

B.N. WALSH, COURTNEY

Walsh ignores the pain to get match-winning haul

By Tony Cozier
Special Correspondent

PERTH - Courtney Walsh, the indestructible lionheart of West Indies cricket, bade his final farewell to Australia with a performance of skill and courage that not only earned his team the satisfaction of a sweeping victory in the final Test. It will also serve as an inspiration to those who will soon have to take on his mantle.

For the better part of two days, long-time team physiotherapist Dennis Waight had tended to the damaged right hamstring muscle of his 34-year-old captain, strained in his ninth over of Australia's first innings on Saturday. The prognosis was not encouraging when the third day started with the West Indies, 110 ahead with three first innings wickets standing, were strongly placed.

It did not seem that Walsh's absence would be a relevant factor in the outcome - to everyone but Walsh himself. In more than a dozen years of Test cricket, he had never missed one of his 85 matches because of injury and he was determined that he would see this significant one through.

The upshot was that Walsh, on the ground where he played his first Test just over 12-years-ago as a shy 22-year-old, batted with vice-captain Brian Lara as his runner at the end of the West Indies first innings, convinced himself he was up to bowling with a few speculative deliveries on the outfield between innings and proceeded to deliver 20 consecutive overs, broken only by the intervals, off which he dismissed five Australian batsmen for 75 on an unsatisfactory rock-hard pitch streaked with long, gaping cracks.

"I was keen to get out there and get started but I didn't know what was going to happen when I started to bowl. So I tried to carry it to as close to lunch as

possible just to see how it would react," Walsh explained afterwards.

Four of Walsh's five victims were the Waugh twins, Australia's finest and most experienced batsmen, Michael Bevan, the left-handed topscorer of the first innings, and wicket-keeper Ian Healy, century-maker in Brisbane and an always dangerous opponent. Only Paul Reiffel of the five could be classified a tailender.

Back in the team room Ambrose had looked up from the

physic's table, seen Walsh plugging away and announced to Waight: "I've got to get back out there." He returned in the middle of the afternoon, just when Walsh was considering having a rest.

"I was leaving the field just before tea but the guys - Jimmy (Adams), Carl (Hooper), Brian (Lara), Simmo (Phil Simmons) - said you've got to stick it out now you've come this far, try and hang in there," Walsh said. In fact, it took a bizarre hour and a quarter for the innings to be

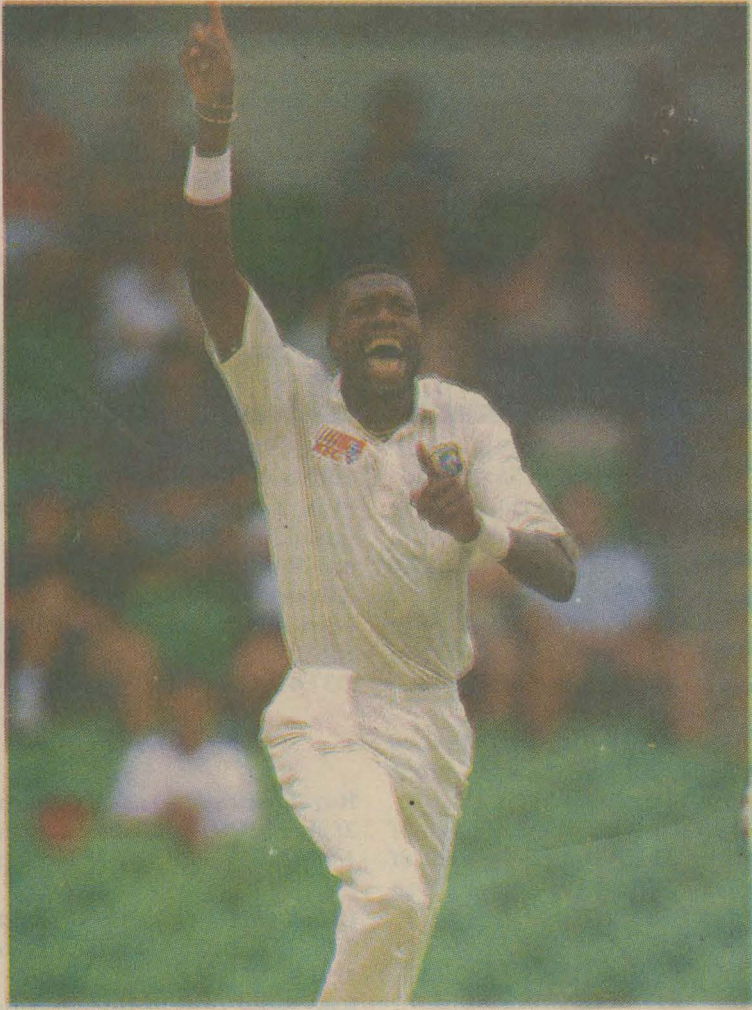
wrapped up as Ambrose found it almost impossible to land his feet within the limits of either batting or popping crease. He sent down one over with six no-balls and another that included nine, all from round the wickets. The tall Antiguan saw the funny side of it, bowling to the crowd of 6,000 as it cheered at the over's eventual end. He could afford to smile. His two wickets brought his match haul to seven and gained him the Man of the Match award on the ground where he has taken 24 wickets in three Tests.

Finally, Ian Bishop, below his best throughout the match, accounted for Andy Bichel and Shane Warne to catches at long-leg and third man from top-edged hooks and cuts respectively and the West Indies were left with a token 54 to win.

As they led the team off the ground, Walsh and Ambrose waved their goodbyes to the appreciative spectators. At the presentation ceremony afterwards, they both confirmed they had played their last match in Australia.

Sherwin Campbell and Robert Samuels completed the victory with a volley of boundaries - four to Campbell, eight to Samuels. It was the second for the West Indies within three days but the disappointing reality quickly followed as Taylor, for the second time in successive series, was presented with the Frank Worrel Trophy.

To have won as convincingly and with such a flawless all-round performance as this was a gratifying finale. But it was no consolation for the failure of the real mission - to reclaim the Trophy. Another chance won't come for another two years in the Caribbean.



- Reuters

West Indies fast bowler Curtley Ambrose celebrate after claiming the wicket of Australian captain Mark Taylor. ■

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF JAMAICA