

## Bits &amp; 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 Headington 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 bars.

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 Gielot.

"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 GREETS '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 Johnson 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 stretch against Australia to 11 games. They now trail 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 looks 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 semis.

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 lost 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 Zulu, as Kusen 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 socks. Had the tournament's most successful bowler taken a wicket then, it would have gone down in the record books as another feat (or feit).

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.

Watching today's match will give the ICC some idea why cricket was losing ground in England, its motherland. The flash, the glitter, the din that is our cricket today, or that in the Caribbean, was just not there, despite two of the world's best teams sweating at the Edgbaston.

Of course, England can also blame their miserable success rate and the lack of genuine heroes.



South Africa opener Herschelle Gibbs' eyes light up as he is about to smash the ball.

— AFP photo

## Turning points

## 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.

+ 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 stumped off Shane Warne for five to leave Neil Johnson stranded at the other end. Johnson finishes with 132 not out.

SL Board suspended

## 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 45.50 after the group stages with a top score of 68 not out. But is yet to get 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.

Today, the judge again changed his mind but said the sports ministry could again set up an interim committee as it did in April. It set a hearing on the allegations for September.

Sumathipala has denied charges of vote-rigging, saying the election was held according to the board's constitution and with the consent of the majority.

Ratnave, Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's brother and President Chandrika Kumaratunga's uncle, made a surprise entry into the presidential race, promising to clean up the administration and impose financial discipline.

## Naimur accorded reception

MANIKGANJ, June 10: A reception was accorded to Bangladesh World Cupper Naimur Rahman here today for his outstanding performances, reports BSS.

## Div III soccer begins today

The Third Division football super league begins at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today, reports UNB. Kawnan Bazar Progati Sangha faces Kadamtala Sangad in the day's first match at 2:45 pm while Sheikh Russel KC will take on Surjolata Right Brothers Club at 4:30 pm.

## Rumour

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

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