

# Ponting can't wait

AFP, Gros Islet



Australia skipper Ricky Ponting admitted that he couldn't wait for Saturday to come when his all-conquering team take on Sri Lanka in the World Cup final.

The Bridgetown title showdown will be two-time defending champions Australia's fourth successive final appearance and they will start as overwhelming favourites after beating South Africa by seven wickets in the semifinal here on Wednesday.

"I'm looking forward to Saturday, it can't come round quickly

enough," said Ponting whose team have won all 10 matches at the World Cup and have not lost a game in the tournament overall since 1999.

"It's a fantastic feeling to be in the final again. It's been a great day."

South Africa were 27-5 at one stage after winning the toss as Shaun Tait, with four wickets, and Glenn McGrath, with three, dominated proceedings with Graeme Smith's men bowled out for 149.

"Full credit to the bowlers," said Ponting. "They executed everything well."

McGrath, playing in his last World Cup, set another record when he took his tournament haul to 25 wickets, the best ever performance in a World Cup.

"It's coming out well," said

McGrath who took 3-18.

"The breeze allowed me to swing the ball and I was lucky enough to get a few edges."

"We have bowled every team out at the World Cup except Bangladesh and that was a 22-over game. That's a great feeling to take into the final."

"Tait, Bracken are bowling well and Brad Hogg is playing a big part like he did at the last World Cup."

South Africa skipper Graeme Smith admitted his team had been outplayed.

"The top order have been good in the tournament but today (Wednesday) we had problems. Their bowlers put us on the back foot and we couldn't seize the initiative," he said.

"Australia were the better team

today and congratulations to them. It's been an up-and-down tournament for us but I can't doubt the effort the players have put in. At times we haven't played our best cricket."

"I know there will be a lot of disappointed people at home but I hope that in four years' time we can pay them back for their support."

Michael Clarke saw Australia home with an unbeaten 60 and paid tribute to the team's bowlers.

"The bowlers did a fantastic job and if we keep bowling like that I don't think we will have to chase too many runs," said Clarke.

"I feel like I am hitting the ball well and it's great to get another 50 and reach another World Cup final. But my job has been made a lot easier by the top order playing so well."

## Chappell attacks Tendulkar

PTI, New Delhi

The Proteas have been widely criticised for their lack of a match-winning spin bowler and once again took on the Australians with an all-pace attack that showed little sign of penetration.

While Australia's pace bowlers did most of the damage, their spinner Brad Hogg conceded only 24 runs in his 10 overs.

"The Australians outplayed us in every department," said Wessels. "We cannot continue to play such predictable cricket. It's so easy to play South Africa."

South Africa had gone into the tournament as the number one ranked team in the world but Lorgat was among the first to acknowledge they had been completely outplayed by the side they had dislodged from the top spot.

"Today we were just flat, just completely nowhere in the game."

Former batsman Adam Bacher said the gap between the two teams was almost embarrassing.

"It was boys against men," he said on public television. "They taught us a cricket lesson."



WATCH AND LEARN: Australia batsman Michael Clarke drives the ball perfectly through mid-off during the World Cup semifinal against South Africa at Beausejour Cricket Ground in Gros Islet on Wednesday.

# Stage-fright blamed

AFP, Johannesburg



The latest chapter in South Africa's sorry World Cup history was put down to a case of stage fright by former stars

Wednesday as the Proteas once again suffered semifinal heartache at the hands of Australia.

The much-vaunted South African top order, including Jacques Kallis and Graeme Smith, were all back inside the pavilion within the first 10 overs as they collapsed to 27-5 in a sequence that left some of their former team-mates stunned.

"The first hour was some of the craziest cricket South Africa have ever played," said former batsman Daryl Cullinan.

South Africa's convenor of selectors Haroon Lorgat said the wickets had been "very poor, very soft dismissals".

"Nobody was up to it today

(Wednesday)," he said on SuperSport television.

Lorgat feared the team had been undone by nerves despite claims by coach Mickey Arthur they were taking everything in their stride rather than being weighed down by past failures, including their 1999 semifinal exit to Australia.

"I wonder how much tension was in them despite what Mickey was saying about their calmness because I just did not see what I was expecting to see," he said.

His view was echoed by one-time skipper Kepler Wessels who suspected current captain Graeme Smith's pre-match confidence was all a show.

"You're always going to be uptight, nervous. That would have been a common thread, to put on a united front but everyone would have been pretty tense."

Wessels, who also played for Australia when South Africa were frozen out of international cricket during the apartheid era, called for a major rethink of the Proteas' whole approach to one-day cricket.

"We must be up to it today

# WC to clear WI debts

CRICINFO, undated



intends to put in place plans for the developing of cricket. That's what we want to do. We've been carrying a deficit of US\$15m. If we can find a way to clear that, it eases our overall structure. It gives us the ability to have bank-borrowing, to do things which we can't do now. Now we can hopefully work our way out of that."

The Caribbean's first-ever hosting of cricket's biggest event, however, has been marred by the death of Pakistan coach Bob Woolmer, complaints about the numbers of spectators at some venues and the restrictions on them.

"Many things have gone wrong," Gordon admitted. "But," he asked, "Who could have expected Bob Woolmer, right at the beginning of the series, to go like that? Who would have expected India and Pakistan to be withdrawn and so many thousands of people who were planning to come cancelling? Who could have expected these things? Some countries have paid the price for it."

In spite of the difficulties, though, Gordon insisted that the World Cup was more success than failure. "This is the third largest event in the world. And we have done it when people didn't think we could. And I think at the end of the day, we should all take some little pride in achieving it."

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Gordon said he was impressed with the manner in which the local organisers have responded to the various problems. "We have dealt with enormous problems and our people have grown every time they have addressed them. And I think even though there were all these setbacks which I referred to, we moved into a second gear. And other things were done to put in place.

"Grenada was happy, Guyana was happy. From what I see here, Barbados looks happy. We've had some empty stands, but you always have empty stands when you have weak games. The challenge is how you handle that in a way that would minimise the damage to the visible, while at the same time, not affecting the sales you're trying to build, and I think we've done a pretty good job at this."

And Gordon noted further that he was especially pleased with the tremendous personal growth I've seen amongst the people who have been managing this. The volunteers have been one of the great successes of this thing ... because they have been absolutely superb.

I've heard so many tourists talk about that. You can't quantify the benefit of the warmth that has been generated at that level when those people leave here. We must understand that this

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

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# 'Bring on Murali, Vaas'

AFP, Gros Islet



Australia captain Ricky Ponting insists his world champions are ready to face down Sri Lanka's veteran bowlers Muttiah Muralidaran and Chaminda Vaas in Saturday's World Cup final.

The Cricket Board official said it had almost been decided in principle not to retain Inzamam in Pakistan's Test team now looks in jeopardy with a top PCB official indicating that he would be dropped for the home series against South Africa.

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