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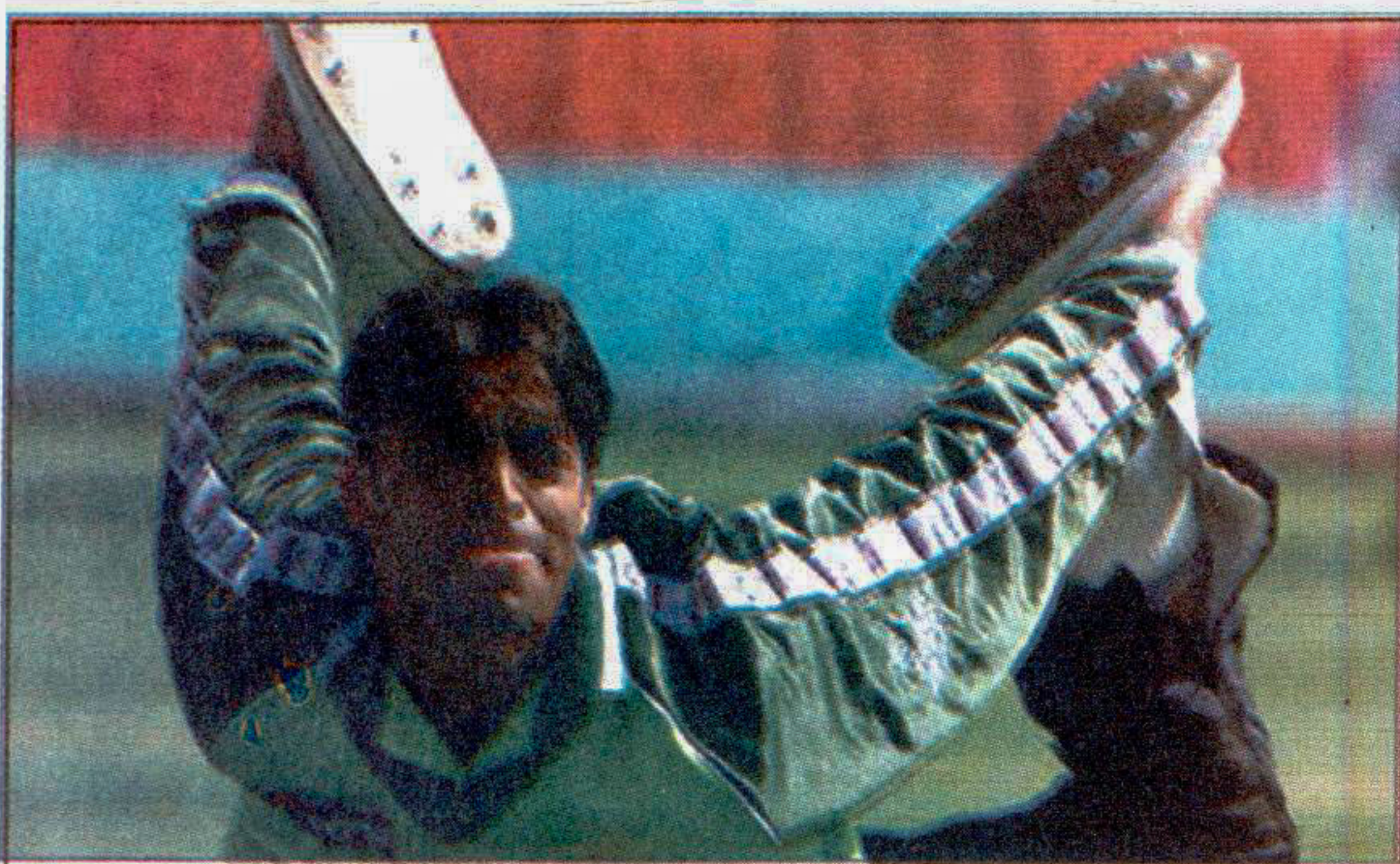


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RANGS GROUP



Pakistan speed demon Shoaib Akhtar stretching during a practice session at Durham yesterday. — Internet photo

Pakistan plot a demolition

CHESTER-LE-STREET, Eng. May 19 : Pakistan promised here on Wednesday to pay Scotland's tartan partisans the perfect cricket World Cup compliment - by showing them absolutely no mercy, reports AFP.

Wasim Akram said Pakistan, the 1992 World Cup winners, planned to make it a short-and-sweet work-out on Thursday after their impressive opening victory over the West Indies.

"We want to go two-up quickly," he said.

"These matches look easy from the outside, but they can be very dicey."

"The Scots gave the Australians a lot of trouble - we can do without that."

Scotland, with just two professionals in their ranks and making their one-day international debuts, were far from disgraced in their group B opener as they made 181 against Australia and then took four wickets.

warm-up matches washed out by rain.

Only Ijaz Ahmed, of the top five, scored more than a dozen runs against the West Indies, while Inzamam-ul Haq lasted just one ball. It needed 43 off 28 balls from Akram himself to save his side.

Scotland's captain George Salmond, meanwhile, said his team would play as if they had a realistic chance of victory, rather than merely trying to survive against an attack including Shoaib Akhtar, the fastest bowler in the world.

"Our technique is probably not good enough to last 50 overs against them, but we obviously have to be positive," he said.

"That's our style and, although that may not always do us good, we did not do too badly against Australia."

The team's real target is to do

enough at the World Cup to impress the International Cricket Council to grant them one-day status in the near future.

A Pakistan win would give them four points and, with a game to come against Bangladesh, would virtually assure them of a place in the second round.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

The sides have never met before at any level. Scotland, yet to be granted one-day or Test status, played their first World Cup match last Sunday against Australia, losing by six wickets.

Players to watch

Pakistan : Azhar Mahmood, a reliable all-rounder, who won the man-of-the-match award against the West Indies. His medium-pace swing bowling is well-suited to English conditions. His dependable batting lower down the order also complements the unpredictable strokeplay of the top-order.

Scotland : George Salmond. Captain and middle-order batsman, who made his first-class debut for Scotland in 1991. Looked sound while making 31 against Australia, giving his side a firm start, but may find Pakistan's pace attack tougher to handle.

Venue

Riverside, in Chester-le-Street, is among the newest grounds in English cricket. Has hosted Durham's county team since 1995. Australian David Boon is the current Durham captain. Will also host the Australia-Bangladesh World Cup match on May 27. Capacity: 6,800. (AFP)

Alec seeks fan following

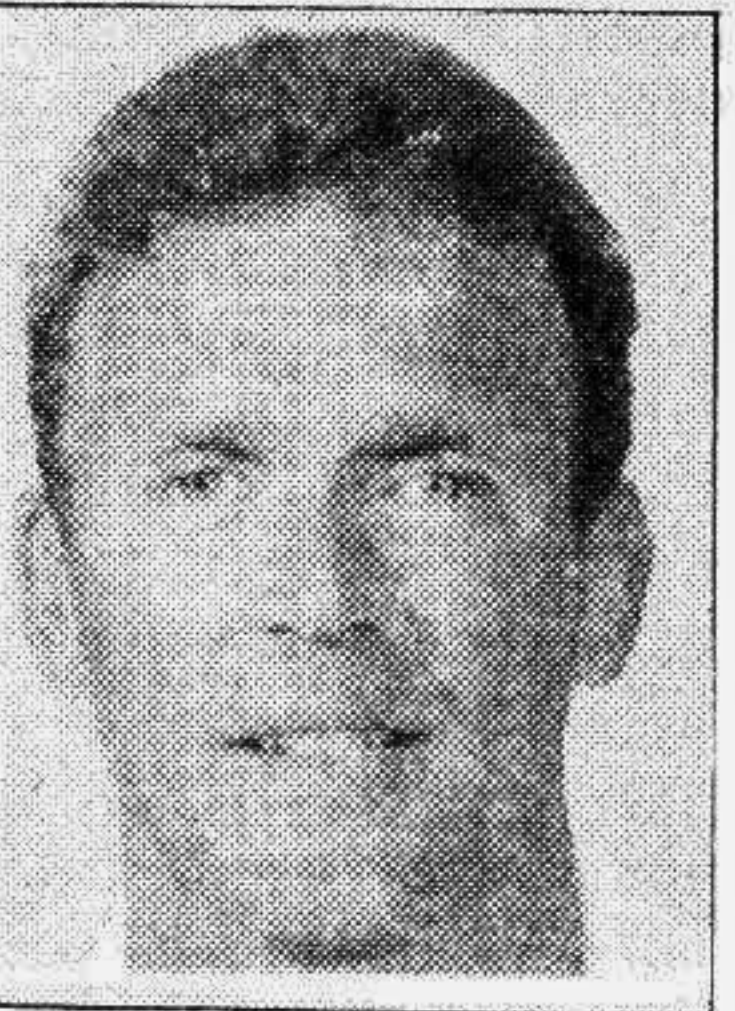
UNDATED, May 19 (Internet report) : Stewart urges fans to get behind England. Captain Alec Stewart today appealed to London's sporting public to help continue England's impressive World Cup momentum by turning Saturday's crunch match against South Africa into a rival attraction to the FA Cup Final.

After completing impressive victories over holders Sri Lanka and unfancied Kenya, Stewart is well aware England are well-placed to seal a place in the top three of Group A and qualify for the Super Six stage.

But despite the fact the majority of the country are likely to be tuning in to discover whether Manchester United can complete the second leg of an unprecedented treble against Newcastle, Stewart is anxious England's World Cup challenge does not become overshadowed by events at Wembley.

"We're not getting over-excited because we've only played two games," stressed Stewart.

"The first one was a big win and we had to win against Kenya, but Saturday against South Africa will be the biggest game of the group and it could well decide the placings at the



Alec Stewart at the end of the initial stage of the tournament. "It's a big game and hopefully the Londoners will come to the cricket and the Northerners can go to Wembley - England against South Africa in any sport is big, but especially in cricket."

England's World Cup credentials, but also play a key role in deciding the final placings in the group.

It is for that reason that Stewart is eager for a healthy crowd to roll up at the Oval and cheer them on as enthusiastically as they have done at Lord's and Canterbury during their opening victories.

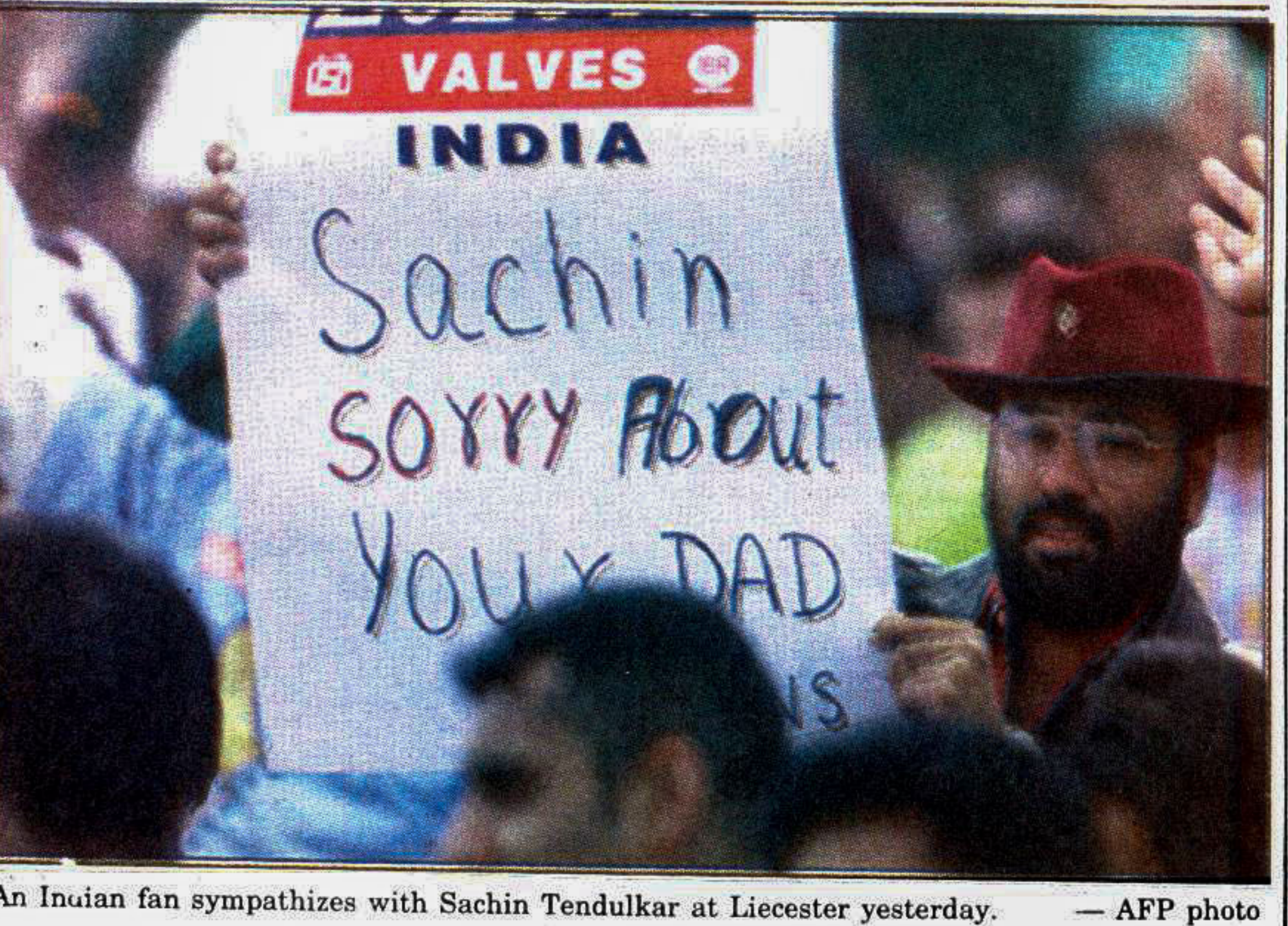
"We've played some good cricket so far and we want to try and continue that throughout the tournament, but especially on Saturday," explained Stewart.

"We've had two good wins and when England do well the crowd does get behind us and I'd like to think that on Saturday there will be 16-17,000 people shouting England on again."

"They play very good cricket so we have to be on the ball and try and match them and play as well as we have so far."

"They are the form side and deserve to be the tournament favourites, but it's all down to how each side plays on the day."

Yesterday's eight-wicket win over Kenya was achieved despite a mix-up over the length of interval - with umpires KT Francis and Rudi Koertzen.



An Indian fan sympathizes with Sachin Tendulkar at Leicester yesterday. — AFP photo

Gentle giant's blood is up

DUBLIN, May 19 : World Cup whipping boys Bangladesh may find themselves on the wrong end of a Courtney Walsh backlash here on Friday, reports AFP.

The towering West Indian strike bowler, on the brink of becoming the world's highest Test wicket-taker, has every right to feel slighted.

Walsh has been all but overlooked in the opening phase of the tournament.

Even an excellent spell against Pakistan - he took three for 28 off 10 overs - barely earned him a mention, as the world's media swarmed around Pakistan's new pace discovery Shoaib Akhtar.

Akhtar - who took two for 54 in Pakistan's 27-run win - has captured the imagination with his coltish pace.

The 36-year-old Jamaican, in comparison, is an old warhorse with a dodgy knee and the knacker's yard awaiting him.

The man-of-the-match award on that occasion went to Gavin Larsen, who took three wickets with his gentle medium-pace. Walsh, however, will be a totally different proposition.

He may not be as fast as he once was, but he will extract sharp lift and movement while probing around the off stump.

He is one of the few bowlers who gives away less than four runs an over in one-day cricket.

He also has more than 200 victims to go with his 423 Test wickets. Kapil Dev, the former Indian star, holds the world record with 434.

Bangladesh's batsmen have been reminded of what to expect from Walsh and Co. by their coach, former West Indian great Gordon Greenidge.

Greenidge, a one-time teammate of Walsh's, however, is pessimistic about the outcome on Friday.

The Bangladesh batsmen, he says, talk a good game but, on reaching the middle, "they seem to forget what they've been talking about."

"We have tried to apply ourselves in terms of the game, but it just doesn't seem to be working."

Bangladesh, making their World Cup debut after winning the 1997 ICC Trophy, looked less than impressive against New Zealand at Chelmsford, when they were skittled out for 116, the lowest total in the tournament to date.

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"We have tried to apply ourselves in terms of the game, but it just doesn't seem to be working."

Betting bonanza

NEW DELHI, May 19 (Reuters/Interet) : The kingpins of India's underground betting sit in Dubai. They know punters bet on the mundane to the ridiculous, but above all they bet on cricket.

Local bookies operating out of the dingy alleys of Delhi's bazaar market say billions of rupees have been placed on the outcome of the cricket World Cup in England.

"Bookies sitting in Dubai run the actual market. They take the bets from Delhi and Bombay while we take the stakes from the smaller cities," said one bookie, squatting cross-legged in a tiny office in Kucha Mahajani, Asia's largest bullion market.

Betting is illegal in India except on horse racing.

Many Indians bet regularly, often in large amounts placed on trust. Most of the business is conducted via telephone and bets are accepted only from people introduced by reliable friends.

Bookies are chary of saying how big their business is but say the total amount runs into millions of U.S. dollars.

Wagers can cover the strangest of ideas, and the cricket World Cup is the perfect tournament for indulging such whims.

Who will be the first batsman to be knocked out by a pace bowler's bouncer? How many times will a particular batsman get run out in the tournament?

The north-western city of Jaipur and the central city of Indore, rich with money linked to commodities trading, are among major betting centres in cricket-crazy India. Some spectators bet on every ball.

Bookies say the main odds in the World Cup are broadly in line with those of London bookmakers who give South Africa as the clear favourites at 5-2.

The odds in India on the South African team are 2.75-1.

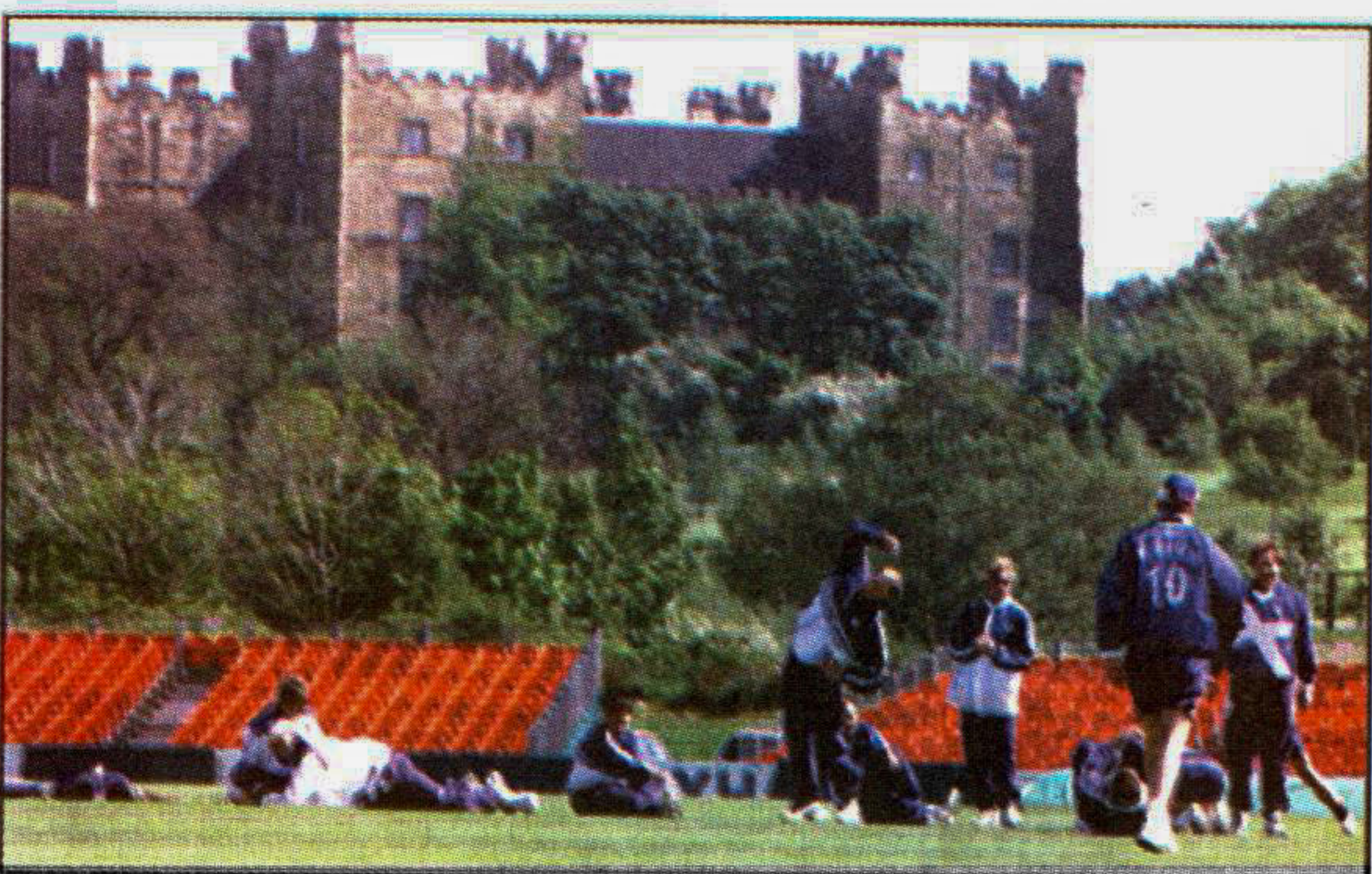
"The maximum money is rising on South Africa. They

are almost everybody's favourite," said Sanjeev Chand, a bullion trader in Delhi's Kucha Mahajani.

Australia have 3.5-1 odds with Pakistan at 4-1. Home advantage gives England odds of 5-1.

Millions of Indians are yearning for an Indian victory but bookies are not letting their feelings override their business sense. The odds on India are 10-1.

"We can highlight anything



The Scotland squad going through a training session at the picturesque setting of Durham on May 18. — AFP photo

Scots turn to tech

CHESTER-LE-STREET, Eng. May 19 (Internet report) : Scotland have turned to video technology in an attempt to improve their performance in the cricket World Cup.

The group B outsiders face Pakistan in their second fixture on Thursday and will use a sophisticated computer-assisted video analysis of the game to spot errors.

"They had hoped to use the system in their opening match against Australia on Sunday but the BBC's decision to show only parts of the match scuppered the plan."

"This time the Scots are making doubly sure and will install their own cameras to back up the BBC coverage."

The system, already used by England and widespread in other sports, gives coaches a fast, detailed breakdown of the action in the middle.

"It's absolutely ideal for cricket," said Ian Brunning, of the system's provider, Newcastle-based Castle Sport.

"We can highlight anything

specific, a bowler's action, a change in batsman's stance, footwork, anything the coaches want to look at.

"Body language can also tell a story and the psychologists might be able to draw some conclusions from looking at players just before they are out, or in the field."

"In one of the games at the weekend you could see one of the players appearing to be starting straight at a TV camera. He was bowled next ball so maybe there was a lesson in concentration there," said Brunning.

Scotland coach Jim Love has no doubts about the system's potential.

"We've always used video to a certain extent but this enables us to look at specific areas and at a great speed," said the former Yorkshire batsman on Tuesday.

"We would love to have our own system but the budget doesn't stretch that far."

England not only bought the system but also employ a full time analyst to get the best from

it, Australia and South Africa are also users.

Scotland's bowling coach Graham Dilley, the former England pacesetter, is particularly keen to see the results.

"We can specify width outside off stump, no-balls, short balls, anything we want," he said.

"We can analyse where the scoring shots are coming from and, hopefully, take steps to stop them."

Several English counties use the system but despite its apparent suitability for cricket many others are reluctant to take it on.

"Some of the older coaches in the game, who perhaps are not that comfortable with technology, maybe fear it will replace them," said Brunning.

There is no such reluctance in rugby where it is embraced all over the world. Several English premier league soccer teams are regular users.

The system's reputation was cemented during the 1997

Greenidge doesn't think much of WI

LONDON, May 19 (Internet report) : Former West Indies batting star Gordon Greenidge believes his country will struggle to make an impact in the World Cup because Brian Lara is under too much pressure to produce the goods.

Greenidge will be aiming to cause one of the biggest shocks in the competition's history when Bangladesh - he is their national coach - tackle the West Indies in Dublin on Friday.

The former Hampshire opener served his country with distinction during their decades of world cricket domination and was a World Cup winner in 1975 and 1979.

But he has a gloomy forecast for Lara's men during the current event, with the West Indies having lost their opening match to Pakistan at Bristol after another poor batting display.

Greenidge said: "They are struggling. Once Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose go out of the attack they will struggle, although Mervyn Dillon bowled reasonably well against Pakistan."

"But they are also going to struggle with the bat. If they are going to rely on Brian Lara and Shivnarine Chanderpaul so much it is going to be uphill for

them.

"If they aren't going to get a good start to their innings then there is going to be additional pressure all the time on the players coming in later down."

Greenidge insisted there will be no special plan to try and get rid of Lara - "just to get him out" - but he is looking to make life uncomfortable for the West Indies.

"The match won't be any more special to me than the

No-hoppers turn heroes

CANTERBURY, England, May 19 (AFP) : Graeme Hick and Nasser Hussain have had their differences with the England selectors in recent years.

The Zimbabwean-born Hick has spent as much time out of the team as in it, as doubts have persisted about his technique.

Hussain, meanwhile, was told he was surplus to requirements for the World Cup. He only got into the squad by the back door, after Michael Atherton had to withdraw with back problems.

Their match-winning performances in the nine-wicket cup victory over an outclassed Kenyan side in group A here on Tuesday may not be enough to

prove a point in the long term, but both players will at least have consolidated their positions for the next few weeks.

Hick, a powerful right-hander but who has often been accused of being leaden-footed, made 61 not out, to go with his undefeated 73 in England's first game against defending champions Sri Lanka.

Hussain, playing the anchor role, made 88 not out as England reached their victory target of 204 for the loss of one wicket and with 11 overs to spare. Their unbroken stand was worth 159.

Hussain now seems set to retain the opener's slot alongside skipper Alec Stewart, after the out-of-touch Nick Knight, groomed for the position for the

past two years, was dropped on the eve of the World Cup.

The irrepressible, steadily maturing Darren Gough also had a good day on Tuesday.

Gough recently admitted he does not really know where the ball will land each time he let fly. But the strike bowler showed he has control as well as pace on Tuesday, taking four for 34 and at the same time claiming his 100th one-day victim.

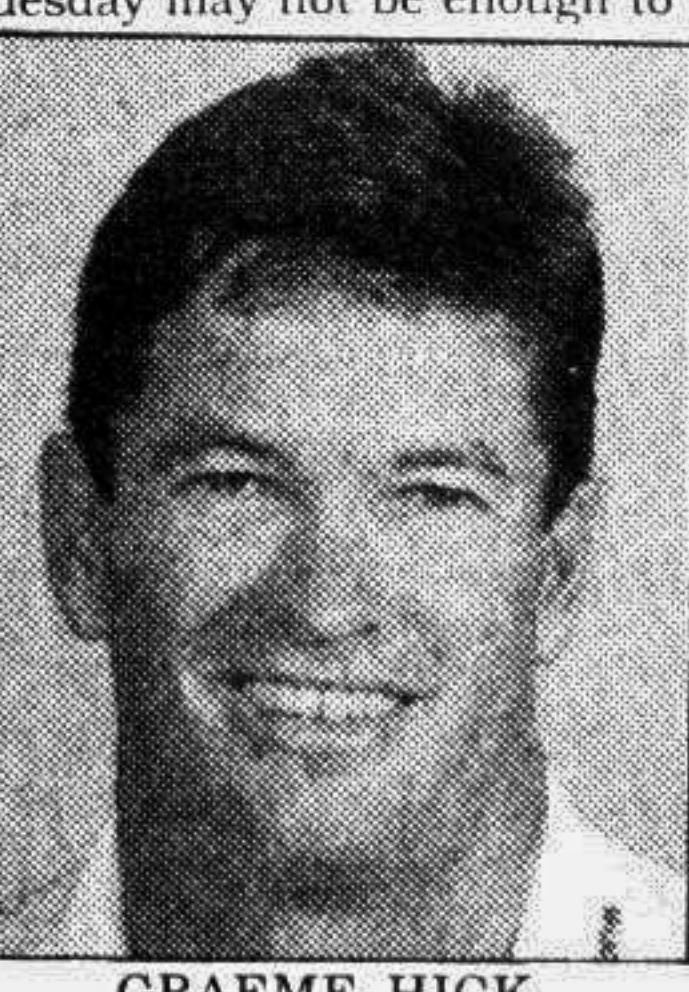
Kenya, however, were not disgraced in a rain-affected encounter after scoring 203.

Steve Tikolo, once of Border in South Africa, made a high-class 71 and put on 100 with UNB.

Div II cricket

Azad Boys Club earned a massive six wicket victory over Gulshan Youth Club in the Acme Second Division relegation league at the Mirpur Outer Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Batting first, Gulshan Youth scored only 85 in 31.3 overs with Raju adding 20 runs. Shamim and Badsha picked up three wickets each. In reply, Azad Boys reached the target making 88 for four in 21 overs with Arif making 29 runs. Raju took three wickets.



GRAEME HICK



NASSER HUSSAIN

Pak PM's plea

ISLAMABAD, May 19 : Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said today he wanted state-run television to stop running commercials during its telecasts of World Cup cricket matches, reports Reuters.

"I am making this request on behalf of the entire nation," Nawaz Sharif was quoted as saying by the official APP news agency.

Commercials on Pakistan Television deprive viewers of players' expressions when they face the bowling, and especially when players are dismissed, Sharif was quoted as saying.

Sharif still occasionally plays cricket.