

I may not play for Australia again, says tearful Warner



David Warner and his wife Candice arrive for the press conference. David Warner in tears at his press conference. David Warner at his first press conference a week after the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town

SYDNEY, MAR 31 /-/- A tearful David Warner apologised for his role in the ball tampering scandal that ruined his career, saying he is resigning to the fact that he may not play for his country again. Warner broke down in tears several times as he faced the media for the first time since the ball tampering conspiracy rocked the world last week during the third Test against South Africa at Cape Town. "To the fans and the lovers of the game who have supported and inspired me on my journey as a cricketer, I want to sincerely apologise for betraying you trust in me. Warner said during an emotional press conference. I have let you down badly. I hope in time I can find a way to repay you for all you've given me and earn your respect again. "I suppose there is a tiny ray of hope that I may one day be given the privilege of play-

ing for my country again, but I am resigned to the fact that may never happen," he added. Warner along with his captain Steve Smith were banned for a year by Cricket Australia, while opener Cameron Bancroft was handed a nine-month suspension for his role in the scandal. Warner was also barred by Cricket Australia from ever leading Australia again. "To my teammates and support staff, I apologise for my actions and take full responsibility for what happened on day three of the Newlands Test," he said. "To Cricket Australia, I apologise for my actions and the effect it has had on our game to your care and control. I want you to know I fully support your review into the culture of the Australian cricket team." Warner's comments came after tearful apologies from Smith and Bancroft, who said he

would appeal against the nine-month ban. An emotional Darren Lehmann also announced his decision to step down as coach of Australia after the ongoing fourth and final Test against South Africa in Johannesburg. Warner, however, didn't mention if he would appeal against Cricket Australia's decision and also didn't answer questions regarding his or other team mates' role in the ball tampering scandal or if there had been any such attempts in the past. Asked about a possible appeal ahead of Thursday's deadline, Warner said, "That's something that I will continue to sit down with my family and weigh up all my considerations before I make any decisions."

Warner is considered to be the mastermind behind the scandal and was charged by Cricket Australia for developing the plot, asking Bancroft to

use yellow sandpaper to tamper the ball. When asked to elaborate the details of the plot, Warner said, "I am here today to accept my responsibility for my part and my involvement for what happened in Cape Town. "We know what the consequences are when we make those horrible decisions like this. It's inexcusable. I am deeply sorry. I failed in my responsibilities as vice-captain of the Australian cricket team. I will do everything I can to earn back the respect of the Australian public. "But in the coming weeks and months I am going to look at what has happened and only R10 (10 Rand). "The best cricket we possibly can. Lehmann said. Despite the cordiality on the Wanderers pitch, some fans in a series-best crowd of 17,023 could not resist poking fun at the Australians' attempts to doctor the ball with sandpaper in the Sydney Test in a huddle before the weekend. One banner among a group of spectators wearing yellow read: "Sandpaper Special. Only R10 (10 Rand)."

Warner and nine months for Bancroft who was captured on TV trying to scuff the ball with sandpaper before comically stuffing the evidence down the front of his trousers. Smith's tearful appearance in front of media helped trigger Lehmann's resignation but also prompted calls to rein in hysteria which has verged on hystericism in Australia in the days since the scandal. "We are all so hurt and angry and maybe we weren't sure if our boys were ready for the challenge before. But the jump to hysteria is something that has elevated the offence beyond what they actually did. It may be a bit harsh, but I think the punishment just might not fit the crime." Former Australia coach Mickey Arthur

said he felt "desperately sorry" for Smith, whose career as the world's top batsman will now be put on hold. "I know he eats, sleeps and drinks cricket," said Arthur, who now coaches Pakistan. The Australian Cricketers' Association also voiced concern over the players' welfare, and argued that the sanctions were disproportionate compared to other sanctions for ball tampering. Cricket Australia also remains under pressure after sponsors have walked away over the damaging saga. Losses include an estimated Aus\$20 million (US\$15 million) partnership with naming rights sponsor Optus. Warner's contract for a year contract after barely seven months. Former Test opener Justin Langer is a strong favourite to become Lehmann's successor, although reports said Australia could name a separate coach for the ODI and Twenty20 teams.

England's Alex Hales to replace David Warner in Sunrisers Hyderabad

NEW DELHI, MAR 31 /-/- Dashing England batsman Alex Hales will replace banned Australian opener David Warner in the Sunrisers Hyderabad squad for the 11th edition of the Indian Premier League. Hales was bought for his base price of Rs one crore as a replacement for 31-year-old Warner, who was barred from

cricketing part in IPL-2018 by the BCCI after Cricket Australia (CA) handed him a one-year ban for his role in the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa. "The Sunrisers Hyderabad have picked Alex Hales as the replacement for David Warner," an IPL statement said. "The opening batsman was bought for his base price of INR 1 crore from the Rajasthan and available in the Player Pool (RAPP) list." Hales is the first and only England player till date to score a T20 century. He is also the top-ranked English player and the only one to feature in the top-10 list of the ICC T20I rankings. The 28-year-old from Middlesex plays, who was part of the Mumbai Indians team in 2015, has played in the Big Bash League (BBL), Pakistan Super League and Bangladesh Premier League. Hales will have big boots to fill as Warner was the Sunrisers' batsman-keeper Kane Williamson as their skipper for this season after the Australian stepped down from his position as the captain of the franchise. Warner has been banned by Cricket Australia from any leadership role for Australia due to his involvement in the ball tampering controversy that took place during the third Test between South Africa and Australia in Cape Town. (PTI)

Churchill Brothers eye victory against Mohun Bagan

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 31 /-/- Having defeated Delhi Dynamos in the qualifiers, Churchill Brothers will be eyeing a second victory when they lock horns with Kolkata giants Mohun Bagan in the pre-quarterfinals of Super Cup here tomorrow. "Yes, we got the sweeter result the other day but it's a new test tomorrow. We have played Mohun Bagan twice this season but couldn't garner a single point. We are aware of their football acumen and we respect them," coach Alfred Fernandes said. Newly-recruited striker Willis Plaza bombed a brace in the qualifiers to propel the Red Machines to the Round of 16 and he'll be the 'trump card' for the Goan outfit tomorrow as well. "Yes, you might term him as our trump card. We are in the hunt for the attacking spearhead and he fitted the bill perfectly. But, at the end of the day, it'll be a team effort and we need to get the job done collectively," Fernandes said. Meanwhile, skipper Monty Osagie said Churchill have special plans for their counterparts including Dipanda Dicka, who wrapped the season with maximum goals in two consecutive Hero I-League seasons. "Yes, I know him (Dicka) very well. We played them twice and we all know how dangerous he can be in the box. We are very keen to prove our diligence tomorrow. Dicka is a great player but there are other players too who can be equally dangerous. We have plans not only for him but everyone," Mohun Bagan's upsurge in the I-League started late which brought them very close to the title but didn't end with the laurel. Sankaraj Chakraborty and his team has now shifted its focus to the Super Cup and the coach is now ready for the fresh challenge. "It's a tough match tomorrow. The tournament is different from I-League. A silly mistake can dent your journey heavily and it might end your path in the tournament as well. Churchill had a terrific game against Delhi Dynamos in the qualifier, far superior to their performance in the I-League and we have to be very cautious tomorrow," Chakraborty said. Although his team boasts of two wins in the I-League against the Red Machines, the coach believes that they are a transformed side who might pose a stiff challenge tomorrow. "Whatever we did in the I-League, is past and we have already flipped the page. I-league is history and we have to focus on tomorrow's game now. Churchill played an excellent game against Delhi Dynamos in the qualifier and we have to respect that," he said. On being asked to single out a player who might give him a sleepless night, Chakraborty said: "They brought in Plaza and he might wreak havoc on a given day. Foreigners like Plaza, Cossay, Monday are well supported by the Indian players and it has been a dangerous team to play against." (PTI)

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Australia vow 'respect and sportsmanship' after cheating scandal

JOHANNESBURG, MAR 31 /-/- Embattled Australia vowed to spread a new era of 'respect and sportsmanship' after the ball-tampering scandal which sent shockwaves through the sport. After a week in which captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and young batsman Cameron Bancroft were banned and sent home in disgrace, Australia returned to action on Friday in the fourth and final Test against South Africa. In a gesture of reconciliation, the Australian and South African teams lined up before the start of play at the Wanderers and shook hands with each other in a gesture of sportsmanship. I spoke to our players about bringing it in. It's not something we'll do every Test match but I think it's not a bad way to start a Test series," explained Australian captain Tim Paine who suggested the pre-match handshake. "I think it's just a good show of sportsmanship and respect. There's been a lot of water under the bridge and a bit of tension between the two sides. We want to be super-competitive but we also want to respect the opposition and it was important to show that today." Warner damned as the ring-leader of the tampering plot, is due to open the batting in the Sydney Test on Saturday. Warner, having described the controversy as a 'stain' on the game, said he was "pleased to see the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday, having described the controversy as a 'stain' on the game. Both Smith and Bancroft made tearful apologies when they arrived home in Australia earlier in the week. Coach Darren Lehmann said he was "pleased" after the match despite being cleared of any involvement in the scandal, gathered his shell-shocked team in a huddle before action began on Friday, but admitted it was hard to concentrate. "We're not a hundred per-

centally right but we're representing our country and we've got to get the ball rolling by playing the best cricket we possibly can. Lehmann said. Despite the cordiality on the Wanderers pitch, some fans in a series-best crowd of 17,023 could not resist poking fun at the Australians' attempts to doctor the ball with sandpaper in the Sydney Test in a huddle before the weekend. One banner among a group of spectators wearing yellow read: "Sandpaper Special. Only R10 (10 Rand)."

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said he felt "desperately sorry" for Smith, whose career as the world's top batsman will now be put on hold. "I know he eats, sleeps and drinks cricket," said Arthur, who now coaches Pakistan. The Australian Cricketers' Association also voiced concern over the players' welfare, and argued that the sanctions were disproportionate compared to other sanctions for ball tampering. Cricket Australia also remains under pressure after sponsors have walked away over the damaging saga. Losses include an estimated Aus\$20 million (US\$15 million) partnership with naming rights sponsor Optus. Warner's contract for a year contract after barely seven months. Former Test opener Justin Langer is a strong favourite to become Lehmann's successor, although reports said Australia could name a separate coach for the ODI and Twenty20 teams.

Women T20I tri-series: Australia beat England to claim series after record total

MUMBAI, MAR 31 /-/- Skipper Meg Lanning's blazing knock helped Australia reach a record total before Megan Schutt led a brilliant bowling performance to beat arch-rivals England by 57 runs in the final of the women's T20 tri-series here on Saturday.

Australia rode on a stunning display by Lanning (88*) and Ellyse Villani (51 of 30 balls) as they amassed 209/4, the highest ever total in a women's T20 International, surpassing the previous best of 204/1 posted by South Africa against Netherlands in 2010.

The Southern Stars then performed with the ball by restricting England to 152/9, winning the game with ease. England had a bad start and were teetering at 14/2 with Breynay Smith and Tamsin Beaumont falling for ducks on a pitch track at the Brabourne Stadium. But opener Danielle Wyatt (34 off 17 balls) made her intentions clear by hitting three boundaries in the very first over. Wyatt was going well and was poised for a big score, but after two consecutive boundaries she failed to get the elevation and gave a sitter to Lanning at cover off Delissa Kinnamine, with England struggling at 47/3. Natalie Sciver (50 off 42 balls) waged a lone battle but that was not enough as the target was well out of their reach. Wickets kept tumbling at regular intervals as Australian bowlers did not allow the English batters to settle. Amy Jones

(30), Fran Wilson (14), Elsie Davidson Richards (1), Sophie Ecclestone (2) fell cheaply as England were never in the game.

For the Aussies Schutt (3/14) was the pick of bowlers, claiming two wickets in the 18th over. She was superbly aided by Ashleigh Gardner (2/20), Delissa Kinnamine (3/25) and Ellyse Perry (1/35). Earlier, asked to bat, Australia had a shaky start with opener Beth Mooney (0) falling early, but then Alyssa Healy (33 off 24 balls) and Gardner (33 off 20 balls) steered the team out of trouble in the 61-run second wicket stand. The Aussies raced to 62/1 in seven overs. Veteran Jenni Gunn bought England back into the game removing both Gardner and Healy in the eighth over but Australia suddenly in a spot of bother at 66/3. However, then began the carnage as Lanning and Villani stitched a 138-run stand for the fourth wicket in just 73 balls, putting the Aussies back on the track.

Initially, Lanning was the more aggressive batter as she hit four boundaries in the 12th over off Davidson Richards. And in the very next over, she continued the onslaught by hitting three boundaries off Natasha Farrant.

Brief Scores: Australia Women 209/4 in 20 overs (Meg Lanning 88 not out, Ellyse Villani 51, Jenny Gunn 2/38) won against England Women 152/9 in 20 overs (Natasha Sciver 50, Danielle Wyatt 34, Megan Schutt 3/14) by 57 runs

Bengaluru upbeat ahead of Gokulam Kerala clash

BHUBANESWAR, MAR 31 /-/- Indian Super League finalists Bengaluru FC will look to get back to winning ways when they take on Gokulam Kerala FC in their Super Cup campaign opener here tomorrow. Bengaluru's Spanish coach Abel Resa states Bengaluru are ready for the challenge and under no pressure. "There isn't much pressure, it's a challenge. We've put a lot of energy into the ISL and we had a good season. It was a shame not to win the title, but we are happy to be back in the Super Cup and consistent we can be," Roca said. He said after the ISL silverware ended them narrow, it's another chance to wrap up the season with a laurel and they're up for the challenge. "It's always difficult to get back from a final and renew your hopes to win a title, but this is a big opportunity to win silverware and we'll be doing our best out there," he said. Bengaluru had clinched the Federation Cup last season from Odisha and the coach said they would like to repeat the feat once again. "We won the Federation Cup last time, so it's on our mind to win this title again," Roca said. Nishu Kumar, Bengaluru's young goalkeeper said, "As a player, you go into any tournament wanting to win. Every time we go out to the pitch, we want to make sure we do our best, and that's the most important part." Roca expressed his concerns over the fitness of a few players but said it won't be an excuse when his boys hit the pitch tomorrow. "The only way to succeed is to work hard and that's what we'll do. We had a lot of players who weren't in their best shape after the final stages of the ISL, but we've recovered and we won't be looking for excuses," Gokulam Kerala FC coach Bino George, on the other hand, said their target was to qualify for the Super Cup final rounds and they've already achieved that. "Our primary target was to qualify for the final rounds and we did that. Now we are up against Bengaluru FC. We are aware of their credibility, but we are not getting into the shell before the final whistle blows," George said. (PTI)

BCCI to monitor workload of top 50 Indian players during IPL

NEW DELHI, MAR 31 /-/- The BCCI is all set to monitor the workload of top 50 Indian cricketers starting with the seven-week IPL, and will create a database for their workload over the course of the tournament to keep them fresh for big international assignments. It has been learnt that the Indian team management is keen that a big pool of players including the top internationals, fringe players and domestic performers are brought under a robust performance and fitness monitoring system in the coming years. "Yes, the plan is there on the anvil. We want to create a database of 50 players. In those 50 players, 27 are our centrally contracted players (with Mohammed Shami re-induced) and there will be another 23 players, who will be added to the list. These 23 players will be short-listed during the Indian Premier League," a senior BCCI officer-bettered PTI on the condition of anonymity. "Starting from India's tour of UK (which includes a short tour of Ireland), the national team is going to have enormous amount of workload of 2019 World Cup in England. Those who are performing, will have their workload monitored as well as the various parameters of their fitness levels checked. If they don't attain required levels, they are not likely to be considered for India or India A teams. Physio Patrick Farhart will monitor them at the National Cricket Academy (NCA)," the official added.

Kerala, Bengal set up thrilling Santosh Trophy final

KOLKATA, MAR 31 /-/- Reigning champions Bengal will have to contend with five-time winners Kerala in their quest for yet another national football title as the two heavyweights clash in the final of the Santosh Trophy at the Salt Lake Stadium, here tomorrow. The 32-time champions Bengal, who ousted Karnataka in a nervy semifinal, will also look to avenge their group stage defeat against Kerala. Bengal veteran duo of Jiten Murmu and Tirthankar Sarkar scored against Karnataka to set up a meeting with Kerala who pipped Mizoram 1-0 in the other semifinal. Kerala have emerged the overwhelming favourites at the tournament but their biggest test against a

Bengal team which knows all about them, having faced the Southern outfit earlier in a redundant Group A game. Kerala managed a 4-0 win in the meeting at Mohun Bagan Ground but Bengal Head Coach Ranjan Choudhury feels the final clash is a different game altogether. Bengal, who will carry the advantage of playing at home, have built their success around a solid defence that has only conceded two goals so far in the tournament, while they relied heavily on quality of Jiten Murmu at the other end. There is absolutely no pressure on the team. The team has confidence in its ability to win the final against Kerala. Choudhury said. Speaking about the opponents he said, "Kerala is a very strong and organised team.

They are very strong defensively and got many talented players. Whoever wins tomorrow needs to earn the trophy by playing well." Nearly half of the Bengal squad members are playing their first Santosh Trophy, with many of them in their early 20s and there are only four survivors from the team that won the title under Mirulid Banerjee last year. Ankit Mukherjee, Ranajit Majumder, Sourav Das, Gupta and Manoj Chakladar. Kerala have not won the trophy since 2005 and lost on penalties in the final in the five years ago at home in Kochi. The Southern outfit are quick off the blocks in both flanks with a solid midfield marshalled by Seesan S and Jithin Gopalan. The strike pair of Arditik and Anurag PC can tear apart any

defense on their day. "I am very happy with the progress of my team, which has shown great improvement match after match. We have a great deal of respect for Bengal but I know my players are capable of winning the title," coach Satheevan Balan said. For many a fan, Kerala is the favourite to win the ultimate at the ten-team tournament, but Satheevan Balan insisted Bengal have an equal chance of being crowned champions. Wear favourites. Since we are here, we take every game as a final and against Bengal will be same. We will put in our best to make sure we win. We have an idea of the Bengal team having played them earlier in the tournament but we are talking of the final and surely it will be different," he said.