

# Warne stumbles in smoking test

## CRICKET

GEOFF McCLURE

Australian Test vice-captain Shane Warne, who was paid a reputed \$200,000 to give up cigarettes, admitted last night that he had smoked during the West Indies tour.

That cigarette was smoked five days before the end of Warne's four-month sponsorship with a nicotine-substitute manufacturer.

His admission came a few hours after he learned a London newspaper was publishing a photograph of him smoking in a Barbados bar on the last day of the tour.

Warne said, however, this was the only cigarette he smoked since he gave up the habit on New Year's Day, and that he remained determined to kick the habit, although the exercise was proving "a bloody lot harder than I thought".

A spokesman for Pharmacia and Upjohn, the company that manufactures the nicotine sub-

stitute Nicorette, said it had paid all monies due to Warne and congratulated him on his "continuing commitment to give up smoking".

There was no suggestion from Warne or the company that any of the money would be returned.

Warne's admission in England, where he is preparing for the World Cup, came at the end of a day during which Pharmacia and Upjohn fielded allegations that Warne was seen smoking during the tour.

One cricket fan, 23-year-old Claire McKee of Canberra, said last night that she saw Warne smoke at least two cigarettes at the Boat Yard Nightclub after the third Test in Bridgetown, Barbados, on March 30. She said Warne "didn't seem to be trying to hide" his smoking.

Warne said from England that he had been at the nightclub "once or twice" during the tour but the only time he smoked was on the last night in Barbados.

"I had one cigarette in the

West Indies and the Nicorette people know about that," Warne said.

"It was the last night. Unfortunately I gave in to the temptation. It was after the disappointing way that the tour finished. It was late at night when I had had a night out with the lads.

"I was very disappointed at having it and hopefully I can still try to kick the habit. It's been a bloody lot harder than I thought.

"I'm going to still keep trying with my Nicorette four-milligram gum. And if I didn't have that, I would be [in] real trouble because that definitely has helped and I'm going to keep trying and do my best."

Michael Oredsson, a Pharmacia and Upjohn director, said Warne was paid his money in two instalments, the second on March 5, although he refused to say how much money was involved.

Later, in a statement, the company said Warne's cigarette

had been an isolated incident and he had "shown considerable willpower in reducing his 40-a-day habit for the last four-month period using Nicorette Gum".

The statement said: "It is possible that ex-smokers relapse, particularly in stressful situations. This is clearly what happened to Shane."

Warne's manager, Austin Robertson, said last night he had discussed Warne's one cigarette with the leg-spinner and that it was "a mere blip in his efforts to give up the smoking habit".

"Shane continues to be committed to staying smoke-free," Robertson said. "As far as I am concerned, this incident is equivalent to anyone on a diet having a plate of ice-cream. Just because you've gone off the rails once, it doesn't mean you've failed."

Robertson said Warne's efforts in reducing his 40-a-day habit to zero in four months was a "sensational success story".

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