



PHOTO: AFP  
PRAYING FOR THEIR CRICKET GOD! A priest performs rituals in front of Hindu god Ganesha for star batsman Sachin Tendulkar's good luck at Madras yesterday.

## Captaincy a curse

AFP, Johannesburg

The sacking of Waqar Younis as Pakistan captain once again reiterated the belief that the World Cup is a graveyard for the leaders of the game.

New Zealand's Stephen Fleming came to this World Cup as the only survivor of the 12-member captains club that ruled the tournament four years ago in England.

Those who lost their jobs between the last and the current World Cup were: Wasim Akram of Pakistan, Mohammad Azharuddin of India, Alec Stewart of England, Brian Lara of the West Indies, Arjuna Ranatunga of Sri Lanka, Steve Waugh of Australia, Hansie Cronje of South Africa, Alistair Campbell of Zimbabwe, Aminul Islam of Bangladesh and Asif Karim of Kenya.

Scotland's Greg Salmond too would have been included in the above list, but his team failed to qualify for the 2003 edition.

Now even before the current tournaments have ended, two captains have already been shown the door, one resigned in disgust, another is pondering his future

while yet another is hovering on the brink.

South Africa sacked Shaun Pollock after the hosts failed to make the Super Sixes even though the team is currently the official world champions in Test cricket.

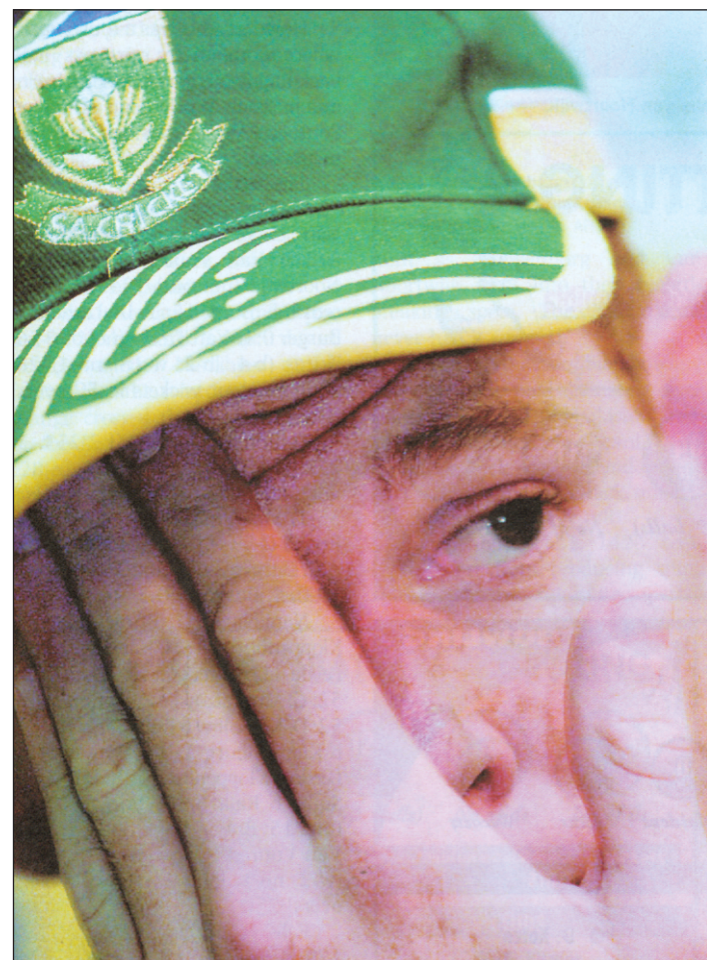
Waqar's sacking on Wednesday was on expected lines after co-favourites Pakistan lost to arch-rivals India on their way to making their exit after the first round. He was replaced by Rashid Latif, Pakistan's sixth captain in five years.

Nasser Hussain resigned as one-day captain, disgusted at the way officials handled the Zimbabwe boycott issue, even though he wants to remain the leader for Test matches.

Carl Hooper is uncertain to lead the West Indies in the upcoming home series against Australia, while Bangladesh's Khaled Mashud said he was still undecided whether to step down.

Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak, on the other hand, insisted he will not follow Andy Flower and

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Shaun Pollock

PHOTO: STAR FILE

## Boycott for India



Geoff Boycott

PHOTO: STAR FILE

AFP, Johannesburg

England great Geoff Boycott has lent his support to India's bid to win the World Cup, advising captain Saurav Ganguly in a three-page fax to "be patient and cool."

"You can win the World Cup. Be patient and be cool. Just dream that you are winning it," Boycott wrote to Ganguly ahead of Thursday's semifinal against Kenya at Durban.

Boycott, the former England opening batsman, is a household name in cricket-crazy India where he became hugely popular for his outspoken comments on television.

He was forced to miss a commentary assignment at the World Cup after undergoing surgery for throat cancer, but has followed the tournament closely from his home in Yorkshire.

Boycott's advice focuses primarily on fielding and batting.

"Catches and run outs win matches," Boycott wrote in the fax.

"It is an old saying but we often forget it. Place the right fielders in right places.

"Everyone in your team cannot be as agile as each other. It is your duty whom to place where and whom to hide. It is important.

"Try to be at your best while on the field. A captain's body language is important, so try to be positive all the time.

"Let everybody understand that this is the last opportunity and please do not lose your cool or argue with the umpire.

"There might be some decisions going against you but that should not force you to argue with the umpires. You will get scope to say those words to the umpire once the match ends."

Boycott, preaching what he practised in his playing days, added: "You have to be selfish. Do not throw away your wicket.

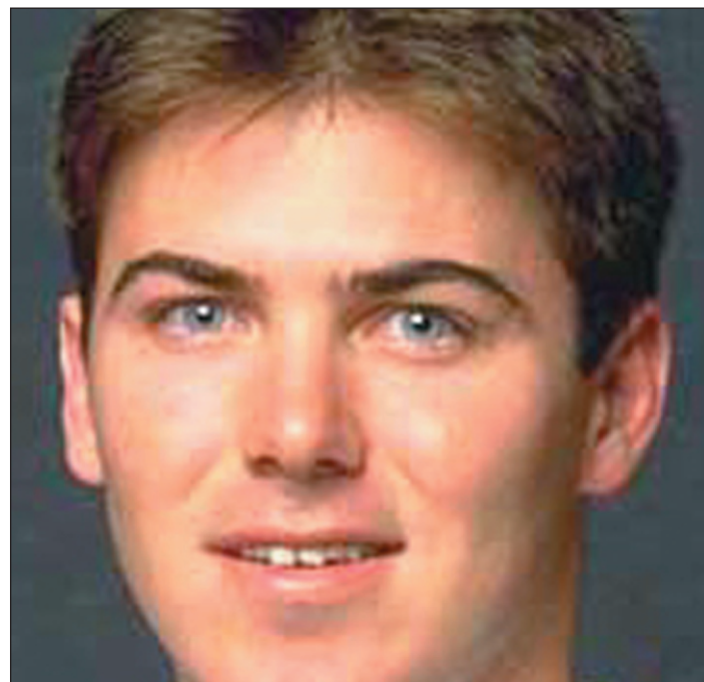
"Focus on the World Cup only everything else can wait.

"Tell the bowlers to rush and fielders should be ready whenever an over is finished.

"They can support the bowlers in doing it quickly. Catch up the s p e e d .

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## Aussie fingers crossed



Damien Martyn

PHOTO: STAR FILE

REUTERS, Port Elizabeth

Australia captain Ricky Ponting still hopes injured batsman Damien Martyn will be available for Sunday's World Cup final.

However he said if there was a chance Martyn could sustain further damage to his fractured right index finger by playing, he would almost certainly be ruled out of contention.

"He is an outside chance and that is what we are all hoping for," Ponting told reporters after Martyn missed Australia's rain-shortened semifinal win over Sri Lanka on Tuesday.

"He has been very consistent for us and is a vital player in our side so I hope he comes up for the final.

"We will keep a close eye on him and Errol Alcott (the team physiotherapist) has got to look at him over the next couple of days but if there is any risk of further serious damage then he probably won't play."

Martyn sustained his injury while fielding during the five-wicket win over Kenya in Durban

on Saturday.

The right-hand batsman, who was also part of Australia's World Cup squad in 1999 although he did not play in the final, has scored 235 runs at an average of 47 in this tournament with three half-centuries in seven innings.

In one sense, Martyn's absence would be a blessing in disguise as it would ease a potential selection problem.

If he is declared fit to play it would be likely to mean one of the team who won Tuesday's semifinal, possibly all-rounder Ian Harvey, would miss the biggest match in any player's career.

In one sense the intense competition for places is a good thing but it has created a real headache for the selectors, as Ponting was quick to acknowledge.

"It is what we have had throughout the tournament," he said. "Players have come in, performed well, and it has made selection for every game very tough.

"If Damien Martyn had been

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## Pondering What-more



Dav Whatmore

PHOTO: STAR FILE

REUTERS, Johannesburg

Coach Dav Whatmore is set to discuss his future with the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCSL) after his side's exit from the World Cup this week.

Whatmore, who helped guide Sri Lanka to the 1996 trophy and to the semifinals this time before losing to Australia, is in his second spell in the role but his contract runs out in two months.

"I am contracted until the end of May and any decision regarding my personal future will be made with the cricket board after the tournament," he told reporters.

"There are still some challenges there but it is a case of communications and dialogue after this tournament."

Captain Sanath Jayasuriya was happy to reflect on everything the side has accomplished under Whatmore when he spoke after Tuesday's 48-run loss to Australia in Port Elizabeth.

"Dav has been doing a good job and he has been very good for the boys," he said.

"He has been there for a long time and when he has been there we have achieved a lot of things."

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### Quips & Quotes

AFP, Johannesburg

Who's saying what at the World Cup:

"Everything is on track and the World Cup final goes ahead as planned. There are no plans to change the schedule but the match will take place with a heightened security awareness."

**Rodney Hartman, the World Cup organising committee's communications director, insisting the Iraq conflict will not lead to a cup final rethink.**

"For 32 years I have waited for a World Cup final to be played here. The final is the ball and end-all of cricket. The pressure on a groundsman is immense to do it right. For me it's a dream and a nightmare come true."

**Wanderers groundsman Chris Scott on Sunday's final.**

"I'm so proud of these boys. Against Zimbabwe they weren't fit. But they played and never complained."

**Kenya coach Sandeep Patil on his injury-hit squad.**

"There has been a lot of chopping and changing because of the injuries we've had and if some players have struggled, there have been others who have come in to take up the slack. Everyone in this team has a s h a r e .

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## What made him walk

AFP, Johannesburg

Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist said on Wednesday he "walked" in the World Cup semifinal against Sri Lanka after watching England batsmen standing their ground last summer.

Gilchrist stunned spectators and teammates alike at Port Elizabeth on Tuesday when he walked off even as umpire Rudi Koertzen negated an appeal for a catch at the wicket off Aravinda De Silva.

The Australian vice-captain said it was the frustration at watching English captain Nasser Hussain and Michael Vaughan standing their ground during the recent Ashes series that made him "walk".

"Hussain and Vaughan had me thinking a lot about walking or the times when players have blatantly nicked the ball, know they have and whether they should walk," Gilchrist told the Australian Associated Press.

"I'm not on a crusade to try and get it back to the old days of gentlemen's behaviour but a lot of the time I was thinking I wonder if I'll ever be in a scenario where I'm the batsman and I have to make that decision.

"That situation came up against Sri Lanka and something inside me

said 'walk' so I went.

"I saw Rudi give me not out and shake his head, so I just went."

Gilchrist said his conscience had been stirred by Hussain's refusal to accept a catch by Jason Gillespie in the Boxing Day Test that "stood out like dog's balls," as the Australian fast bowler described it at the time.

He also recalled another no-walk incident in the Adelaide Test involving Vaughan.

"I remember vividly the Boxing Day Test when Nasser Hussain didn't go when Dizzy (Gillespie) claimed to have caught him," said Gilchrist.

"I remember thinking and saying to a few people that there was the perfect opportunity for a player to make a statement.

"Maybe because it's been in my mind I reacted that way.

"There have been times before in my career where I've hit the ball and known it, been given not out and not walked.

"I'm not totally sure why in a World Cup semifinal I've decided to do otherwise but it sits comfortably with me.

"Hopefully we can move on in a positive fashion."



Adam Gilchrist

PHOTO: STAR FILE