

## Chelsea bid for Ramires

Chelsea have made a £20million move for Benfica's Brazilian World Cup star Ramires. The Barclays Premier League champions want to head off interest from Bayern Munich and Barcelona and hope a deal can be agreed quickly for the man affectionately known as the 'Blue Kenyan' in Brazil. Manchester City were reported to have also shown interest in the 23-year-old, but his representatives say they have had no contact and that Ramires sees Chelsea as a 'dream move'.  
- Daily Mail



# MURALI'S octuple ton

## Cricket

REUTERS, London

Prodigious spin propelled by an abnormally strong wrist and an iron resolve forged in bitter acrimony over his unique action took Muttiah Muralidaran to unprecedented heights in world cricket.

Muralidaran, 38, took his 800th Test wicket with his final ball in 133 Tests on Thursday. With Twenty20 cricket cutting increasingly into the Test programme it is a mark that is unlikely ever to be exceeded.

Muralidaran, son of a confectioner from Kandy and a member of the embattled Tamil minority, believes his best Test figures 16 for 220 at The Oval in 1999 remain his career highlight.

The one-off Test against an England side who

had just beaten South Africa in a series was an unforgettable snapshot of his wondrous powers of flight and spin and the parallel emergence of Sri Lanka as a world force.

An hour before play began on a sunlit final morning, Muralidaran warmed up in the middle under the guidance of his impressive captain Arjuna Ranatunga.

By late afternoon, Ranatunga, Muralidaran and their teammates were celebrating a 10-wicket victory. Only a runout denied Muralidaran all the England second innings wickets.

"It was a mental trial beyond comparison," wrote one of the England openers Steven James recently.

"There was no physical threat, just an unremitting battle against a bowler of supreme accuracy and stamina, with pace and degrees of turn being varied almost imperceptibly."

Muralidaran's triumph followed an oblique but unmistakable message from England coach David Lloyd on the previous evening. "I have my opinions that I have made known to the authorities," Lloyd said.

Lloyd's remarks were triggered by Muralidaran's standard delivery, which at first glance appears to break the fundamental rule of bowling, namely the obligation to deliver the ball without bending and then straightening the arm.

Australian Darrell Hair no-balled the Sri Lankan seven times for throwing in the 1995 Melbourne Test.

Ten days later, Muralidaran was no-balled repeatedly by Roy Emerson in a one-day international. In January, 1999, Emerson called him again in Adelaide.

Muralidaran, taunted by the Australian crowds whenever he took the ball, announced he would never tour Australia again and seriously contemplated retirement.

He decided instead to fight back with the support of the Sri Lankan board and his career was rescued by the International Cricket Board (ICC).

Extensive Tests concluded that Muralidaran's action "created the optical illusion of throwing".

After the controversy continued to rumble, further tests revealed that all contemporary bowlers, and therefore logically all bowlers before them, flexed their elbows to some extent.

A maximum allowance of 15 degrees for both pace and spin bowlers was agreed.

Because of an elbow deformity, Muralidaran's

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### MURALI FACTS

- Out of 800 wickets, he took 795 for Sri Lanka and 5 for ICC World XI.
- Most wickets against England - 112
- His best year was 2006, with 90 wickets.
- Most wickets for a bowler at home (493).
- Most wickets in lost matches (210).
- Under Sanath Jayasuriya, he took 230 wickets.
- He had 435 batsmen caught and 167 bowled.
- He dismissed 102 batsmen for a duck.
- Mark Boucher (12) and Grant Flower (10) were his bunnies.
- c Mahela Jayawardene b Muralidaran (77 times)
- His only one half-century, 67, came against India in 2001.
- But he was a genuine tail-ender, bagging 33 ducks.

### MILESTONES

Wicket	Batsman	Venue	Year
1st	CJ McDermott	Colombo	1992
100th	S Fleming	Hamilton	1997
200th	D Cork	London	1998
300th	S Pollock	Durban	2000
400th	H Olonga	Galle	2002
500th	M Kaspruwicz	Kandy	2004
600th	K Mashud	Bogra	2006
700th	S Rasel	Kandy	2007
800th	P Ojha	Colombo	2010

# Mashrafe concerned Siddons looks on the bright side

## Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

It was a case of the glass half-empty or half-full.

The Bangladesh cricket team think-tank had different views of the 7-match tour of the United Kingdom.

Upon their return from London yesterday, Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza told reporters that he believed the players should take responsibility for the shocking defeats against associate nations Ireland and the Netherlands. But coach Jamie Siddons reminded everyone of the good things the Tigers did on the tour -- beating England for the first time.

"There were some issues like losing the toss in both the matches and the condition but still I believe the players should take the responsibility for the defeats. We didn't play well and that's why we lost the matches," confessed Mashrafe while talking to reporters during the on-arrival press conference at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

"I am very much aware of the fact that everybody shared the joy when we won the match but players are only responsible when we lose," the pace spearhead added with a furtive smile.

While the Bangladesh captain had mixed reactions, Siddons was a very happy man with the outcome of the trip.

The Australian coach wanted to highlight his team's great victory against England rather than focusing on the defeats against the two ICC associate member countries, although Mashrafe had con-

cerns with the bowling effort.

"What are you talking about? How is that easy? You got to listen to the whole story. The ground was under covers for five days and was under water four days earlier. Had we won the toss we would have had a chance. The pitch was damp, we missed two catches and bowling was poor so we lost the game. Don't be dramatic over that loss; it was a 30-overs game not a 50-overs game. Why don't you remember the win against England? It was a fantastic win," Siddons responded.

"We remember the win against Australia ten years later but we forgot the win against England two days later. That's not really fair.

"These boys played fantastically on the tour, we lost the 30-overs game against the Netherlands where the pitch was underwater four days before the game," he added.

"You weren't there, you don't understand what the wicket was like, what the condition was like. How much rush we were to travel, we didn't get time to practice. There were real excuses; I think the team performed reasonably well and shouldn't have lost that game yesterday, but we did and we got to move on," he said while defending his team's poor showing.

Pointing to the bright sight of his team, Siddons said: "I am pretty positive about it. I think it went quite well. Batting was really consistent; I think five out of six or four out of five games we were around the 250 or 240-mark. We didn't bat very well in one game against England."

The Tigers' coach was very confident that his team can beat both Ireland and the Netherlands in the 2011 World

Cup group matches.

Like his coach, Mashrafe also blamed the condition and luck for the disaster against Ireland and the Netherlands but the 'Narail Express' said that they have to correct few things quickly before the World Cup.

"It's true that conditions and toss were factors but we still must have won those two matches. We must have won the series against Ireland against whom we secured a 3-0 victory at home (in 2006). We will get some time before the World Cup and we must rectify the mistakes we made in the last series.

"I'm really concerned with our bowling. We should focus on this area ahead of the World Cup. I believe this team has got the quality to play much better cricket than the performance had against the two weak teams," said Mashrafe.

Shakib Al Hasan didn't accompany the team due to his county commitment while Mohammad Ashraful has also stayed back in England.

### SPORTS POLL

Do you think Australia have lost their aura for good?

Yes 58.3%

No 41.7%

TOTAL VOTES: 84

### TODAY'S POLL

Who is to blame for Bangladesh's latest debacle?

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