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Shaun Pollock retrieves the ball after it was hit for a four while jubilant Indian fans show their appreciation for the stroke. — AFP photo

Beware of Bevan

UNDATED (AFP/ Internet): Michael Bevan has the weight of statistics proclaiming that he is the greatest one-day cricketer heading into the World Cup.

Long regarded as Australia's premier one-day cricketer, Bevan sits at the top of the all-time one-day batting averages with 61.20 after 97 internationals.

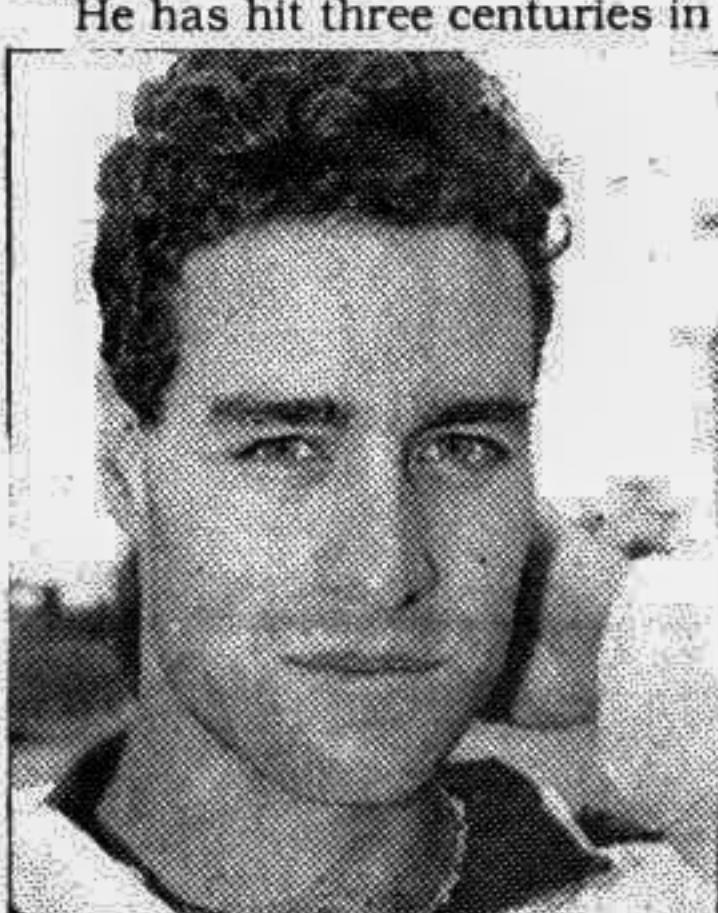
Bevan reigns ahead of Pakistan's Zaheer Abbas (47.62), West Indian Viv Richards (47.00), New Zealander Glenn Turner (47.00), West Indian captain Brian Lara (45.73).

Underlining the Australian left-hander's standing is that he far surpasses Gordon Greenidge, Dean Jones and Sachin Tendulkar on the career one-day averages list.

The fluent left-hander may struggle in Test cricket where his footwork and mental fragility have let him down (29.07 in 18 Tests), but he rules the roost in the one-day game.

In this year's home triangular series against world champions Sri Lanka and England again topped the tournament batting averages with an astonishing 135.50.

He was only dismissed twice in seven innings, many times guiding Australia to victory with his careful shepherding of



MICHAEL BEVAN

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Caution for complacency

LONDON, May 15 (Internet report): Wasim Akram has warned his Pakistan team-mates to be wary of complacency as they open their World Cup campaign against the West Indies tomorrow.

Captain Wasim, who has made his name in England with Lancashire, leads one of the tournament favourites who are on the crest of a wave following their Sharjah Cup success last month.

But the all-rounder has sounded a note of caution ahead of their clash with Brian Lara's unpredictable side at Bristol.

"Back home people think we have already won the World Cup," said Wasim. "I know we're one of the favourites but you still have to go out there and win."

Wasim will be part of an attack which is likely to feature Azhar Mahmood and new sensation Shoaib Akhtar, with Waqar Younis a possible absentee.

Shoaib, widely regarded as the fastest bowler in the world at present, is about to give the West Indies - for so long the kings of pace bowling - taste of their own medicine.

"I would love to bowl at above 100mph. You will see in

the World Cup I will bowl quicker than in Sharjah," he said.

"I have worked hard on my fitness and building my strength in the gym but the secret is in my sprint. If I get it right I can bowl really fast."

"I started my cricket because I saw Wasim and Waqar. A lot of



SHOAIB AKHTER

youngsters want to be like them."

"I have learned a lot from them. They are great guys and I am never scared to ask them for advice."

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Belated Wisdom

HOVE, England, May 15: South African manager Bob Woolmer apologised here on Saturday after captain Hansie Cronje was caught by television pictures taking dressing-room instructions through an earpiece, reports AFP.

Woolmer said: "If I have upset anyone, then I apologise. I was just trying to be innovative."

"We probably should have asked permission from the International Cricket Council (ICC). I suppose it was a little naive of me not to do that."

"All it is is a two-way radio which allows me to talk to the players. All we're trying to do is give the players advice and help them more quickly rather than send on someone with gloves or whatever to pass on the same information."

Cronje was spotted wearing the ear piece during Saturday's Group A match against India.

The Indian team reportedly

Powell packs punches

HO-NONSENSE approach, Powell, who also bowls off-breaks and is an outstanding fielder, earns his trip to the World Cup after his late call-up to the West Indies World Cup squad.

The little known 20-year-old Jamaican all-rounder was the surprise choice after the shock decision by Carl Hooper to pull out of the squad and quit international cricket.

And he is determined to make the most of his chance.

"I am just eager to go out there and do my best," said Powell, an industrial arts student.

"I know it is going to be a big challenge for me. I have never played in England and I don't know the conditions but I will have to make use of the opportunity and do the best I can."

Powell says it has been his dream to play for West Indies and foresees no problems in fitting into the squad. "I have been

around the (West Indies) players quite a few times and I always feel comfortable," he said.

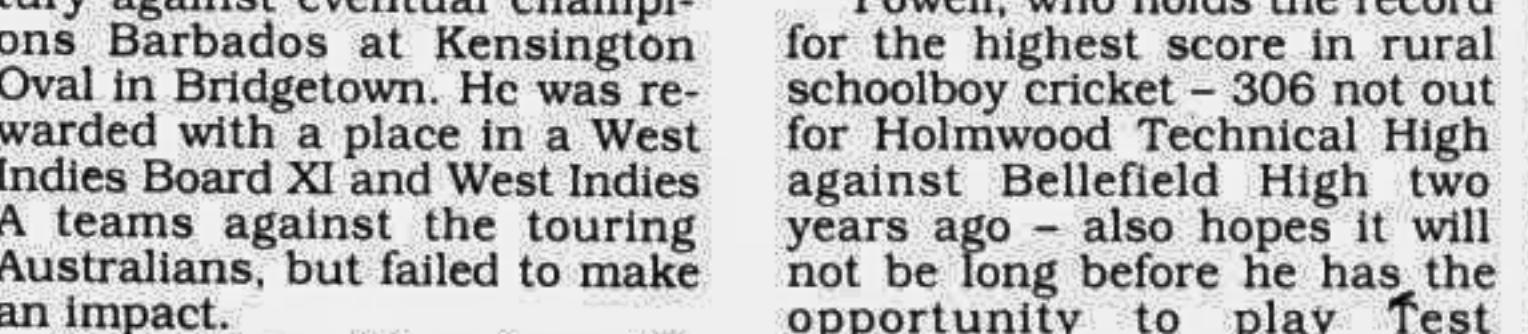
"I rally around them, they rally around me and I don't think I will have a problem."

"I'm young, and the selectors obviously believe that I'm one of the promising young players in the region. Hooper is a great batsman, bowler and fielder, so it's hard to fill that gap, but once I play to the best of my ability, I believe I can make a good impression."

Powell, who holds the record for the highest score in rural schoolboy cricket - 306 not out for Holwood Technical High against Bellefield High two years ago - also hopes it will not be long before he has the opportunity to play Test cricket.

"Once I condition my mind, I think I am capable of doing well

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THAT WAS CLOSE: Shaun Pollock (L) doesn't hide his feelings as Sachin Tendulkar is beaten by a delivery yesterday. — AFP photo

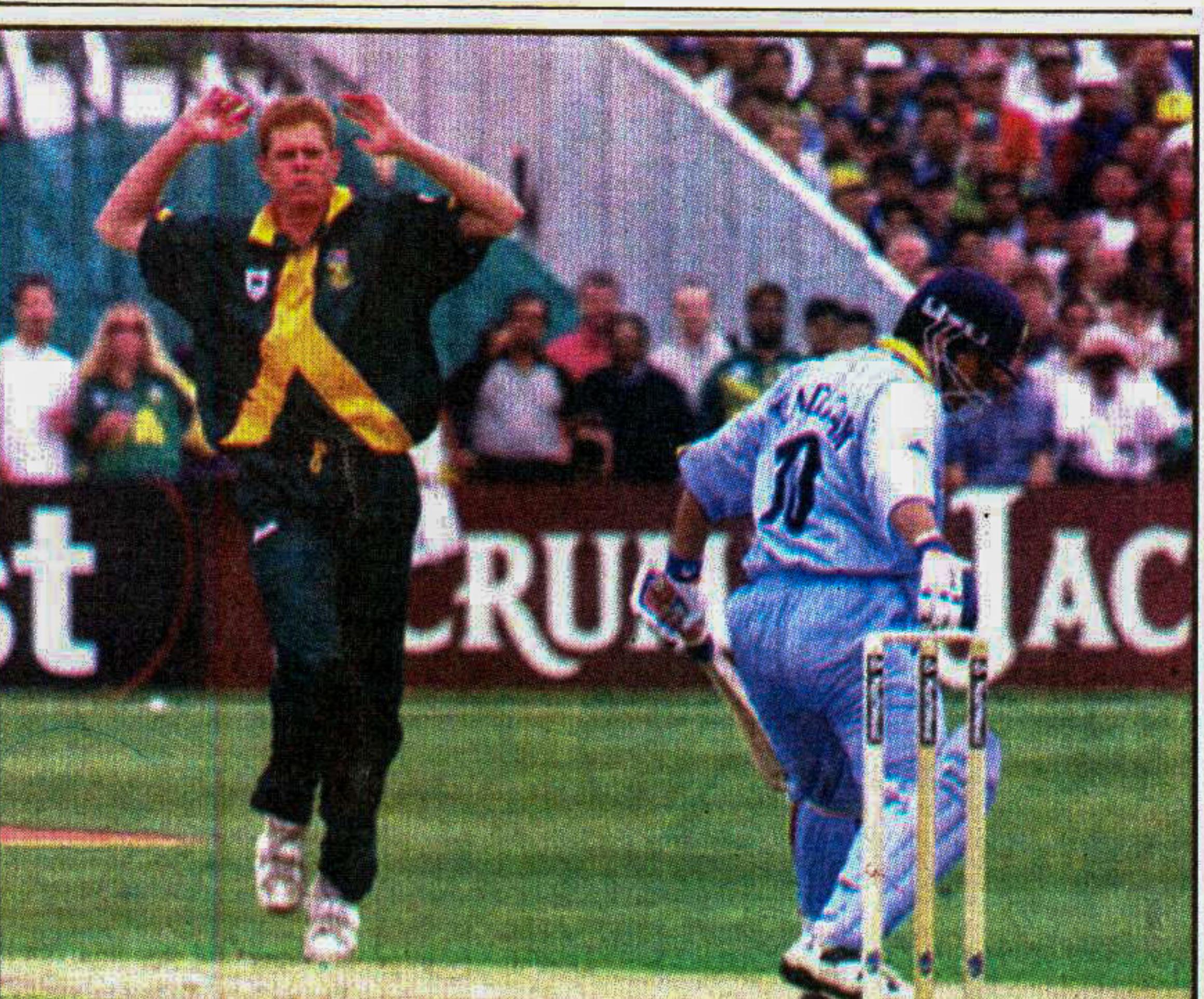


approached match referee Talat Ali and he then consulted cricket's chiefs to ask if the ear piece was legal.

The ICC later said in a statement that Cronje was asked to remove the ear piece as soon as it was brought to the notice of the match referee.

"He had not sought permission to use it from the ICC. The World Cup is not the event to experiment with new devices without seeking permission from the ICC," the statement said.

Some sports, like American football, use similar methods to



— AFP photo

Bravehearts will brave for honour

WORCESTER, England, May 15: Australia open their World Cup here on Sunday against a rag-bag collection of Scottish teachers, estate agents, a civil engineer, a taxi driver ... and a cricketer or two, reports AFP.

This will not only be Scotland's World Cup debut but also their first official one-day international.

Winning against Steve Waugh's side, coach Jim Love concedes, is out of the question. All the Scots want to do is to end the game with their heads held high. Their only real hope of a World Cup victory will come later against Bangladesh.

"If the Aussies thrash us in the opening game then it'll be very difficult to pick the lads up. Personally speaking, I believe anything less than a 75-run defeat against Australia would be pretty respectable," Love said.

For Steve Waugh's side, meanwhile, the group B match will offer little more than a useful stretching session before they take on the likes of Pakistan, the West Indies and New Zealand.

Shane Warne, however, will not show any mercy. He is keen for the practice, whatever the opposition, as he continues to fine-tune his game following shoulder surgery last year. Pace bowler Glenn McGrath is also searching for his best rhythm.

Ricky Ponting would like some runs after scoring a duck in Australia's last warm-up match and Tom Moody would like a run-out at the ground where he has played country cricket for Worcestershire since 1991.

Scottish captain George Salmon said his team, at 1,000-1 to win the World Cup and who qualified after coming third behind Bangladesh and Kenya in the 1997 ICC Trophy, would respond by trying to "put a bag over Glenn McGrath's head."

He explained: "We've got to forget who they are - not think that it's Glenn McGrath steaming in, or Shane Warne, or Mark Waugh batting."

"It has to be bowler against

batsman, and batsman against bowler. If you think too much about the opposition and their reputations, you can sometimes forget about your own strengths."

One of those strengths may be the ability to ignore Australia's famed "sledding" or

"chirping".

Last week the Scots asked former Australian Test star David Boon, currently playing for English county Durham, to give them a lesson in how the Australians might try to unsettle their batsmen with disparaging remarks.

If Scotland are to survive Sunday with morale intact, then their two professionals, John Blain, a 20-year-old from Northamptonshire, and Yorkshire's Gavin Hamilton will have to perform at their best.

Australia (likely): M. Waugh, A. Gilchrist, R. Ponting, D. Lehmann, S. Waugh, M. Bevan, T. Moody, S. Warne, D. Fleming, A. Dale, G. McGrath

Scotland (likely): B. Patterson, I. Philip, M. de Allingham, G. Salmon (captain), G. Hamilton, J. Williamson, J. Brinkley, A. Davies, J. Blain, K. Sheridan, Asim Butt

KNOW THE NUMBERS

Following is the players' list with shirt numbers:

AUSTRALIA

1. Steve Waugh (captain)
2. Michael Bevan
3. Damien Fleming
4. Paul Reiffel
5. Shane Warne
6. Mark Waugh
7. Shane Lee
8. Brendon Julian
9. Tom Moody
10. Darren Lehmann
11. Glenn McGrath
12. Adam Gilchrist
13. Adam Dale
14. Ricky Ponting
15. Damien Martyn

SCOTLAND

1. George Salmon (captain)
2. Iain Philip
3. Mike Allingham
4. John Blain
5. James Brinkley
6. Asim Butt
7. Alex Davies
8. Nick Dyer
9. Gavin Hamilton
10. Bruce Patterson
11. Keith Sheridan
12. Mike Smith
13. Ian Stanger
14. Peter Steindl
15. Greig Williamson

HEAD-TO-HEAD

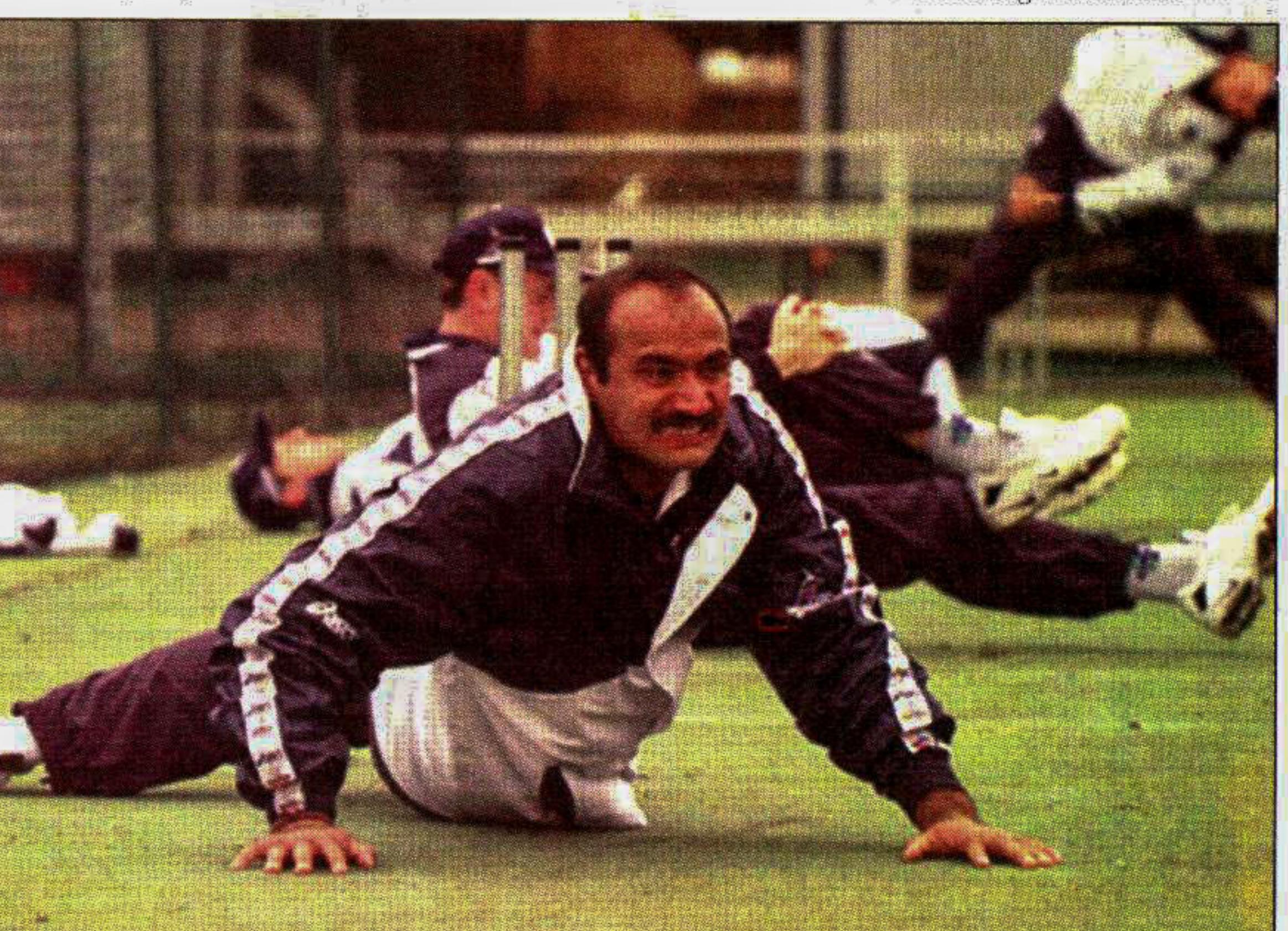
The sides have never met before, at any level. Scotland have yet to be granted one-day status, let alone Test status and this will be their first World Cup. A couple of famous Scots, however, have jostled with Australia as England captains — Mike Dennis and Douglas Jardine, the man behind the infamous "Bodyline" bowling campaign.

Players to watch:

Australia: Glenn McGrath, among the world's top pacemen, will be keen to knock over a few wickets after claiming just one victim in two warm-up games. Worse still, he was hit for 44 off nine overs by Somerset's batsmen. Scotland may pay for that audacity.

Scotland: Gavin Hamilton almost played for England during the World Cup and may play Test cricket for them in the near future. But the World Cup sees him in Scottish colours — he must be a true Scot, he says, because he supports the Scotland football team. His all-round skills offer the team their best chance of reliability.

Venue: Worcester. A beautiful ground overlooked by the city's cathedral. The last time Worcestershire won the county championship was in 1989, when they were inspired by one Ian Botham. Australia's Tom Moody has played for the county since 1991. Capacity 5,500.



YOU GOT TO STRETCH AT THIS LEVEL: Scotland's Asim Butt grimaces during a workout at Worcester on May 14. Minnows Scotland take on the mighty Australians today.

— AFP photo

Warne spin gets a whack

WORCESTER, England, May 15 (Reuters/AP): Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne will answer a charge of misconduct on Saturday after writing a scathing newspaper column against Sri Lanka's World Cup captain Arjuna Ranatunga.

Australian team manager Steve Bernard said that Warne had been charged by the game's ruling body. "I expect to hear the result within the next hour," he said, declining further comment after an Australian training session.

Earlier the New Zealand Press Association quoted International Cricket Council chief executive David Richards as saying: "I have alleged a breach of the code of conduct. A hearing will be heard this afternoon."

Richards said he reviewed Warne's column, which appeared in Friday's Times newspaper — the same day Sri Lanka lost to England in the tournament opener at Lord's — and lodged a complaint alleging the Australian vice-captain had breached the ICC code of conduct.

Under ICC rules, Warne faces a fine or possible suspension for making a "public pronouncement or media comment which is detrimental either to the game in general, or to a particular tour in which they are involved."

Warne was reprimanded by the Australian Cricket Board earlier on Saturday after he told the Times that the game of cricket would be better off without Ranatunga.

He also said the Sri Lankan captain's on-field behaviour was against the spirit of the

game and most international players shared that opinion.

Ranatunga, speaking after his side's eight-wicket defeat by England in their opening match, hit back at Warne saying his comments showed more about "Australian culture" than anything else.

With relations between the Australian and Sri Lankan cricket boards already strained, the ACB acted quickly to gag Warne before the situation escalated.

"Frankly, Sri Lanka — and the game overall — would be better off without him."

Warne, regarded as the leading bowler in the world, added: "Yes, there is plenty of animosity between Ranatunga and myself. I don't like him and I'm not in a club of one."

Sri Lankan manager Duleep Mendis said there would be no official complaint to the International Cricket Council.

Ranatunga said he would reserve comment on Warne's remarks but added: "I come from a 2-1/2 thousand year old culture," Ranatunga said. "I think they know where they come from. You all know where they come from."

The veteran of five World Cups, who is still under a suspended six-match suspension for leading his side off the field during a match against England during the limited-overs series in Australia earlier this year, refused to explain his comments about the Australian culture.

"I'll tell you when I've finished my cricket," he said.

An ICC statement was expected later Saturday.

Australian selector Allan Border questioned whether Warne would make himself available to tour Sri Lanka in August.

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