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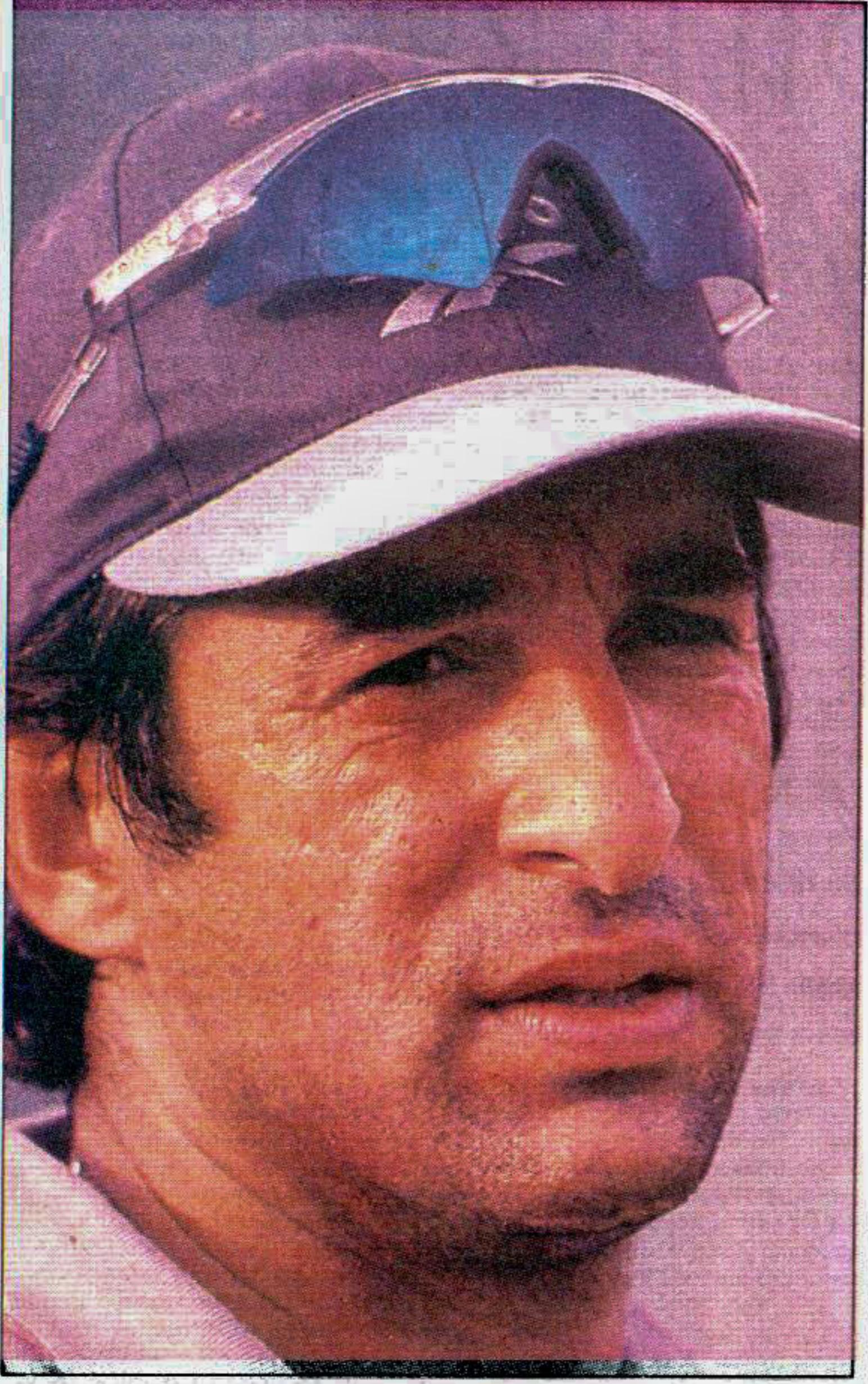


## Final wake up call for Pakistan.

Breaking Boundaries.



MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT POSSIBLE



WASIM AKRAM ...will it be his day or not? —Star file photo

## Skipper under strain

LONDON, June 10 (Reuters): Pakistan look to Wasim Akram's inspirational captaincy to repair their shattered confidence as they face the World Cup Super Six match against Zimbabwe at The Oval on Friday needing victory to secure a semifinal place.

Wasim's influential role for Pakistan since he started his fourth spell as captain earlier this year is reflected in an impressive sequence of results.

He led the side to victory in the inaugural Asian test championship against India and Sri Lanka, then won a limited overs series against the same opponents as well as a one-day tournament in Sharjah involving England and India.

His ability to produce a winning combination out of a gifted but sometimes volatile set of individuals mirrors a quality which made his mentor Imran Khan such a successful captain in a reign that culminated in Pakistan's 1992 World Cup tri-

umph.

After winning their first four games of the current tournament, Wasim's side have subsequently fallen away through a shortage of runs from the specialist batsmen and loose out-cricket.

That was particularly apparent during their 47-run defeat by India at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

The fact that Wasim, a diabetic, has been unwell during the past week has not helped their cause either.

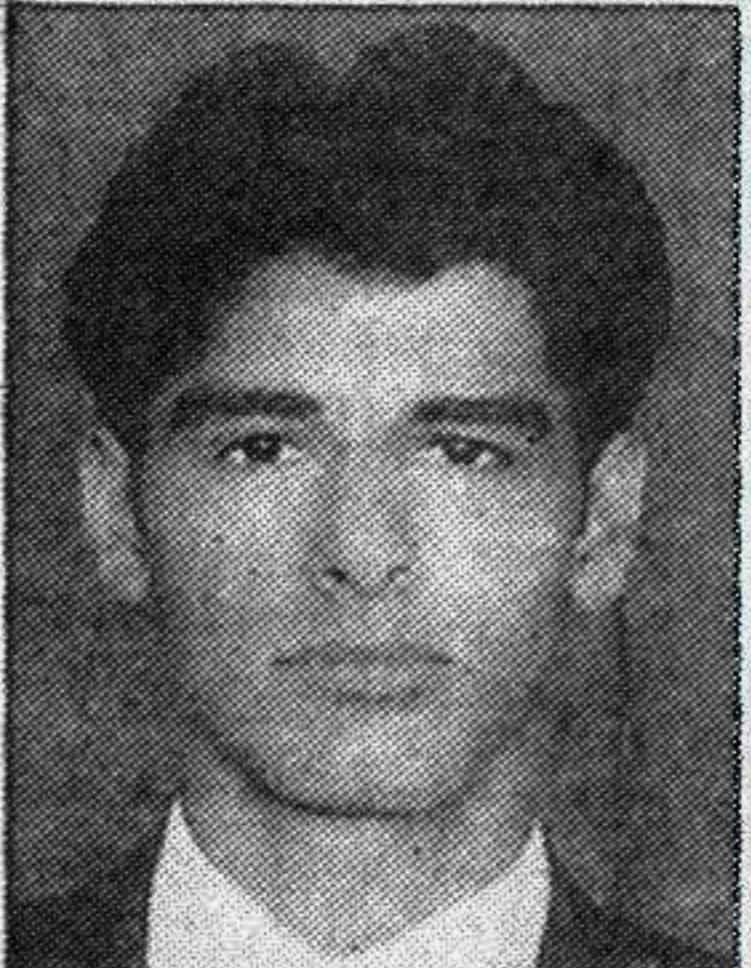
Wasim realizes the scenario has changed drastically but asserts that his men have the uncanny ability of bouncing back.

"It's the crunch situations which test your resolve," Wasim said. "We always comeback from a tight spot."

"We are going through a bad patch. It happens to the best of teams. We've had a bad week after six (good) months. But we just pull ourselves together."

## In need of alternatives

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LONDON, June 10: Pakistan were on Thursday considering asking for a replacement batsman following a string of injuries to their World Cup squad, reports Reuters.

Three top batsman, Younus Youhanna, Ijaz Ahmed and Inzamam ul Haq, were nursing injuries ahead of Friday's second-round tie against Zimbabwe at The Oval, a game Pakistan must win to make sure of reaching the semi-finals.

Team manager Zafar Altaf said Ijaz and Inzamam, who have finger injuries, were expected to play but Youhanna's

hamstring was more serious. "We have a lot of problems," Altaf said. "I think we may need a replacement if we make it." —See page 14

## Willow makes its mark

LONDON, June 10 (AFP): The balance of power at the 1999 cricket World Cup has shifted dramatically in the last few days from bowlers to batsmen.

The switch, brought on by better pitches and drier weather, was confirmed at Lord's on Wednesday when Mark Waugh and Neil Johnson both hit centuries.

Australian skipper Steve Waugh said after his side's Lord's victory: "The batters are coming into their own."

For most of the tournament, opening batsmen have had to fight for survival in moist, seamer-friendly morning conditions.

The white ball being used for the event also amplified the swing available, making top-order collapses almost routine and putting the onus on all-

rounders like Lance Klusener — 210 not out in the World Cup so far — to salvage their teams as conditions eased up later.

34 games before Australia's 44-run win over Zimbabwe, only four batsmen had made it to three figures.

Steve Waugh said the quality of the pitches was also having an effect.

First-round matches were staged right across the country but, he pointed out, from the Super Six second-phase onwards games are being played solely at Test venues.

"The Lord's wicket is the best in the world," he added.

Sri Lankan captain Arjuna Ranatunga must be cursing that the change did not come earlier.

His defending champions were eliminated after the first

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New Zealand paceman Geoff Allott (L) makes a desperate sliding attempt to run out South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs (R) who also makes his own abortive effort to survive.

— AFP photo

## Puzzled Pakistan v jiving Zimbabwe

LONDON, June 10 (AFP/Reuters): Suicidal Pakistan, dogged by ball tampering charges, find themselves under self-inflicted pressure as they prepare to face Zimbabwe in a crucial World Cup match here on Friday, reports AFP.

Wasim Akram's men, coasting merrily towards the semi-finals after four wins in the first round, are saddled with a must-win situation in the second-round game at the Oval because of three consecutive defeats.

Zimbabwe on the otherhand will be buoyed by their spirited attempt to beat Australia at Lord's on Wednesday, losing by 44 runs after making 259 for six in pursuit of their opponents' 303 for four.

Yet Zimbabwe captain Alastair Campbell is realistic about his team's task against Pakistan. "They're a tough side and we're going to have to be on the top of our game if we're going to compete," he said.

As if the on-field problems were not enough, the Pakistanis have been upset by renewed

charges of ball tampering hurled against them.

Manager Zafar Altaf defended his team, saying: "What's sad is that we are singled out every time. It's made to sound as if we are cheats, which we definitely are not."

Even if the charges are not proved, Pakistan, the pre-tournament favourites with South Africa, will find it hard to explain the sudden slump in their

form.

Pakistan began the World Cup in awesome touch, then caved in inexplicably against minnows Bangladesh in the biggest upset of the tournament.

The narrow second round defeat against South Africa last Saturday was followed by a humiliating 47-run defeat by

India on Tuesday, despite restricting their bitter rivals to 222 for six.

Pakistan fans were, naturally, dumbfounded — describing the loss to India as "shameful" and "unbelievable."

One supporter Ahsan Chaudhary said: "They are making fools out of us, there has to be a probe for their defeat," referring to the slow batting against India.

Even if the charges are not proved, Pakistan will be the first bowler on who will be the first bowler to dismiss South African all-rounder Lance Klusener, who is 210 not out at this World Cup competition having batted five times without getting out, reports AP.

Corals have odds of only 9-2 that he will remain unbeaten in the championship.

Klusener's amazing run is helped by the fact that he bats low down in the order, around seven or eight, and that gives him more of a chance of still being around when the South African innings ends.

But he is hampered by the fact that, going in late, he gets less time to score his runs and has made up for that by being big and fast hitting.

The talented left-hander has

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## BITS & PIECES

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## Bewitched spin doctor

LONDON, June 10 (Reuters): One vital piece is missing from the jigsaw as Australia prepare for the final stages of their World Cup campaign.

Steve Waugh's side are three games away from reclaiming the Cup won 12 years ago and two key players — batsman Mark Waugh and pace bowler Glenn McGrath — are back to their best.

But Steve Waugh, the leg-spinner who has bamboozled batsmen for the past six years, has looked innocuous in the first two games of the Super Six round and he was treated with something approaching disdain by Zimbabwe's Neil Johnson on Wednesday.

Waugh has been integral to the success of the current Australian team and would be expected to play a major role in the final second round match against South Africa.

Now, after conceding 103 runs from 15 overs for just one wicket in the Super Six, the South Africans are certain to target him at Headington on Wednesday.

Johnson plundered 16 off Waugh's second over at Lord's and said later the assault had been premeditated.

"He gave a bit of width and he wasn't turning it so I took a bit of a chance," Johnson said. "We

had to score seven or eight an over so we just didn't let him get into his rhythm."

Operations on Waugh's spinning finger and shoulder meant a late start to the last Ashes campaign this year and after a severe case of assault and battery from Brian Lara in the Caribbean he was dropped from the test side.

After bowling well in the opening round of the World Cup, Waugh is now troubled by a neck injury which has restricted his appearances at the nets.

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## Record-breaker Geoff Allot

BIRMINGHAM, England, June 10 (Internet report): New Zealand's Geoff Allot took his 19th wicket in the 1999 World Cup, breaking the record for a bowler in a single tournament.

Allot bowled South African opener Herschelle Gibbs for 91 to claim his first wicket of the Super Six match.

He had shared the record of 18 wickets in a single tournament with Wasim Akram of Pakistan, Craig McDermott of Australia and India's Roger Binny.

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## S AFRICA-NEW ZEALAND SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the South African innings in the Super Six match against New Zealand at Edgbaston yesterday.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

G Kirsten c Nash b Astle 82 121 4 6

H Gibbs b Allot 91 118 6 1

L Klusener b Larsen 4 5 1 0

J Kallis not out 53 36 1 3

D Cullinan c&b Cairns 0 2 0 0

H Cronje run out (Nash) 39 22 2 2

J Rhodes not out 0 0 0 0

Extras: (lb-11, w-3, nb-4) 18 0 0 0

Total: (for 5 wickets in 50 overs) 287

Did not bat: S Pollock, M Boucher, S Blomworth, A Donald.

Fall of wkt: 1-176 (Kirsten, 36.3 ov); 2-187 (Klusener, 37.5 ov); 3-228 (Gibbs, 43.6 ov); 4-229 (Cullinan, 44.3 ov); 5-283 (Cronje, 49.4 ov).

**Bowlers**

Allot 10 0 42 1 (nb-1, w-1)

Nash 8 0 44 0 (w-1)

Cairns 7 0 55 1 (nb-3)

Larsen 9 0 47 1

Harris 10 0 59 0

Astle 6 0 29 1 (w-1)

Toss: South Africa.

Umpires: ID Robinson (Zim) and S Venkataraghavan (Ind).

TV Umpire: P Willey.

Match Referee: CW Smith (AUS).



FINDING HIS FEET: Gary Kirsten, the South African opener, prepares to sweep during his half-century against New Zealand yesterday.

— AFP photo



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