

Should **WAGS** tail the team?

There'll be no Indian WAGs on the World Cup tour. Good thing or bad?

THEY may cheer from the stands, rustle up home food and offer warmth and comfort when needed, but will they prove to be a distraction? That's the eternal debate when wives and girlfriends accompany the cricket team on a tour. This year, the Indian cricket authorities have decided not to allow wives to accompany players to the World Cup 2007 group stages. Sourav Ganguly has backed the decision and said, "It will give players more opportunity to spend time together." But others have mixed opinions on the decision.

Says Jayanthi Prasad, wife of cricketer Venkatesh Prasad, "When I went for the World Cup in the past with my husband, I was in charge of all the back stage work. My husband's a vegetarian and it's not possible to live on salads and pizza. I used to co-ordinate with the Indian restaurants and ensure he got good food at the end of the day. When you go along with your husband you are like a glorified maid. I don't think it makes a lot of difference if the wife is

there; but there's no real value add-on for the players. Your husband knows what to do on the field



NOT ALLOWED: Anjali and Sachin Tendulkar

and when he is playing at the highest level, he needs to concentrate on the game. When he comes back after a bad day on the field, any amount

of cuddles cannot make much of a difference. If they are alone, they can focus much more."

Says cricket commentator Charu Sharma, "Having your family along on a trip is a de-stressor. You get to forget about the game for a while and since wives have different interests, there would be other things to do. But the World Cup is a different animal. With all the pressure there is, it might be best that wives don't go along because the pressure tends to geometrically rise. Without their families, there could be additional team focus and the intensity that's required all the way."

Says Meera Ravi, family counsellor and psychologist, "It's a good emotional support to have your spouse with you. There's someone there for you whether you win or lose. There could be a lot of loneliness when a person is away from home and it has been noticed that when emotional needs are fulfilled, performance is enhanced. I don't see how spouses can be

a distraction because these are mature men, not adolescents. They know how to balance their personal lives and careers."

Adds psychiatrist Dr Vikram Prabhu, "There are two schools of thought when it comes to this issue. The orthodox view is that if wives go with their husbands, they often end up going out, eating out and sightseeing, all of which may impair their performance the following day. The liberal view is that spouses should not be separated for long periods of time as the wife has a positive psychological effect on the husband. I go by the liberal view. As long as a cricketer can impose a standard of discipline on himself, it doesn't matter if the wife is with him. In fact, wives can check if their husbands are eating the right foods, not drinking too much and getting up on time. And just as there are cheerleaders for other games, the wives can be their personal cheerleaders, supporting them from the stands."

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