

### Bindra riding high

NEW DELHI, Jan 30: India's cricket chief said today he was confident of resolving the television row over next month's World Cup within the next 48 hours, reports AFP.

Inderjit Singh Bindra, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), said his recent meetings with government representatives gave him hope that a solution would be found soon.

"We have taken up the matter at the highest governmental level, and it is likely the issue will be settled within the next 48 hours," he told reporters here.

The month-long World Cup, cricket's premier limited-overs tournament, is scheduled to open on February 11 in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Tournament officials have asked the government to overrule objections by some of its departments and allow the 17 Cup matches in India to be beamed live around the world.

### Kiwis pull Patel out

WELLINGTON, Jan 30: New Zealand has dropped veteran off-spinner Dipak Patel from its team to face Zimbabwe in the second of three limited-overs cricket internationals at the Basin Reserve on Wednesday, reports AP.

New Zealand named all-rounder Shane Thomson ahead of Patel after losing Chris Harris and Chris Cairns from its 14-man squad. Both Harris and Cairns are injured.

New Zealand captain Lee Germon said Thomson's superior performance in the first one-dayer, in which he took 3-32 as New Zealand won by 74 runs, was only part of the reason for his retention ahead of Patel.

"We wanted to play one spinner and all the seamers, so we felt that maybe Dipak could do with a rest," Germon said. "He's had a lot of cricket this summer and he's still carrying one or two minor injuries."

Thomson will fill the No. 6 batting spot vacated by Cairns after scoring 11 runs of 11 balls in the first match of the series in Auckland.

Germon said he expects an improved performance on Wednesday.

"Our bowlers struggled for line and length early on in the first game," he said. "We failed to settle straight into the one-day mode."

"Our catching was very good, but in general our ground fielding wasn't that good."

#### THE TEAMS

**NEW ZEALAND:** Lee Germon (captain), Craig Spearman, Nathan Astle, Stephen Fleming, Roger Twose, Adam Parore, Shane Thomson, Dion Nash, Gavin Larsen, Danny Morrison, Robert Kennedy.

**ZIMBABWE** (two to be omitted): Andy Flower (captain), Grant Flower, Craig Evans, Guy Whittall, Alistair Campbell, Sean Davies, Heath Streak, Paul Strang, Charlie Lock, Bryan Strang, Eddo Brandes, Henry Olonga, Stephen Feal.

### Cash bonanza for Pak cricketers

ISLAMABAD, Jan 30: Pakistan on Monday said it would give each of its national squad cricketers five million rupees (142,800 dollars) and a plot of land if they win the World Cup, the official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported, says AFP.

In addition to cash, each cricketer will be allotted a valuable 500-square-yard (400-square-metre) plot of land in Islamabad, the news agency said.

The incentives were announced in Lahore by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who is also chairman of the World Cup organising committee in Pakistan.

"This has been done to motivate the team to do well in the world competition," Zardari said.

Zardari said sponsorships from multinationals would also be arranged for the cricketers.

"The nation is expecting a lot from its cricketers," Zardari was quoted as saying. "Every player must exert himself to the maximum to retain the World Cup," which Pakistan won in 1992, he added.

The World Cup, jointly hosted by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, starts on February 14. Money and land have been used as incentives before, although the value of this year's offer is the largest yet.

### Magic back

LOS ANGELES, Jan 30: Former basketball great Magic Johnson has come out of retirement and signed with his old team, the Los Angeles Lakers, it was announced on Monday, reports Reuter.

Jerry West, Lakers executive vice president of basketball operations, said Johnson would wear his old number 32 on his jersey, the number was retired when Johnson left basketball after announcing he had the HIV virus, which can lead to AIDS.

## Saga of an unsung hero



NEW DELHI, Jan 30 (AFP): Mohammad Azharuddin is India's most successful cricket captain ever. Which will count for absolutely nothing if his team fails to win the World Cup.

Azharuddin — who will turn 33 just before the tournament — has won more

him. As a batsman Azharuddin, who averages over 45 in Tests, is the epitome of style. Every great has his trademark quality. Brian Lara's secret is in his fancy footwork. Shane Warne is all about fingers. Azharuddin's ability comes from those supple wrists that whip down and through the ball.

Yet it is his equally striking lack of real style as a leader that has earned him his critics.

A mild-mannered man,

teammates. More importantly, he accuses him of being too stereotyped and he lets the game drag.

Hard nosed critics attribute his impressive unbeaten record at home since 1990 to poor opposition — Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, New Zealand and Graham Gooch's struggling Englishmen of 1993 — and designer tracks suited to India's spin bowling.

And they still have not forgiven him for the dismal results of 1991 and 1992, when India lost Test series in Australia and South Africa and finished seventh out of nine in the World Cup.

The presence of vice-captain Tendulkar at his shoulder — the world's highest paid player and a man made for the limelight — has not helped.

But at least he knows he has the support of the selectors, until September at least. Led by former Test batsman Gundappa Vishwanath, they have stood by him ever since withstanding a media campaign to reinstate veteran Kapil Dev after the South African tour in January 1993.

The vote of confidence until September will ensure that he doesn't suffer the same fate as Kapil, who was sacked as captain after India failed to defend the World Cup title at home in 1987.

Azharuddin, a devout Muslim, refuses to acknowledge the pressure.

"It was Allah's will that I became India's most successful captain," he says. "No one can take that away from me. I perform to the best of my ability, then leave the rest to destiny."

He also believes India, one of the hosts of the tournament, are well placed to duplicate that 1983 win.

"We are a settled side, and playing at home is an added advantage," he says.

The critics will be waiting if he is wrong.



MOHAMMAD AZHARUDDIN

Tests and one-day internationals than any of his predecessors.

Yet that record has not stopped the sniping...nor the constant speculation that skipper-in-waiting Sachin Tendulkar is about to depose

Azharuddin is rarely seen giving death or glory speeches to his players or delivering brutal browbeatings.

Former captain Bishen Bedi says Azhar is great at self-motivation, but he falls short of motivating his

## Stage set for Zimbabwe



HARARE, Jan 30 (Reuter): Zimbabwe are hoping to graduate from cricket's whipping boys to inflict a little punishment of their own at the World Cup in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka starting on February 14.

Zimbabwe have won only two of their 20 previous World Cup encounters but believe they can improve on that ratio in their Group A games against India, Sri Lanka, Australia, West Indies and Kenya.

Captain and opening batsman Andy Flower says his young team, currently on tour in New Zealand, have a good chance of reaching the quarter-finals for the first time.

"Our target is the quarter-finals and we just have to win two games to achieve that," he told Reuters.

"If we beat Kenya and another team — the obvious one is Sri Lanka but they have been playing well in one-day matches recently — then

we'll be through."

But Flower, who is expected to drop down the batting order for the limited-overs competition, says it would be an unrealistic goal to look any further than the quarter-finals.

Zimbabwe suffered a major blow when veteran batsman and former captain David Houghton broke a foot during the recent second Test against New Zealand in Auckland.

"It's a big blow to us because we are a very young side and he brings a lot of experience to the team."

"He's a very innovative batsman, particularly in the one-day game, and we'll have to shuffle the batting order around now without him."

Former captain Andy Waller, 36, a hard-hitting middle-order batsman, was chosen to replace Houghton and will be appearing in his third successive World Cup.

Zimbabwe have shown one-day international pedigree with victories over Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the past 12 months and Flower believes their increased par-

ticipation since achieving Test status has made the team a more formidable prospect.

"We've been playing a lot more cricket and the guys have had to improve a lot and learn as we go along," Flower added.

Among them is fast bowler Heath Streak, who will turn from big game hunter to big name hunter as he seeks cricketing scalps at the World Cup.

Streak, who earns his living ranching and hunting wild animals is expected to be the trump card in Zimbabwe's attack.

A season of county cricket with Hampshire, plus a formidable list of Test wickets since bursting into the Zimbabwe team three years ago, make Streak a potential match-winner.

"We will look to him to get an early breakthrough for us," said Flower.

"But he is also very tight at the death, getting the ball into the block and making it difficult for anyone to get runs off him."

## Dav sings positive song



SYDNEY, Jan 30: Sri Lankan cricket coach Dav Whatmore said here Tuesday he hoped there was sufficient evidence for outlawed off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan to bowl in next month's World Cup without any more controversy, reports AFP.

And he called on the head body, the International Cricket Council which meets in July, to set up a panel to adjudicate on "chuckers."

Muralitharan was called

for throwing by Australian umpires in separate matches and he was omitted from Sri Lanka's last block of four games.

The 23-year-old spinner was no-balled seven times on Boxing Day in the second Test against Australia in Melbourne and was subsequently called on another seven occasions in the World Series game against the West Indies on January 5 at Brisbane.

Tour management took extensive video footage of Muralitharan's bowling action and he was subsequently in-

cluded in Sri Lanka's squad for the World Cup, starting on the Indian sub-continent next month.

"We have got some very good evidence to support what we have been saying all along," said Whatmore here, during a stop over by the Sri Lankan team on its way home.

"But the only problem is there is no process at the moment. It is still back in the umpire's hands."

"What we would like to do is just disseminate the information and show people what we have learnt and to treat this whole issue as a learning process for all and sundry."

"To understand whilst at certain angles his action causes a visual illusion, the actual fact is as shown by the experts, who have taken the right angle at the high speed film."

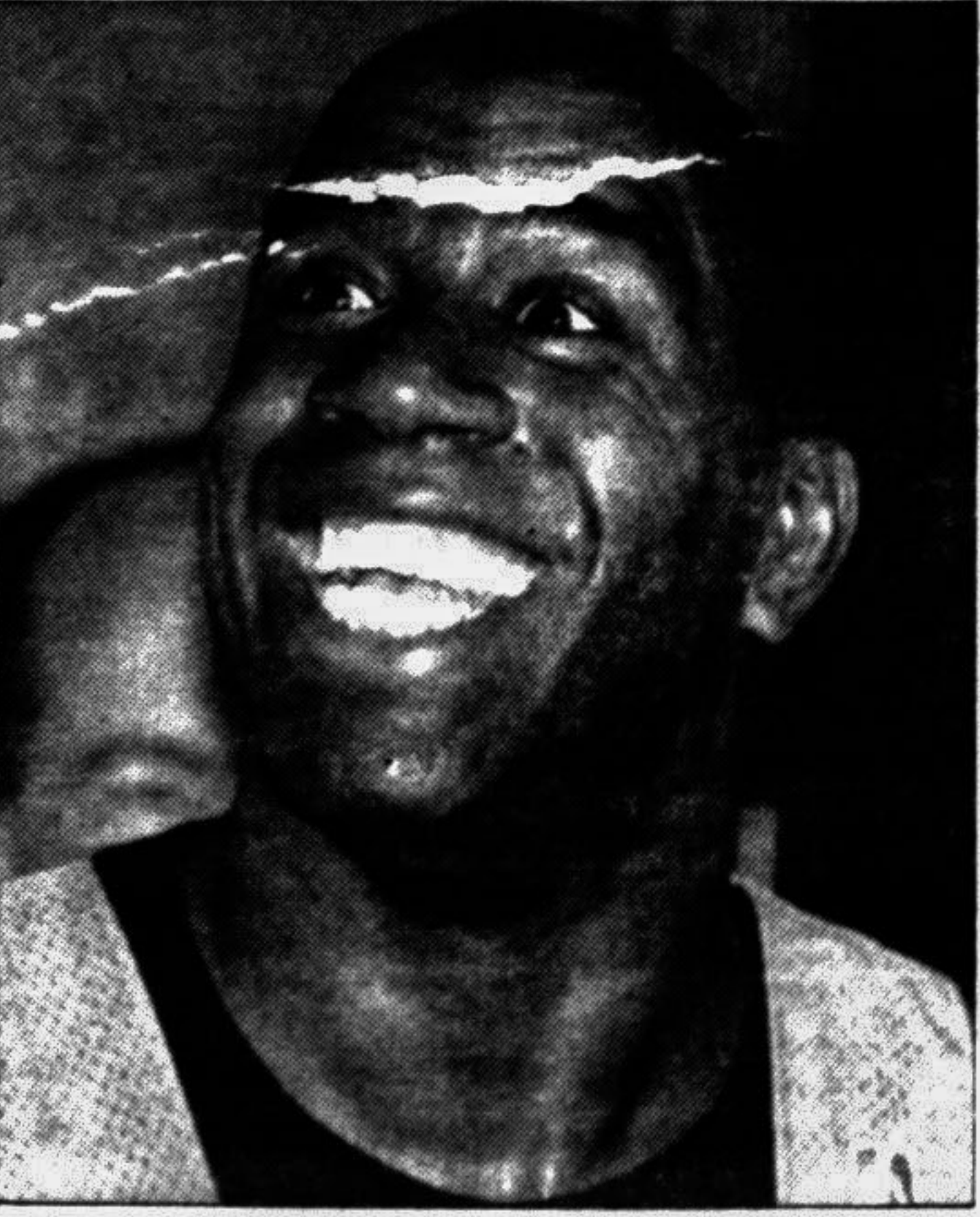
"We hope to show everyone this is what happens in his delivery arc."

"We just hope that will be sufficient to get him through the World Cup and hopefully, after the ICC meeting in July, they may be able to create a small panel that would be able to adjudicate in this case and future cases."

Whatmore was adamant his players had benefited from a troubled tour, which also included a ball tampering allegation against his side and some ill-tempered incidents with the Australian players in the second World Series final.

"Every tour is a learning curve, but I think this one especially when you consider that there were so many outside influences that interfered in and out of the last 10 weeks," said Whatmore.

He stressed relationships between the Australian and Sri Lankan players were good despite the ugly clashes which marred the second World Series final in Sydney.



UNDAUNTED, AS USUAL... "Magic" Johnson, the legendary basketball player is all smiles as he announces his return as a player to the LA Lakers. The three-time "most valuable player" in the NBA had retired four years ago when he was tested HIV positive.

— AFP/UNB photo

### Jyoti Basu to open World Cup

By Tapan Majumder from Calcutta

Though PILCOM is yet to come out with an official announcement, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, is a certainly for inauguration of the tournament.

The PILCOM convenor Jagmohan Dalmiya, and the ITC chairman, Mr Y C Deveswar, met Basu last week at Writers' Building and extended the invitation to him. Earlier it was decided that the President Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma would inaugurate the trophy. But the plan fell through as the octogenarian president politely declined the invitation on health grounds.

Meanwhile, the trophy for the Wills World Cup cricket is arriving today (Wednesday Jan 31, '96) in Calcutta from London. It will be kept for public viewing from February 1 at the Calcutta Information Centre and not Nandan Complex as decided earlier.

According to sources, the centre was preferred for its better accessibility for the common people and it is being specially dressed up for the occasion. ITC Ltd, the title-sponsors, will officially hand over the trophy to PILCOM at the inauguration ceremony at the Eden Gardens on February 11.

As there is no plan to shift the trophy out of the city Calcutta till the meet is officially launched, the sponsors may request the state information and culture department, who are in charge of the information centre, to keep it there for the entire period till February 11. The state minister of sports and youth affairs, Subhas Chakraborty, will receive the trophy at the Dum Dum airport later today.

Richardson said it was becoming increasingly difficult to hit boundaries in the modern day limited overs game.

"Over the years we have been accustomed to hitting a lot of boundaries. Now we have got to work on running between the wickets and scoring more singles."

Richardson, speaking in Anguilla after leading the Leeward Islands to victory over the Windward Islands in the Red Stripe Cup, said he believed West Indies would do very well in the World Cup if his batsmen found some consistency.

He said he had felt a lot better about his own form recently.

"I have struggled before and bounced back and I intend to come good in the World Cup."

### WI in quest of quickies

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Jan 30: West Indies, the masters of cavalier batting, will be seeking a more softly approach in their bid to win the World Cup, reports Reuter.

Skipper Richie Richardson said on Monday his squad planned to work on "looking for singles" during a training camp ahead of the month long tournament starting next month.

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## Cork comes to the fore



English player since Peter Loader in 1957.

He put his pads on and immediately scored his maiden half-century — but only after kicking a ball off during his innings.

Nobody noticed at the time. Cork ran four off Ian Bishop and then calmly put the ball back on himself.

"I can't put a foot wrong at the moment," he said — somewhat aptly — afterwards. "Everything seems to be working for me at the moment. I'm getting the luck

wickets at 25.42 in the drawn series with the West Indies.

In South Africa, he continued in similar vein with 19 victims, almost twice as many as any other English bowler.

Perhaps the 24-year-old's biggest break, however, has been a teammate's misfortune.

When Darren Gough made an impressive international debut against Australia in the 1994 Ashes series, he was prematurely hailed as the "new Ian Botham".

As dramatically, Gough's form slumped. When Cork surfaced in even more dramatic fashion, the media decided it was a shade too early to label Cork the "new Botham".

The lack of exaggerated adulation gave him the chance to establish himself in the team. Cork, in any case, was having none of it, knowing his batting was still way short of the real thing.

So, as it happens, is his one-day bowling, according to supreme Raymond Illingworth, after he was caned for 65 runs off 10 overs in one of the limited-over internationals against South Africa.

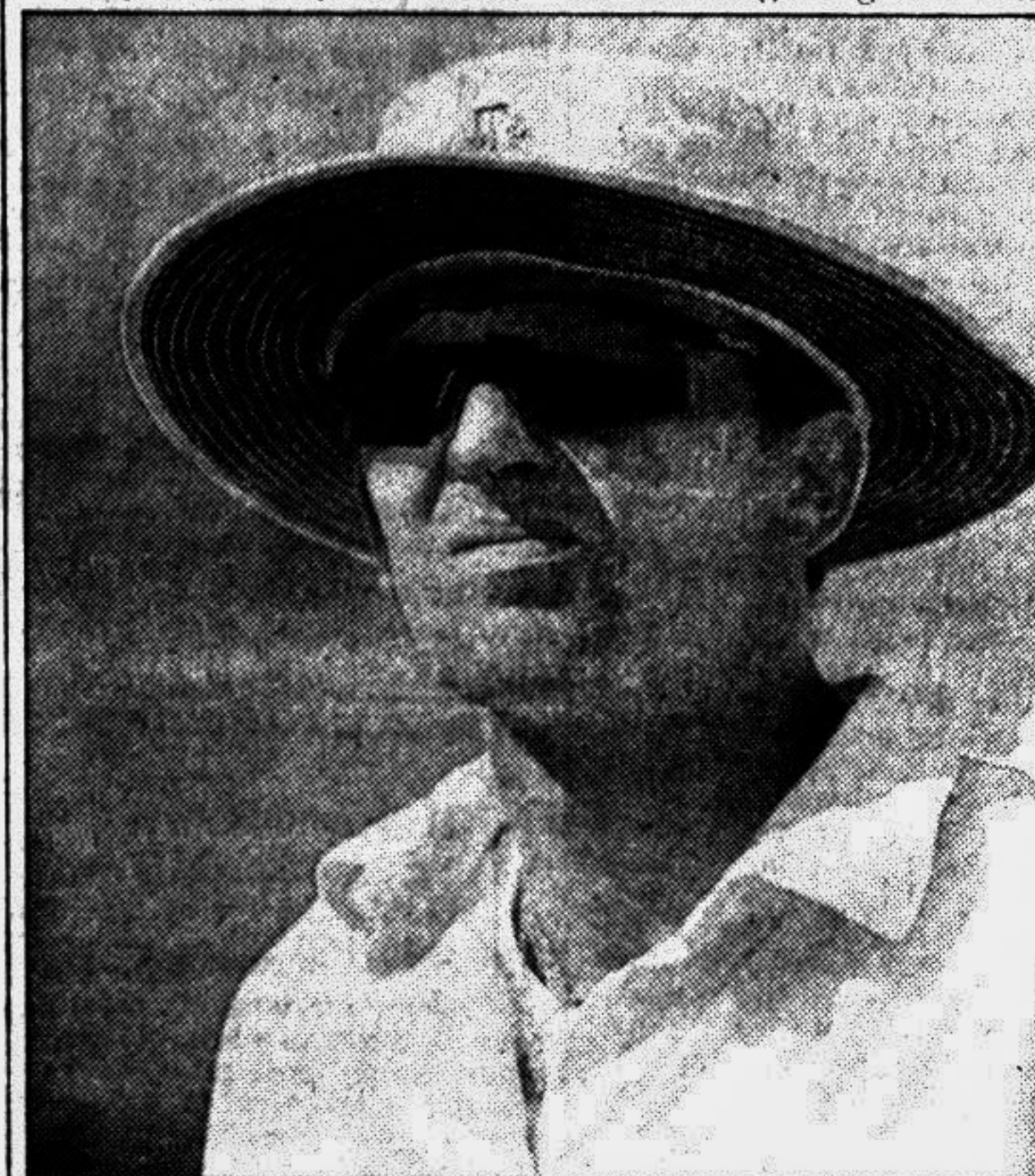
Cork, put simply, is too aggressive for his own good, striving for wickets at the expense of run-saving.

"It's really a question of not attacking too much, but also attacking enough," says the player. "There has been an element of having to make the transition from Test cricket to these one-dayers."

"And the way I bowl in Test cricket is completely different to the way I have to bowl in the limited overs game."

Without him, however, England's attack would have as much bite as a pair of false teeth in a bedside glass.

Cork used to have a reputation as a flashy, arrogant player. "I became aware that I had too much to say on the pitch. I am a better bowler without that," he says.



DOMINIC CORK

Test last summer at Old Trafford, a routine Cork delivery was helped into West Indian captain Richie Richardson's stumps via an inside edge.

Two balls later the Derbyshire player had recorded the first hat-trick by an

and breaks a bowler needs."

Cork's talent, of course, had been in evidence before that. His right-arm medium-fast out-swing earned him seven for 43 on his debut — the best by a new English player this century — and 26

## Money makes difference



ANCESTRY, has also been disputing the daily allowances on offer from the Kenyan Cricket Association, claiming they were railroaded into signing their tournament contracts.

Requests for a supply of white balls, which the teams will be using in the World Cup, resulted in the team management providing red balls which had been painted white, while demands for a bowling machine also went unsatisfied.

Kenya are in the same World Cup group as India, West Indies, Australia, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, but team manager Harilal Shah is still insisting his side can make an impact.

"Zimbabwe beat Australia in 1983 in England. They beat England at the last World Cup in Australia. Whoever dismisses us does so at a great risk," said Shah, who captained the then East Africa Cricket Conference at the 1975 World Cup in England.

Shah's optimism is inconsistent with Kenya's unimpressive build-up, in which their only notable re-

cent performance has been beating an India "A" side containing Vinod Kamble and Venkatapathy Raju in a five-match one-day series.

There is also increasing discontent among indigenous cricket followers who want a broad-based representation and believe some deserving players have been excluded. Shah has declined to comment.

Hanumant Singh, who has coached Kenya since the 1990 ICC trophy, and Peter Lever, who has recently been part of England's coaching team, have both spent time working with the African side's bowlers.

But the Kenyan squad will remain heavily dependent on the skills of Steve Tikolo, who now plays professionally for Border in South Africa along with skipper Maurice Odumbe.

Tikolo and Odumbe will be relied upon for runs and, along with Asif Karim, will also carry the spinning burden, if they struggle, the east Africans are likely to endure a similarly lean tournament to their predecessors in 1975.

## ROADS TO WILLS WORLD CUP '96

NEW DELHI, Jan 30 (AFP): List of match venues for the World Cup to be co-hosted by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka from February 11 to March 17:

**INDIA (17 VENUES FOR 17 MATCHES):** CALCUTTA: India's bustling eastern metropolis, 100,000-capacity Eden Gardens, one of the most modern cricket stadiums in the world is the venue for the opening ceremony on February 11 and the first semifinal on March 13. Hosted the World Cup final in 1987.

**AHMEDABAD:** In the western state of Gujarat, the 45,000-seater Gujarat Cricket Stadium, built in 1983, is situated in the suburb of Motera, 10 km from the city centre. Has hosted three Tests so far. Venue of the inaugural match between England and New Zealand on February 14.

**BARODA:** A three-hour drive from Ahmedabad, the compact 20,000-seater cricket stadium is situated inside a pharmaceutical factory complex. Has hosted one-day internationals, but is yet to host a Test match. Venue for the New Zealand-Netherlands match on February 17.

**HYDERABAD:** In the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, the 40,000-capacity Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium in the heart of the city has hosted both Tests and one-day matches. Venue of the day-night match between West Indies and Zimbabwe on February 16.

**CUTTACK:** In the eastern state of Orissa, The Barabati Stadium, which seats 40,000, has hosted two Tests. The town has no luxury hotels or airport. Teams arrive and stay in the state capital of Bhubaneswar, an hour's drive from Cuttack, hosts the India-Kenya match on February 18.

**GWALIOR:** In the central state of Madhya Pradesh, the 18,000-capacity Roop Singh Stadium, named after the brother of hockey legend

Dhyan Chand, hosted its first one-dayer in 1986. Not a Test venue yet. Will host the India-West Indies match on February 21 under newly-installed floodlights.

**VISHAKHAPATNAM:** A coastal town in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, the 25,000-seater India Priyadarshini Stadium is not a Test venue, but has hosted one-day matches. Venue of the Australia-Kenya match on February 23.

**PATNA:** The capital of the eastern state of Bihar is a new international venue. The 25,000-capacity Bihar Stadium will host the Zimbabwe-Kenya match on February 26.

**BOMBAY:** The western metropolis and India's financial capital. The 45,000-capacity Wankhede Stadium is a regular Test venue since 1974. Has been equipped with floodlights and a giant video screen for the India-Australia match on February 27.

**PUNE:** A two-hour drive from Bombay. The renovated Nehru Stadium, which seats 35,000, has organised one-dayers before, but is yet to host a Test match. Venue for the West Indies-Kenya match on February 29.

**NAGPUR:** The summer capital of the western state of Maharashtra. Venue of the Australia-Zimbabwe match on March 1.

**NEW DELHI:** India's capital does not have a modern cricket stadium. But the historic 30,000-seater Feroze Shah Kotla ground is a permanent Test venue. New dressing rooms and a media centre are being constructed for the India-Sri Lanka match on March 2.

**JAIPOUR:** The capital of the desert state of Rajasthan and a popular tourist city.

Venue for the West Indies-Australia match on March 4.

**KANPUR:** An industrial city in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

Will host the India-Zimbabwe match on March 6.

**BANGALORE:** The garden city is the capital of the southern state of Karnataka.

New floodlights are being installed for the quarterfinals match on March 9.

**MADRAS:** The southern metropolis and the capital of the southern state of Tamil Nadu. The historic Chepauk, which seats 40,000, is one of India's best cricket grounds. Also installing floodlights for the second quarterfinal on March 11.

**CHANDIGAREH:** The twin-capital of the northern states of Punjab and Haryana. Is being equipped with floodlights for the second semifinal on March 14.

**PAKISTAN (6 VENUES FOR 16 MATCHES):** LAHORE: The historic city, once the seat of power in undivided medieval India, is the capital of the Pakistani province of Punjab. The renovated Gaddafi Stadium, making the ideal setting for the World Cup final on March 17. The Stadium, with newly-installed floodlights, will also host three other matches: Pakistan-Netherlands (February 26), United Arab Emirates-Netherlands (March 1), Pakistan-New Zealand (March 6).

**KARACHI:** The port city is Pakistan's financial capital. The 50,000-capacity National Stadium, owned by the Pakistan Cricket Board, will hold three matches: Pakistan-South Africa (Feb 29), (Pakistan-England (March 3) and a quarterfinal on March 11.

**PESHAWAR:** The capital of North West Frontier Province is the home of the famous Pathan tribe. The 30,000-seater Shahi Bagh Stadium hosted its first Test match last year, but has been the venue of several one-dayers in the past. It will host two World Cup matches: England-UAE (February 18), England-Netherlands (Feb

22).

**RAWALPINDI:** A major military cantonment, it is 20km away from the national capital of Islamabad. The small 15,000-seater Pindi Club ground is a regular centre for international matches and will host three World Cup games: