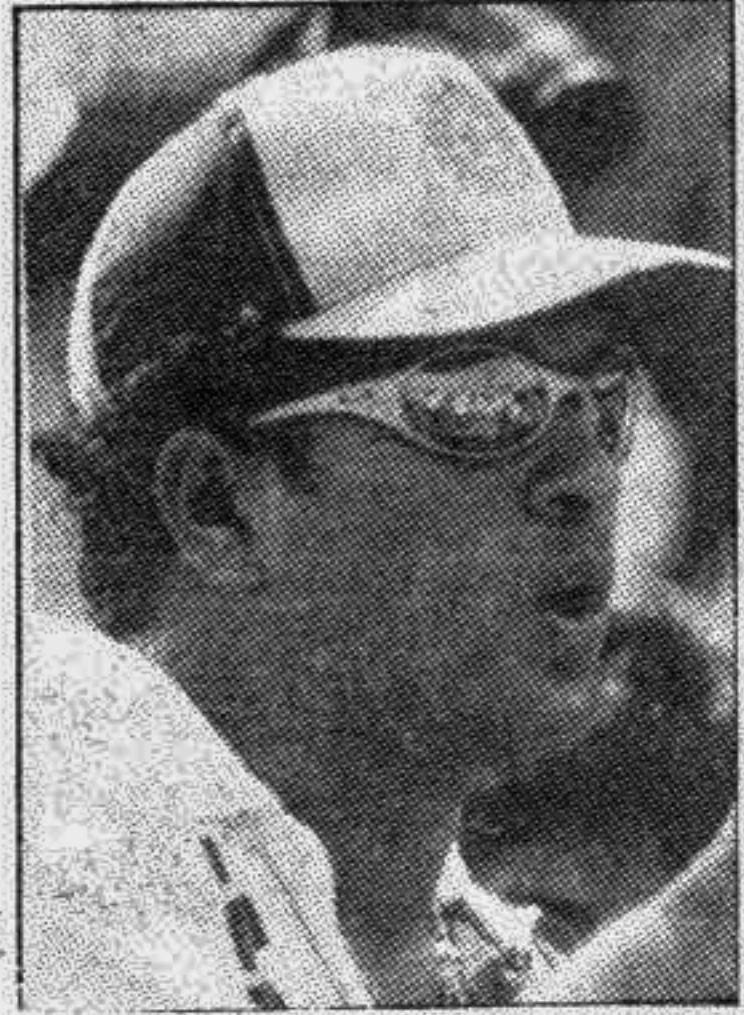


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Tendulkar, opener again?

LONDON, June 2: Sachin Tendulkar could be promoted to open for India's crunch clash with Australia at the start of the cricket World Cup's second round, coach Anshuman Gaekwad revealed here today, reports AFP.



Tendulkar, who has made 21 of his 22 one-day centuries as an opener, dropped down the order to number four during the tournament.

Gaekwad hinted Tendulkar would open against Australia at the Oval on Friday if the conditions were right. "It's an option we are consid-

ering, but we will wait to see the wicket before making a decision," he said.

"He will certainly open if the wicket looks good." Tendulkar's stand-in, Sadagopan Ramesh, failed against England at Edgbaston on Saturday, but Gaekwad insisted the left-hander was still in contention.

"Ramesh is not batting badly and could continue," he said. "But when you have an option like Sachin, it makes it tougher for the other blokes."

Both India and Australia scraped through to the Super Six second round on run rate and have not retained any points from the first round. Neither can afford to lose on Friday if they are to remain in the race for the semi-finals.

Tendulkar goes into the key match with a huge psychological advantage over Australia. He has scored centuries in each of his last three one-dayers against Steve Waugh's men. The first, 143 off 131 balls, helped India reach the Sharjah Cup final in April. Two days later, on his 25th birthday, Tendulkar made 134 to win the final. He followed that with 141 at the mini World Cup in Bangladesh in October.

"He had Australia for breakfast, lunch and dinner," Gaekwad said. "We hope he can do it again."



Task master Hansie Cronje has a tough ride ahead.

— Star file photo

Sachin v Shane: Clash of class

LONDON, June 2, (AFP): Shane Warne will not sleep much on Thursday night.

If he drops off at all, he will probably find himself counting Tendulkar boundaries rather than sheep.

The cricket World Cup's second phase will be launched on Friday at The Oval with a mouth-watering head-to-head — Shane versus Sachin, the greatest spinner in the world against the greatest batsman of a generation.

To add gravity to their duel, neither Australia nor India can afford to lose.

Both sides entered the Super Sixes without retaining a point from the first round and must win all their next three games to have a strong chance of reaching the semifinals.

The two men go back a long way.

When the young Warne made his Test debut in Sydney in 1992 he ran straight into Tendulkar's bat. The Indian made a century, the Australian took one wicket for 150. One match later Warne was dropped.

He returned, however, to become one of the greatest bowlers of all time, with more than 300

Test wickets. His first Ashes delivery, spinning over a foot from outside leg to clip Mike Gatting's off stump, is remembered as "The Ball of the Century."

Tendulkar, however, will go into the encounter with a psychological advantage as awe-inspiring as a Bombay traffic jam.

His last three one-day innings against Australia have all ended in big hundreds. Warne watched two of them from 22 yards away.

Tendulkar hit 143 and 134 last April as India won the Sharjah Cup.

Warne, struggling at the time with a serious shoulder problem that later required surgery, had joked: "I can't sleep at night. I have nightmares about the guy."

Sharjah had come immediately after Australia's tour of India, where Warne had also been mauled. The Indians had decided to target him from the first ball of the first match. Warne left the country with 10 wickets costing more than 50 runs apiece.

Tendulkar, meanwhile, made 1,130 runs in 12 innings

against Australia over those two tours, including a first-class double century, two Test hundreds and three one-day tons. He averaged 113.

Rumour has it the Australians tried to get hold of one of his bats after being convinced it was wider than the rules allowed.

Warne and Tendulkar share an enormous mutual respect but could not be more different.

It is hard to imagine Tendulkar with peroxide hair and an earring.

Warne, while popular, has a reputation for speaking before engaging his brain. Tendulkar's words are as well-considered as his forward defensive.

It will snow in high summer in New Delhi before he resorts to sledding.

The World Cup has already thrown up one fine individual contest between bat and ball, when Steve Waugh and Shoaib Akhtar went head to head at Headingley during the first round.

Waugh eventually had his stumps scattered by the pace bowler and Pakistan won by 10 runs.

This should be a second classic.

Donald points at English nerves

LONDON, June 2: England's early exit from the cricket World Cup was due as much to India's fans as to their own blunders, South African pace bowler Allan Donald said today, reports AFP.

"It was like Calcutta out there and England couldn't handle the pressure," Donald said.

England lost to Mohammad Azharuddin's side by 63 runs after a batting collapse at Edgbaston on Sunday. Most of the 17,000 sell-out crowd were made up of Indian fans.

More bodies hail cricket team

Sports Reporter

More organisations have congratulated Bangladesh cricket team on their historic 62-run win over Pakistan in the World Cup on Monday.

Bangladesh Tennis Federation, Bangladesh Public Service Commission secretary, Bangladesh Amateur Athletics Federation and Summit Group of Industries, in separate messages, Felicitated the team yesterday.

Donald added: "Graeme Hick is an unbelievably good player but you could see from the look on his face that he was done for before he took guard."

"When he walked out and saw the Rae Bank stand packed with Indian supporters, he must have thought he was in Calcutta."

Donald, whose South Africans are leading contenders for the title alongside Pakistan, added that England had contributed to their own downfall with a series of bad errors.

He said Alec Stewart was wrong to put India in at Edgbaston, where Donald has played many years for Warwickshire.

"By the time England had got in, the conditions had changed and the ball was doing all kinds of silly things. It was a completely different story and England paid the penalty," he said.

But he commiserated with Graham Thorpe, who was controversially given out to start England's side.

"The Graham Thorpe lbw decision was a shocker. It affected the England dressing room because the England batsmen lost all sense of purpose once Thorpe had gone," Donald said, but added: "England's destiny was in their hands. They knew what they had to do — and didn't do it."



Allan Donald remains as sharp as ever.

— Star file photo

Reals, replicas shine alike

LONDON, June 2 (AFP): The cricket World Cup is thick with 'bits-and-pieces' players masquerading as all-rounders.

The genuine articles, however, still blaze like diamonds amid the counterfeit glass.

Most of them are to be found tightly packed in the middle of the South African and Pakistan line-ups.

The rest of the Super Six sides look impoverished in comparison.

"I think the term all-rounder is used too loosely," says Shaun Pollock, and he is right.

But he is too severe on his own batting when suggesting that real all-rounders should be equally worthy of selection in either discipline.

Even cricket's legendary Kapil Dev, Ian Botham and Imran Khan had a clear penchant for one art over the other.

In Pollock, Lance Klusener and Jacques Kallis, South Africa have an engine room to marvel at.

The athletic Klusener is the second highest wicket-taker in the tournament, with 13, and is batting so well that he cannot yet claim an average, having scored 164 runs in four visits without being dismissed.

More impressive still, "Zulu", as he is nicknamed, is scoring quickly. His 52 not out against Sri Lanka won the game, his 48 not out against England gave his bowlers the lee-way they needed and his undefeated 52 against Zimbabwe

might have won the match, if Klusener had not run out of partners.

The barrel-chested Kallis — "Dozy" to his team-mates — meanwhile is a batsman who has suddenly learnt to bowl, and bowl very sharply indeed.

He showed both sides of his cricketing character with 96 against India, then three wickets for 26 against Sri Lanka.

The flame-haired Pollock, son of Peter and nephew of Graeme, hit a rearguard 52 against Zimbabwe and has produced two memorable spells of bowling — eight overs, two for 10 against Sri Lanka and nine overs, one for 13 against England.

Pakistan are the only side with a similar depth of multi-faceted talent.

Wasim Akram, with more than 350 Test and one-day wickets, is not as flexible or as fast as he used to be, but, at 33, his left-arm pace remains the best of its kind.

Those who have forgotten the effectiveness of his batting have been quickly reminded by his scything 43 runs off 28 balls against the West Indies and an undefeated 37 off 19 against the Scots.

Azhar Mahmood and Abdul Razzaq, two whippy medium-fast seamers and neat middle-order batsmen, keep him company. The 19-year-old Razzaq, virtually unheard of a few weeks ago, has impressed as a number-three pinch-hitter.

Australia, the World Cup third favourites, have assem-

bled Shane Lee, Tom Moody and Brendon Julian at the heart of their team. None, however, is currently rated good enough for Test cricket.

India's only all-rounder is Robin Singh but he is paste rather than gem, despite five wickets for 31 against Sri Lanka.

Chris Cairns, meanwhile, is a destructive number six for New Zealand but his medium-fast seam bowling has never come on.

His balding team-mate Chris Harris, in contrast, looks very 'bits-and-pieces' but just could be the genuine article, at least in one-dayers.

His loopy, slow, crafty medium pace looks like cannon fodder but his peers admit they can't stand facing him.

He has eight wickets at 17.12 each and a batting average of 36.00.

The World Cup's darkest horse, however, is Zimbabwean Neil Johnson.

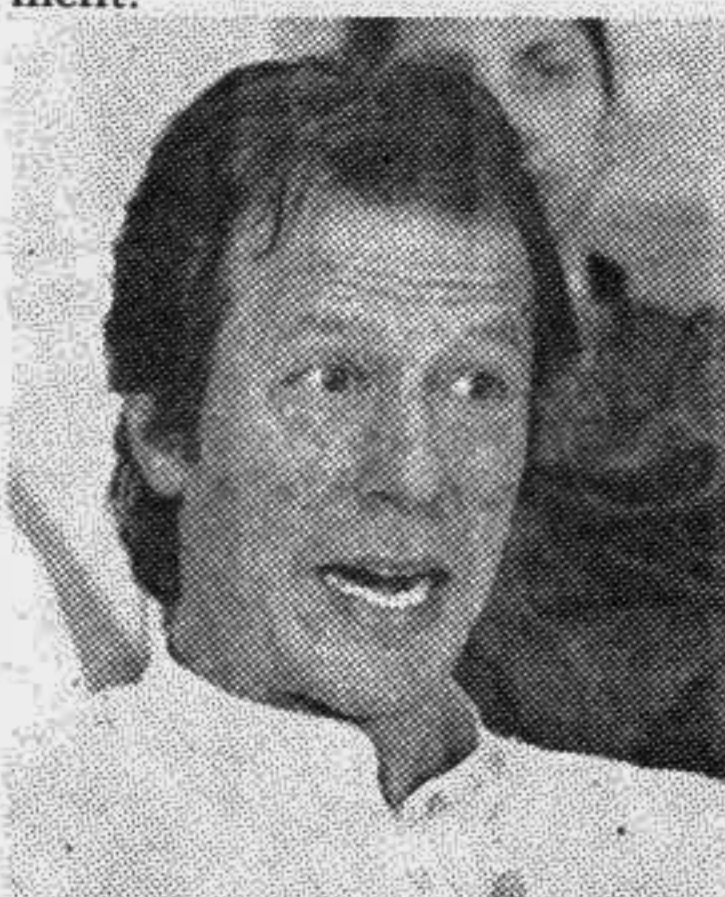
He bowls sharp right-arm swing and opens the batting. He currently stands 11th in the bowling averages with 10 wickets and is 27th in the batting averages with 31.20.

Not regarded as good enough for the South African team after playing at Natal, Johnson returned to the country of his birth. On May 29 at Chelmsford, he took three wickets and cracked 76 as Cronje and Co crashed to their only defeat of the tournament to date.

Imran's choice

LONDON, June 2: Cricket legend Imran Khan has named India and Australia as his World Cup favourites ahead of bookies' favourites South Africa and Pakistan, reports AFP.

Imran, who masterminded Pakistan's World Cup triumph in 1992, said the winner of the India-Australia second-round match at the Oval on Friday could go on to win the tournament.



"It all comes down to my cornered tiger philosophy of cricket," Imran wrote in the Daily Express newspaper on Wednesday.

"Teams who come back from the dead, who escape perilous situations, who prove they can hold their nerve when the pressure is pounding, are those who emerge in glory."

"India and Australia have already survived one make-or-break match... now they confront each other in another game upon which everything depends."

Both India and Australia scraped through to the Super Sixes on run rate but have not retained any points from the first round. Neither can afford to lose on Friday if they are to remain in the race for the semifinals.

The team which wins on Friday will have the most incredible surge of confidence from coming through this kind of contest," Imran added.

"Although South Africa and Pakistan are everyone's favourites, I would be worried in their position about the winners of the India-Australia match."

Confusing configuration

LONDON, June 2: Pakistan and Zimbabwe will be the teams to beat in the second round of the cricket World Cup after both qualified with four points, reports AFP.

Australia and India, meanwhile, will have to start from scratch in their attempts to reach the semi-finals.

New Zealand completed the Super Sixes line-up on Monday by beating Scotland at Edinburgh.

Each team takes the points won against fellow first-round qualifiers into the next phase.

Zimbabwe, South Africa (two points) and India (no points) qualified from group A and Pakistan, New Zealand (two points) and Australia (no points) from group B.

Pakistan, the 1992 World Cup champions who began the tournament as third favourites, look all but certain of a place in the last four.

Wasim Akram's men, the tournament's only unbeaten side, now play the three group A qualifiers — South Africa, India and Zimbabwe — knowing that one win should be enough to get them to the semis.

Zimbabwe are in the same happy situation.

South Africa, however, who began the tournament as favourites, will still feel well placed despite crashing to a shock defeat in their final group game against Zimbabwe.

Australia, the 1987 winners, cannot afford to lose against any of the group A qualifiers if they want to be sure of progressing to the semi-finals.

Few neutrals, however, were shedding any tears for them following their attempts to orchestrate New Zealand's elimination on run rate on Sunday by deliberately delaying their win over the West Indies at Old Trafford.

Two pent-up Englishmen

EDINBURGH, June 2: New Zealand's World Cup encounter with Scotland produced an interesting study in national identity, reports AFP.

Roger Twose — a man who England did not want and had to emigrate to New Zealand to get an international game — was facing Gavin Hamilton — a man who England probably will want in the near future but who had to go back to his roots to get a World Cup match.

Twose, born in the southern English county of Devon and who played most of his career at Warwickshire, is regarded as a stubborn, journeyman middle-order batsman.

His move to New Zealand, where he played much of his winter cricket, became permanent when he married there.

Hamilton — "I must be a Scot because I support their football team" — is an all-rounder who

was included in England's provisional World Cup squad.

But the 24-year-old, born in Scotland but educated in England and currently playing for Yorkshire, agreed to represent the Scots after being told it would not affect his eligibility for England.

Twose was the winner on Monday. Dropped three times, he made 54 not out as New Zealand reached the second phase of the World Cup.

But Hamilton, whose side was eliminated, outshone him overall, with 217 runs in five games, the third highest individual total in the first round and made at an average of more than 54.

That included a 76 against Pakistan's feared pace attack. Perhaps the biggest losers of all were England, for not including the Scot in their squad.

Sweet speaking Steve

MANCHESTER, England, June 2: Australian Steve Waugh, whose questionable tactics in attempting to get New Zealand knocked out of the World Cup provoked a storm, on Tuesday wished his intended victims well in the next round, reports AFP.

Waugh had tried to exploit a loophole in the rules by deliberately delaying his team's victory against the West Indies.

Had he succeeded, New Zealand would have been eliminated from the World Cup on run rate, giving Australia an extra two points to take through to the second phase.

Waugh's men were booed by the Old Trafford crowd after taking 78 balls to score 19 runs, eight of which were gifted to

them by wides or no balls. But New Zealand managed to sidestep the trap door, beating Scotland in double-quick time on Monday to boost their run rate and scraping through just ahead of the West Indies.

Waugh said: "Good luck to them," he said. "It was good play by them — that's what it's all about."

Pakistan qualified from group B in first place, ahead of Australia and New Zealand.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming said Waugh's tactics had been the "tournament organisers' worst nightmare" but had conceded he would have done the same thing in his position.

Many neutrals, however, felt Australia had infringed the

rules of sportsmanship by not trying, with some suggesting the West Indies had colluded in making their game drag on.

Waugh had responded: "I don't know about morals, I'm here to win the World Cup. They make the rules, we have to do as we see fit."

West Indies skipper Brian Lara angrily refused to answer questions on whether he and Waugh had acted together in delaying the result.

Australia and New Zealand are keen sporting rivals. The Kiwis pulled off a shock by beating their trans-Tasman rivals in the first round, after which New Zealand match-winner Roger Twose branded Waugh's side as "bullies".

Kiwis need to get better

LONDON, June 2 (Internet report): New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming predicts his side will have to improve if they are to triumph in their unlikely Super Six confrontation with Zimbabwe.

Few would have predicted the Kiwis making it through to the last half dozen and even fewer thought the Africans would win through.

But, with the West Indies winging their way home, and England's humiliated players licking their wounds, two of the whipping boys of international cricket will meet in Leeds on Sunday with a semi-final place at stake.

New Zealand took advantage of Scotland's woeful batting in Edinburgh May 31 to reach a victory target of 122 in 17.5 overs, 21 balls quicker than required, to advance to the next stage on a superior net run rate.

It is a new sequence of games, and we have to forget what has gone before."

Allott took the man of the match award after completing the opening phase as the tournament leading wicket-taker.

While the Kiwis may not have the most penetrative bowling attack or the most prolific run scorers, their major strength is their work as a unit.

A repeat of their last four appearances of 1992 is certainly within their capabilities, although a win at Headingley is vital to aid that cause.

For Scotland, it is back to the drawing board. In Gavin Hamilton they have a Test prospect — albeit for England — and seam bowler John Blair shows plenty of promise for a 20-year-old.

But until they find a top order that can consistently make runs, they will never fulfil their undoubted promise.

Scotland should still be granted one-day status at international level but maybe another option would be to try and join the County Championship which would provide them with more meaningful and competitive fixtures.

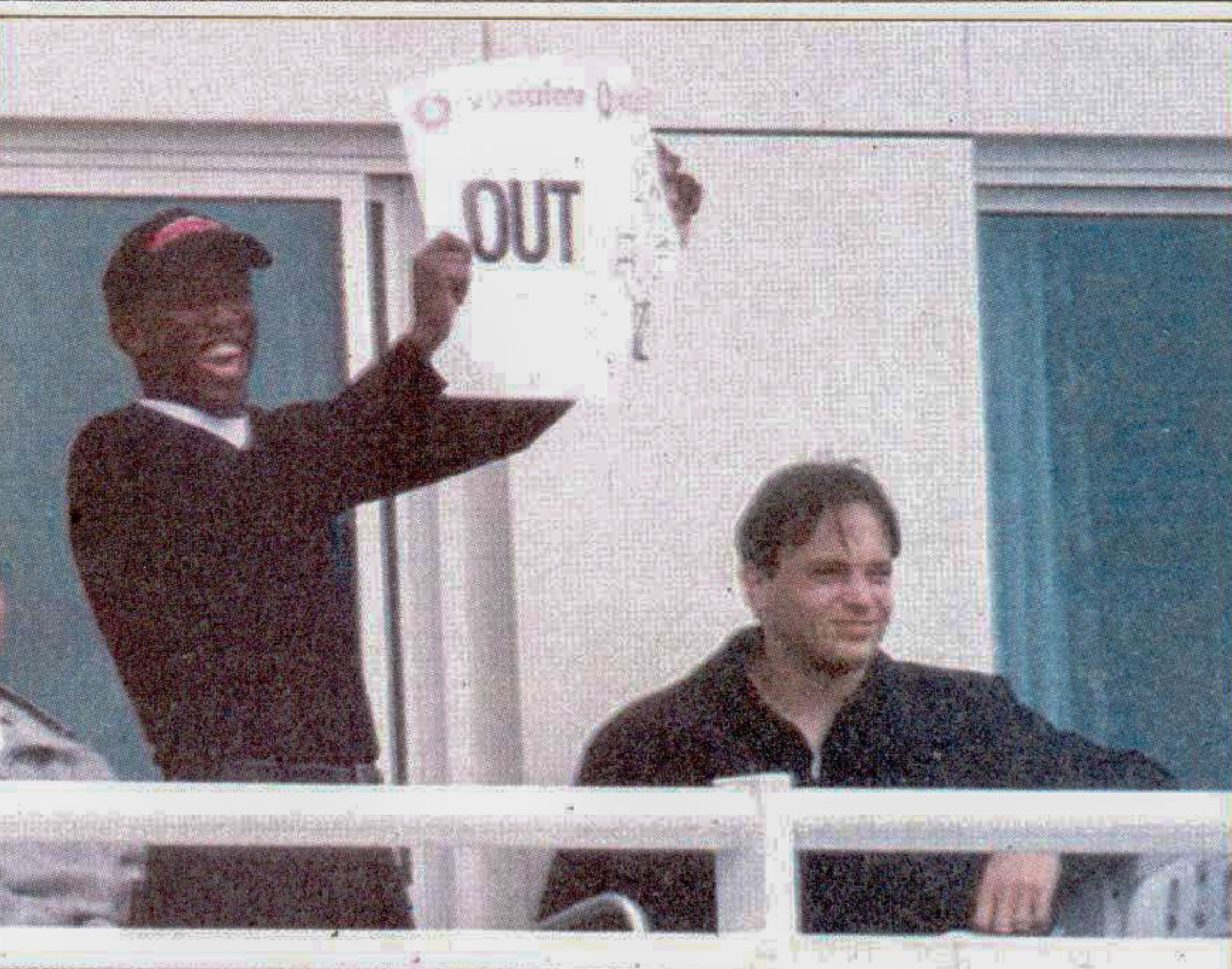
"It is all down to cash," said coach Jim Lovie. "We have to decide which way we want to go, and that may involve either professional or semi-professional players."

"We can't carry on the way we have been, and there has to be a few discussions about the way forward."

For skipper George Salmond, who again failed to

make it to the Super Six, Aston Villa goalkeeper Mark Bosnich is on the right.

— AFP photo



Manchester United Superstar Dwight Yorke's optimism backfired as his presence during the game against Australia, failed to inspire close friend Brian Lara and the West Indies to make it to the Super Six. Aston Villa goalkeeper Mark Bosnich is on the right.

— AFP photo