

The ultimate cricket war

MANCHESTER, June 6: Pakistan and India square up for the most highly-charged clash of the World Cup on Tuesday as Old Trafford braces itself for a match which will reverberate far beyond the boundary fence, reports Reuters.

An upsurge of fighting between the two countries in their disputed region of Kashmir has added a whole new dimension to a contest which would be rich in cricketing possibilities alone.

Indian will be desperate for a win after their 77-run defeat by Australia on Friday left them only a faint hope of making the semifinals.

And Pakistan's pulsating defeat by South Africa yesterday has raised the stakes still further, making victory paramount for them to get their World Cup campaign back on track.

Even in peacetime the two sides' fervent fans serve up one of sport's fiercest rivalries and police are planning extra-tight security to try and keep all the fireworks on the field of play.

There the crowds can expect a riveting tussle between Pakistan's potent pace attack and an Indian batting line up that has set the tournament alight. India's Rahul Dravid, Saurav Ganguly, Ajay Jadeja and the peerless Sachin Tendulkar have between them scored all five of the tournament's centuries so far.

But they have lost matches that matter. Swept aside by Australia's Glenn McGrath in their first Super Six game and saddled with defeats by fellow qualifiers Zimbabwe and South Africa from the group stage, India now rest at the foot of the second round standings without a point to their name.

They now face daunting opponents who not only thrashed India in April's Sharjah Cup final, but also steamrollered through their World Cup group before a shock late loss to Bangladesh.

Led by one of the world's finest one-day performers in Wasim Akram, Pakistan also have the tournament's fastest bowler in Shoaib Akhtar and the top off-spinner in Saqlain Mushtaq.

Inzamam-ul-Haq has provided the kind of middle order batting power that could exploit India's lack of bowling depth to bring even the toughest total within reach while wicket-keeper Moin Khan showed with his explosive 63 from 56 balls against South Africa that he can turn a match.

The South Africa and Bangladesh defeats have underlined this Pakistan's side's ability to self-destruct, but they will still need to falter badly to miss out on a semifinal spot. India should be prepared for a back-lash in a duel that organisers hope will be memorable for events on the pitch, not off it.

Cronje not contented

NOTTINGHAM, England, June 6 (Reuters/Internet): South Africa's captain Hansie Cronje is not satisfied with the way his side are winning matches in the World Cup.

All-rounder Lance Klusener was again the South African batting hero in the Super Sixes match against Pakistan at Trent Bridge on Saturday, lashing an unbeaten 46 off 41 balls in a fightback that took his side from 135 for six to their victory target of 221 with six balls to spare.

They won by three wickets. Klusener has now scored 210 runs in five innings in the tournament without being dismissed but while acknowledging his vital contribution Cronje is aware it is covering cracks in the front line batting.

"The guys are playing some good cricket under pressure but I'm still not satisfied with the way in which we're winning," Cronje said. "I'm happy with the fact we are winning but we are not doing so in the way that I want us to."

"I'm obviously concerned at the way we are batting. It's not so much a case of technically (wrong) but we think it's more a case of letting ourselves down in the mental part."

"We are not backing our-

selves enough. We must go out there and be bold."

"Fortunately, the middle and late order has played well so far and I'm hoping that when all things click we come out firing."

Klusener hits the ball immensely hard, plays effectively in a tight situation and his capacity to score at more than a run a ball swiftly changes the whole shape of a match.

Pakistan manager Dr Zafar Alfaz said they had discussed Klusener at team talks but found it difficult to decide on a strategy.

In an attempt to stiffen their early batting, Cronje promoted himself from the middle order to number three against Pakistan but the move did not work as he was out for four.

Cronje said: "We felt we needed some experience there (at three). Seeing that I haven't contributed in the middle I felt that it was a good chance for me to go in early and get stuck in because I've been feeling reasonably good in the nets and working very hard."

South Africa's skipper was one of two victims for Shoaib Akhtar whose presence on the opposite side to fellow fast bowler Allan Donald offered a fascinating contest within the

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The 'Black Caps' celebrate the dismissal of Zimbabwe's star batsman Andy Flower at Headingley yesterday. — Internet photo

Saber backs BCB decision

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Saber Hossain Chowdhury said that the board did not sack its West Indian coach Gordon Greenidge, but only removed him from the team management in order to restore discipline.

"There has been a misunderstanding. We have only discharged him (Gordon) from his additional job as coach. But he is still the director of coaching," said Saber while talking to a host of reporters in a press conference at his office at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

"We sincerely did not want to go through an experience like the one that had happened with Mahinder Amarnath. We have tried our utmost to bring him (Gordon) back to Bangladesh with the team. But he was not available," said Saber.

"It's a big disappointment that he is not here with us today," said Saber. But the BCB supremo claimed that the Board quite rightly issued the letter to Gordon before Bangladesh's match against Pakistan.

"It was one of the most difficult decisions to make. It was a bit harsh and I think by taking such decisions you can't satisfy everyone. But before taking the decision we have talked to the captain, vice-captain and the manager. They all agreed to discharge Gordon from his additional job."

"We had a mission in the World Cup, and Gordon had a job to do. But at times he disregarded his professional commitments and crossed his line. So, to restore discipline in the team, to get the best out of the players and to uphold spirit and the image of the country we took the decision," said Saber.

When asked was it so necessary to remove him before the end of the World Cup, Saber replied in the affirmative.

"I don't want to go into de-

tails in absence of him. Let me tell you one thing that as coach he was a member of the team management whose responsibility was to motivate the players on and off the field apart from the captain and his deputy. He was also liable to attend all the team meetings. But after the New Zealand and West Indies matches he remained away from the team and the meetings."

"We called him several times but he said he was unwell. Fine... he was a great batsman and we have offered him with honorary citizenship. But that doesn't mean that somebody has the license to anything he wants. There has to be some element of accountability, some

four years to get a schedule to play a Test Match.

"I think in next four years we will be ready enough to play Test matches," he said.

Manager Tanveer Muzhar Islam, skipper Aminul Islam and his deputy Khaled Mahmud and coordinator Dewan, Shafiqul Arefin were present at the press briefing.

A CRICKET STADIUM BEFORE THIS SEASON?

About a permanent venue for cricket, Saber said, the Prime Minister has assured him of the allotment of a permanent ground before the beginning of the next season.

"I'm very confident that a



element of responsibility," Saber said.

"Still, after all these, we wanted to have him back with us and join the reception as he is still our director of coaching. We tried to communicate with him."

"I'm going to England to attend the ICC meeting. The Prime Minister announced a cash award for him and when I go back to London I will personally hand over the award to him," Saber said.

Answering to another query, Saber said that getting a Test status does not mean that Bangladesh will start playing Test matches now. He said that if Bangladesh get Test status this year it would take another

stadium will be given to us. Well, if you push me I will say that as we have already established Dhaka as an international venue and Bangabandhu National Stadium will be our prime choice because it is tailor-made for cricket. The floodlights we have installed here is the world's best. Besides, some other renovations have also been made. So it's the perfect choice."

"The Prime Minister has not only talked of Dhaka but also of building cricket venues in other divisions. I'm very pleased with that," Saber said.

About the future Bangladesh coach, Saber said that nothing has been finalised yet.

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NOTTINGHAM, June 6 (AP): Pakistani patience is running out with Inzamamul Haq's running.

The burly slugger ran up another run out Saturday as Pakistan lost to South Africa by three wickets in the cricket World Cup Super Sixes.

Inzamam's dismissal continued his team's dismal performance between the wickets at the World Cup. It also marked the 31st time Inzamam had been caught short going for a run in his one-day career.

Pakistan team manager Zafar Alfaz said his players had practised running between the wickets last week, but admitted it had not helped.

"It is instant reaction on the pitch, while in practice sessions you have a more conscious decision," Alfaz said. "I suppose at that moment they missed out on a few things they had learned."

Lumbering for a single to the striker's end, Inzamam made the schoolboy error of not grounding his bat as he passed the popping crease and was sent packing by a direct hit from Jonty Rhodes.

As well as running himself out twice in this tournament, Inzamam also was involved in the run outs of two fellow Pakistanis in his team's defeat of Australia.

He has now been involved in the run outs of four teammates in the World Cup alone. In six matches, Pakistan have lost 12 wickets to run outs.

The Australia match earned Inzamam a verbal assault from former Pakistani captain Imran Khan.

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I won't quit: Azharuddin

LONDON, June 6: Under-fire Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin insisted today that he will not step down despite his team being on the verge of being knocked out of the World Cup, reports AFP.

The 77-run defeat by Australia at the Oval on Friday has left India needing a highly improbable set of results in the Super Six to squeeze through to the semifinals.

But Azharuddin said, "I am still the World Cup captain and the immediate aim is to see that we beat both Pakistan and New Zealand in our remaining matches."

"After that, it is up to the selectors. They made me captain, only they can remove me from it."

"I still have some years of cricket left in me. If they want me out, so be it. I will not go on my own," added the 36-year-old.

Cries for Azharuddin's removal have gone on for so long that he has become a perennial scapegoat for India's cricketing ills.

The nightmare of the 1996 World Cup has returned to haunt India's most successful Test and one-day captain.

Then, he was slammed for putting Sri Lanka in on a deteriorating Eden Gardens wicket in Calcutta before India collapsed batting second to lose the semi-final.

This time, Azharuddin again came under fire for inviting

Australia to bat on a good wicket, even though India don't have a reputation for chasing one-day targets.

Azharuddin's own poor form has not helped India's cause. He has played more one-dayers (321) and scored more runs (9,019) than any one else in the



world, but he has failed to produce a big score at the World Cup.

His growing band of critics did not fail to notice that he held himself back in the batting order against Australia and sent vice-captain Ajay Jadeja instead.

Jadeja, tipped as his likely

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Die hard Lance

TRENT BRIDGE, England, June 6 (AFP): On the cricket pitch, Lance Klusener is a mix of in-your-face aggression and brutal power. Off it, he wouldn't say boo to a goose.

He probably wouldn't even look a goose in the eye.

On Saturday, after scoring an unbeaten 46 off 41 balls to set up South Africa's back-to-the-wall win, the Natal all-rounder was asked whether he realised he had just broken a world record.

When he last dismissed in a one-day international, someone asked.

Klusener blushed beetroot.

"I haven't a clue when I was last out," he said. "World record, no, I didn't know. What world record?"

Klusener was informed his latest innings meant he had scored 396 one-day runs with out being dismissed, overtaking Javed Miandad's 395. His last dismissal dates back to February, nine matches ago.

"Cheers, thanks man," stammered the red-faced South African, looking as happy as a man having teeth extracted without anaesthetic. "Thanks, yea."

Someone should tell Klusener: if he does not like the spotlight off the pitch, he should change his behaviour on it. And radically.

Before Saturday, he had hit World Cup scores of 12 not out against India, 52 not out off 43 balls against Sri Lanka, 48 not out against England and 52 not out against Zimbabwe.

He has also chipped in with 14 wickets, including three against Sri Lanka and five against Kenya.

His six performances so far in the tournament have won him four man-of-the-match awards.

Against Pakistan, however, it seemed his team was asking too much.

He came in with the score on 176 for seven, chasing 221 to win. Soon, 44 were needed off five overs.

Klusener, who wields a three pound, two ounce bat, the heaviest in the tournament, and his partner Mark Boucher, did it in four. Pakistan's hostile pacer Shoaib Akhtar, bowling at over 90 miles per hour, was the biggest sufferer as he was hit for 17 off an over.

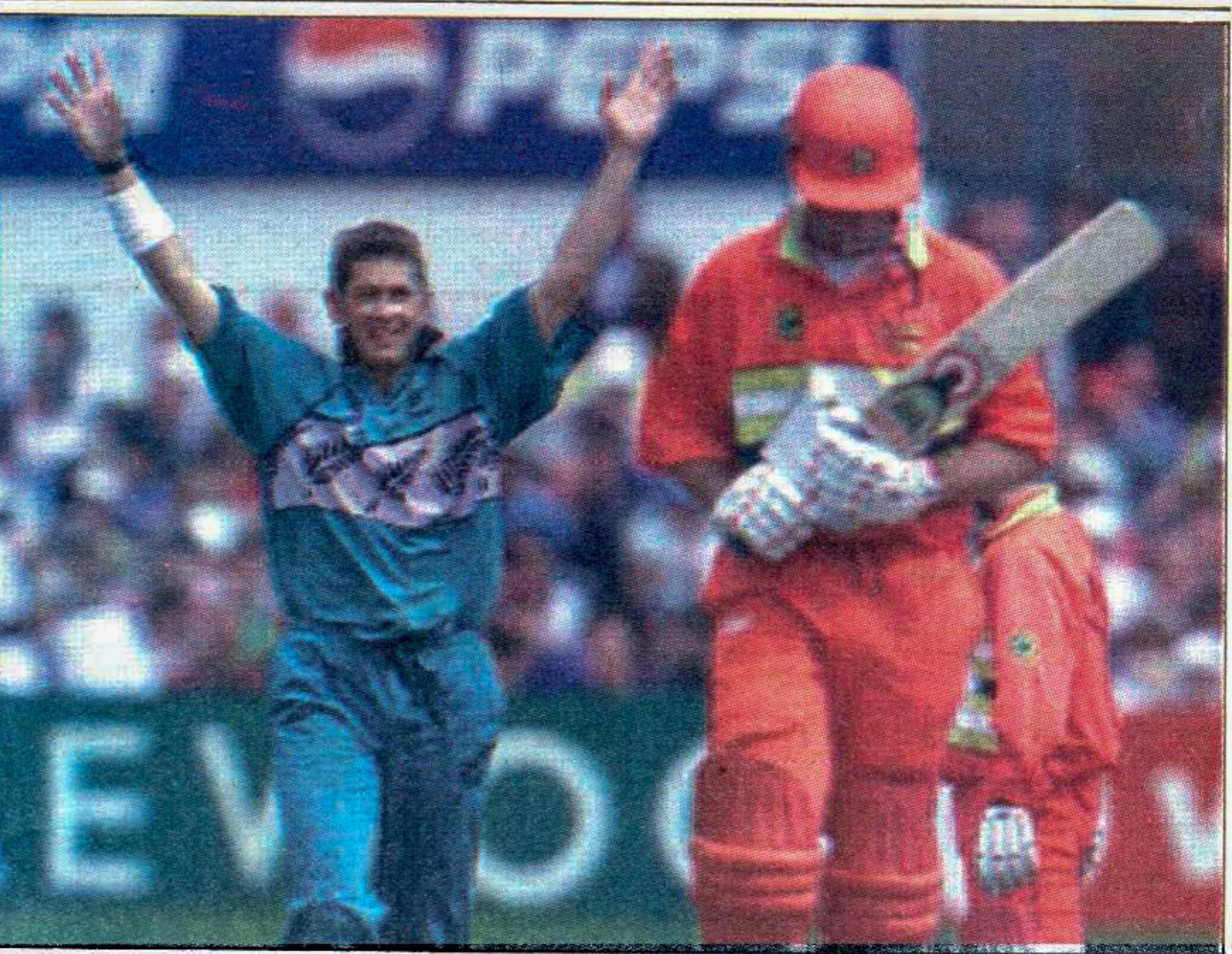
South African skipper Hansie Cronje admitted victory had been "a tough ask" until "Zulu", as he is nicknamed, began wading in.

Cronje added with a smile: "We're making it harder and harder to see how far we can push him." "The more trouble we get ourselves in the more Lance seems to pull us out."

"He is so difficult to bowl at and we always had a chance as long as he was at the crease."

Klusener added: "I just tried to deal with the situation the best way I could."

"It was a run a ball from a long way out, but I knew if we got close we could make six off the last over."



New Zealand's premier paceman Geoff Allott is euphoric after dismissing Zimbabwe's Neil Johnson yesterday. — Internet photo

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ZIMBABWE-NEW ZEALAND SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Zimbabwe innings in the Super Six match against New Zealand at Headingley yesterday:

	R	B	4	6
ZIMBABWE				
N Johnson b Allott	25	32	5	0
G Flower run out (Horne)	1	9	0	0
M Goodwin not out	56	88	6	0
A Flower c McMillan b Allott	0	2	0	0
A Campbell not out	33	87	2	0
Extras: (b-4, lb-11, w-2, nb-2)	19			
Total: (For 3 wickets in 36 overs)	134			
To bat: G Whittall, S Carlisle, H Streak, A Whittall, H Olonga, A Huckle				
Fall of wkts: 1-10 (G W Flower, 2.5 ov); 2-35 (Johnson, 8.5 ov); 3-45 (A Flower, 10.1 ov)				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Allott	6	1	10	2
Nash	10	2	48	0 (1 nb)
Larsen	7	0	21	0
Cairns	5	2	18	0 (1 nb, 2w)
Harris	2	0	6	0
Astle	6	0	16	0

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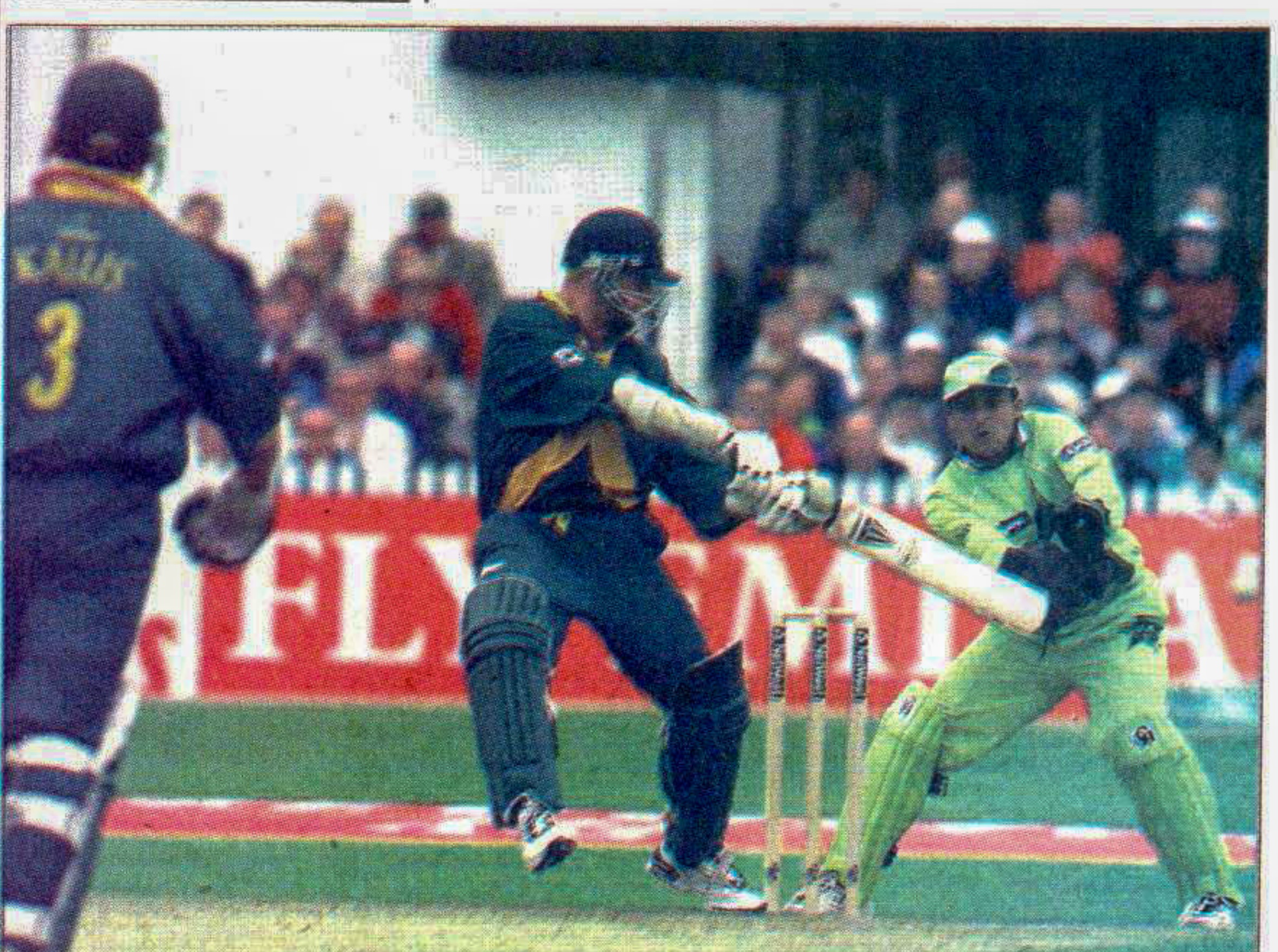
Toss: Zimbabwe.

Umpires: D L Orchard (SA) and S Venkataraman (Ind).

TV Umpire: R E Koertzen (SA).

Match Referee: P J P Burge (Aus).

NEW ZEALAND: M Horne, N Astle, C McMillan, S Fleming, R Twose, C Cairns, A Parore, C Harris, G Larsen, D Nash, G Allott.



UNCONQUERABLE: The fantastic Lance Klusener square cuts against Pakistan on June 5. — AFP photo