenal have been, football can come back and kick you. That's why we have to keep going," Ferguson said.

"The situation is quite clear we have to win games. There is no doubt about that or else Arsenal will be over the horizon.

"But Arsenal have been confident. They talk confident and that's coming from all of them.

"You wouldn't get us acting like that. When you compare the two clubs it doesn't matter how many trophies we have won, we have never gone into that bragging game.



ALEX FERGUSON

"It's not our style and the nature of football is that it can come back and give you a kick in the teeth.

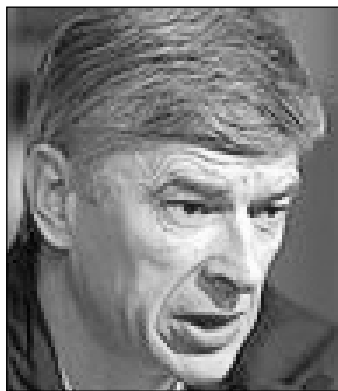
"We are capable of winning our remaining nine games. We are capable of winning any game and we have shown that time and time again, but the important thing is to win them and not just be capable of winning them."

Ferguson has demanded that his players show a reaction to their League Cup final defeat by Liverpool on Sunday.

"After Sunday we now have to depend on players with real character. We have to progress and

make sure we keep the pressure on Arsenal."

Ferguson is determined that his side will still be in the title race when they travel to Highbury on April 15.



ARSENE WENGER

But Leeds boss Terry Venables told him he should now concentrate on winning the Champions League, in which United have reached the quarter-finals with two games to spare.

"They (United) had their problems earlier in the season, and they have done well to now get where they are, but Arsenal have been so strong I can't see them letting it go.

"With the Champions League, while Arsenal have done well, the experience Manchester United have gained, they seem to be cashing in on that."

Houllier for life?

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Gerard Houllier can have the Liverpool manager's job for the rest of his career if he wants it said the club's chief executive Rick Parry on Tuesday and not just because of Sunday's 2-0 victory over archrivals Manchester United in the League Cup final.

Parry claimed there had never been any question of the former French national coach being removed from his post when Liverpool slumped from top of the Premiership to their worst run in nearly 50 years.

They were also dumped out of the Champions League in the first phase and the FA Cup by First Division Crystal Palace.

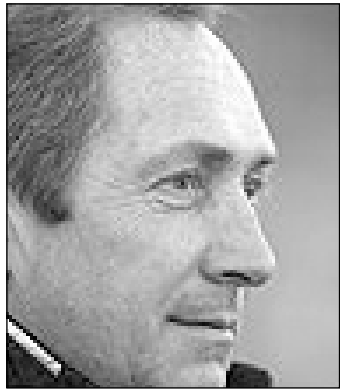
"That's what we are hoping for," Parry told the Liverpool Echo when asked whether he would like Houllier to stay at the club for the rest of his career.

"We were confident when we appointed Gerard he was the right man for the club and we were

delighted he came to Liverpool when he did.

"Our success under his management has been consistent.

"We never take any notice of what anyone outside the club is



GERARD HOULLIER

saying because it simply wasn't an issue.

"Our view was very clear and nothing changed just because we have won the League Cup."

Parry, a former chief executive of the Premier League before taking up his post at Liverpool, said there had been contrary to press reports no anxiety over the mid-season slump.

"We don't panic at Liverpool,"

he said.

"It was always our intention to keep him (Houllier) at Liverpool for the long haul, as he said last week, and that was always going to be the case."

"During the difficult few weeks we had it was important we all stuck together and were supportive of each other."

"I think this is one of the great qualities of our club and we knew he would lead us to further success," added Parry, who was chief executive of the Premier League before taking up his duties at Liverpool.

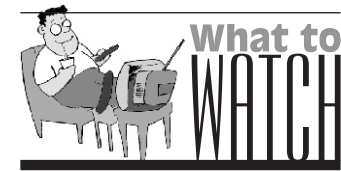
Parry said the 55-year-old handler, who underwent open-heart surgery in October 2001 months after taking Liverpool to the League Cup, FA Cup and UEFA Cup treble, had never lost the belief the board had placed in him.

"Our belief in him has never wavered at any stage," Parry said.

"We have always been happy with the direction we were taking under Gerard. He has always had our full support."

"In many ways it (the League Cup victory) was the most satisfying cup win of all our recent successes."

"It's always satisfying to beat Manchester United, but especially in a cup final."



ESPN
Sportscentre Hindi
Sport News
Live at 8:30 pm
Taking Guard Super Six Preview
WC Cricket Programme
Live at 9:30 pm
STAR Sports
Harsha Online
Cricket Talk Show
Repeat at 7:00 am
Futbol Mundial
Taped Version at 6:30 pm
Sportsline Tonight
Sport News
Live at 8:00 pm
Taking Guard Super Six Series Preview
WC Cricket Programme
Live at 9:30 pm

Star WHIZZ KID
COMPETITION 191
Tick the correct answers, post to
The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
March 7, 2003 and draw
shortly afterwards

1. Who clinched the Shahjalal Bank International Rating Chess title?
Lovlu Rajib Zia
2. New Zealand beat South Africa in a World Cup Group B match by:
102 runs 9 wkts 5 wkts
3. How many runs did Bangladesh score against South Africa in the World Cup Group B match?
120 108 110
4. Bangladesh lost to Canada in the World Cup Group B match?
Name
.....
Class..... Roll No.....
School Address.....
Phone: (If any).....

Milan tracking Kaka

Football

AFP, Sao Paulo

Sao Paulo's World Cup winning midfielder Kaka is the target of Italian giants AC Milan in a 19.5-million-dollar bid, the Brazilian press reported on Tuesday.

The press said it was the influence of former Sao Paulo and AC Milan midfielder Leonardo, who will be involved in AC's youth programme next year, which was giving impetus to the proposed deal for the 20-year-old, who was a member of Brazil's World Cup winning squad last year.

"I am not up-to-date with what's happening but it would be great to work with Leonardo," Kaka told Red Globo television station.

"I would like to play in Europe but I don't know if it will happen

Dublin sorry

Football

AFP, London

Aston Villa striker Dion Dublin has apologised for headbutting Birmingham's Robbie Savage in Monday night's Scottish 2-0 defeat.

Dublin saw red following a clash with Savage in a game which saw Villa reduced to nine men.

"I am ashamed of what I have done," he said Tuesday.

"I've let the players, the manager and staff down - and most importantly I have let myself down."

Dublin's out-of-character display came after Savage had reacted to a fierce tackle from the striker.

He denied claims that his actions were sparked by a racist comment from Savage.

"That is completely untrue," he said.

"What was said is irrelevant. My actions were wrong. It was the wrong reaction."

"I called a meeting of my teammates and said sorry to them. I wanted to say sorry to their faces."

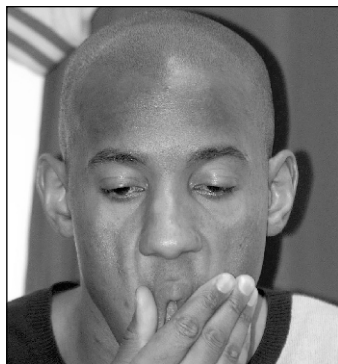
"I have never done anything like



KAKA

this time."

Sao Paulo club president Marcelo Portugal Gouvea said however he had not received an official offer and would not let Kaka leave for less than 20 million dollars.



DION DUBLIN

that in my career before. Where it came from, I just don't know. I just don't know why I reacted like that."

"Possibly it was partly frustration but I have got no explanation for my actions. It won't happen again."

"Words are exchanged in football in the heat of the moment, but I should not have reacted that way."

Aston Villa manager Graham Taylor said he would be taking disciplinary action against Dublin, who is likely to face a fine of two weeks' wages in addition to a three-match suspension.

We're ashamed

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ogies and would like to share the grief with every single follower of the game.

"The sun will rise again tomorrow and Inshallah (God willing) Pakistan will bounce back and cricket would continue to flourish."

The defeat put the careers of at least four senior players on the line: Wasim Akram, captain Waqar Younis, Saeed Anwar and Rashid Latif.

But Akram, the first bowler to take 500 one-day wickets, said he had not made up his mind about quitting even though he is unlikely to play in a World Cup again.

"This was not the swansong I had dreamt of," the 36-year-old Wasim told AFP.

"We did not do justice to our reputation and potential."

"Frankly, I have not decided about my future. I will talk it over with my family and friends and then make up my mind."

Wasim conceded Pakistan did not deserve to go through to the Super Sixes, just as hosts South Africa and England did not deserve to move up.

"All these three big teams struggled and it only shows one has to be consistent to go far," said Wasim, who played in his fifth World Cup.

Wicketkeeper Latif also said he may play on.

"I don't want to leave the team in such a bad state, but it all depends if the selectors want to pick me," Latif said.

He also denied reports in the Pakistani media that Younis had lost the support of his players.

"We all supported Waqar and everyone tried his best but nothing went right for us after we lost to Australia," Latif said.

Pakistan return home on Thursday before a team is picked to take part in the Sharjah Cup from April 1-10 against Sri Lanka and South Africa.

D-L targets go

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ised to be used in the remaining World Cup matches to eliminate any possibility of human error.

"Certainly with the scoreboards that we have in South Africa there's no reason why we can't display it on the scoreboard," Richardson said.

In one-day matches where no target is displayed on the board, captains often carry paper copies of the number of runs needed at different stages if the match is abandoned for rain or any other reason.

Elite umpire

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was pretty much pro the umpire and the losing captain was not.

"But I think they are becoming more professional about it and we get a lot more value from the captains' reports."

All five full time members of the ICC match referee panel, Clive Lloyd, Ranjan Madugala, Mike Procter, Wasim Raja and Gundaappa Viswanath will officiate in the Super Sixes.

SUPER SIX UMPIRES

Billy Bowden (New Zealand), Steve Bucknor (West Indies), Aleem Dar (Pakistan), Asoka de Silva (Sri Lanka), David Harper (Australia), Darrell Hair (Australia), Brian Jerling (South Africa), Rudi Koertzen (South Africa), David Shepherd (England), Simon Taufel (Australia), Srinivas Venkataraghavan (India), Peter Willey (England).

No sympathy

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communication but in these days of professional sport where you're being paid good money, you shouldn't really make that mistake."

Boucher didn't realise he needed one run from the final ball of the 45th over for South Africa to beat Sri Lanka and reach the Super Sixes stage.

Having already taken 13 runs from Muttiah Muralitharan's over, Boucher blocked the final ball, thinking the required total had been reached.

Hussain's resignation

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and their decision to forfeit their match against Zimbabwe in Harare because of security concerns were highlighted as key factors.

Former England player Derek Pringle, writing in the Daily Telegraph, said: "Before the World Cup, England were ranked sixth best one-day side in the world, a position that suggests a place in the Super Six was marginal at best."

"When you are no better than mid-table, you gift other sides four points at your peril and it is no coincidence that the beneficiaries of such charity, Kenya (from New Zealand) and Zimbabwe are both through to the next stage."

The Times added: "With some help from the coin, they managed a convincing victory over Pakistan, but their luck was reversed against India and they could not finish off Australia when they had them on the ground with a foot on their throat."

"The epitaph for England's tournament reads 135 for eight."

Australia were reduced to this score when chasing 204 and they won without losing another wicket.

"England lost because Hussain failed to go for the jugular."

It was a lack of conviction that characterises all of England's recent performances against Australia and, to a large degree, their one-day matches against all the leading nations."

A few high WI points

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, Johannesburg

From World Cup winners in 1975 and 1979 to comprehensive World Cup losers in 1999 and 2003, the West Indies' declining powers face another severe test in April when they host a Test series against Australia.

But the squad, who failed for the second successive time to make the Super Sixes, are determined to prove that they have the raw materials to bounce back.

Ramnaresh Sarwan finished second in the first round batting averages with 209 runs at 95.87 while Vasbert Drakes was equal first in the wicket-taking stakes with 16 alongside Sri Lanka's Chaminda Vaas.

"It's been a very disappointing World Cup for us but a lot of the players in the squad are still young and they will bounce back," said opener Chris Gayle whose 119 in the win over Kenya on Tuesday was the fifth of his career.

Bacher's cause for concern

ICC Cricket World Cup SOUTH AFRICA 2003

AFP, Johannesburg

World Cup organisers are set to spend an uncomfortable two days worrying whether the remainder of their showpiece tournament will be played out in front of half-empty houses.

South Africa's stunning exit in the rain of Durban on Monday has led to fears that the Super Sixes, which get underway on Friday, may go mostly unnoticed with fans registering their displeasure with their team's failings by voting with their feet.

"Everyone is disappointed that South Africa didn't progress to the Super Sixes," said Ali Bacher, executive director of the World Cup.

"We have shown the rest of the world we have the capability to host a global sporting event of this nature and we need the country to continue supporting in that way they have."

"I can understand South Africa's supporters' predicament, but we need the country to show how important the event is."

The tournament takes a breather on Wednesday and Thursday before the Super Six stage gets underway with a double-header on Friday when defending champions and overwhelming favourites Australia face Sri Lanka at Centurion and India take on Kenya in a day-nighter at Newlands in Cape Town.

Mixed bag

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against South Africa for 53 not out in a 118-run defeat.

Only Sunil Gavaskar, with 36 not out from 60 overs against England in the inaugural World Cup, has ever been more soporific.

If Davison set the tournament alight, Maraj did his best to douse the blaze with freezing water. Cricket's chiefs argue the lesser teams and that description must now include

Bangladesh after they extended their run of one-dayers without a win to 32 must be exposed to top-class competition to improve.

The critics, however, say that the World Cup is too big a forum to be devalued. Of the 40 games in the first round, 25 involved at least one minor side.

Of those 25, two ended in giant-killings, with Canada beating Bangladesh and Kenya beating Sri Lanka.

Former South Africa captain and Australia Test batsman Kepler Wessels argues the World Cup should be cut from 14 to eight teams.

"I think certainly a lot of these teams are out of their depth and I wonder how much it does for cricket," he says.

"There are too many matches that don't mean much."

Former Australia fast bowler Jeff Thomson agrees, arguing for a separate competition for smaller nations. "That would be better than us playing these obvious games where they're going to get their backsides kicked."

The ICC will point to Kenya's historic achievement in reaching the Super Sixes, even if they were helped by New Zealand's refusal to travel to Nairobi on security grounds.

The critics point instead to Canada's dismissal for a world record 36 against Sri Lanka. Sanath Jayasuriya's side needed 28 balls of their 50 batting overs to win that game or Namibia's 256-run rout, another world record margin, against Australia.

Senegal launched last year's football World Cup by beating defending champions France 1-0. Cricket can only dream of such drama.

"We just have to make sure we win this match, go home with our heads high so that we can face the Australians when they tour in April with confidence."

The West Indies beat South Africa, Canada and Kenya here, lost to New Zealand and Sri Lanka but the rained-off match against Bangladesh in Benoni was the crucial blow.

"Obviously after the loss against Sri Lanka, the boys were not in the best of moods," said team manager Ricky Skerritt.

"A number of things resulted in us being where we are. We made too many errors against New Zealand and the loss of two points, because of rain against Bangladesh, meant we had no chance."

"If we had those points we would have a chance. It's unfortunate but not unfair. We all knew the rules before we started. But a reserve day is something the organisers may want to look at for next time."

The West Indies got their campaign off to a flying start with victory over South Africa on the open-

ing day of the tournament and Skerritt saw enough evidence in that game to sense hope for the future.

"If you look at the West Indies' performances in one-day cricket over the last seven to eight years, there's been a significant improvement in the last 12 months," the managers said.

"We have made our fans quite happy with our performances and we've won the respect of the South African crowds with the cricket we've played. There's been a big improvement on England four years ago."

"We may not have been able to make it to the Super Six again, which was our aim, but we do have some good material we're working with."

"Ramnaresh Sarwan is leading the way. Even before his innings against Sri Lanka he was up with the best averages in the tournament and his Test record makes him one of the brightest sparks in world cricket today."

"Certainly with the scoreboards we have now in South Africa, there's no reason why we can't display it," ICC general manager David Richardson said.

"Obviously, we've got to make sure there's no possibility of human error creeping in," he added.

"But I'm sure we'll work to make sure the information displayed is correct, obviously you can imagine what disasters we will have."

Blemish their own

AFP, Johannesburg

England's World Cup campaign, which ended with a first round exit on Tuesday after Pakistan's game against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo was washed out, was effectively over even before it had begun.

The drawn-out decision to boycott their match in Harare a move which gifted Zimbabwe four points by forfeit left England with a huge mountain to climb.

However, England captain Nasser Hussain, who resigned the leadership of the one-day side Tuesday, said a win against Zimbabwe would not have been a foregone conclusion.

"We mustn't presume by not going there we lost four points," he said. "They've got some very gutsy cricketers. They could have said 'we could be 5-0 when the sides last met in a one-day series, would surely have expected to beat them again."

Hussain's men though were not a good enough side to give away points and it meant they had to beat at least two of the three Pool A giants reigning champions Australia, India and Pakistan to go through to the Super Sixes.

Gillespie out

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A key member of the team's pace attack, he underwent the scan when the injury failed to respond to treatment.

Australia, unbeaten in the opening phase of the tournament, play Sri Lanka on Friday in the first Super Six match.

Leg spinner Shane Warne withdrew from the Australia squad before bowling a ball in South Africa after it was announced he had failed a drugs test for diuretics. He has since been banned for 12 months.

Gillespie's injury was initially considered minor but when he tried to bowl before the England game on Sunday in Port Elizabeth it flared up again. He first felt discomfort a week ago before the Pool A match against Namibia.

The 27-year-old right-arm fast bowler took eight World Cup wickets at an average of 12.25, including a hugely impressive 10-over spell of three for 13 against India. Generating good pace from a short run-up, Gillespie can move the ball

both ways off the seam.

His misfortune is likely to pave the way for Andy Bichel to claim a regular place in the starting line-up. In Gillespie's absence, Bichel took seven for 20, the second best figures in World Cup history, against England on Sunday.

Bichel, though, will be challenged by Bracken, who was chosen as a replacement ahead of Brad Williams. "We thought Nathan offered more variety as a left-arm and he had success against some of the sides we'll come up against in the Super Sixes," skipper Ricky Ponting said. Bracken is due to arrive in South Africa on Thursday.

Gillespie's career has been repeatedly stalled by injuries, most spectacularly when he collided with Steve Waugh while fielding in 1999 and breaking his leg.

He will fly home to Australia on Wednesday and said he hoped to be back bowling in about four weeks.

"I'd like to think I'll be able to put myself in front of the selectors for the West Indies tour," he said.

Bigger the better

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World Cup, I believe that we have demonstrated that this country has the resources, the capacity and the infrastructure to successfully manage a global sporting event.

"It is now time for this country to demonstrate that it has the willingness to support such an event. The World Cup does not stop because the host country is out."

Bacher also said stadiums had been filled to 76 per cent of their overall capacity for the group matches and that 80 million rand (10 million dollars) had been generated in ticket sales.

South Africa exited after only managing a tie in their final group game against Sri Lanka under the Duckworth-Lewis (D/L) method used to decide the outcome of rain-affected matches.

However, while the teams receive charts telling them of the D/L situation at various stages of the game no such information has been displayed to crowds even though all the grounds are equipped with modern electronic scoreboards.

"Certainly with the scoreboards we have now in South Africa, there's no reason why we can't display it," ICC general manager David Richardson said.

"Obviously, we've got to make sure there's no possibility of human error creeping in," he added.