



Javagal Srinath

PHOTO: AFP

Srinath basks in glory

AFP, Johannesburg

Javagal Srinath had originally planned to hang up his boots and turn into a couch potato to watch the World Cup on television from his lavish home in Bangalore.

Instead, the 33-year-old was told by captain Saurav Ganguly to drop the idea, pick up his kit and go out and do what he did best - take wickets for India with the new ball.

It was another of Ganguly's gambles that worked as Srinath returned to the international fold to plot India's impressive World Cup campaign which has taken them to the semifinals.

His 4-35 against Sri Lanka at the Wanderers here on Monday, which secured a thumping 183-run victory for India, made him his team's most successful bowler in the tournament with 14 wickets.

That is two more than young left-arm Ashish Nehra and only four behind the current leader Chaminda Vaas, of Sri Lanka, who has 18 wickets.

Srinath had retired from international cricket after the tour of the West Indies last April, but Ganguly persuaded him to return for the Champions Trophy in Sri Lanka in September.

He then took 18 wickets in a one-day series in New Zealand at the start of this year, which India lost 5-2, and was an automatic selection for the World Cup.

He now has 313 one-day wickets, only the fifth bowler in history, and the second Indian after Anil Kumble, to cross the 300 mark.

"I want to dedicate this four-wicket haul to my friend Hemant who died a few days back in Mysore. He was only 38," Srinath said after being named the man of the match.

"I am obviously very happy at what I have achieved so far and look forward to doing the same in the rest of the tournament."

Srinath laughed off his return to the international stage, saying: "I can see that the captain is happy and is not regretting my comeback. So that's fine with me."

"This is my last World Cup so I want to achieve the best and help my team win."

"With Ashish (Nehra) and Zaheer (Khan) bowling so well this is the best time to be bowling fast for India."

"They are faster than me and that helps the attack."

Srinath, however, gave the batsmen all the credit for scoring 292-6 against Sri Lanka, who were shot out for 109 in reply.

"Today the best part was done by our batsmen," he said. "They put the runs on the board which made it easier for us bowlers."

Srinath wrecked the Sri Lankan reply even before the 15,000 fans had settled back after lunch.

He had Marvan Atapattu caught in the covers with his third delivery and then removed Jehan Mubarak, who replaced the injured Hashan Tillekeratne, caught behind with his

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Not spinning too much

INTERNET, undated

The 2003 World Cup has been a 'Waterloo' for poor spinners. In no battle so far in this edition of cricket's greatest event has a spinner been really the wrecked.

Perhaps the disgraceful exit of legendary Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne, the top wicket-taker in the previous World Cup in England, may have psychologically upset the spinners, failing to inspire them this time.

In fact, as the World Cup was about to begin, there had been expert opinions that spinners would be prove decisive this time. But, at least so far, that prediction has not come true.

Even Muttiah Muralitharan, the most feared Lankan next to Warne, has not proved to be a match-winner. The Aussies tamed him in their first Super Six outing.

Murali's sixth best haul of 12 wickets in seven matches among the leading bowlers in this Cup, is the only success.

His best haul in a match has been 4-28 in the preliminary league phase. Against the Australians in the Super Sixes, he went wicket-less.

Indian leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who was also expected to do well, has been even fighting for a place in the team with the seamers leading from the front and Ashish Nehra emerging as a hero in the key league match against England.

Harbhajan Singh's off-spin has also not brought him many wickets, the best being spells of two wickets twice in the league phase.

New Zealand brought in left-arm Daniel Vettori, but he too has not met with any big success, with the Black Caps batting led by skipper Stephen Fleming and Nathan Astle proving crucial for them.

In the last World Cup, Pakistan's wily off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq proved to be quite a threat. But this time he too failed to be inspiring taking just a couple of wickets, as the entire team came down in a heap.

The West Indies too failed in this department. Not that they had any reputed tweaker barring their successful off-spinning captain Carl Hooper. But Hooper just managed to get just two or three wickets.

England did not have a spinner, nor did Zimbabwe or Kenya who managed to sneak into the Super Sixes.

But all hope is not lost. It would be quite an event if Kumble or Harbhajan struck and turned a game around.

Million dollar Aussies

INTERNET, Melbourne

After an agreement between the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) and the players' association, Glenn McGrath, Adam Gilchrist and Ricky Ponting are set to earn over

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Sachin Tendulkar

Sachin the best

REUTERS, Bloemfontein

According to Andy Flower, there are two categories of batsmen: Sachin Tendulkar, and the rest.

"He is the best in the world," Flower said of the Indian player. "The rest of us, who are more human, make mistakes sometimes."

"But people watch him bat and they think all of us should play as well as he does. It doesn't quite work like that."

Flower had been asked why he, as one of the game's premier batsmen, had not cashed in against the weaker teams in the World Cup.

Flower scored 39 against Namibia and 71 against the Netherlands. Zimbabwe will have

their last opportunity against a minor side when they play Kenya in Bloemfontein on Wednesday.

Shouldn't Flower be looking to score a century against his African cousins?

"I agree. All of our batsmen should aim to score hundreds against them," Flower said.

Flower's World Cup career record could also do with the boost of a century on Wednesday.

In 28 matches he has scored just one hundred.

In 211 one-day internationals, he has converted only four of his 54 half-centuries into three figures.

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Harper lets WI job go

INTERNET/AP, undated

Roger Harper has decided not to re-apply for his position as West Indies coach.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) invited new candidates to come forward following their side's early elimination from the World Cup.

Harper was given the option of re-applying, but is believed to have stepped down to spend more time with his family.

Harper told Press Association International: "I did not re-apply. I don't have anything planned just yet, but I will think about my options

before I make my next move."

The West Indies return to action next month with a Test series against Australia, which begins on April 10.

Former West Indies batsman Gus Logie, who was in charge of minnows Canada at the World Cup and also looks after the West Indies Under-19 team, has been tipped to take over as coach.

Ex-South Africa and Warwickshire coach Bob Woolmer was also linked with the post.

Meanwhile, Woolmer isn't rushing headlong into the West

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Lamb has no regrets

INTERNET, London

England cricket bosses insist they have no regrets over the Zimbabwe boycott which cost them their World Cup dream.

Nasser Hussain's team returned home today after being eliminated from the tournament prior to the Super Six stages largely because their refusal to play in Harare cost them four expected points.

But the England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Tim Lamb said today he was satisfied with the decisions made.

Lamb told the BBC's Breakfast With Frost: "The ECB management board met earlier in the week and went through the sequence of

events and the general consensus was that it was difficult to see how we could have done anything different.

"It was a blow that we didn't get through to the Super Sixes - we should have beaten Australia and clearly losing the points from a match we were expected to win (in Zimbabwe) ruined our chances in the World Cup."

"But at the end of the day our decision not to send the players was borne out of our duty of care - imagine how we would have lived with ourselves if anything had happened in Harare."

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Indian press pumped up



PHOTO: AFP

SING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING: Indian fans celebrate their team's victory over Sri Lanka in Johannesburg on Monday.

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian media on Tuesday lauded its cricket team's crushing victory over Sri Lanka, saying Saurav Ganguly's side could stop formidable Australia in the ongoing World Cup in South Africa.

"Ponting beware, Indians are on fire," proclaimed a Times of India headline after India routed Sri Lanka by 183 runs in their Super-Six clash at Johannesburg on Monday to storm into the semifinals.

Ricky Ponting's Australians, who were beaten so far in the tournament, have already made it to the penultimate round.

"The Indian team which came into the World Cup was insecure, uncertain. The Indian team which has entered the semifinals of the World Cup is on fire. Mr Ricky Ponting, beware," said the paper.

The media praised Indian openers Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag, and veteran fast bowler Javagal Srinath for the team's second successive Super-Six win.

Tendulkar (97) and Sehwag (66) provided a blistering 153-run start which helped India post an imposing 292-6 before Srinath sliced through the Sri Lankan batting with a four-wicket haul.

Sri Lanka were shot out for 109, with as many as five batsmen scoring ducks in a dismal performance.

"On a bright and sunny Monday morning at the Wanderers (venue of the match), the Indians went hunting and returned with eleven Lankan lions and five ducks," said the Times of India.

"Sri Rips Lanka," said the Indian Express front-page headline, referring to Srinath's incisive spell which reduced the match to a no-contest.

"A match slated as a shootout

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

Saurav Ganguly

Saurav hard to please

INTERNET, Johannesburg

India have begun making plans for the World Cup semifinals, with hard-to-please captain Saurav Ganguly warning his talented lineup the real challenges of the tournament are still to come.

Their 183-run victory over Sri Lanka at The Wanderers not only confirmed their place in the last four but also established India as the most in-form team in the tournament alongside world champions Australia after six successive victories.

But despite the impressive manner in which they disposed of

Sri Lanka - posting an impressive total of 292 for six after a majestic 97 from Sachin Tendulkar before dismissing their opponents for 109 in 23 overs - Ganguly believes their current form will be wasted if they do not maintain their high standards.

"We want to win because winning becomes a habit and at this particular time we're focusing on playing good cricket," said Ganguly.

"We've played very good cricket over the past year, and I'm not surprised we're playing well here."

"We're a good unit; we know our

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Glenn McGrath

PHOTO: STAR FILE

Pigeon ends duck

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

In the greater scheme of things, Glenn McGrath's three not out off two balls in the World Cup against New Zealand on Tuesday may not stand out.

It was not a "I was there" sort of innings but for the Australia quick bowler, it ended a seven-year wait to break his tournament batting duck.

The 33-year-old McGrath, nicknamed 'Pigeon', confidently flicked a Jacob Oram delivery to leg for his first run and stole a second on the overthrow in Tuesday's Super Six match. He then squeezed the next ball to fine leg to finish on three not out.

Never mind that fellow quick bowler Andy Bichel managed 64 and that Brett Lee, completing Australia's triumvirate of

pacemen, hit the last two balls of the innings for six.

For McGrath, his 25th World Cup game will remain special.

He made his tournament debut in 1996 against Kenya. Australia's one-day expertise is such that Tuesday was only the fourth time he had managed to pad up and get to the crease.

His previous three innings read nought not out (he did not face a ball that day in 1996, against India in Bombay), nought (bowled second ball by Wasim Akram in 1999 at Leeds) and nought not out (off one ball, in the 1999 tied semifinal against South Africa at Edgbaston).

McGrath is much more prolific outside World Cups. He averages almost four in 176 one-dayers overall and has scored 6.43 per visit in 91 Tests.

Henry for quota

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa's chief selector Omar Henry on Tuesday defended his team's controversial quota system and insisted it can't be used as an excuse for the country's dismal World Cup performance.

"Cricketers, both black and white, must accept this as part of today's set-up," Henry said.

"We have a legacy that we have to correct, and we have to learn to function successfully within that context."

Prior to the tournament, former South Africa cricket chief Ali Bacher, now the World Cup supremo, gave late sports minister Steve Tshwete a promise that five coloured players would be included in the 15-man squad.

Herschelle Gibbs, Makhaya Ntini, Robin Peterson, Charl Langeveldt and Monde Zondeki

were the coloured players in the 15-man squad.

The selection of Boland seamer Langeveldt caused most uproar.

"What he does with what he has learned is up to him," Henry told the Business Day newspaper.

"He can take negatives or he can take positives out of the experience and this will define his future."

"In 1992, I never played but what I learned about myself and what it took to be an international cricketer proved invaluable to me in the long run."

Gibbs and Ntini were two of the team's success stories in South Africa's otherwise dismal World Cup campaign which ended at the first round stage.

Opening batsman Gibbs hit 384 runs with a best of 143 and average of 96 while pace bowler Ntini claimed 10 wickets at 17.60.



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Omar Henry