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## Of the Indian run-machine

NOTTINGHAM, England, June 11 (Reuters): For a man who was considered purely a Test match batsman until a few months ago, it has been an extraordinary World Cup for Rahul Dravid.

India may be coming into form a bit too late to save their one-day campaign but they can't blame Dravid, who has been on fire from Day One.



RAHUL DRAVID

He has been involved in World Cup record second and third wicket partnerships — with Saurav Ganguly he put on 318 against Sri Lanka (a record one-day international stand for any wicket) and with Sachin Tendulkar 237 against Kenya.

Until this year he was not rated by the selectors as a one-day performer but the quietly confident 25-year-old has shown that skills and good habits learned in the Test arena pay dividends in one-day cricket.

"There are runs to be had but the ball and the conditions take a bit of getting used to. It's almost like Test cricket initially as you have to be a bit more cautious," he said before India's

final second round match against New Zealand.

"Before, a team would look to charge to a hundred in the first 15 overs and then take stock. Now you are happy to reach 50 or 60, as long as you don't lose wickets.

"We've seen that teams who are losing three or four wickets, early on are losing while those who can afford to take risks are scoring a lot of runs in the latter stages."

Dravid's superb batting at number three should have been enough to take India into the semifinals with ease if the rest of the team had been able to perform consistently.

India's top order has been one of the star turns of the tournament — Dravid is top aggregate scorer with 432 and Ganguly second with 350 — but the team has failed to capitalise on the great starts.

Dravid began with 54 against South Africa before he failed against Zimbabwe in a defeat that has haunted India for the rest of the tournament.

He stormed back with successive centuries — 104 not out against Kenya and a brilliant 145 against Sri Lanka — and then contributed a top score 53 as India swept past England.

Tellingly, when he and Ganguly — along with Sachin Tendulkar — were skittled with just 12 on the board in their first Super Six match against Australia India's victory hopes disappeared.

The 26-year-old bounced back, top-scoring with a patient 61 against Pakistan, a fifth 50 in seven innings which almost slipped past unnoticed in the cauldron of Old Trafford.

"We haven't played badly but just had one bad day against Zimbabwe," he said.

"Before the tournament we sat down and talked about what was needed to win it and we agreed that you need a bit of

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## Songs of Praise

LONDON, June 11 (Internet report): BBC Television's 'Songs of Praise' joins the World Cup Carnival with a special programme dedicated to cricket. It will be shown on BBC1 on Sunday 13 June at 5.30pm — one week before the World Cup final.

The presenter is Christopher Martin-Jenkins, BBC Cricket Commentator and recently appointed Chief Cricket Correspondent with The Times.

Christopher will be talking to a wide variety of people who are passionate about the game.

Former Prime Minister John Major describes his lifelong love of the game and his close association with the Oval. He's currently deputy President of Surrey County Cricket Club and takes over the Presidency next year.

As the World Cup gathers momentum two of South Africa's star players, captain Hansie Cronje and Jonty Rhodes, talk about their careers and their Christian faith.

At their pre-tournament base in Hove, home of Sussex County Cricket Club, they provide an insight into the pressures of professional cricket.

And former players Colin Cowdrey — now Lord Cowdrey — and John Barclay, who captained Sussex for six years, tell Christopher why the cricket club at Arundel is such a special place and how young people from all over the country benefit from coaching sessions there.

The President of The Lord's Taverners, Nicholas Parsons, and the President of the Lady Taverners, Judith Chalmers join Christopher in the Tavern Stand at Lord's to explain how the charity started and why they are so committed to fundraising in this way.

The programme also features a village cricket match in Oxfordshire where the hymn-singing comes from The Green at Warborough, near Wallingford.

It will be accompanied by one of the country's top championship brass bands, The Flowers Band, who are based in Cheltenham and are the 1998 Grand Shield Champions.

Special guest soloist is Miriam singing 'Perfect Day' from her debut solo album released on Virgin Records on 28 June.



Inzamamul Haq turning one on the inside against Zimbabwe.

— AFP photo

## Cronje v Waugh: Who's under pressure

LONDON, June 11 (AFP): It was a bad sign for cricket World Cup skippers Steve Waugh, Wasim Akram, Alistair Campbell, Stephen Fleming and Mohammad Azharuddin.

On Thursday at Trent Bridge it happened at last — Hansie Cronje smiled.

Australia, who face South Africa in their final Super Six second-round match at Headingley on Sunday as they try to sneak into the semifinals, have been warned.



HANSIE CRONJE

wicked sense of humour but whose on-field demeanour usually wavers between the stern, the gloomy and the funeral — had just seen his side cruise into the last four after putting on an ultra-professional display in crushing Zimbabwe by

74 runs. The openers had put on 176, 93 runs had come off the last 10 overs, the wickets had been shared widely and Lance Klusener, with 214 World Cup runs and just one dismissal, had for once not been required to bail out the side.

"At last we've made the semifinals. And we are hugely relieved! Especially after 1996," Cronje said.

Three years ago the South Africans, looking by far the most accomplished side in the tournament, cruised through the first round with five wins out of five before a Brian Lara century knocked them out of the quarterfinals.

In 1992, they had missed out on the final when a controversial rule used to readjust targets for chasing sides in rain-affected games had killed off their chances against England.

The pressure on Sunday, Cronje said, would be firmly on Waugh's shoulders.

"Australia are going to be under pressure and tense and our mood may give us the upper hand," he said.

Cronje — who cracked 39 off 22 balls on Thursday, took two wickets for 37 with his slippery medium-pacers and also a catch — was also happy that strike bowlers Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock had failed to hog the limelight against Zimbabwe.

"Allan feels a little underdone from the wickets point of view," Cronje said, adding, "I think that's a good position to be in."

"Rather than everyone per-

forming really well up until this stage, I think it will keep those players hungry."

"Players like Shaun and Allan and some of the other batsmen who haven't batted yet, it really keeps them hungry and those are the guys who can really turn it on for the big occasion."

There was some good news for Australia, however. South African Jacques Kallis, Thursday's man of the match, ended the game with a sore stomach muscle and might be rested at Headingley. Gibbs could also



STEVE WAUGH

stand down after tweaking a hamstring.

Waugh, however, said he was relishing the challenge.

"They play cricket similar to us. I'm looking forward to the game," he said.

"It will be a pointer as to who is going to go on and win the World Cup."

### Plight of Pigeons

LONDON, June 11 (Reuters/Internet): Ducks are common at the Oval but it's the pigeons who are living dangerously during the cricket World Cup.

Two pigeons were killed by the ball during Australia's defeat of India last Friday, organisers said.

Australia's Paul Reffel knocked one out of the sky with a throw from the boundary while a late cut from India's Ajay Jadeja struck another before it could take off.

The Oval's cat, Lulu, has shown no interest in catching the pigeons, which are a constant problem at the London ground. She eats only fresh fish and is now too cosseted to chase birds.

### Twose takes time off for different tie

LONDON, June 11 (Internet report): Cricket was the last thing on World Cup star Roger Twose's mind on the eve of New Zealand's crucial game against India at Trent Bridge.

This afternoon he was getting his head down to a far different type of searching examination — an extra mural business management paper for a degree course at Massey University in New Zealand.

The New Zealand manager John Graham, a former headmaster, played the role of invigilator as Twose took the three-hour examination paper in a Nottingham hotel room.

But Twose isn't alone in the swotting stakes during the World Cup — his fellow New Zealander Adam Parore is also due to take an exam for his law degree.

## The marked man

LONDON, June 11: Australian opener Mark Waugh can expect a hostile reception from the South Africans when he reaches the crease in the cricket World Cup clash at Headingley on Sunday, reports AFP.

Hansie Cronje's men have an old score to settle with the in-form right-hander from New South Wales.

Last year, the South Africans looked set to win the third Test at Adelaide and square the series against Australia when Waugh, after fending away a ball, swung round and hit down his stumps.

The umpires, however, infuriated the South Africans by judging that Waugh's stroke was already complete and that he could not be given out hit-wicket.

Waugh went on to make 115 not out. Cronje, in a moment of indiscipline, later pierced the door of the umpires' changing room with a stump.

South Africa, already assured of a place in the semifinals, will have added incentive of knowing that another victory on Sunday could kill off the Aussies' chances of reaching the last four.

Waugh's fate could decide the game.

The 34-year-old has run into his best form in the Super Six second round, with scores of 83 against India and 104 versus Zimbabwe.

Waugh's skipper and twin brother Steve said: "he's going to be crucial as to how we end up in this tournament."

Waugh hit three centuries in the last World Cup. He began that campaign with scores of 130, 126 and 76 not out.

This tournament saw him begin more cautiously, as the bowlers exploited the conditions to dominate the early games.

The turning point came against India. "He got through a difficult test against them at

The Oval," his brother said. Waugh saw off the new ball before suddenly abandoning his textbook elegance. A baseball-style smash sent a delivery from medium pacer Robin Singh over long off and into the crowd.

The shot seemed to herald Mark Waugh's arrival at the 1999 World Cup.



MARK WAUGH

The wickets are also helping him. While the first-round games were played at venues throughout England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and even Holland, the Super Six fixtures have been confined to Test venues, giving batsmen the confidence to play their shots. Waugh's century on Wednesday was his past Allan Border's 6,524 runs, making him Australia's leading one-day scorer.

## Wessels' money on South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, June 11 (Reuters/Internet): Former captain Kepler Wessels, the most cautious of cricketers in his playing days, has backed South Africa to win the 1999 World Cup after their comfortable qualification for the semifinals.

"I said so before the tournament and I still believe we're going to win the World Cup," said Wessels.

South Africa, bookmakers' favourites to lift the trophy at Lord's on June 20, became the first country to qualify for the semifinals with an emphatic 74-run win over New Zealand at Edgbaston on Thursday.

South Africa's fine batting display against the Kiwis underpinned Wessels' confidence. The top order had been the one area in which Hansie Cronje's team had seemed vulnerable.

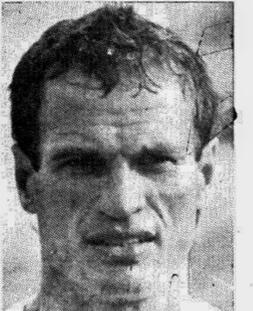
"It was much needed at the time and New Zealand were the perfect team to build the confidence of our batsmen against because their attack is not great," Wessels said.

"Everything else is in pretty good shape," Wessels said.

South Africa built their latest victory, their sixth in seven matches at this World Cup, on an opening partnership of 176

between Gary Kirsten and Herschelle Gibbs.

Wessels felt Australia would be South Africa's toughest opponents as "they are always competitive in a tight situation".



South Africa and Australia meet in the final Super Six match on Sunday that Australia must win to go further.

Wessels said Pakistan "for all their brilliance" were too prone to panic to be considered contenders for the trophy.

## Proteas won't go slow

BIRMINGHAM, England, June 11 (Reuters/Internet report): South Africa are not ready to drop down a few gears against Australia in Sunday's final World Cup Super Six clash.

After pushing New Zealand unceremoniously off the road in Thursday's 74-run victory to become the first team to reach the last four, the tournament favourites might be tempted to take it easy ahead of next week's semifinals.

By the time Sunday's game, crucial to Australia's hopes, is played the South Africans will probably know their opponents in the last four — win, lose or draw.

But captain Hansie Cronje says South Africa will not ease up. "It might bite you back," Cronje said. "I can't remember this team taking their foot off the accelerator too many times."

Cronje claimed there is still plenty of room for improvement before the competition reaches its climax at Lord's on June 20.

"Even though we haven't clicked as a batting unit yet, and Allan (Donald) even feels a little underdone from the wickets point of view, I think that's a good position to be in," stressed Cronje.

"Rather than everyone performing really well up until this stage, I think it will keep

those players hungry.

"Players like Shaun (Pollock) and Allan (Donald) and some of the other batsmen who haven't batted yet, it really keeps them hungry and those are the guys who can really turn it on for the big occasion."

It makes depressing reading for their rivals, particularly when players like Darryl Cullinan, Jonty Rhodes, Pollock and Donald are yet to produce match-winning performances.

"The semifinals and the final, that's when you really look at your players like your Donalds and Pollocks and Rhodes and those players to come to the party and I'm sure they will," warned Cronje.

"The guys are all really hungry and determined to get some runs. I'm quite happy with the way it has built up. Bob (Woolmer) said before yesterday that we've fought well in the tournament but haven't really played and it's now the time to get stuck in."

Opener Herschelle Gibbs is suffering from a hamstring strain while all-rounder Jacques Kallis has a stomach muscle problem and the South Africans may decide to make a few changes for the Headingley game.

Cronje said his side would benefit from feeling relaxed against an Australian team who will be under pressure to

win, having just four Super Six points to South Africa's six.

"Often you play your best cricket when you are relaxed," he said. "It is a big game for them. They are under pressure and a bit tense. Sometimes the relaxed team plays really well."

Cronje had said before the New Zealand game at Edgbaston that his team was keen to pick up maximum points from their last two games to finish top of the Super Six table.

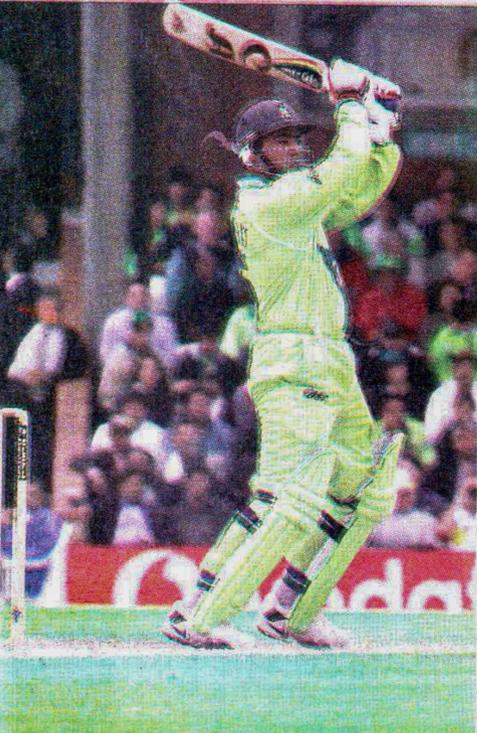
The winner of the Super Six takes on the fourth-placed team in a semifinal at Old Trafford next Wednesday.

With the second semifinal taking place the following day, the winner of the Old Trafford semifinal then has the advantage of an extra day to prepare for the final at Lord's on June 20.

In a tournament where two games have been forced into a second day because of wet weather, playing in the first semifinal could turn out to be a huge advantage.

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming knows his team, who have just three points, are in the same position as Australia when they take on India on Saturday at Trent Bridge.

"We have to beat India and beat them well. It is simple," he said. "The whole occasion will be quite charged."



Pakis opener Wajahatullah Wasti playing off the back foot yesterday at The Oval. — AFP photo



New Zealand skipper Stephen Fleming misses an attempted square cut against South Africa on June 10. — AFP photo