

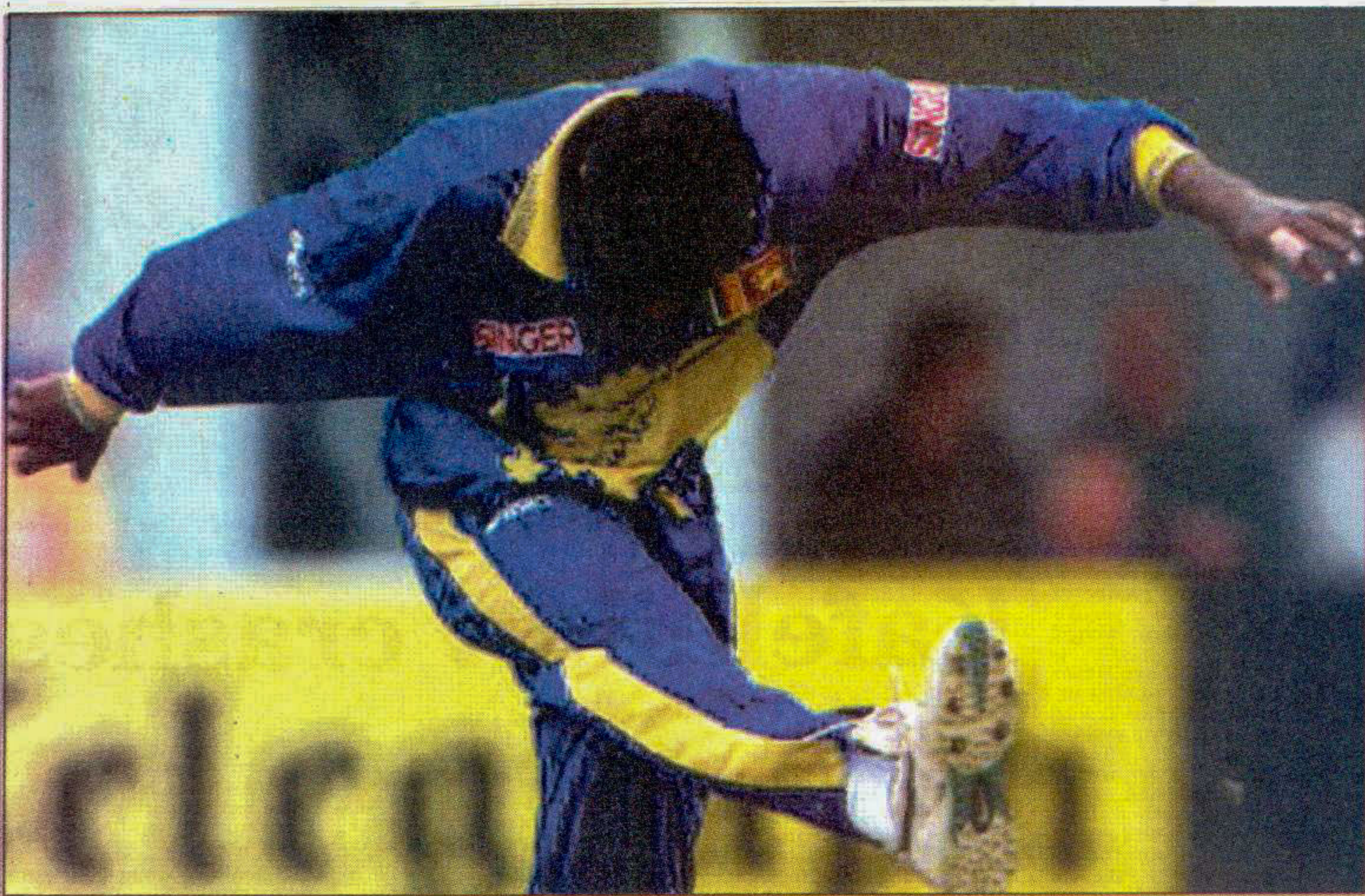
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SHEER FRUSTRATION! Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan kicks the ground in disgust after dropping a regulation catch, which was in abundance during the Indian innings at Taunton yesterday. —Internet photo

Calypso Kings v Bravehearts : West Indies v Scotland

LEICESTER, May 26 (Reuters/Internet) : Now you're starting to see the real West Indies and captain Brian Lara believes his side are starting to show their true form ahead of tomorrow's clash with Scotland at Leicester, reports Reuters.

The Windies put the cat among the pigeons in World Cup Group B with victory over New Zealand on Monday, meaning those teams plus Australia are realistically fighting for the two qualifying places behind pool leaders Pakistan for the Super Six.

Lara said: "It was a very important win for us and vital to get some points against one of the teams who could also be going through to the next stage of the competition."

"The good thing is that we're learning from our mistakes and learning as the tournament is progressing. Hopefully we'll be at our very best on the day of the final."

"But there are still things to improve and the plan is not to break down from here and to be as consistent as possible."

"We don't want to keep sending down wickets and no-balls which better teams will take advantage of, and if we're going

to play four fast bowlers we need to bat 50 overs and make sure the top seven batters get runs."

Lara's aim at Leicester will be to win by a big margin to improve their net run-rate - a helpful cushion in case they get beaten by Australia on Sunday.

Lara, rated the best batsman in the world alongside India's Sachin Tendulkar, will have to lead from the front against Australia after disappointing scores of 11, 25 and 36 so far.

For their part, Scotland - who lost to Bangladesh earlier in the week - are looking for

their batsmen to start firing.

Even Gavin Hamilton has been unable to dig his side out of the huge holes his team-mates higher up the order have left them in and captain George Salmond said: "In the games against Australia and Pakistan you can forgive low scores because the bowling is so tough."

"But that was obviously not the case against Bangladesh. It's a chance for one of us to make an impression on the World Cup and it's so disappointing that so far we've failed to take it."

"People have spoken about the difference playing with a

white ball makes but the other teams are managing to cope with it."

"It seems an easy enough task to stay in and see off the new ball but it's just not happening. I suppose the only remedy is hard work, getting in and applying yourself."

"But it's a worry because the games aren't going to get any easier."

Experienced batsman Bruce Patterson may be axed after a succession of low scores, with Mike Allingham coming in to the middle order and Mike Smith moving up to opener.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

The sides have never met in one day internationals.

Players to watch

West Indies: Reon King. The fast bowler from Guyana bowled with enough pace and venom against New Zealand and has already taken five wickets in the two matches that he has played.

Scotland: Asim Butt. His prodigious left arm swing bowling and probing line has earned the respect of some of the top batsmen in the competition.

Venue

Leicester. It is the second largest ground in the world after Melbourne. The team Leicestershire won the county championships last season. Capacity: 7,500.

SQUADS

WEST INDIES (Probable) :

Ridley Jacobs, Sherwin Campbell, Jimmy Adams, Brian Lara, Shivnarin Chanderpaul, Stuart Williams, Phil Simmons, Curtley Ambrose, Reon King, Marvyn Dillon, Courtney Walsh.

SCOTLAND (Probable) :

Ian Philip, Mike Smith, Ian Stanger, George Salmond, Gavin Hamilton, Mike Allingham, James Brinkley, Alec Davies, John Blain, Asim Butt, Nick Dyer.

KENYA-S AFRICA SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Kenyan innings against South Africa at Amstelveen yesterday:

KENYA
K Otieno lbw b Elworthy 26
Ravindra Shah c Boucher b Donald 50
S Gupta b Elworthy 16
S Tikolo c Cronje b Klusener 10
M Odumbe b Donald 7
A Vadhwa c b Klusener 9
T Odoyo lbw b Klusener 22
Asif Karim lbw b Cronje 20
Mohammad Sheikh b Klusener 8
M Suji not out 6
Extras: (lb-5, w-7, nb-2) 14
Total: (all out in 44.3 overs) 152

Fall of wickets: 1-66 (Otieno, 15.2 ov); 2-80 (Gupta, 17.6 ov); 3-82 (Ravindra Shah, 18.3 ov); 4-91 (Odumbe, 22.5 ov); 5-104 (Tikolo, 30.3 ov); 6-104 (Odoyo, 30.4 ov); 7-107 (Vadhwa, 32.1 ov); 8-138 (Asif Karim, 41.4 ov); 9-140 (Mohammad Sheikh, 42.2 ov); 10-152 (Angara, 44.3 ov).

Bowler
Pollock 8
Kallis 8
Donald 10
Elworthy 8.3
Klusener 2
Cronje 2

O M R W
0 1 22 0 (1-nb, 1-w)
8 0 37 0 (1-w)
8 1 42 2 (1-nb, 3-w)
10 2 20 2 (1-w)
8.3 3 21 5
2 0 5 1 (1-w)

Toss: South Africa.
Umpires: D B Cowie (NZ) and P Willey (Eng).
TV Umpire: D J Constant (Eng).
Match Referee: R Subba Row (Eng).

Mullally making a difference

LONDON, May 26 (Internet report) : Alan Mullally is emerging as the key figure in England's move to the World Cup's Super Six.

The paceman claimed the man of the match award for his wicket of two for 16 in 10 overs that sent Zimbabwe plunging to defeat at Trent Bridge.

England cruised to a seven-wicket victory that was never in doubt against opponents who were punished for annoying Alex Stewart's side by calling them "underdogs" before the match.

The mind games backfired badly and they were restricted

to 167 for eight in their 50 overs, a total that was never going to trouble Nasser Hussain (57no) and Graham Thorpe (62) who put together a match-winning third-wicket stand of 124.

But it was Mullally's destructive and economical spell that really put England on the way to their third Group A victory that virtually ensures their passage into the second stage.

And skipper Stewart was quick to underline the contribution of the Leicestershire pace ace.

Stewart said: "Alan really bowled well. There were a few

See page 14

Aussie guns aimed at Aminul & Co

CHESTER-LE-STREET, England, May 26 (Reuters/Internet) : Australia captain Steve Waugh has held a heart-to-heart with his frontline bowlers and urged them to give their all in the last two World Cup qualifying matches.

"I'd like to think the specialist bowlers can bowl better under pressure. We've had a good meeting with the bowlers yesterday and I'm pretty sure we can fix up what happened the other day," he told reporters on Wednesday.

Waugh said Australia's fastest bowler Glenn McGrath would continue to be used as first change in the group B match against Bangladesh on Thursday. There had been reports McGrath was unhappy and wanted to bowl with the new ball.

"He's bowled OK without bowling really well. He knows he can bowl better so I think you'll see a better performance from him in the next couple of games," said Waugh.

Australia, the second favourites, have lost two of their first three games and are in real danger of missing out on the Super Six stage of the tournament.

McGrath took an expensive one for 54 in the 10-run defeat by Pakistan on Sunday.

Paul Reiffel took one for 48 and leg-spinner Shane Warne one for 50 in the match, with Damien Fleming the most successful with two for 37.

Team officials said they would name their team later on Wednesday but Brendan Julian, Shane Lee and Adam Dale are all pressing for a bowlers' spot.

Tomorrow's game is as big as we've played over the last 12 months, even though it's against Bangladesh," said Waugh.

With McGrath and Warne bowling third and fourth, Waugh faces the problem of finding an efficient fifth bowler. A combination of

Waugh, Damien Martyn and Darren Lehmann were smashed for 79 in 10 overs by Pakistan.

Waugh disputed Australian media claims that the lack of a fifth bowler had been behind Australia's poor run and instead paid tribute to Pakistan's batting, saying it was some of the best he had ever seen.

"We don't need to get too down about it. It was phenomenal batting, some of the shots they played. I don't think I've ever seen better shots. Sometimes you've got to give credit to the opposition and the way they played."

"We didn't play as well as we'd have liked and we got pasted every time we bowled a bad ball," he said.

Waugh said Australia had reasons to be cheerful about their performances.

"Contrary to popular belief we're going OK at the moment as

See page 14

Go-kart fever!

CHESTER-LE-STREET, England, May 26 (Reuters/Internet) : Several members of Australia's World Cup squad were struck down by a mystery fever on Wednesday after a light-hearted session of go-karting.

Team physiotherapist Errol Alcott said the players had flu-like symptoms after the go-karting session on Tuesday afternoon and some had reported feeling sick.

"We think it may have been the fumes," he said. Australia play Bangladesh on Thursday.

All the players attended nets at the Chester-le-Street ground, apart from batsman Ricky Ponting who has gastric flu.

Alcott said left-hand batsman Darren Lehmann was still nursing a shoulder injury and it was not known if he would be fit for the match, which Australia must win to have any chance of qualifying for the Super Six stage of the World Cup.

Calculation curse

LEICESTER, England, May 26 (Reuters) : After two weeks of battle between bat and ball the decisive weapon in the cricket World Cup's first phase round could prove to be the pocket calculator.

While South Africa and Pakistan are virtually assured of progress to the Super Six, the battle for the four remaining places has developed into a fascinating, albeit confusing, one.

When teams finish level on points they are divided first by the number of wins and then by their head-to-head record.

If, as looks increasingly likely, more than two teams finish level, their relative positions will be decided by net run rate - the average number of runs scored per over, minus the average conceded.

It means that run rate could well prove decisive and that this week's games involving the tournament's outsiders have taken on a new importance.

Group B could end with West Indies, New Zealand and Australia locked together in joint second place on six points. That scenario would need Australia to beat West Indies and New Zealand to lose to Pakistan.

Assuming West Indies and Australia beat Scotland and Bangladesh respectively on Thursday, the Old Trafford showdown between the two on May 30 will be decisive.

If West Indies win they will go through, also sending New Zealand through if they beat Scotland - thanks to their

group win over Australia.

If the Australians win in Manchester they could still miss out on run rate so they will do their utmost against Bangladesh to make up their current deficit on West Indies.

"We haven't looked at it too closely yet but we will certainly have a look before the game to see what we need to do," said Australian captain Steve Waugh on Tuesday.

"We've got to win convincingly against Bangladesh. We know that so we will be playing aggressively."

Waugh said he was still not sure whether it was better to bat first and try to post a bit score or bowl and try to skittle out Bangladesh and then knock off the runs quickly.

"We'll have a chat about it before the game but whatever happens we know it's got to be a big win," added Waugh.

See page 14

England's odds slashed

LONDON, May 26 (Reuters) : England's World Cup odds have been cut from 15-2 to 13-2 following their seven-wicket Group A win over Zimbabwe on Tuesday. South Africa remain favourites, with bookmakers William Hill quoting them at 6-5.

LATEST ODDS

South Africa 6-5
Pakistan 5-2
England 13-2
Australia 8-1
New Zealand 12-1
West Indies 12-1
India 20-1
Sri Lanka 25-1
Zimbabwe 150-1



India opener Sadagoppan Ramesh's off-stump is unsettled by Sri Lanka's Chaminda Vaas. —AFP photo

Classy rebuttal

TAUNTON, England, May 26 : Eighteen months ago, Wasim Akram was sacked in disgrace. 12 months ago he retired and today he is halfway to the cricket World Cup title, at the head of the most exciting side in the game, reports AFP.

Victory over New Zealand at Derby on Friday will seal their place in the second round. A win against Bangladesh on May 31 at Northampton will give them five wins out of five in group B and go a long way to assuring them a place in the semi-finals.

If Akram were to lift the trophy on June 20 at Lord's, he would emulate his mentor Imran Khan's 1992 triumph.

Imran, however, was a fine captain, was a fading force as an individual.

If anybody suspected the same of Akram before this tournament, they cannot now.

Even at 33, he remains that rare jewel - a player able to turn games with either bat or ball.

Against the West Indies, Pakistan were struggling at 135 for six before he came in and hit 43 not out off 28 balls. Against Scotland they were 92 for five. He made an undefeated 37 off 19 balls.

Against Australia it was with the ball that he made his mark, removing opener Adam Gilchrist with his third delivery and finishing with four for 40, including the last two wickets in his final over.

Many had thought Akram over the hill but he warmed up for the tournament with successive Test hat-tricks. Here, he currently boasts a batting average of 46.50 and seven wickets at 14.28 runs apiece.

"I have been winning off many times before. It's nothing new and does not bother me," he says.

Australia's Steve Waugh is just ahead of him in the batting averages, and Lance Klusener just behind him with the ball, but no all-rounder is close to him in both disciplines.

A few months ago, New Zealand's pre-match team talk would have centred on Pakistan's crop of young players. Akram would have earned a mention only as a captain able to unite his divisive troops.

Now, however, his batting and left-arm pace are sure to feature in discussions.

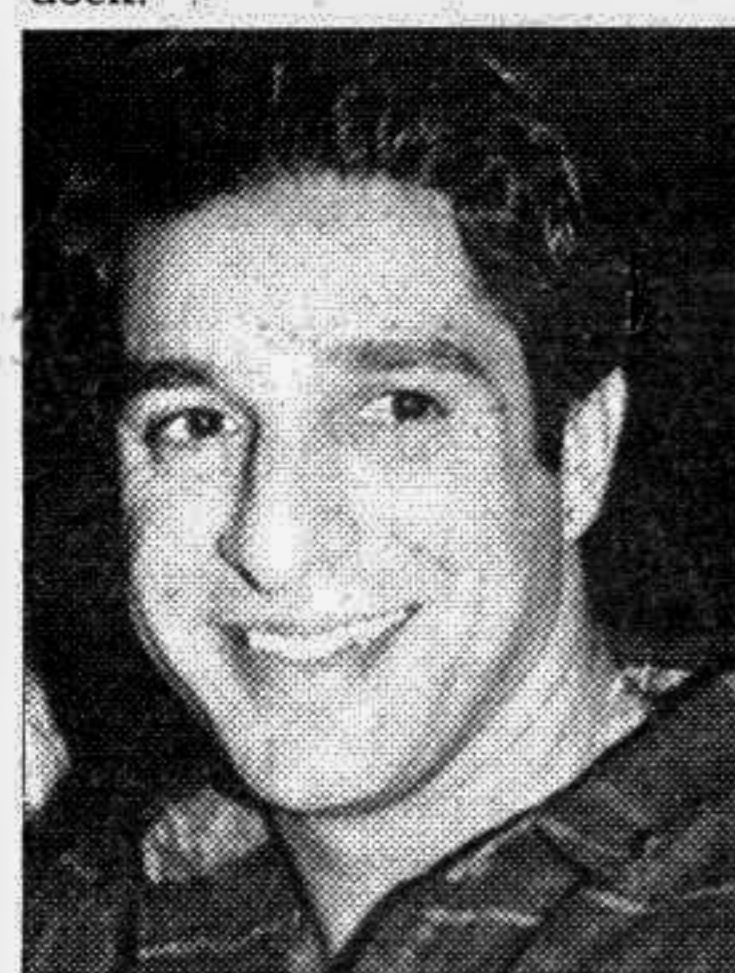
The World Cup, it appears, brings out the best in him. Akram was instrumental in Pakistan's win against England in the 1992 final in Melbourne, when he smashed 33 off 19 balls and removed Allan Lamb and Chris Lewis with successive deliveries.

There is only one blot on the landscape.

Akram's sacking as captain followed match-fixing allegations. Torturous inquiries into the affair are continuing.

Some people suspect the findings of the probe were delayed so as not to coincide with the World Cup.

Akram, however, is well aware that his best insurance policy against censure would be to return home with the trophy in his suitcase. Nobody would dare put the captain of the World Cup champions in the dock.



WASIM AKRAM

His chin is up

LONDON, May 26 (Internet report) : Adam Gilchrist is hoping a word of advice from his mother will help put him among the runs against Bangladesh tomorrow.

The Australian opener has failed to fire in three World Cup Group B matches so far, scoring 20 runs in three innings against Scotland, New Zealand and Pakistan.

But he is remaining upbeat about his chances of hitting form when the Aussies meet Bangladesh, who beat Scotland on Monday, at Chester-le-Street.

"You know you're in trouble when you get long-lost friends ringing you up to tell you to keep your chin up," said the wicketkeeper. "My mum even rang to tell me to do something about my technique."

Australia need to beat both Bangladesh and the West Indies, who they play at Old Trafford on Sunday, to qualify for the Super Six after losing their last two matches.

Captain Steve Waugh, though, is refusing to let their poor form get him down and he insisted: "We will be aggressive in both matches. We want to get as many quick runs as possible against Bangladesh and the strategy will be pretty much the same against the West Indies."



England batsman Graham Thorpe paddles the ball against Zimbabwe on May 25. —AFP photo

Security call, yet again

NOTTINGHAM, England, May 26 (Reuters/Internet) : A further call to World Cup organisers to review security was made by the England and Zimbabwe captains on Tuesday when their match ended with a pitch invasion.

After watching fans rush on to the Trent Bridge pitch following England's seven-wicket group A win, Zimbabwe captain Alistair Campbell said: "The guys there were quick with the rope but still no one is heeding the call not to run on to the field. This is not ideal."

"They need to get to the stage where no one is allowed on the field.... Obviously more security needs to be provided."

England captain Alec Stewart said: "It has not been a problem to us yet.... But it needs to be looked at. No one has been hurt yet but you never know."

Earlier this week World Cup organisers appealed to the British government to introduce emergency legislation to combat the stream of pitch invasions that have left players fearing serious injury.

The Home Office (Interior Ministry) has been asked urgently to extend the law outlawing football pitch invasions to cricket stadia, at least during the duration of the World Cup.

English cricket chief Tim Lamb has summoned chief executives and safety officers from England's test match grounds and police to a meeting in Birmingham on Thursday to consider new security measures.

Campbell said fines or ground bans might deter fans from rushing on to the pitch.

But the British government

See page 14



WICKET-SNATCHER: A spectator of the England-Zimbabwe match tries to get away with a stump after the game at Trentbridge on May 25. —Internet photo