



INDIAN IN TEARS! An Indian fan cries at The Wanderers after the final on March 23.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## Billion broken hearts



REUTERS, Johannesburg

It was meant to be Sachin Tendulkar's day of destiny. It was meant to be Tendulkar versus Lee, immovable object meets unstoppable force. A sporting duel to die for.

It never happened. The world's second fastest bowler never even got to take aim at the world's greatest batsman in Sunday's World Cup final.

By the time Australia's Lee was marking out his run-up, "The Little Master" was already back in the pavilion, dismissed by Glenn McGrath's fifth ball, and India were heading for defeat.

Tendulkar's departure broke a billion hearts and must have

deflated his teammates as well.

It may yet reopen the interminable Indian debate over whether their best player should be granted his wish of opening the innings.

Saurav Ganguly's side already faced a momentous task in chasing 360 for victory against the best unit in the world.

Without Tendulkar, that target galloped over the horizon as India went down by 125 runs, Australia underlining their global dominance to become the first side to win three World Cups.

Tendulkar must have been broken-hearted too.

Looking to hook his second boundary of the opening over, he got a leading edge and sent the ball straight up in the air. McGrath strode down the pitch, demanded the honour and claimed the catch.

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## Award could hardly make him smile



REUTERS, Johannesburg

Sachin Tendulkar said he could take no joy from his man-of-the-tournament award after India's World Cup final defeat against Australia on Sunday.

"I am extremely disappointed," he said after India slumped to a 125-run reverse at The Wanderers.

"More than being the man-of-the-series, I would have been happier if we had lifted the trophy."

Tendulkar was handed his award by former West Indies all rounder Garfield Sobers for amassing a record 673 runs but was dismissed for four on Sunday after Australia set India a daunting target of 360.

Looking highly charged and full of adrenaline, Tendulkar hit a boundary but then miscued Glenn McGrath's fifth delivery and skied a return catch.

Tendulkar dismissed suggestions that he had failed to play a major role when his team needed him most.

"I think we play as a team," he said. "I don't play as an individual."

"The bottom line is we play as a team."

He added: "When we won the toss, I thought we had a fair chance because there was a fair bit in the track. Unfortunately our bowlers had an off-day."

India's quick bowlers Zaheer Khan, Javagal Srinath and Ashish Nehra bowled poorly to concede 211 runs from their 27 overs, having shared 49 wickets and conceded less than four an over before the final.

Tendulkar was left to praise

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PHOTO: INTERNET

I'D RATHER TAKE THAT ONE! Sachin Tendulkar poses with the player-of-the-tournament trophy at Johannesburg after the World Cup final.

## Mixed feelings



AFP, New Delhi

Indian newspapers Monday heaped praise on Australia for their victory in the cricket World Cup final in South Africa, but India's performance was greeted with a mixture of forgiveness and condemnation.

Front pages of all major newspapers carried pictures of Ricky Ponting and his men posing with their prize, while banner headlines reflected the mood of millions of dejected Indian cricket fans.

"Shock and awe" ran the headline in the Pioneer newspaper, using the title given to the US-led blitz on Baghdad.

The Hindustan Times carried a similar headline, but offered some consolation, "At least we reached the final".

Another headline in the newspaper, "If only hope and prayer could help", perhaps summed up the mood of the nation.

India had come to a standstill Sunday for the keenly-awaited match, the pre-match excitement, however, quickly descending into a pall of gloom as the Aussies batted and battered away at the Indians.

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## Kolkata goes berserk



AFP, Kolkata

Drunken cricket fans, dejected after India failed to lift the World Cup, threw crude home-made bombs and attacked a police vehicle in eastern India, injuring five policemen, police said Monday.

The policemen were injured, one of them seriously, when an angry mob turned violent in Baragah village in Hooghly district, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) north-east of Kolkata, capital of the eastern state of West Bengal, police

said.

West Bengal police deputy inspector Narayan Chandra Ghosh said that immediately after the match Sunday, about 20 drunken youths hurled crude bombs at a mobile police vehicle.

Police fired live rounds to disperse them. Ghosh said there were no arrests.

He said a heated argument over India's defeat among youngsters in the industrial city of Howrah, about 20 kilometres west of Kolkata, also sparked violence early Monday. No one was injured.

Ghosh said security outside Indian skipper Saurav Ganguly's

residence here was stepped up to check any demonstration by cricket fans.

Ganguly's house and that of team-mate Mohammed Kaif were stoned by mobs after India were beaten by Australia early in the tournament.

On Sunday, millions of cricket fans all over the country, who had planned victory rallies if India had won, abandoned their plans and remained indoors.

Posters of the Indian players, decorated earlier with flowers and miniature lamps in clubs and big buildings, were ripped off walls and Indian flags were taken down.

## Champs can be beaten



AFP, Johannesburg

Outclassed India captain Saurav Ganguly says world champions Australia's dominance could not carry on for ever.

"Someone has got to beat them," Ganguly said a day after the Aussie mean-machine crushed India by 125 runs in the final.

"Playing better than them on a particular day is the only way you can do it."

Australia not only became the first side to win three World Cups but also extended their winning streak in one-day internationals to 17 matches.

Australia's triumph in Sunday's final was never in doubt after they

piled up 359 for two, including a match-winning 140 not out from skipper Ricky Ponting, both World Cup final records.

India might have escaped had rain, which forced a 26-minute stoppage, prevented 25 overs being bowled in their innings.

In that event the match would have been replayed on Monday with Australia's innings counting for nothing.

When the players went off they were greeted by the unusual sound of huge cheers from the thousands of fanatical Indian supporters inside the ground.

"It just shows how much they want us to do well," Ganguly said. "But that's not the right way to win. Australia played better than us."

India stuck to their tried and

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PHOTO: AFP

NO PROBLEM! Australia captain Ricky Ponting giving a thumbs-up to someone while his Indian counterpart Saurav Ganguly stands in the background at Johannesburg on March 23.

## Hitters & takers

AFP, Johannesburg

Leading scorers and wicket-takers of the World Cup which ended on Sunday:

Runs	Batter	Country
673	S Tendulkar	India
465	S Ganguly	India
415	R Ponting	Australia
408	A Gilchrist	Australia
384	H Gibbs	SAfrica
Wkts	Bowler	Country
23	C Vaas	SLanka
22	B Lee	Australia
21	G McGrath	Australia
18	Z Khan	India
17	S Bond	NZealand

## Div I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhanmondi Club recorded a three-wicket win against Bangladesh Boys in a First Division Cricket League match at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

Batting first Bangladesh Boys were bundled out for 134 in 46.2 overs. Dhanmondi reached the victory target in 45.1 overs for the loss of seven wickets.

It was however a rare day in which extras featured highest in

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## Catch us if you can



AFP, Johannesburg

Australia coach John Buchanan insists his team has room for improvement after retaining the World Cup with a 125-run thrashing of India in a lop-sided final.

The Aussie mastermind issued a 'catch us if you can' challenge to the rest of world cricket after his side, commonly viewed as the best Test outfit around, stretched their world record run of consecutive one-day triumphs to 17.

Asked Monday if Australia the first team to win three World Cups could get better, Buchanan told reporters: "I really think we can work on all aspects of our game."

"You just have to look at the difference Mike Young (fielding coach) has made in a few months."

"If we were to sit back and say 'we've won back-to-back World Cups' we'd be doing a dis-service to ourselves and world cricket."

"If there is a gap, it's our job to extend that and hope other countries want to follow us."

Buchanan, who took over after the World Cup win in 1999, said there was no mystery to the way his side had taken the game to a new level.

"We do what everybody else

does but more consistently and more often," he said.

Buchanan added other countries were tapping into Australia's expertise but whether they can emulate their state of mind is another matter.

Australia captain Ricky Ponting, whose unbeaten 140 was the cornerstone of their massive 359 for two, both World Cup final records denied his side was arrogant.

"We don't think we're better than anybody else, we just play," Ponting said.

"They (India) are a very good side but we've beaten them comprehensively which suggests there might be a bit of a gap."

Before Sunday's brilliant win in the final at The Wanderers, the Australians had thrashed India by nine wickets in the preliminary game at Centurion on February 15.

Australia's current performances have started to earn comparison with the legendary Don Bradman's 1948 'Invincibles' who swept all before them on their tour of England.

But Ponting said he was unconcerned about any sort of nicknames applied to the present-day team. "I don't really care as long as it's nice."

He also insisted history played n

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### Salute Aussies

AFP, Johannesburg

Australian captain Ricky Ponting saluted his team for retaining the cricket World Cup on Sunday, saying the players stood up to be counted when it mattered most.

"I am at a loss for words but I can say we were outstanding," said Ponting, whose unbeaten 140 off 121 balls helped Australia crush India by 125 runs in a one-sided final at The Wanderers here.

"To do it when it mattered most was really something special, especially after I've been struggling," explained Ponting after Australia became the first side to win three World Cups.

"We remained unbeaten in the whole tournament and that says a lot for the team," said Ponting, whose innings was the cornerstone of Australia's 359 for two, their best total in one-day cricket and the largest in a World Cup final.

"The World Cup comes once in four years and the boys put their hands up and performed when it mattered most."

He added the fact that his team won the cup despite injuries to the

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## Waltzing matilda



REUTERS, Melbourne

Australia's World Cup heroes were set to arrive home from South Africa on Tuesday after two days of heady celebrations, having accomplished their mission in record-breaking style.

Captain Ricky Ponting's side extended their world record winning streak in one-day internationals to 17 in the tournament final at The Wanderers on Sunday, smashing 359 for two before dismissing India for 234 in a successful title defence.

Batsman Darren Lehmann, a popular member of two World Cup-winning sides, said the celebrations would be completed at top pace before the team returned home to relive the moment with

their jubilant fans.

"It's great to be relaxing now with one of Adam Gilchrist's cigars and a cold beer," the 32-year-old wrote in a BBC website column.

"We are all going to drink solidly now until 5pm on Monday because that's when our plane home is (departing)."

Australian television news bulletins showed the players spraying champagne around their Johannesburg dressing room and praised Ponting's side.

An emotional all-rounder Andrew Symonds, who took 2-7 in the final, told Channel Nine: "There were some tears out there. I can't describe it... It's unreal."

Back in Australia, supporters watched every move made by their team in the final via television as they crammed into restaurants and bars.

A noisy crowd of about 500 packed into the All-Star Cafe at

Melbourne's Crown casino in the early hours of Monday was typical.

"We had a big crowd and we had a very, very big night," bar manager Sonia Danielewski said on Monday.

"We had about 500 people in here and the atmosphere was incredible. It was probably 60-40 India and Australia support."

"They were singing, they were chanting and every ball that got hit, the Aussies would cheer. Every ball that got caught, the Indians would cheer. It was just a really good atmosphere."

"I was yelling out to people one metre away and they couldn't hear me. It was just a really big atmosphere. They all seemed really excited to be there," Danielewski added.

Australia's 1999 World Cup-

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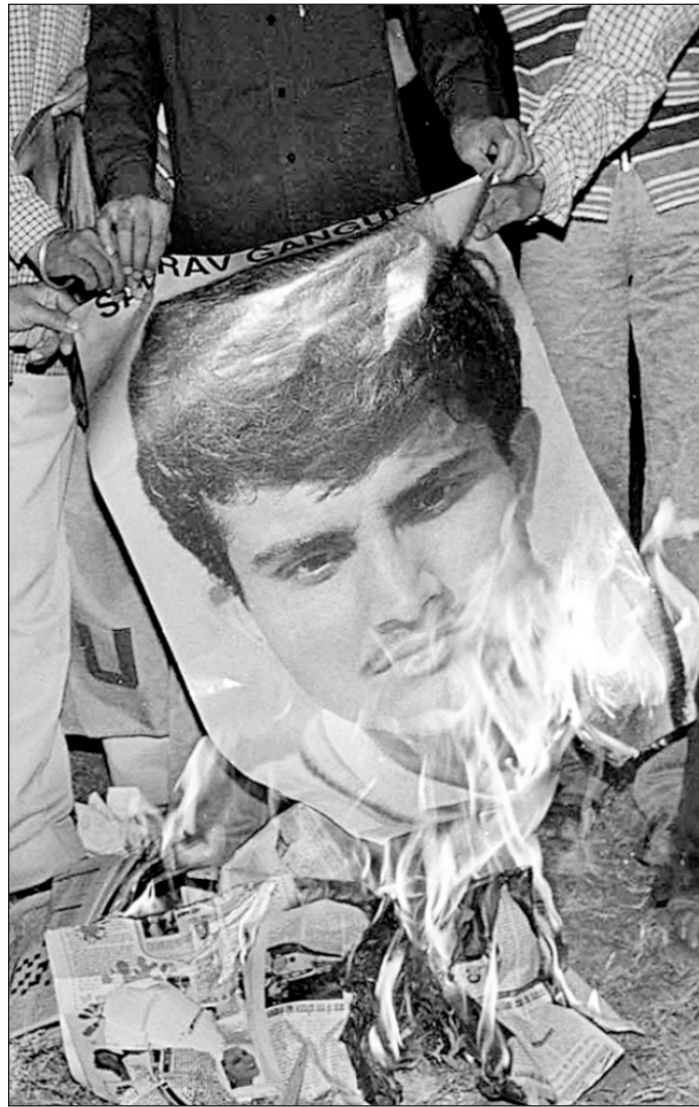


PHOTO: AFP

BACK TO SQUARE ONE! Fans in Bhopal burn posters of Indian captain Saurav Ganguly on March 23 after their team was defeated.



PHOTO: AFP

THE UNBEATABLE BUNCH: The ecstatic Australian cricket team with the World Cup.