



New Zealand pacer Jimmy Neesham attends the pitch inspection with a mug of coffee with a demeanour that shows there were little hopes of the game against India being played at all. PHOTO: NZC

My wife was 'my rock', says Warner

AFP, Taunton

David Warner said wife Candice had been his "rock" and the driving force behind his return to Australia after the opener's first international century since a ball-tampering ban during a win over Pakistan. The opener made 107, his first hundred in Australia colours since an Ashes century against England during in 2017, as the World Cup champions won by 41 runs at Taunton on Wednesday.

Both Warner and former captain Steve Smith were given 12-month bans by Cricket Australia following their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa. "I was always coming back to international cricket if selected," Warner said in his first major press conference since his suspension expired. "The thing that kept me going was my wife and kids. My wife is just, she's just my rock. She's unbelievable. She's determined, disciplined, selfless," the 32-year-old left-hander added.

"She's a strong woman. And she got me out of bed a lot in those sort of first sort of 12 weeks, and got me back running and training hard as I could... She really nailed that into me."

Candice Warner, who is pregnant with the couple's third child, is now in England. Australia, whose next match is against Sri Lanka at the Oval on Saturday, now have an official period of 'family time' starting Thursday when players can see their wives and families.

"We're fortunate enough to have our families away with us which is great and obviously we're going to be here for a while in the UK," said Warner, set for a long stay given Australia remain in England for an Ashes series after the World Cup.

While Smith and Cameron Bancroft, who received a nine-month ban, gave interviews during their suspensions, Warner maintained his silence following an emotional press conference at Sydney Airport after he was sent home.

Cricket chiefs deny TV 'gagging' order

AFP, Nottingham

International cricket chiefs say they do not want to gag commentators after West Indies great Michael Holding hit out at "censorship" following on-air comments that were critical of the standard of umpiring at the World Cup. The former pace bowler, a high-profile TV analyst, labelled the officiating in the match between West Indies and Australia at Trent Bridge on June 6, as "atrocious".

Holding criticised umpires Ruchira Palliyaguruge and Chris Gaffaney in the group game in Nottingham for caving in to pressure created by constant appealing by the Australians, who won the match by 15 runs.

Chris Gayle was out to what should technically have been a free hit after Mitchell Starc overstepped the crease on the previous ball, which was not spotted by the umpire.

West Indies skipper Jason Holder was also at the receiving end of an umpiring blunder after being adjudged lbw off Adam Zampa but replays suggested the ball had pitched outside leg stump. The decision was overturned on review.

According to the Times of India, Huw Bevan, the production head for the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) rights partner Sunset and Vine, wrote an email to Holding on June 7.

"Inherently in live television, there are occasions when on-field decisions cause reason for discussion or debate, but as ICC TV host broadcasters, our (Sunset & Vine) duty is not to judge or highlight mistakes," he said.

Bevan added: "It's critical for us that we should never amplify umpires' mistakes by giving airtime to those incidents nor show the umpires in bad light. We should also be very careful not to look to create controversy around an event or match at any time."

But Holding wrote a strong reply to the ICC, the Times of India reported. "Commentators are being more and more compromised by controlling organisations to the point of censorship," he said.

"If those umpires yesterday were FIFA officials, they would have been told to pack their bags and head home," he added. "They would not have been given another World Cup game to officiate."

"As a former cricketer, I think cricket should be held to a higher standard. Is the objective to protect the umpires even when they do a bad job?"

"I am sorry, but I am not going to be part of that," he said. "Please let me know if I should be heading back to my home in Newmarket instead of heading to Cardiff because I don't agree with what is being suggested here and happy not being part of it."

But an ICC spokesman told AFP the matter was now closed.

"We only want them (commentators) to be fair. We have got the best experience on board to provide quality to the viewers. And we in no way want to gag anybody on their views," an ICC source said.

"The matter with Holding has been settled and there are no hard feelings between the ICC and Mr Holding."

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'Bayliss has to live with the salute'

REUTERS, Southampton

West Indies bowler Sheldon Cottrell may have a special salute for England coach Trevor Bayliss when the two sides meet in the World Cup on Friday.

Cottrell, whose flamboyant wicket-taking celebration involves a short march, stand to attention and salute to the pavilion, will meanwhile be doing his best to get on Bayliss's nerves. The 56-year-old Australian told reporters on Wednesday that the 'Sheldon Salute' was enough to annoy anyone over the age of 40 and himself in particular.

West Indies captain Jason Holder was asked on Thursday whether Cottrell had "a nice, special salute" lined up for Bayliss, and he smiled.

"I don't think it will change, that's just Sheldon. I guess Trevor will just have learn to accept it," he replied.

Watching the West Indies batsmen smashing Caribbean-born Jofra Archer's deliveries to the boundary might rank even higher on the satisfaction scale but Holder was keen to put the match into perspective.

"It's something that has been talked up in the press, in the media, and we are looking forward to the challenge against England," he said. "I have seen Jofra over the years. He is obviously a Barbadian. He's grown up in Barbados playing cricket so what I'm seeing of Jofra doesn't surprise me. He is one of those guys who has always had ability and talent," added the captain.

"It is just unfortunate how things went in terms of his decision-making but he is a good talent."

The match, he emphasised, was against England, the pre-tournament favourites, and not just about one man.

Holder said the final team selection would be made on Friday, with all-rounder Andre Russell recovering well from a knee injury after being left out of the rain-abandoned match with South Africa.



An Indian fan holds up a placard with a message that will resonate not just with fans of the two-time world champions, but with fans of every other team that want to see their side on the biggest stage in world cricket. PHOTO: REUTERS

BEST QUOTE

ইস্পর্ক গ্রেট টেস্ট-এ লজ্জা সহ্যকাজ মিশি হানে ভরবেই মল!

ফেক জামিলা



Afghanistan pacer Hamid Hassan was certainly pleased with his umpiring as he 'officiated' during a training session with children yesterday. PHOTO: TWITTER

'Need to learn from Pak fightback'

AFP, Taunton

Australia pacer Pat Cummins said Pakistan's late rally with the bat was a timely warning for the defending champions even though his side returned to winning ways.

Aaron Finch's side won by 41 runs at Taunton on Wednesday as they recorded their third win of the campaign in England and Wales following their defeat to India. Australia reduced Pakistan to

200-7 chasing a target of 308, with Cummins taking an economical 3-33 from his 10 overs.

But an eighth-wicket stand of 64 between Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed and Wahab Riaz, who hit a rapid 45, provided Australia with some worrying moments before a late collapse saw the final three wickets fall for just two runs.

"It goes to show that everyone can bat these days," said Cummins. "It

was a bit closer than we would have liked, so it was good to get those couple of wickets and finish it off."

"We gave them a bit too much width and suddenly they were back in the game," the 26-year-old added. "It's a good lesson to learn."

Cummins struck early against Pakistan, removing Fakhar Zaman, and then made another important breakthrough when he had Imam-ul-Haq caught behind for 53.

High-pressure India game a must-win, says Imamul

AFP, Taunton

Pakistan's Imam-ul-Haq said this weekend's "huge-pressure" World Cup game against arch-rivals India was a must-win clash for his side after their defeat by Australia.

Wednesday's 41-run loss to the reigning champions in Taunton left Pakistan eighth in the 10-team table and with plenty to do if they are to qualify for the top four, who will contest the semi-finals.

Asked if the reverse at Somerset's headquarters meant Sunday's match at Old Trafford was now one Pakistan simply had to win, Imam replied: "Yes, we've had one game rained off, which was very important for us -- every game now is very important for us, so yes you can say that."

"Obviously, to be part of that kind of game, it's great. It's in Manchester, lots of Pakistani fans there -- so I'm really excited about it. It's a huge pressure game, obviously."

"Pakistan and India, there's a lot of mysteries behind that but we want to just focus on our cricket strengths and how we can get better."

Set a target of 308 to beat Australia, Pakistan were going well while Imam was at the crease making 53.

But he fell in tame fashion, gloving a legside ball from Pat Cummins he could have left alone to wicketkeeper Alex Carey.

So disappointed was Imam, he could barely drag himself from the crease before trudging back towards the pavilion.

Pakistan continued to lose wickets

steadily and, despite a late flurry of runs from the eighth-wicket pair of captain Sarfaraz Ahmed and Wahab Riaz, were bowled out for 266.

"Obviously, I'm playing well, and this team depends on me and Babar (Azam)," said Imam.

"When Babar got out (for 30), it was then my responsibility and I was going well but it was not a good ball that got me out, the same as I did against the West Indies," added the left-hander, the nephew of Pakistan great and selection chief Inzamam-ul-Haq.

"I knew I'd spent a hell of a lot of time on a tricky wicket so I knew it wouldn't be easy for any new batsman to come in. So it was a huge disappointment."

"If I've scored 30 in a winning side, that would be great, I'd be very happy."

"As a pro, if you're winning matches for your country, that's the best thing and if you're not, even if you score a fifty, that's a huge disappointment."

Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed meanwhile said his side had to raise their fielding standards ahead of a crucial World Cup match against arch-rivals India at Old Trafford on Sunday.

"Definitely I think the fielding needs improvement -- the fielding is not up to the mark," the wicketkeeper admitted. "We work together again, and work hard before the India match."

Speaking about the Australia loss, Sarfaraz said: "We committed more mistakes than Australia. We won a good toss but didn't bowl well in the first 30 overs."

We only want commentators to be fair. We have got the best experience on board to provide quality to the viewers. And we in no way want to gag anybody on their views. The matter with Holding has been settled and there are no hard feelings.

ICC Source to AFP