

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 bugger!"

Flintoff, the star of England's 2005 Ashes success, was one of six players fined 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, Raquib 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, 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 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 Ighir.

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

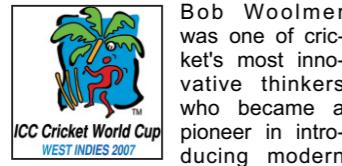
RUSSEL: Zia, Aminul, Bourdif, Hassan, Mishu, Nayan, Ighir, Saad (Kaiser), Tanvir (Pappu), Rana (Bulbul) and Younes.

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

Referee: Azad Rahman.

A thinking coach

REUTERS, Port of Spain



Bob Woolmer was one of cricket's most innovative thinkers who became a pioneer in introducing modern technology into a 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 "suspicions".

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.

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.

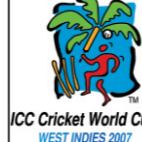
Two other selectors -- former left-arm spinner Iqbal Qasim and ex-pacer Ehteshamuddin also tendered their resignations.

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

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

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 Daryl 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 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 batsmen 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."

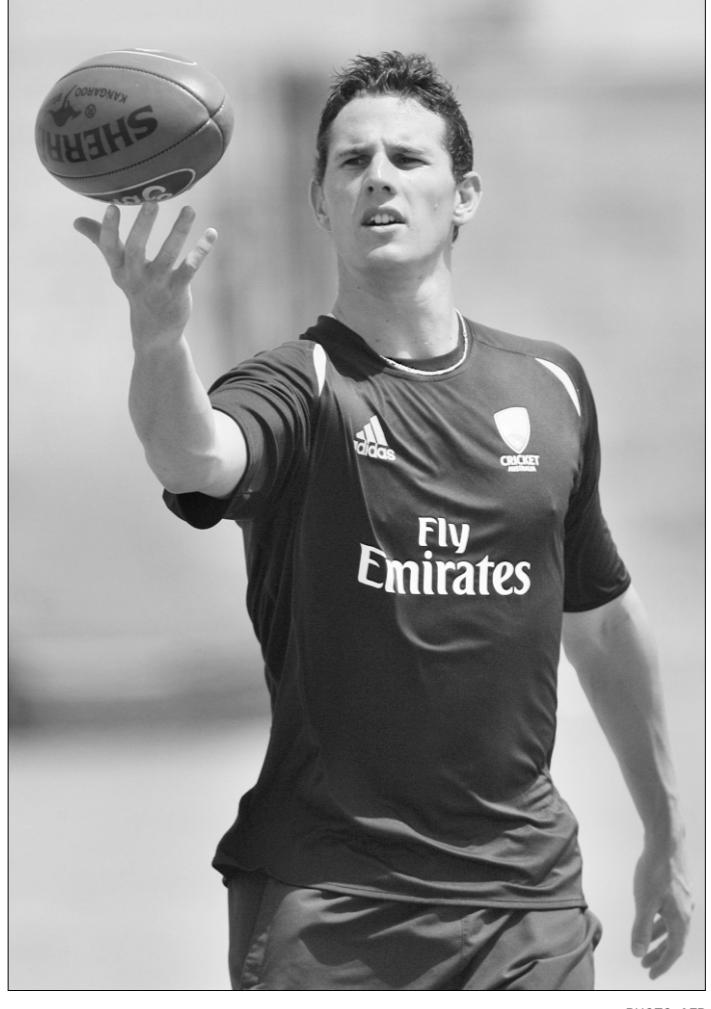


PHOTO: AFP

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
Ouma run out	4	24	21	0	0
Obuya lbw b Mason	1	8	5	0	0
Shah c & Vettori	71	138	89	8	2
Tikolo c Vettori b Mason					