

Now on Time's cover!

NEW DELHI, May 12: Sachin Tendulkar yesterday became the first Indian sportsman to adorn the cover of the American Newsweekly 'Time' which says the 'Bombay Bombers' batting performances have earned him comparisons with soccer great Diego Maradona, reports PTI.

Although cricket is hardly known in the United States, the latest issue of the prestigious magazine carries a write up on this week's World Cup in England with the Indian batting maestro shown in the follow-through of a cover drive. Speaking about comparison between Tendulkar and Maradona, 'Time' noted that both were short, stocky and curly-haired.

But unlike the Argentine ace, Tendulkar is a level-headed, even bland professional who does all his hell-raising at the wicket.

He wields the heaviest bat in the game, both literally and figuratively, and is a quick reader of bowlers and wicket conditions, 'Time' said.

The magazine said it's difficult to single out a standout Tendulkar performance, as there are so many — and so many to come.

He already owns the record for the most one-day international centuries, and he has at least ten playing years ahead of him.

The four-page cover story which celebrates the top batsmen in the shortened version of the game — who lift the game to dizzy heights as entertainers — and captures cricket's phenomenal growth in the Indian sub-continent, thanks to India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka cornering glory in three of the last four editions.

Jadukar Samad soccer final today

Suritola New Bengal Club will take on Rayer Bazar Diamond Kira Chakra in the final of the Jadukar Samad Kishore Football Tournament today at the Banabanthu National Stadium, reports UNB.

Sports Secretary A S M Shahjahan will witness the match and distribute prizes as chief guest.

Suritola New Bengal Club reached the final defeating Abdul Hadi Lane Juba Sangha by 4-2 goals while Rayer Bazar moved into the final beating Narinda Palashi Sporting Club by 2-0.

Randell set to face 15 separate trials

HOBBART, Australia, May 12: Australia's top international cricket umpire Steve Randell may face 15 separate sex charge trials, his counsel said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Randell, 43, who has stood in an Australian record 36 Tests, has pleaded not guilty to 26 charges of indecent assault and one of sexual intercourse involving a male aged under 17.

They involve 14 girls and a boy, and allegedly occurred in different parts of Tasmania state between 1979 and 1995.

During a brief appearance in the Tasmanian Supreme Court Wednesday, prosecutor Mike Stoddart said the Crown had not yet filed an indictment with the court.

The indictment was expected to contain a range of charges, but not all 27.

Randell's counsel, Kim Baumeler, said that depending on the indictment which was filed, she would apply to sever it into 15 separate ones, one for each complainant.

Justice Pierre Slicer adjourned the case to May 25 when a date will be set for the severance argument.

Randell has stood down from umpiring and been suspended on full pay from his job as a Hobart city primary schoolteacher until the case is finalised.

Rios sent packing

ROME, May 12: Defending champion Marcelo Rios, Aussie Mark Philippoussis and Spain's Albert Costa found themselves on the Italian Open scrap heap on Tuesday on a bad day for the seeded players, reports AFP.

Pete Sampras very nearly joined them before a three-set victory over unseeded Czech Bohdan Ulihrach in a tie-break at the Foro Italico.

Rios, who won the Hamburg tournament last Sunday, was sent packing by German qualifier David Prinosil 6-2, 5-7, 6-3.

The eighth seeded Chilean trailed 6-2, 5-2 before holding serve and breaking twice to draw level — only to find himself in an identical position in the following set.

The second time, though, after holding serve for 5-3 and then lining up the first of three break points at 40-15, he failed to get out jail. Prinosil ended the match with a powerful forehand down the right-hand side.

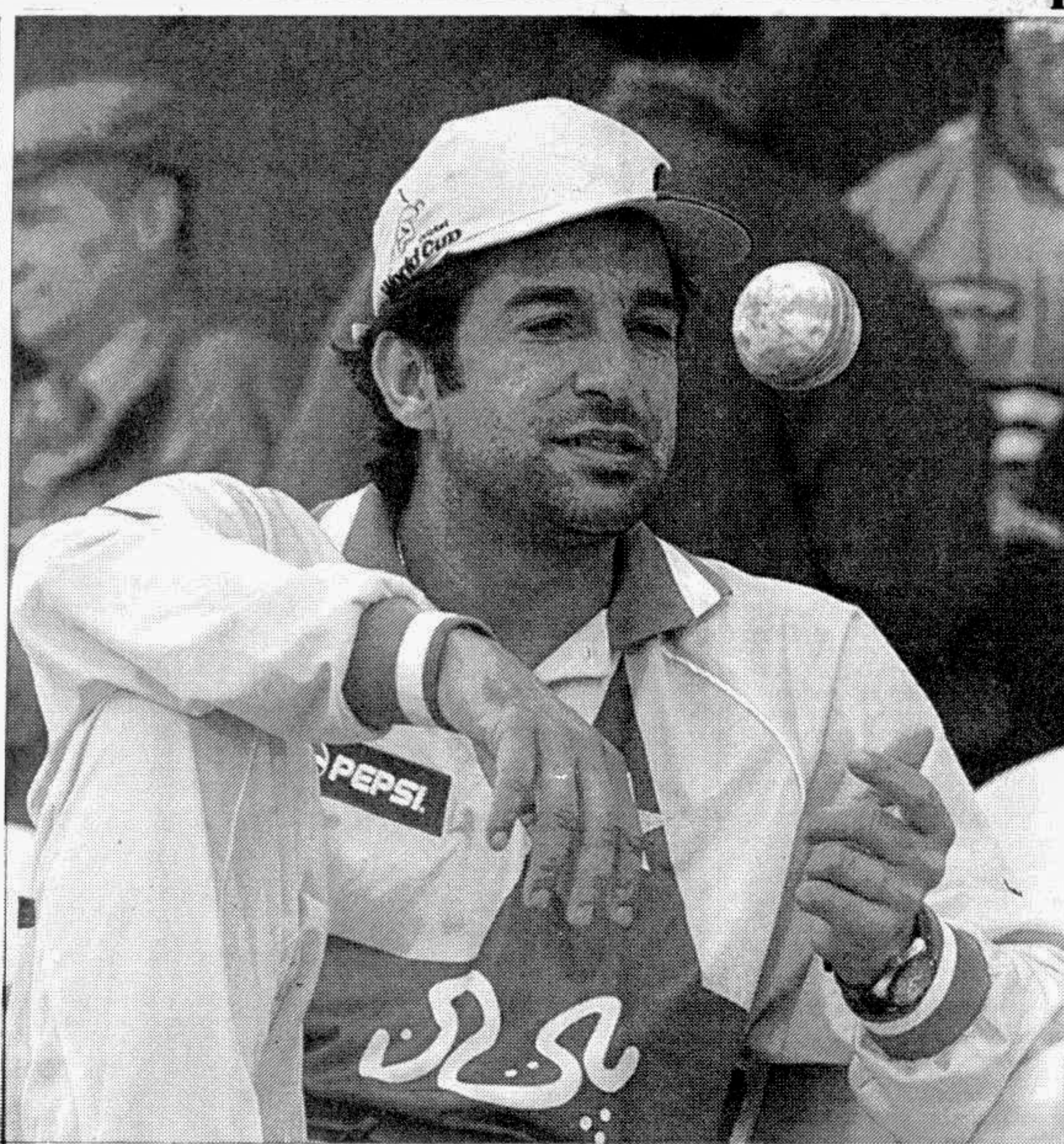
"It was a very bad match, but that's tennis," said Rios, who claimed he'd found it hard to switch from the pace in Germany to a slower court here.

And he added: "I just hope it doesn't affect my confidence."

Philippoussis, seeded ninth, was beaten 7-6 (7/2), 4-6, 6-1 at night on the centre court by American Vincent Spadea.

A player ranked 25th in the world and who has lost both of his previous two tournament starts.

It was a bitter disappointment for Philippoussis, who won at San Jose and Indian Wells earlier this year, and who was playing his first event since losing last month in the quarter-finals at Monte Carlo.



ALL RAIN AND NO PLAY MAKES WASIM A DULL BOY: Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram passing an uneventful morning at Old Trafford where rain prevented his team's warm-up game against Lancashire. — AFP photo

NORTHANTS-BANGLADESH SCOREBOARD

First innings scoreboard in the World Cup warm-up match between Bangladesh and Northamptonshire on Wednesday: Northamptonshire won the toss and decided to bat.

| NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: | | | | | Runs | Balls | 4s | 6s |
|---|----|---|----|---|------|-------|----|----|
| Batsman | | | | | | | | |
| MB Loye c Khaled Mashud b Minhazul | | | | | 62 | 83 | 6 | 2 |
| ML Hayden c Khaled Mashud b K Mahmud | | | | | 5 | 18 | 1 | - |
| RJ Warren c Aminul b Rafique | | | | | 20 | 45 | - | - |
| DJG Sales b Enamul Hoque | | | | | 50 | 55 | 3 | 2 |
| Penberthy b Enamul Hoque | | | | | 17 | 33 | - | - |
| KM Curran not out | | | | | 57 | 39 | 7 | 1 |
| KJ Innes not out | | | | | 42 | 31 | 4 | 1 |
| Extras: (lb-10, w-12, nb-4) | | | | | 26 | | | |
| Total: (for 5 wks in 50 overs) | | | | | 279 | | | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-15 (15 Hayden, 22 mins); 2-97 (82 Loye, 61 mins); 3-103 (6 Warren, 4 mins); 4-166 (63 Penberthy, 46 mins); 5-181 (15 Sales, 12 mins) | | | | | | | | |
| Did not bat: G P Swann, D Ripley, J P Taylor, D Follett | | | | | | | | |
| Bowler | O | M | R | W | nb | w | | |
| Manjural | 9 | 1 | 34 | 0 | 3 | 3 | | |
| K Mahmud | 10 | 0 | 71 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | |
| Enamul Hoque | 10 | 0 | 54 | 2 | 0 | 1 | | |
| Minhazul | 10 | 0 | 40 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Rafique | 10 | 0 | 56 | 1 | 0 | 5 | | |
| Aminul | 1 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | |

Cup predictions

NEW DELHI, May 12 (India Abroad News Service): On the eve of the World Cup starting on May 14, India's astrologers have put out their predictions, most of them backing India and South Africa to win the tournament.

While some of them have explained the planetary positions that would be in India's favour, others seem to have also depended on patriotic fervour also to predict an Indian triumph, in reports published in Indian dailies over the last few days.

New Delhi based numerologist S S Rao has even gone to the extent of predicting the scores in an India-West Indies final. If India bats first, Rao says they will score 279 runs and West Indies will make 270 in reply. If West Indies bats first it would score 170 runs and India would romp home by scoring 171 runs for the loss of nine wickets, he predicted.

India's star performers this time would be captain Mohammad Azharuddin, his deputy Ajay Jadeja, master blaster Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, allrounder Robin Singh and bowler Venkatesh

Prasad, Rao told The Hindu.

Another astrologer Asha Kiran Shukla predicted a West Indies-India final. Ajay Bhami who runs a daily astrology column too predicted an Indian win. Not all noted astrologers have backed India though. While Kanpur-based astrologer R K Dube Pankaj has predicted India-South Africa clash in the finals, Soma Banerjee from Calcutta has foreseen a West Indies-South Africa clash. But in both the cases South Africa emerges as favourite to win.

Indian Astrologers Council president A K Dube Padmesh is reported to have said that South Africa has the best chance of winning the cup but India's Sachin Tendulkar would create new records during the tournament.

According to astrologer Kishanlal Dube, India would not progress beyond the semifinals. South Africa would emerge as the world champion, he predicted.

While cynics have brushed aside such predictions as wishful thinking, there are a large number of Indians who swear by astrology prediction and will settle for nothing less than an Indian victory.

They'll never feel home-sick

LONDON, May 12: England will feel like a home away from home for Asian World Cup teams, with Mohammad Azharuddin's Indian team likely to be the chief beneficiaries of local support, reports AFP.

India are the only team among the 12 competing whose five preliminary-league matches were sold out in March.

Even hosts England have some tickets left for their match against rank outsiders Kenya.

The reason? Around 900,000 people of Indian origin live in Britain, higher than any competing nation barring England and Scotland.

Pakistan has a population here of 600,000, while the Caribbean are third with 500,000.

Bangladesh, too, will have ample support in their maiden World Cup appearance, with 200,000 people supporting them.

The strong Indian presence at their World Cup base in Leicester made Azharuddin's men feel immediately at home following their arrival on April 24.

More than 2,000 fans turned up to watch top batsman Sachin Tendulkar play in India's first warm-up game against Leicestershire last week.

It's all the same, except for the weather," Indian coach Anshuman Gaekwad. "The team has a lot of fans here."

India open their Cup campaign against favourites South Africa at Hove on Sunday.

Garza retains WBA crown

LAS VEGAS, Nevada, May 12: Mexico's Nestor Garza retained the World Boxing Association super bantamweight title here today, stopping Venezuelan Carlos Barreto two minutes into the eighth round, reports AFP.

Garza defended the title he won with a unanimous decision over previously unbeaten champion Enrique Sanchez on December 12.

He also ended Barreto's claim to a share of the WBA title, as he improved to 36-1 with 28 wins inside the distance.

Richards puts his money on Windies

LONDON, May 12 (Reuters/Internet): Sir Vivian Richards, not surprisingly, believes West Indies will win the World Cup.

Speaking on BBC radio, the former West Indies captain said on Wednesday: "I'm going to support West Indies until I die... they are going to win it. But there are a few teams that West Indies should take into consideration."

"South Africa are the best-organised unit in world cricket today and you have Australia who consistently have been doing well in one-day games and Test matches."

New Zealand and England could benefit from the conditions in England at this time of year, he said.

"Teams that have had adequate enough experience in these conditions I believe are going to do well," Richards said.

Asked who was the best fast bowler in world cricket, Richards said he was very impressed with Australian Glenn McGrath.

McGrath is a very mean sort of bowler but I think he has got to get his attitude right in terms of his mind. There are times when he can be a little bit too arrogant."

The World Cup begins on Friday with England playing defending champions Sri Lanka.

Cash incentive for Windies' World Cuppers

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua, May 12 (Reuters/Internet): West Indies will receive a bonus of 350,000 dollars if they win the World Cup, the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) said.

If the team reach the semifinals they get 50,000 dollars. A place in the final nets them another 100,000 dollars and winning the trophy itself earns them a bounty of 200,000 dollars.

The board said the incentives were negotiated with Carib Breweries as part of their 1 million dollars sponsorship of the West Indies team for the World Cup and the tour of England in 2000.

WICB's chief marketing executive Chris Dehring said the players were very pleased with the incentive package and were highly motivated to bring the cup back to the Caribbean.

Players, led by captain Brian Lara, went on strike over pay and conditions ahead of last year's disastrous tour of South Africa and forced the WICB to negotiate a better deal.

The West Indies begin their World Cup campaign on Sunday against Pakistan.

The South African 'Gestapo'

LONDON, May 12 :Cricket World Cup favourites South Africa have stolen a march on their rivals by employing a string of spies to evaluate other teams, reports AFP.

Coach Bob Woolmer said on Wednesday every warm-up match played by the opposition in the last few days had been watched by the South Africans.

The man following India, South Africa's rivals in their first match at Hove on Saturday, is former Test captain and all-rounder Clive Rice.

"I am ringing Rice tonight to see what he can tell us about the Indians in their game at Trent Bridge (against Nottinghamshire)," Woolmer said.

"You can always learn something and you can counter what the opposition is doing. We have brought two extra coaches with us for that reason."

Woolmer, an Englishman and regarded as one of the most innovative coaches in the game, refused to say who his other spies were.

England's chief selector David Graveney, asked whether his team employed spies, said: "No, we speak to the captain of the other team on the phone. They can tell us what's going on."

Wanchope unsettled at Derby

SAN JOSE, May 12 : Costa Rica striker Paulo Wanchope has said Tuesday that he is not happy with the performance of his English Premiership side Derby County, although he admitted he had no other options at the moment, reports AFP.

Wanchope said: "I am not happy with the team I am playing in this year. We have not scored enough goals and we have lost many games through mistakes we do not understand. It is logical that there is discontent."

Derby are in a respectable seventh place in the English top flight but Wanchope said: "Many players are thinking of leaving the team."

However, the striker would not confirm speculation in the English press that he would be sold, saying Derby boss Jim Smith had suspended any decisions until the close season.

He told La Nacion newspaper that Smith was looking for new players, especially strikers but that he would not necessarily be the man to make way.

Wanchope said: "Smith is still looking for new strikers but I do not think it is to replace me. In fact I think Dean Sturridge does not want to carry on with the team and it could be he is looking for a partner for me not a replacement."

The bandy-legged Costa Rican admitted he was not happy with his personal goal tally this season but said the problem was a general one.

Aussies leave nothing to chance



SYDNEY, May 12 (Reuters/Internet): Australia's build-up to World Cup began almost immediately after their loss to Sri Lanka in the final of the 1996 tournament.

It was only then that Australia's cricket selectors finally decided to embark on a fresh approach to the one-day game.

Australia's philosophy before that had been to rely upon the same players who had proven themselves in the Test arena with the addition of the odd all-rounder.

They worked on the theory of building their innings by keeping their wickets intact for a late flourish then pressuring the opposition with tight bowling.

Australia's strategy had been good enough to enable them to win the 1987 World Cup but their defeat by Sri Lanka at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore nine years later exposed the shortcomings of the game plan.

Sri Lanka's innovative use of pinch-hitters at the top of the order and their policy of chipping over the in-field from the start of the innings changed forever the way one-day cricket would be played.

It signalled to the rest of the world that limited-overs cricket had finally evolved from the longer version of the game and needed to be treated as a different entity.

Australia, to their credit, were one of the first nations in the world to take heed of the Sri Lankan message, even though they were already recognised as the best Test-playing country on earth.

They did not, however, follow Sri Lanka's attack-at-all costs approach but instead restructured their selection policy by choosing separate teams for tests and limited-overs matches.

A number of players were chosen in both sides but some of the biggest names in Australian cricket, including former captain Mark Taylor and veteran wicketkeeper Ian Healy, suddenly found themselves out of favour for one-day selection.

The policy, which was implemented for the sole purpose of winning the World Cup, ruffled more than a few feathers when it was first introduced but has since been seen as a masterstroke following the emergence of a new breed of one-day specialists, particularly Adam Gilchrist and Michael Bevan.

Gilchrist, who single-handedly replaced both Taylor and Healy, has proved a revelation. A dashing left-handed batsman, Gilchrist has been appointed to open the Australian innings along with Mark Waugh, who normally bats at number four in the Test team.

Together they have formed a formidable partnership with Gilchrist, in particular, relishing his role. They have already scored five centuries including the highest ever score (154) by an Australian in a one-day match which he made against Sri Lanka earlier this year and helped the team off to a flying start.

He also keeps wicket and while he is perhaps not as nimble behind the stumps as Healy but he has been more than adequate for the abbreviated version of the game.

Bevan, too, has also been a revelation, propping up the Australian middle-order with an endless stream of runs.

Although he has failed to shine in his limited test appearances for Australia, partly because of his problems against short-pitched bowling, Bevan has shone on the one-day stage

where bouncers are effectively banned.

His almost unbelievable average of 62 is a tribute to the number of times he remains not out although his real genius is in the manner in which he calmly goes about shepherding the tail-enders from the strike at the close of innings as he carefully builds his own score.

But Australia's strengths do not lie entirely with their one-day specialists. They also boast a number of highly experienced, and equally shrewd, campaigners.

Their captain, Steve Waugh, is possibly the fiercest competitor in the game and leg-spinner Shane Warne and paceman Glenn McGrath remain as two of the world's premier strike bowlers.

Australia's fresh approach to the game has already met with a degree of success.

They beat South Africa last season to win a triangular World Series tournament at home then hammered England to retain their title this year.

But they also crashed to an early defeat at last year's mini World Cup tournament in Bangladesh and were beaten by South Africa in the Commonwealth Games final in Kuala Lumpur.

Australia's biggest problems in recent years have been at the hands of two individual players, India's Sachin Tendulkar and West Indian skipper Brian Lara.

The two have an uncanny knack of producing their best against Australia and although the players concede that is probably the one variable they have little power over, they remain supremely confident that if they can keep that pair in check they can go all the way and win in England.

Julian: The unsung hero?



CARDIFF, May 12 (Reuters): Thinking of Australia's likely World Cup match-winners and the names that leap to mind are captain Steve Waugh, fast bowler Glenn McGrath, leg-spinner Shane Warne and dashing opener Adam Gilchrist.

It is a fair bet that all-rounder Brendan Julian, who bowls left-arm at a brisk medium pace and bats right-handed, is not on your list.

Yet before the tournament ends with the final at Lord's on June 20, he could have played an important part in Australia's progress.

The statistical evidence in the Western Australian's favour is, admittedly, far from convincing. Unlike some of his illustrious team mates, Julian's figures are some way short of startling.

A one-day international batting average of 13.44 and 22 wickets at 41.68 are not the stuff of legend. But it is because the World Cup is being played in England that Julian could yet turn out to be a match-winner.

On days when skies are grey, and pitches have some moisture in them, Julian's natural swing bowling allied to the seaming qualities of the white ball could see him pose problems to the best batsmen.

He has experience of English conditions after two Ashes tours in 1993 and 1997, plus a

season with Surrey in 1996 when he finished with 61 first-class wickets and showed his batting credentials with a century against Lancashire.

"I would love to come back here again. I have had offers from Surrey and Kent so hopefully it will happen," said Julian at Australia's World Cup base in Cardiff.

"I have played on most of the grounds where we have games so I know what to expect, and that knowledge is always useful."

"In the one-day game you are looking to keep things fairly tight when you bowl. The ball we are using does have quite a big seam on it and is pretty hard, too."



BRENDAN JULIAN

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Not many people gave him a chance before than match either.

Betting legally online!



NEW DELHI, May 12 (Reuters/Internet): What happens when a stockbroker economist cannot kick his cricket addiction? You get "CricketX" the Internet.

During the World Cup, starting on Friday, a World Wide Web site (<http://www.cricketcx.com>) will offer running probabilities of victory for each team before and during matches, based on the current form and past performance of the 12 sides.

Select the batting team, enter the score and number of overs bowled at any point in the match, and you will get their chances of victory in percentage terms.

It is predicting the future based on past performance, a technique used by stockbrokers

and foreign exchange dealers all over the world to place their bets...er, investments.

"We are putting our necks on the line," said economist and fund manager Surjit Bhalla, the brain behind No Boundaries International which is hosting the website.

"We give you probabilities, odds if you will, before the match and as the match progresses," said Bhalla who has worked for the World Bank and investment bank Goldman Sachs.

The site is scheduled to be hosted from Wednesday. Bhalla said he expected the model to have a 70 percent success rate in predictions before a match, 75 percent in the 25th over of a victory chase, and 80 percent at the end of 30 overs.

Bhalla conceived a "Crimet-

rics" (cricket econometrics) model for test cricket in 1987, and has since made presentations on the subject at the London School of Economics, the Indian Statistical Institute and Princeton University.

"Data for the entire history of cricket (test cricket, 1877 to present, and one-day cricket, 1971 to present) are used to develop and test performance of teams and

While CricketX is busy crunching numbers SatyamOnline, an Internet service provider (ISP) affiliated to Satyam Computer Services Ltd, has launched CrickEx a "virtual stock exchange" on cricket.

The site (<http://cricket.satyamonline.com>) will have put on playing "virtual money" on their favourite players and teams. Winners will get prizes.

Kumble keen on spin



LONDON, May 12 (AFP): India's 10-wicket hero Anil Kumble believes spin could be a dominant factor at the World Cup despite the cold, damp English conditions favouring seam and swing bowling.

"I know everyone is talking about how effective the seamers will be at the World Cup," Kumble said. "My hunch is that the spinners will do as well, if not better."

Kumble said his experience with Northamptonshire in English county cricket in 1995 showed that aggressive spinners like himself, Shane Warne, Mushtaq Ahmed and Muttiah Muralitharan would have a crucial role to play.

"I took more than 100 wickets that season, many of them during the first half of the English summer when the World Cup will be played," he said.

"So there's still hope for us spinners. I know both Shane and I will be looked upon as match-winning bowlers."

Kumble, who relies more on extracting top-spin and bounce to fool batsmen than sideways turn, has had little opportunity over the last week to display his skills as India's two practice matches against county sides have both been washed out.

But Warne, showed he would feature prominently as one of Australia's main bowling weapons when taking two top-