

Wife puts Freddie in place!

AFP, London

England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff's wife Rachael and their two children will fly to the West Indies next week to be with the maligned cricketer at the World Cup, the Daily Mirror said on Wednesday.

In an interview with the tabloid, Rachael, a 28-year-old model, said the first thing she will say to her husband is: "Stupid buggler!"

Flintoff, the star of England's 2005 Ashes success, was one of six players fired following a late-night drinking session after a six-wicket defeat by New Zealand on Friday.

He was also stripped of the vice-captaincy and dropped for the team's match against Canada.

His alcohol-fuelled exploits culminated in him being helped to shore after falling off a pedalo.

Flintoff's wife defended him, however, telling the Mirror: "Andrew is extremely hard-working and extremely loyal."

"What you see is what you get. You can see how hard-working he is with his cricket. He can be in complete pain and covered in blisters and will still keep going for five more days."

Flintoff has received several warnings about his off-field behaviour in the past, most recently while captaining England during their 5-0 Ashes thrashing in Australia when Michael Vaughan was injured.

But he said being dropped meant he would, unlike previous occasions, make good on his promises to change his ways.

Record-breaking

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title while Rajshahi finished runners-up.

BRIEF SCORES

SYLHET: First innings 408 all out in 125.5 overs.

BARISAL: First innings 712-7 in 221 overs (Imran 8, Hannan 95, Faruque 6, Raqibul 313 n.o., Humayun 0, Shahin 65, Salahuddin 15, Ariful 115, Ali Arman 41 n.o., extras 54, Hasibul 1-79, Rashedur 2-56, Kapali 3-185, Nabil 2-161). **Result:** Match drawn.

Afridi regrets

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Pakistan crashing out of the event. "I came back to my room, put down my bag and I thought it had been a dream," said Afridi, who played as an overseas player for Ireland last year. "I thought, 'How come Pakistan lost a game against Ireland?'"

"I know these guys (Ireland) and I think we are a thousand times better than them. They have just one or two professional players and the others work five or six days a week. It shows anything can happen in one-day cricket."

Meantime, Afridi said he is still trying to come to terms with Woolmer's death. He said Woolmer used to "keep the team united" and he respected him as he would a father.

"I've played under about five or six coaches and I liked Bob so much," he said.

"Even when I didn't perform he would come to me and say 'Don't you worry about anything, you just play your game and enjoy it.' These words would give me a boost."

"Against Zimbabwe we should win this game, especially for Bob."

The seven-week tournament in the Caribbean culminates in the Barbados final on April 28.

Russel on top

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national forward failed to control the ball.

Rahmatganj, whose lone first half chance was a long range effort by Emon who shot the ball inches over the bar, could have gone ahead in the 50th minute but veteran striker Milon volleyed his chance from a scramble just wide.

Russel had a blow when midfielder Saad, one of their Moroccan quartet, was severely injured on the face and left the ground bleeding heavily. However, his replacement Kaiser split the rival defence at the right flank to send a superb cross in the 70th minute. Younes received put the ball down with exquisite skill but much to the horror of his teammates, blasted over the bar. Two minutes later, Younes converted a penalty coolly after winning it by himself when he was brought down by a clumsy challenge from Rahmatganj goalkeeper Amjad while chasing a through by fellow Moroccan Igdir.

He was inspirational when Russel sealed their second win from a counter attack. After hard work at left, he cut the ball for substitute Bulbul whose square pass was converted by Nayan from seven yards with a first-time volley.

Yellow cards: Kamrul, Mehdi (Rahmatganj)

TEAMS

RUSSEL: Zia, Aminul, Bourdief, Hassan, Mishu, Nayan, Igdir, Saad (Kaiser), Tanvir (Pappu), Rana (Bulbul) and Younes.

RAHMATGANJ: Amjad, Mahiuddin, Sony, Rezaul, Shipon, Hanif (Emrul), Emon, Mehdi, Kamrul, Milon (Shoeb) and Rizvi.

Referee: Azad Rahman.

A thinking coach

REUTERS, Port of Spain



centuries-old game.

The Pakistan coach was declared dead in hospital on Sunday after he was found unconscious in his hotel room in Kingston, Jamaica. On Tuesday, Jamaican police announced that they were now treating his death as "suspicious".

His team had crashed out of the World Cup four days earlier on Saturday after losing to debutants Ireland. It was one of the biggest shocks in the 32-year history of the tournament.

Ironically, part of his duties in a previous job had been to help develop the game in countries which did not play the game at elite test level. One of them was Ireland.

Born in India, Woolmer became one of the world's leading coaches on the back of a solid playing career in English county and test cricket.

A respected all rounder at first class level who played for Kent and South African provinces Natal and Western Province, Woolmer also played 19 tests and six one-day internationals for England between 1975 and 1981.

He was one of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year in 1976, and he scored three test centuries at an average of 33.09.

Woolmer bowled medium paced swingers and was an elegant right-handed batsman with a free-flowing, fluent flourish.

But it was as a coach, after his career petered out having joined the Kerry Packer breakaway cricketing revolution during the late 1970s, that Woolmer would leave a far greater mark on the game.

He soon became recognised as one of the more free-thinking coaches, a reputation he earned first with Warwickshire and then confirmed during his five years at the helm of the South African national team.

Woolmer almost single-handedly popularised the reverse sweep and his coaching methods required players to think beyond the accepted boundaries of the game. He was one of the first coaches to take a laptop computer into the dressing room.

His attention to detail was complete. To improve his wicketkeepers, for example, he would study the way football goalkeepers moved and pass on his findings.

Warwickshire won three of the four domestic trophies on offer in England in 1994, the same year Woolmer left the county to take up the reins with South Africa.

South Africa were whitewashed 6-0 in their first series with Woolmer as coach, a one-day tournament in Pakistan that also featured Australia.

But by the time Woolmer resigned as South Africa coach after the 1999 World Cup, the team had won 83 of their 117 one-day internationals they played under his guidance -- a winning percentage of 72.80 -- and 10 of the 15 test series they contested.

At the World Cup in England in 1999, Woolmer almost guided his side to the final but a bizarre run-out in the semi with eventual winners Australia robbed his side of victory

when the scores were tied.

He said on Saturday that this was the worst moment of his career.

His tenure, though, was marred by a match-fixing scandal which led to the life ban of his captain Hansie Cronje.

Woolmer was untainted personally by the episode and, after leaving the post for a second spell at Warwickshire, campaigned for Cronje's reinstatement. Cronje was killed in a plane crash in 2002.

He took over as Pakistan coach in June 2004, one of the most high profile and stressful positions in the international game.

Controversy again followed him in August 2006 when his team were accused and punished for ball-tampering during the fourth and final test with England at the Oval.

The team refused to take the field on the penultimate day after being docked five runs and became the first country to forfeit a test match.

His contract with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) was due to run until June 2007 but it was widely thought he would not complete it in the wake of the defeat by Ireland on Saturday.

He said in a news conference that the hassles of life as a top international coach had left him questioning his future but Pakistan officials said on Sunday that he was already plotting improvements within his ageing team.

A universally popular, phlegmatic character, Woolmer had made his home in Cape Town. He leaves a wife, Gill, and two sons.

Cup getting serious

AFP, St Kitts



South African captain Graeme Smith said his team were well tuned-up for the real World Cup business after

cruising to the Super Eight stages with two victories from two games.

"I think from the point of view of going through to the next round, the first two games are out of the way, and that's a good thing," Smith said after his team's seven-wicket win against Scotland at Warner Park on Tuesday.

South Africa, ranked world number one, now meet bitter rivals Australia in a high-profile Group A clash on Saturday, a match Smith termed as real challenge.

"The World Cup is really starting for us now, and the first part of that is Saturday because Australia is the game that everyone's been looking forward to," said Smith, who hit an attractive 91 to help his team chase 189.

For their part Scotland deserved credit for playing out all their 50 overs to score their highest World Cup score of 186-8, former England Test player Dougie Brown top-scoring with 45.

Andrew Hall took 3-48 and fellow paceman Charl Langeveldt (2-48) enjoyed a good work-out after Smith won the toss and fielded.

Smith said his team was ready for any opposition in the round of eight teams.

"I think every team has match winners, so I don't want to delve into who'll beat us and who won't beat us. I think that as a team you cannot afford to take teams for granted, have to be ready for each day.

"If you're slightly off the mark,

teams can beat you. Australia is a big challenge in itself," said Smith.

"I'm very relaxed at the moment. I think I'm going to get a lesson on how to fish, a couple of our farm boys are taking me fishing. Hopefully I don't get too seasick."

Analysing his team's performance against Scotland, Smith said his bowlers offered more loose deliveries.

"We weren't any less aggressive against Scotland. There were just a lot of four-balls on offer. The track played well today (Tuesday), it was a really good wicket. It was a lot slower against Holland," said Smith of team's first match which they won by 221 runs.

"I think Scotland are the better unit, a few better bowling options and a few decent batters in the top six."

Smith said some of his players were emotional leading up to the Scotland match due to former coach Bob Woolmer who died in Jamaica on Sunday.

"The Scotland game took on extra meaning after Bob passed away. There were a couple of emotional guys, and to their credit they were guys who were very professional. We discussed that aspect and I am happy everyone did well."

Smith said the Proteas will prepare extensively for the Australia match.

"Our couple of days of preparation is going to be important. Our planning is going to be important. I know we're a very confident bunch of guys, each guy got a good workout coming out of these two games.

"I think we are running pretty solidly and it's just about getting it right and hopefully executing on the day. I think both teams are very close, and it's about who's better on the day and who takes their chances."

Smith, whose team dethroned

Australia as world number one last month, said it would not matter who is top in the rankings.

"I don't think it changes it in any way. We've come a long way against Australia and I don't think there is that fear factor anymore. It's going to be a cracking game and hopefully it lives up to what everybody wants to see."

Bangladesh

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for only 18 while Mahmudullah Riyad added just six to his overnight score of 22.

In the second essay, opener Jahurul Islam went back for 13 but Mehrah Hossain and Nazimuddin looked well set to steady the innings before their 70-run second wicket stand came to an end when paceman Ishara Amerasinghe had the latter caught by Upul Chandana.

In-form Nazimuddin scored 45 off 68 balls that contained eight fours and a six while Mehrah was run out for 41 off 115 balls featuring with half-dozen boundaries.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka A: 547-6 dec. and 132-4 dec. in 36 overs (Vandort 7, Udawatte 33, Silva 36, Kapugedera 1, Mubarak 32 n.o., Chandana 16 n.o., extras 7, Talha 1-34, Enamul 2-31, Riyad 1-42).

Bangladesh A: 163 all out in 51.5 overs (Jahurul 18, Mehrah 9, Nazimuddin 10, Tushar 18, Sahagir 17, Nadif 17, Mashud 18, Riyad 28, Nazmul 20, Enamul 0, Talha 0 not out, extras 8, Ganegama 2-39, de Silva 3-38, Amerasinghe 2-31, Chandana 2-43) and 110-3 in 39 overs (Jahurul 13, Mehrah 41, Nazimuddin 45, Tushar 9 batting, Nazmul 0 batting, extras 2, Silva 1-30, Amerasinghe 1-27).

Autopsy

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rejecting reports the team was pulling out due to mental distress.

But former Pakistan international leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed, due to take charge of the team for that game, admitted the squad was having a hard time coming to terms with the tragedy.

"There is a great vacuum because Bob was a part of the family," he said.

"When you lose a member of the family, we all know how bad it can be. The whole team is depressed right now. The boys -- and even me -- have been totally depressed."

Woolmer's coffin had been expected to be on the same flight as the team to London, from where it would be transported to South Africa, where he lived with his wife Gill.

On Monday, Gill Woolmer had revealed the pressures placed on her husband as coach of cricket-mad Pakistan.

"His job coaching there has been incredibly stressful," she said.

Woolmer had endured a tense build-up to the World Cup.

Last August, Pakistan were embroiled in a ball-tampering row against England at The Oval in London which led to the first forfeiture of a Test match in the sport's history.

He then saw his two best fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif fail drugs tests. They later had their bans overturned on appeal but were ruled out of the World Cup on fitness grounds.

Umpires: Billy Doctrove and Asad Rauf.

Bari has a go at Inzamam

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan's former chief cricket selector Wasim Bari Tuesday criticised captain Inzamamul Haq for not leading the side from the front and making wrong selections which led to their World Cup failure.

"Inzamam led without commitment and the team looked like an army without a general," Bari, who resigned over team's first round exit from the World Cup, told AFP.

Pakistan were dumped out of the World Cup on Saturday after losing their Group D match to minnows Ireland -- their worst ever World Cup exit which prompted Inzamam to retire from one-day cricket and quit the captaincy.

On Sunday, 58-year-old Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer died after being found unconscious in his hotel room in Jamaica.

Pakistan were scheduled to play their last group match against Zimbabwe on Wednesday before heading home.

Bari, a former Pakistan captain, said he never criticised individuals but Inzamam's recent statements forced him to go public.

"The commitment comes from the top and it doesn't come from anywhere else and he could have had a better farewell."

"I read that the team management including the now deceased coach Woolmer said they did not want certain players in the World Cup team. This is baseless. I went to South Africa to get their nod on team selection."

Bari said his selection committee always tried to accommodate the captain and the coach.

"We thought it's the captain who has to lead the team in the ground and that's why we always took their words and never forced any selection. I never went public but there were times I could have."

"I tried to convince both the captain and the coach to have a left-right opening combination but they did not budge and there was no left-hander in the 15-man Cup squad," said Bari, who also had to resign after the team's first round exit in the 2003 World Cup.

Two other selectors -- former left-arm spinner Iqbal Qasim and ex-paceman Ehteshamuddin also tendered their resignations.

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Naseem Ashraf also quit from his post.

Bari refused to comment on Inzamam's decision to quit limited overs cricket.

Not my last WC

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Warne (708) with 674 Test wickets, having claimed five or more victims in an innings 57 times and 10 or more in a match 19 times -- both world records.

"There is no competition with anybody because we compete against batsmen. They bat against me and I want to get their wickets. I don't think about records or wickets or what anyone else is doing," he said.

Muralidaran is also the only bowler with more than 1,000 wickets in international cricket, having grabbed 434 in one-dayers. But he does not believe he is the best.

"You never know. Someone will come in five or 10 year's time, or maybe next year, who will start bowling like me or better than me. Nobody thought when I started playing that I'll be the best off-spinner in the world," he said.

Sri Lanka may have quality batsmen and bowlers, but Muralidaran believed the most important thing was how the team would perform in the middle.

"We have all come here to win and not giving any chance to others. That's the way we want to play. If things go right and we have the right combination, then we can have a good World Cup," he said.

"The media make some teams favourites, but the game is different. Any team can beat anybody. This game is about playing just 50 overs and 15 overs can change the game. Whoever plays well on the day, will win. That's my theory."

Muralidaran said his only aim in the World Cup was to win matches for his team by bowling consistently well.

"There are no personal goals. I always play for the team and try to bowl well. When my captain asks me to bowl, I have to make the best of the situation," he said.

Minnows

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SQUADS

SCOTLAND (from): Craig Wright (captain), Ryan Watson, John Blain, Dougie Brown, Gavin Hamilton, Majid Haq, Paul Hoffmann, Douglas Lockhart, Ross Lyons, Neil McCallum, Deward Nel, Navdeep Poonia, Glenn Rogers, Colin Smith, Fraser Watts.

NETHERLANDS (from): Luuk van Troost (captain), Peter Borren, Daan van Bunge, Ryan ten Doeschate, Mark Jonkman, Muhammad Kashif, Alexei Kervezee, Tim de Leede, Adeel Raja, Darron Reekers, Edgar Schiferli, Jeroen Smits, Billy Stelling, Eric Szwarczynski, Bas Zuiderent.

Umpires: Tony Hill and Asoka de Silva.

Tait not the weak link

AFP, St Kitts



Australian pace sensation Shaun Tait was all game for the clash against world number one South Africa.

saying any pre-match talk of him being a "weak link" doesn't perturb him.

"I couldn't care less what Daryll Cullinan or others have to say for me. To be honest it doesn't bother me at all. I don't know him," said Tait of former South African batsman

Cullinan who described Tait as the weak link in Australia's attack.

"I suppose being the young bloke in the side coming up there's no reason why they shouldn't target me but I am looking forward to the match," said Tait of Australia's last group A match on Saturday.

The 24-year-old South Australian pace sensation has taken over from spearhead Brett Lee, who had to pull out of the World Cup because of an injured ankle.

Tait, who managed 2-45 against Scotland and 1-29 against the Netherlands, thinks bowling to

South Africa batsmen would be a challenge.

"It should be a good hit-out, two of the better sides in the competition and they have powerful batting line-ups. I suppose our fast bowlers and spinners have really got to be on the ball."

"It should be cracking game and everyone is waiting for it."

Tait believed giving him the new ball was justified.

"I think it is more important when the new batsman comes in, in general, and if we get a couple of early quick wickets, (Glenn) McGrath comes on."

"The batsman is at his weakest early on, especially if it's reversing a bit it's quite hard to pick up on these tracks so it's quite a good time to bring me on. I hope to do the same job Lee used to do," said Tait of dismissing South African captain Graeme Smith early.

Tait said it would be important to learn from recent mistakes.

"We saw what happened when we were a little bit off in New Zealand and South Africa has got a powerful batting line-up," said Tait of the matches in New Zealand last month when Australia lost 3-0 and failed to defend big totals.

Tait refused to be drawn in predicting the outcome of the South Africa match.

"I think the Australian team has had the ability to do that (beating any team) for the past 10 years, to put doubt in the opposition's minds and some of the guys' presence around the field, as well."

"I'm not going to get too over-confident and start telling people who I'm going to get out but hopefully if the ball moves around early I should be quite dangerous."

Tait said he was gaining in speed, besides confidence.

"I think I'm building up to it, so hopefully there will be some really quick spells coming up."

"I've been a little bit disappointed but I suppose the different conditions, pretty hot and dry and a flat wicket, it's probably not the ideal place to be bowling high 150s but my body is definitely working up to it."



PHOTO: AFP

Australia paceman Shaun Tait balances an Aussie rules football on his fingers at a training session on the island of St Kitts on Tuesday. The Warner Park cricket ground in Basseterre plays host to the Group A clash between South Africa and Australia on March 24.

NEW ZEALAND V KENYA SCOREBOARD

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Did not bat: Bond, Mason.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-105, 3-192, 4-274, 5-280, 6-307, 7-321.

Bowler	O	M	R	W	Econ
Odoyo	10	0	55	2	5.50
Ongondo	10	0	64	2	6.40
Onyango	8	0	63	1	7.87
Kamande	9	0	61	0	6.77
Varaiya	7	0	40	0	5.71
Tikolo	6	0	45	1	7.50
KENYA	R	M	B	4s	6s
Cuma run out	4	24	21	0	0
Obuya lbw b Mason	1	8	5	0	0
Shah c & b Vettori	71	138	89	8	2
Tikolo c Vettori b Mason	7	28	16	1	0
Mishra c Fleming b Franklin	2	2	4	0	0
Obuya run out	21	46	31	0	0
Odoyo c Oram b Bond	42	94	67	4	1
Kamande b Vettori	12	21	15	0	1
Onyango run out	6	19	17	0	0
Ongondo c & b Franklin	4	27	21	0	0
Varaiya not out	1	16	16	0	0
Extras: (lb-2, w-2, nb-8)	12				
Total: (All out in 49.2 overs)	183				

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-8, 3-26, 4-29, 5-76, 6-122, 7-149, 8-167, 9-179, 10-183.

Bowler	O	M	R	W	Econ
Mason	9	0	29	2	3.22
Bond	8	2	19	1	2.37
Franklin	7.2	2	20	2	2.72
McMillan	10	0	39	0	3.90
Vettori	10	0	45	2	4.50
Oram	5	0	29	0	5.8