

Bits & pieces

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scored two half-centuries as well as 46 and faces New Zealand at Edgbaston on Thursday.

That has put Kiwi front line bowler Geoff Allott at the top of the list of favourites to get him out. Allott is rated a 5-1 shot with all-rounder Chris Cairns at 8-1 and Australian paceman Glenn McGrath in their place on 9-1.

The Australians meet South Africa at Headingley on Sunday.

MCC'S PROTEST
LONDON, June 10: With the rest of the ground virtually sold out, there were scores of empty seats in front of the famous Lord's pavilion on Wednesday because of a protest by members of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) against their own committee, reports AP.

Angry at being forced to buy tickets at a club they technically own, the members made their protest by either staying away from the Australian-Zimbabwe game or watching the game from the balcony.

The members have been offered tickets, which cost up to 100 pounds (161 dollars), on a discounted basis by the committee. But they say that's still not good enough.

This argument is not going to go away and has very little to do with money, although it is plainly ridiculous that the landlords are being charged rent by the tenants, said MCC member Michael Geliot.

"Primarily we are complaining about the incompetence and secrecy of the MCC committee. We, the members who own the club, were never consulted about paying for tickets and the arrangement to allocate seats."

SONIA GREET'S 'EM
NEW DELHI, June 10: Congress President Sonia Gandhi yesterday greeted the Indian cricket team on its spectacular and sensational 47-run victory against Pakistan in a crucial Super Six World Cup cricket match at Old Trafford on Wednesday, reports PTI.

In a message to captain Mohammad Azharuddin, she said splendid and brilliant overall performances and wonderful team work of the squad was lauded and celebrated by millions of cricket lovers all over.

All's well
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one wicket against Zimbabwe.

And Shane Warne, who went into the game with a niggling shoulder injury, conceded 44 runs in his first five overs as Jonsson plundered him to all parts of the ground.

It was 16 years to the day since a bunch of rookies from Zimbabwe stunned Australia in a 13-run upset at Trent Bridge in the 1983 World Cup.

But the Zimbabweans, making their Lord's debut, couldn't repeat the upset and, instead, extended their losing streak against Australia to 11 games. They now trails Australia 6-1 in World Cup head-to-heads.

Asians take a break
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tell with the couple sporting the dazzling colours from top to bottom. By the books, they must win today, he said. And even if they did not, they had another chance. We will take on the Aussies, he pronounced with confidence.

In a way this was a do-or-die match for both the teams. As the World Cup has seen this far, nothing can be taken for granted. Teams with four points from the group matches were still struggling to find the vital two that may take them to the semi.

With all the six teams on a knife-edge, a defeat for New Zealand today would mean they would have to beat India, who look hungry now. South Africa would have a steeper task against the in-form Australia.

Birmingham, in spite of being an Olympic venue candidate for several years, obviously does not have more interest in cricket than the rest of Britain. No posters or banners, no hype at all. One is usually just on arriving at the rail or bus station. Only kindly people on the street act as guides. Bus 47 took us to the ground, but it was just another bus.

The leading daily, The Birmingham Post, found popular reason to put the World Cup match being held in its city after four pages of England's draw with Bulgaria, tennis at the Queens, golf and motor racing.

South Africa seemed determined not to rely too much on the Zuils, as Klusener is known for his attacking and killing instincts. Gary Kirsten and Herschelle Gibbs laid a rock-hard foundation despite some superb bits of fielding from the Kiwis.

Apart from the monotony of good cricket going South Africa's way, the dull morning was given a sparkle with Geoff Allott splitting his right show to expose a lot of sweat on the tournament's most successful bowler taken a wicket then, it would have gone down in the record books as another feat (or feat).

As the South African openers gave signs of a cautious innings building up, the packed crowd settled down to see the battle between the pace of the Proteas and the tight bowling of the Kiwis. 29 wickets from eight matches before this one.



South Africa opener Herschelle Gibbs' eyes light up as he is about to smack the ball. — AFP photo

Turning points

LONDON, June 10 (AFP): Ten key moments during Australia and Zimbabwe's World Cup Super Six clash here on Wednesday.

Mark Waugh cuts Heath
Streak high to Grant Flower at point but the one-handed chance is spilled. Waugh, on seven at the time, goes on to add another 97 before he is dismissed.

Ricky Ponting launches
Australia's attack with three fours off Neil Johnson as the swing bowler is hit for 16 off the 11th over.

Henry Olonga dismisses
Ricky Ponting, played on, but 62 runs come off the pace bowler's seven overs.

Seven batsman Darren Lehmann is forced to retire
with an injured hand but fears of a broken finger are dispelled after hospital X-rays.

Steve Waugh celebrates his half-century with two consecutive leg-side boundaries, one a four and one a six, on his way to 62 off 61 deliveries before he is bowled by Guy Whittall, slogging across the line.

Mark Waugh chips
Neil Johnson to square leg as he is dismissed for 104, including 13 fours, off 120 balls.

Zimbabwe's Murray Goodwin, on 47, is dismissed by Michael Bevan, sweeping to Tom Moody at square leg, after putting on a high-speed 114 with Neil Johnson and raising hopes of an improbable win.

One over later, Andy Flower falls
first ball, caught behind off Paul Reiffel, to make it 154 for three with 150 needed off 20 overs.

Reiffel has Guy Whittall caught by Mark Waugh in the covers to pick up his third wicket of the innings.

Dirk Viljoen, playing his first match in the tournament, is stunned off
Shane Warne for five to leave Neil Johnson stranded at the other end. Johnson finishes with 132 not out.

SL Board suspended
COLOMBO, June 10: Cricket board officials in Sri Lanka faced fresh trouble today when a court renewed a restriction preventing them from carrying out their duties, reports Reuters.

Officials at the Colombo district court said Judge A.M.A. Salam had barred the Board of Control for Cricket in Sri Lanka (BCCSL) president Thilanga Sumathipala and other officials from carrying out their duties until an election dispute was settled.

Clifford Ratwatte, who lost to Sumathipala in the board's elections earlier this year, has alleged in court that gun-toting intruders had prevented free and fair voting.

SUPER SIX STANDINGS

LONDON, June 10 (AFP): World Cup Super Six table after Wednesday's match:										
Team	P	W	L	T	NR	Pts	NRR			
Zimbabwe	4	2	1	0	1	5	-0.09			
South Africa	3	2	1	0	0	4	-0.20			
Pakistan	4	2	2	0	0	4	+0.10			
Australia	4	2	2	0	0	4	+0.44			
New Zealand	3	1	1	0	1	3	-0.40			
India	4	1	3	0	0	2	-0.14			

(Table includes team points and results retained from the first round. The top four qualify for the semi-finals.)

Faulty Flower

LONDON, June 10 (AFP): Catches win matches, they tell school kids. And dropped ones presumably lose them.

Zimbabwean Grant Flower's missed chance here on Wednesday against Australia was one that proved more expensive than most.

Had he caught it, Flower would have been in line to pick up the catch of the tournament award.

Standing at backward point, he found a full-blooded Mark Waugh cut heading his way at high velocity. He jumped and

got his hand to the ball, only for it to bounce up and behind him. Flower swivelled round, but the ball had already bounced behind him.

Waugh had scored seven at the time. Australia were 25 for one in the eighth over of their innings at the start of the World Cup Super Six encounter at Lord's.

Waugh went on to make 104 off 120 balls, setting up Australia's huge total of 303 for four.

Later, Flower was pressed into service as an emergency bowler in an attempt to help stem the Australian charge, only for his occasional left-arm spin to go for 20 off three overs, putting him further into the red.

Opening the innings, he then made 21 during a 39-run stand with Neil Johnson before falling leg before to Glenn McGrath, thus ending the day owing his team 96 runs.

At least it wasn't quite as bad as the most expensive catch in cricketing history.

When Brian Lara made 501 not out, the highest individual score in the history of first-class cricket, for Warwickshire against Durham in 1994, he was dropped after reaching 18.

Opening the innings, he then made 21 during a 39-run stand with Neil Johnson before falling leg before to Glenn McGrath, thus ending the day owing his team 96 runs.

Rumour

LONDON, June 10: The Australian Cricket Board has dismissed fresh allegations of match-fixing against star leg-spinner Shane Warne as "scurrilous rumour," reports AP.

The new allegations were made by former Australian Test batsman David Hookes in an interview on Melbourne radio Thursday. But ACB chief executive Malcolm Speed, in London with the Australian World Cup squad, said the match-fixing investigation against Warne was over.

Hookes, now a journalist, reportedly said there was more to come in the fixing scandal although he later withdrew his comments.

Warne and teammate Mark Waugh were fined in February 1995 for providing match information to an Indian bookmaker during Australia's tour of Sri Lanka in 1994-95.

Waugh was fined 10,000 Australian dollars (US \$ix 6,500) and Warne 8,000 Australian dollars (52,000 dollars) for accepting 6,000 Australian dollars (3,900 dollars and 5,000 Australian dollars 3,250 dollars) respectively.

Speed said there was no new inquiry.

As far as we can tell it's a scurrilous rumour that's completely unsubstantiated," he said.

"As far as the ACB is concerned... the 1995 issue is well and truly behind us, and it's about time (Warne) was allowed to get on and play the game."

He had added: "Obviously the bowlers are right on top in this World Cup, but hopefully that'll change in the Super Six and the batters will get their turn."

Ranatunga was right. But by then his team had already flown home.

The only people who did not hear that the first phase of the World Cup was a bowlers' paradise were the Indian batsmen.

While the rest of the world played and missed, looking as comfortable at shoe-less men dancing in snake pits, India's batsmen cracked four centuries.

The fifth, at the start of the Super Six phase, also fell to them.

Rahul Dravid claimed two and Saurav Ganguly scored 183, the highest score of the tournament. Sachin Tendulkar's 140 against Kenya was the fastest.

However, unfortunately for India - who are now on the brink of being knocked out of the tournament - somebody forgot to tell their seamers during the first round that they were world-beaters.

On Wednesday his initial three-over spell cost 29 and two further overs from the end went for 15 before Steve Waugh again pulled him out of the attack.

Warne, normally a picture of confidence when bowling, looked frustrated and perplexed at his treatment by Zimbabwe.

Australia had Michael Bevan's whippy, unorthodox left-arm spin to turn to and Mark Waugh's off-spin is another option.

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Puzzled Pakistan v jiving Zimbabwe

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their normal attacking fashion. Right from the start they were very much on the defensive, very tentative in their cricket. It seemed they had a giant hangover from losing to South Africa."

Pakistan, who are stuck with the four points they brought forward from the first round, may find themselves dependent on run-rates for a place in the semi-finals if they lose to Zimbabwe.

Injuries to the in-form duo of Yousuf Youhana and Inzamam-ul Haq, and Saeed Akram's misery.

Campbell's men gave proof of their growing stature when they won an away Test series against Pakistan in December and entered the Sharjah Cup final a month earlier at Sri Lanka's expense.

"We would like to go into the semi-finals beating both favourites, South Africa and Pakistan," Campbell said, despite the 44-run defeat by Australia at Lord's on Wednesday.

"We are happy to stay the underdogs as long as we play good cricket."

Akram said he regarded Zimbabwe as tough competitors. "Pakistan underestimated them in the home series and paid the price. We will have to be on our toes against them."

Pakistan, in their form at the start of the competition, would be odds on to beat Zimbabwe. But they should remember that South Africa were also expected to do so in a Group A match at Chelmsford and ended up suffering a shock 48-run defeat by their African neighbours.

That has been the high point of Zimbabwe's tournament. It lifted their tally of points to be carried into the Super Six phase to four, which they increased by one after rain prevented a result against New Zealand at Headingley earlier this week.

A key element in the Zimbabweans' progress has been the all-round form of Neil Johnson who reached a peak with an unbeaten 132 against Australia.

Johnson finished his magnificent innings in some discomfort. "It's a bit of knee, groin, ankle, back (trouble) but I'll be fit for Friday," he said.

Zimbabwe and Pakistan have met only once before in the World Cup, at Hobart in 1992, when the Pakistanis won by 53 runs.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Pakistan beat Zimbabwe 2-1 in the one-day series on home soil in November last year, before losing the three-match Test series 1-0. Pakistan won the opening one-dayer at Gujranwala by six wickets, Zimbabwe took the second at Sheikhupura by six wickets, before the home side trounced the Africans by 111 runs in the third at Rawalpindi.

In December, Zimbabwe won their first ever Test series since being granted full international status in 1992. They won the first Test at Peshawar by seven wickets before the second and third Tests were abandoned due to bad weather.

1999 WORLD CUP RESULTS
Pakistan: Beat New Zealand by 62 runs, bt Australia by 10 runs, bt the West Indies by 27 runs, bt Scotland 49 runs, lost to Bangladesh by 62 runs. Super Six — Lost to South Africa by 3 wickets, lost to India by 47 runs.
Zimbabwe: Lost to England by seven wickets, beat India by three runs, lost to Sri Lanka by four wickets, beat Kenya by five wickets, beat South Africa by 48 runs. Super Six — No result against New Zealand, lost to Australia by 44 runs.

PREVIOUS WORLD CUPS
The teams have met just once in the World Cup when Pakistan won by 53 runs in the preliminary round of the 1992 tournament in Hobart, Australia. Pakistan scored 254 for four as Aamer Sohail scored 114 and Javed Miandad 89. Zimbabwe reached 201 for seven with Wasim Akram taking three for 21.

VENUE
The Oval, London. The ground has become synonymous with the landmark pale-blue gas tank which overlooks the north-east side of the ground. Steeped in history — it was used as a prisoner-of-war camp during the second world war — the Oval has seen Len Hutton's 364 and Sri Lankan Muttiah Muralitharan's 16-wicket haul last year.

Capacity: 18,000 (AFP)

He also became a victim of Muralitharan.

Warwickshire did gain a measure of revenge before the close as Ed Giddins and Graeme Welch claimed a wicket apiece to leave Lancashire 52 for two in reply.

Surrey's England youngster Alex Tudor was another bowler to claim a magnificent seven as he helped the current championship leaders dismiss defending champions Leicestershire for 272 at Grace Road.

Aftab Habib (60) and Chris Lewis (56) shared a sixth-wicket stand of 91 but the hosts then lost four wickets with the total on 267 as Tudor, a candidate for an England Test recall this

summer, finished with seven for 77.

Surrey then built on their bowling efforts when Mark Butcher (49 not out) dominated an unbroken opening stand of 76 with Ian Ward (18no) before stumps.

Tudor's fellow England pace hopeful Chris Silverwood also enjoyed considerable success with the ball as his season's best five for 43 enabled Yorkshire to dismiss fellow high fliers Hampshire for 206 at Basingstoke.

Unfortunately Silverwood's team-mates were unable to take advantage when they replied with the bat and slumped to five for three before reaching 62 for three by the end of the day.

Robin Weston's unbeaten 129 enabled Derbyshire to reach 285 before they were dismissed just before the close against Essex at Chelmsford.

Weston reached his maiden first-class century off 232 balls with 13 fours but received little support as Ashley Cowan and Peter Such picked up three wickets apiece.

Another century came from Sussex's Australian star Michael Di Venuto, who ended the day undefeated on 117 as his side reached 299 for seven against Kent at Hove.

SQUADS

PAKISTAN (probable): Saeed Anwar, Shahid Afridi, Abdul Razaq, Ijaz Ahmed, Inzamam-ul Haq, Salim Malik, Moin Khan, Wasim Akram (capt), Azhar Mahmood, Saqlain Mushtaq, Shoaib Akhtar.

ZIMBABWE (probable): Neil Johnson, Grant Flower, Murray Goodwin, Andy Flower, Alistair Campbell (capt), Guy Whittall, Dirk Viljoen, Heath Streak, Andrew Whittall, Paul Strang, Henry Olonga.

Marvellous Murali

LONDON, June 10: Sri Lankan spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan claimed seven wickets to bowl Lancashire into a commanding position after the opening day of their English county championship clash with Warwickshire at Southport on Wednesday.

The off-spinner bamboozled the opposing batsmen to return magnificent figures of seven for 44 off 34.5 overs as he and paceman Peter Martin, who took 3-24, combined to dismiss the visitors for 217.

Only opener Nick Knight's 82 enabled Warwickshire, who had chosen to bat and initially progressed to 137 for one, to make as much progress as they did before he also became a victim of Muralitharan.

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Who versus who

LONDON, June 10 (AFP): Pakistan v Zimbabwe player head-to-heads.

Shoaib Akhtar v Neil Johnson
Shoaib, the fast bowling sensation of the World Cup, owes his team-mates a match-winning performance. So far he has taken 11 wickets in seven matches and has clocked 95 miles an hour — but he is yet to dominate a match. His end-of-innings control was questioned by Pakistan captain Wasim Akram after the defeat against South Africa. His figures against the top nations are modest: one for 54 against India, two for 51 against South Africa, one for 46 against Australia and two for 54 against West Indies.

Johnson has been one of the stars of the tournament. Largely unknown outside of southern Africa before the tournament, the left-handed opener and right-arm seamer has proved himself to be a one-day allrounder of the highest quality. The South African-educated 29-year-old has scored 313 runs — including an unbeaten 132 against Australia — and has taken 12 wickets so far.

Moin Khan v Andy Flower
These two wicket-keeping all-rounders have had impressive tournaments with the bat. Moin, the Pakistani vice-captain, is the fastest scoring batsman at the World Cup averaging 44.6 after scoring 223 runs in seven innings. His best of 63 off 58 balls against South Africa helped Pakistan recover from 118 for five to 220 for seven. Manages to score rapidly in the 'slog' overs without throwing the bat recklessly.

Flower was averaging 45.30 after the group stages with a top score of 68 not out. But is yet to get off the mark in the second round after suffering two consecutive ducks against New Zealand and Australia. Regarded as the best technical batsman in the side with a Test average of over 43, Flower quit as captain two years ago to concentrate on his wicket-keeping and batting and also dropped down to number five.

Saeed Anwar v Henry Olonga
Left-hand opener Saeed Anwar, is regarded as the best batsman in the Pakistan team, but he is yet to register a major innings. In seven matches so far he has scored 36, 23, 9, 28, 25, 6, 10 for an average of 19.60. He boasts the world record one-day score of 194 against India at Madras. Skipper Wasim Akram says Anwar has kept faith with the 30-year-old here, insisting he is bound to come good in the important matches later in the tournament.

Dreadlocked right-arm pace bowler Olonga, the first black cricketer to represent Zimbabwe, has had a World Cup of mixed fortunes. He was the hero against India at Hove when he took the last three wickets to secure a shock win, but too often batsmen have feasted on his erratic line and length. He idolises Wasim Akram, the Pakistan captain, and was man of the series when Zimbabwe clinched an historic 1-0 away Test series triumph against Pakistan in December.

Bewitched spin

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He is presently delivering from well below his shoulder, rarely giving the ball any loop, and there is little zip or bounce on the slow English pitches.

Warne conceded 48 runs from six overs against India and during the 44-run win over Zimbabwe took one for 55 from nine.

On Wednesday his initial three-over spell cost 29 and two further overs from the end went for 15 before Steve Waugh again pulled him out of the attack.

Warne, normally a picture of confidence when bowling, looked frustrated and perplexed at his treatment by Zimbabwe.

Australia had Michael Bevan's whippy, unorthodox left-arm spin to turn to and Mark Waugh's off-spin is another option.

But to be the best they need Warne at his best and, despite his captain's public confidence, the stocky leg-spinner has a lot to prove against South Africa.

In need of

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it to the semi-finals."

If a replacement is allowed by tournament organisers, one of the three will have to go home.

Inzamam and Youhana have both been in good form while Ijaz has looked threatening without making a major score. Ironically, Pakistan's one out-of-form player, veteran Salim Malik, is in perfect health.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
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