



## Much ado about coach, captain

SPORTS REPORTER

Once the Dav Whatmore issue was settled, the cricket fraternity in the country has been gripped by speculation about his successor.

The Sri Lankan-born Australian has decided not to renew his contract with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) although he will see through next month's home series against India.

From the cricket board's point of view it is too early to mention any name as there are five boards around the world, including three from the sub-continent, which are searching for a new coach right at the moment.

"We have a list in our hand. We have also talked with a few of them but it is unwise to mention the names because you all know there are a number of countries who are looking for a new coach," said a BCB high-up, a member of the six-member committee which was formed to handle the issue.

But it couldn't stop the guessing-game: especially as the mediapersons are desperate to find a clue about the next Tigers coach. One might be surprised but there are a number of big names have come in for discussion including that of Australia great Steve Waugh.

"The board is trying to get Steve Waugh," a private TV channel mentioned.

The names of former India coach John Wright and current Sri Lanka coach Tom Moody were doing the rounds. If it is not, then they focused on second-ranked names from Australia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

"High profile coach? Why not?" was a smiling answer from the board official.

The six-member committee will meet today but not only to discuss about the coach issue but also about a possible next captain.

Although the board officials said that they would only announce the names of the captain and his deputy for the two-match Test and

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BRIAN CHARLES LARA, FOR ONE LAST TIME: West Indies captain Brian Lara walks on to the crease for the last time as he is being given a standing ovation by the England players during their World Cup Super Eights match at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Memories for a lifetime

ANDREW WHITE



As we sit at the end of our long and eventful journey in the Caribbean, there is a real sense of satisfaction in a job well done. Our 'World Cup Final' was against Bangladesh, a game in which we were victorious with a display of excellent cricket in all three disciplines.

Yes, we finished badly with a hefty defeat against the Sri Lankans, but all in all we feel that we have met and surpassed our goals and can now take a few days in the sun to reflect and enjoy the memories.

The dressing room was an emotional place for all after the final game as coach Adrian Birrell called it a day after five great years at the helm. Words cannot describe the impact he has had and it was only befitting that his last game in charge

should be in the Super Eights of the World Cup.

I have spent the last couple of days by the pool side trying to take on board the magnitude of what we have achieved. However, it's maybe only when we arrive home on Tuesday that it will all start to sink in.

Probably the greatest satisfaction from our efforts has been the reports of cricket being played in the streets of Belfast and Dublin, record numbers of boys and girls at club age-group practice sessions, talk of cricket in the wilds of Ireland and the joy it has brought to so many people across the world.

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People have asked me "What is your abiding memory of the World Cup?" but it is a difficult task to narrow down so many great moments into one. The opening ceremony and walking onto the

world stage with the greats of the game, the tie against Zimbabwe in our first match, the famous St Patrick's Day win over Pakistan, the scenes on floor 11 of the Pegasus Hotel in Kingston when the news came through of our qualification to the Super Eights and our win over Bangladesh, are just a few of them.

But a personal highlight and that of many will be the supporters. They were simply superb and were a major success factor to the World Cup itself, bringing colour, friendship, entertainment and madness to every game across the Caribbean.

There is no doubt that for every individual that witnessed the games they will have a thousand stories and more.

For us as players however there is little time to bask in the view that it can't get any better, because it must. Irish cricket is only at the beginning of its journey because

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## Super League from May 14

SPORTS REPORTER

Super League phase of the Kai-Altech Premier Cricket League is set to begin on May 14, three months after the first phase ended.

Ten days before the Tigers left for the West Indies to play the World Cup on February 10, the twelve-team competition concluded with Abahani clearly at the top of the table with 20 points after an almost flawless show.

But things will be different for all the teams -- Abahani, Victoria, Mohammedan, Sonargaon, Birman and defending champions Old DOHS -- as the national players will be unavailable for the second phase of the prestigious Dhaka league.

The Tigers will be busy playing against visiting India. Mosharraf was right behind Abahani in the points table with 17 points, closely followed by Victoria on 16, Sonargaon 15,

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## Kumar smells hypocrisy

AFP, St George's

Sri Lanka wicket-keeper Kumar Sangakkara in his www.cricinfo.com column.

"Consequently, many of the critics have been wide of the mark in their conclusions. I question whether double standards are being applied here by some pundits.

"Nearly all top cricket playing nations have rotational policies that they put into action during heavily congested schedules. Australia, for example, regularly rest their senior players in group matches once their qualification (and sometimes even before) has been confirmed.

"What then is the difference between resting players in the CB Series or the World Cup?

"Will some of the television 'experts' now calling for ICC intervention do the same when

"Much of the analysis has been ill-informed, offered without great thought or deep understanding of this Sri Lanka team," wrote Sangakkara in his www.cricinfo.com column.

"Ricky Ponting or Stephen Fleming or Graeme Smith next rests a strike bowler? I doubt it."

Sangakkara, preparing for the first semifinal which takes place in Jamaica on Tuesday probably against New Zealand, said decisions are based on what's best for the team's chances.

Sri Lanka are looking to win their second World Cup title to add to their 1996 victory.

"Some of the critics appear to think that the Australia game was our most important game in the tournament. Why -- just because we were playing Australia? That's nonsense."

"The simple fact was it was the least important game of our World Cup. Everything we do is focused on that goal. We don't care about morale-boosting victories."

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## Cosmetic changes

Cricket

PRADEEP MAGAZINE

This is a sell-out. If the Indian selectors have any pride left in them they should quit and tell the Board that from now on, they should pick the team themselves.

How did a man of Dilip Vengsarkar's stature not walk out of the meeting and later, keep his calm in a press conference where one bizarre explanation after another was being given for strange selections. Even more baffling was not selecting a vice-captain, instead leaving the choice of Rahul Dravid's deputy to the captain and coach.

First, the Working Committee decides to name the captain of the team themselves - unprecedented in the annals of India's history -- and then it gives a directive to the selectors to pick a "youthful team".

Following that, the selection committee promptly decides that Dinesh Mongia, at 30 years, is

young and Virender Sehwag, nearly 29, is not old enough to be dropped.

What has saved Sehwag is his great match-winning hundred against a team like Bermuda and what has not saved Sourav Ganguly his place in the team is his six half centuries in the nine ODIs he has played after his comeback to international cricket.

And has Sachin Tendulkar been penalised for speaking against Greg Chappell or for his lack of form? No, it has to be for speaking out against the coach, who, if one goes by the Board's thinking, is the greatest threat to have happened to Indian cricket.

One great has been the coach's influence on the team that within 18 months of his taking over this role, Indian cricket may have hit rock-bottom, but his methods have given the Board a great insight into how to improve Indian cricket.

Perhaps they are right. After all, how low can one sink? From now on, India can only improve their ranking. The Working Committee

will then deserve all credit and may be they should then take a leaf from what happens in tennis and appoint a non-playing captain.

There are many in the Board who understand the game better than the players and no harm in giving one of them this job. Their own Working Committee can then ratify all these decisions.

One can well understand this policy of "youth" and also the logic that Bangladesh will be the best place to groom youngsters. But apart from one or two players, which youngsters have been picked? None.

It is a team full of compromises only because the Board wanted to keep Tendulkar and Ganguly out of the one-day team. Chappell must be smirking wherever he is in Australia.

Rahul Dravid, one believed,

was a great captain-statesman in the making. But after all that has happened in the past month, I am afraid his silent acquiescence could well have him go down in history as someone who played a crucial role in the liquidation of Indian cricket.

(The author, a renowned cricket writer, wrote this piece for Hindustan Times).

Ad

ESPN

English Premier Football League

Newcastle United v Chelsea

Live at 6:25 pm

Aston Villa v Portsmouth

Live at 8:55 pm

STAR Sports

Primera Liga

Villarreal v Barcelona

Live at 1:00 am (Monday)



A veteran attendant times the men's 4x100m relay manually with the help of a stopwatch during the 32nd National Athletics Championship at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. This old system of clocking the athletes must be overhauled and modernised before the SAF Games, which is just a year away.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN