

# Sports on war alert



PHOTO: INTERNET

THIS ONE'S FOR MR. BUSH! Fans in the Indian city of Kolkata merge cricket with anti-war slogans yesterday.

AFP, Paris

Organisers of international sporting events were on the alert Tuesday faced with the imminent conflict in Iraq which could throw their calendars into disarray with the threat of terrorist reprisals.

So far the only competition which has fallen victim to the situation in the Middle East has been the under-20 world football championship.

FIFA, world soccer's governing body, decided to postpone the event which had been scheduled for the United Arab Emirates from March 25 to April 16.

But FIFA have told Iraq they must play their 2004 Olympic qualifier against Vietnam next month at a neutral venue. Iraq had been due to play Vietnam in Baghdad in their first leg match on April 5, but Iraqi officials were ordered to find another venue for the game.

Meanwhile, European football bosses said they were closely monitoring the situation but did not intend to postpone upcoming matches.

"At this stage we hope all the matches can go ahead as planned - but we will not hesitate to intervene if the circumstances push us to do so," said UEFA communications director Mike Lee.

A slew of Euro 2004 qualifiers are scheduled to go ahead on March 29 and April 2 all across the continent with countries such as Israel and Turkey involved.

Security will also be tight for the Cricket World Cup final next Sunday with defending champions Australia, whose Prime Minister John Howard has pledged military aid to a US-led invasion to disarm Iraq, to play either India or Kenya in Johannesburg.

Other sports federations have also reserved the right to modify their programmes depending on the evolution of the situation.

"We're in a waiting situation," a spokesperson for European basketball's Euroleague said.

But organisers of next week's World Figure Skating Championships in Washington DC said they were confident the event would be conducted safely even if a

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## Latif made captain

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan appointed wicketkeeper Rashid Latif as captain and Javed Miandad as coach on Wednesday to rebuild the team after their disappointing World Cup campaign in South Africa.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) ditched captain Waqar Younis, appointed former Test player Haroon Rasheed as team manager and named new selectors, board spokesman Samiul Hasan said.

The changes end days of speculation the board would reshape the team management and selection committee to make a fresh start after Pakistan failed to qualify for the Super Sixes.

"They are all experienced people in Pakistan cricket and know what is expected of them," Hasan said.

"The board is hopeful this combination will work well."

Latif, 34, will lead a new Pakistan team into next month's Sharjah Cup against Sri Lanka and

South Africa.

"I have accepted the responsibility. I will do my best to lead the team to success."

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RASHID LATIF

## Treat Tendulkar as friend

AFP, Durban

Former South African coach Bob Woolmer has told Kenya to treat Sachin Tendulkar and his Indian teammates as friends not enemies if they are to win Thursday's World Cup semifinal.

"The one thing you can't do is name-drop and get hung up about bowling to Sachin Tendulkar," said Woolmer, who spent part of his 18 months as International Cricket Council high performance director working with the team.

"The best way to deal with it is to pretend you are playing against your mates."

"India are favourites and they should win, but that is not to say Kenya do not have it in them to beat them."

"They've done it before, after all."

The Kenyans defeated India at Gwalior in 1998 and at Port

Elizabeth in 2001 while, in the World Cup, they have seen off Test nations Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

"No one would have expected them to have come as far as they have myself included," Woolmer told the BBC.

"But given the way they have played, they have richly deserved it."

"The victory against Zimbabwe in the Super Six stage was crucial to their confidence and to the way others perceive this achievement."

"They were given a head start by New Zealand forfeiting points against them in the group stage, but ultimately they qualified for the semifinal on merit."

"All it will take is for Kenya to score enough runs during the day, nip out two early wickets and then gradually wear them down under the lights."

## Half-done Lanka

AFP, Johannesburg

Sri Lanka fly home from the World Cup later on Wednesday knowing they did only half the job right.

If the batsmen had supported the bowlers, Sanath Jayasuriya's men may well have been playing in Sunday's final at the Wanderers here.

They had their best chance to end the campaign on a high note when, with considerable help from India, they squeezed past New Zealand and Zimbabwe into the semifinals.

Once there, they gave themselves a great opportunity when they restricted reigning champions Australia to a modest 212-7 at St George's Park on Tuesday.

But the batsmen failed to deliver again and Sri Lanka were reduced to 123-7 in the 36th over before rain ended their misery.

Jayasuriya and the top order not only let down seamer Chaminda Vaas, who finished with a record 23 World Cup wickets, but also the retiring Aravinda De Silva.

Sri Lanka's Australian coach

Dav Whatmore hit the nail on the head when he said later the middle-order batting had to take the blame.

"I would not say the entire batting failed," Whatmore said.

"I would say more the middle or lower order perhaps didn't give us enough runs, that certainly was the case against Australia."

"We had some good performances, some good positives over the 10 matches. But one area where we could have done better, that would have been our middle order batting," he said.

Mahela Jayawardene, Avishka Gunawardena and Russel Arnold, all usually good contributors with the bat, had dismal campaigns.

"They didn't give us consistent assistance when we needed it. I thought our bowlers did very well throughout the tournament and I am very pleased for that," said Whatmore.

The Sri Lanka-born former Australian Test batsman's contract as coach runs out in May, but

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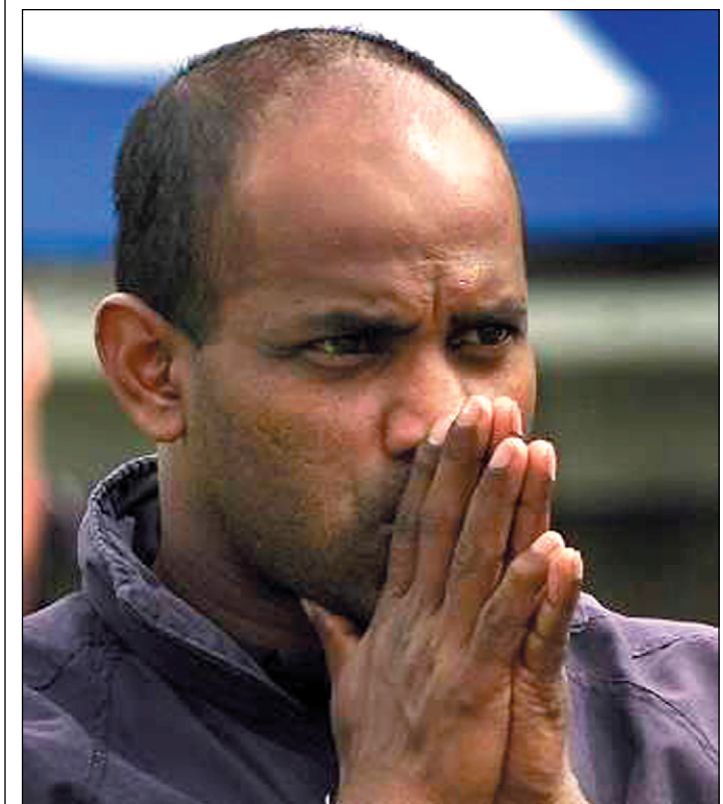


PHOTO: STAR FILE

Sanath Jayasuriya



PHOTO: STAR FILE

Adam Gilchrist

## Hail gentlemen

AFP, Johannesburg

It could have been the moment that lost Australia the World Cup.

Instead, Adam Gilchrist can look back upon the moment when he "walked" as proof that, for one day at least, the good guy won.

His moment of truth came in Tuesday's semifinal victory against Sri Lanka at Port Elizabeth when the Australian opener had made 22 and swept Aravinda de Silva.

The ball came off bat and pad and Kumar Sangakkara jogged off to take the catch, but umpire Rudi Koertzen was unmoved by the furious appeals.

Gilchrist, however, made the decision for the official by tucking his bat under his arm and walking off the St George's Park pitch.

"The whole dressing room was surprised," said skipper Ricky Ponting after Australia won the rain-hit match by 48 runs to storm into Sunday's final.

"I think Gilly didn't see Rudi's not out. He knew he got some bat on it and set off. I won't be encouraging any of our batsmen to do it.

It's up to each player to decide what to do."

However, Sri Lankan batsman Aravinda De Silva, who announced his retirement from international cricket after the match, hailed Gilchrist as a "gentleman".

"It was a good gesture on his part," de Silva said and bracketed Gilchrist with West Indian Brian Lara.

"It is very rare to see batsmen walking off. There are still some gentlemen in the game."

Lara also walked in the World Cup, in the group game against Sri Lanka in Cape Town, when he was caught by Sangakkara off Chaminda Vaas for just one.

It was a crucial moment in both sides' World Cup fortunes as the Windies lost by just six runs.

The Aussies, known for their uncompromising approach to the game, applauded a rare moment of sportsmanship in the last Ashes series when England's Mark Butcher

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## Why 'walk'?

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

Victorious Australia captain Ricky Ponting said he had no plans to encourage his players to "walk" after Adam Gilchrist gave himself out in the World Cup semifinal against Sri Lanka on Tuesday.

Gilchrist headed back to the pavilion without waiting for the umpire's decision after getting an edge to a sweep shot and seeing the ball loop to wicketkeeper Kumar Sangakkara.

"He knew he had got a bat on it and didn't bother looking at the umpire," Ponting told a news conference after Australia's 48-win in the rain-affected match.

"He just turned and walked off. I think all of us were surprised in the dressing room. I won't be encouraging any of our batsmen to do it. No, it's up to them."

"I won't tell any of our batsmen what to do. To walk or not to walk,

it's how they see it on the day."

Umpire Rudi Koertzen had appeared to mouth "not out" after the incident, which left Australia on 34 for one.

Ponting, however, said Gilchrist had not been aware of the umpire's decision.

"Talking to Gilly after that, he just didn't see Rudi Koertzen say not out."

Sri Lanka's Aravinda de Silva, who was bowling, confirmed that the umpire had turned down his appeal but still praised Gilchrist's sportsmanship.

"It was a good gesture on Gilchrist's part," he said. "It's very rare nowadays to see a batsman walking off."

"Brian Lara does it all the time. I think there are still some gentlemen in the game."

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PHOTO: STAR FILE

ANDREW SYMONDS



PHOTO: STAR FILE

RICKY PONTING

## Symonds shows his mettle

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

After years of under-achievement Andrew Symonds is now playing close to his true potential, Australia captain Ricky Ponting said on Tuesday.

Symonds was Australia's batting hero in Tuesday's World Cup semifinal, scoring a vital unbeaten 91 against Sri Lanka to shepherd his side to 212 for seven and help them to a 48-run win under the Duckworth-Lewis method when rain intervened.

That innings gave him 326 runs for twice out in this tournament, an amazing contrast to his previous record which produced just two half-centuries in 54 matches.

"I'm just happy for Symo that he is playing as well as he is," Ponting said.

"He has been around the squad for a few years and probably hasn't

played as well as he and we knew he could."

"It is great for me to see and for the guys to watch him playing somewhere near his full potential."

There was particular satisfaction for Ponting as he had insisted on having the Queensland all-rounder in the squad, even though Symonds' figures did not demand his inclusion.

"It was down to the last few positions in the touring party and I just got my point across to the selectors that I thought Andrew would be a very good inclusion in our squad," he said.

"I have played a fair bit of cricket with Symo, I know what he is capable of and I think we are all now seeing what he is capable of as so far he has almost won two games off his

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## Getting scalps, not awards

REUTERS, Johannesburg

According to the men who matter at the World Cup, Australia's strike bowler Brett Lee is over-rated.

No more than a medium-paced pie-thrower, really.

Before the World Cup semifinals, Lee was equal ninth in the race for the man-of-the-tournament award, with fewer than half the points awarded to India's Sachin Tendulkar.

Canada's John Davison, an off-spinning all-rounder who left for home some two weeks ago after one scintillating century and several entertaining cameos, was one of the men still ahead of Lee on that list.

The 26-year-old New South Welshman, indeed, tall and blond and hard to miss, has yet to win a man-of-the-match award.

Taking five New Zealand top-

order wickets for three runs in 15 balls, effectively killing off that Super Six encounter and sending the Kiwis home before the semifinals, was not good enough.

Nor was his hattrick, the first by an Australian in a World Cup, without conceding a run against Kenya. Lee, so approachable off the field, shrugged off that decision.

"I'm not bowling for personal things," he said, with his trademark boyish grin. But his captain, Ricky Ponting, was flabbergasted and less forgiving.

In his first game against the Sri Lankans, Lee shredded the top order with a burst of three wickets for one run in 11 deliveries. He also sent Sanath Jayasuriya to hospital with a chipped thumb and bruised forearm (he was to inflict similar damage to Kenya's Kennedy O t i e n o ) .

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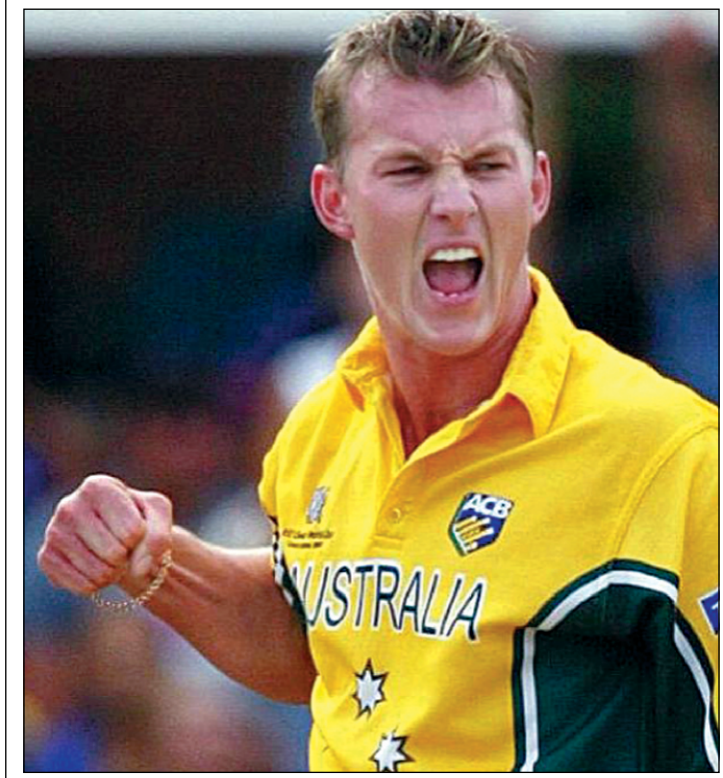


PHOTO: AFP

DID YOU SEE THAT? Australia's firebrand Brett Lee is absolutely ecstatic after clean bowling Sri Lanka's Marvan Atapattu at Port Elizabeth on March 18.