

Bits & pieces

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Friday, "But these things happen."

WARNE BREAKS SILENCE

LONDON, June 12: Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne broke his self-imposed media ban Saturday to defend his bowling against growing criticism, reports AP.

Warne, who conceded 104 runs and took a solitary wicket in 15.2 overs against India and Zimbabwe, listed excuses for his figures in a column he wrote for Saturday's The Times newspaper.

"The Indians can play spin in their sleep," he said. Warne also said the other leading spin bowlers in the tournament had taken a similar punishment from the Indian batsman.

"Saqlain Mushtaq (Pakistan) went for 67 from 10 overs against them and (Muttiah) Muralitharan (Sri Lanka) cost 60. I'm not the only one to suffer," he said.

"Against Zimbabwe, I came on in the 10th over after they had made a good start. Stephen Waugh thought I might be able to buy a wicket with only two men in the deep. It was a good gamble, but it didn't come off."

PUNYESH KNOWS IT?

BIRMINGHAM, June 12 (AP): Want to know who's going to win the cricket World Cup? Just ask Punyesh.

Relying on his observations of Hindu Astrological Predictions each day of the championship, this cricket fan has so far been 80 per cent right.

Punyesh, who updates his predictions on his own website, correctly forecast that India would upset Pakistan at Old Trafford on Tuesday, that out-of-form Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin, who scored 59, would fall against the Pakistanis, and that South African all-rounder Lance Klusener, who had scored 210 runs without being out, would fall against New Zealand on Thursday.

LARSEN THE LUCKY ONE

BIRMINGHAM, June 12 (AP): New Zealand bowler Gavin Larsen had good reason to spell out the numbers 1-0-0-0 with his finger after dismissing South African all-rounder Lance Klusener.

He was the first player to bowl Klusener out and his reward for dismissing him for only four runs was 1,000 pounds (1,600 dollars) from a sponsor.

Last four waits for the last two

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worry for Cronje as they have depth in every aspect of the game.

Steve Waugh, the Aussie skipper, was also confident of not only making it to the semifinals, but of lifting the Cup. "We have three games to go. If we play as well as we have in the last four, we will in it," said the man, who could luxuriate in calling the shots with his brother Mark in fine fettle.

On Saturday, Steve seemed to have other worries and was under pressure. He warned that the champions everybody likes to hate, Shane Warne, might quit cricket if the leg-spinner continues to get the non-stop criticism from the media.

This World Cup has already seen the first of its sacrificial lambs. The Sri Lankan skipper Arjuna Ranatunga, who bought the island the Cup three years back, has been sacked as captain by the sports minister S B Dissanayake. The minister was reported as saying that many things were wrong and that the captain should step down. Ranatunga however could continue to play, said the minister.

No doubt there will be several others. Suddenly my thoughts are with Azharuddin and Alec Stewart.

This World Cup, although nearing to its end with three matches to go after tomorrow, is still without its hero. That is extraordinary in a gathering of the masters of the game.

Perhaps not surprising then that the World Cup song, (Do you hear cries of "Was there one?"). All Over The World has hardly been sold. London stores reported poor sale after the song was released ominously the day after England were knocked out of the tournament. One radio station even offered free holidays abroad to first person who called and sang a few lines of the song. Magic FM, the station, left the offer open for two hours but not a single person called.

Back to tradition

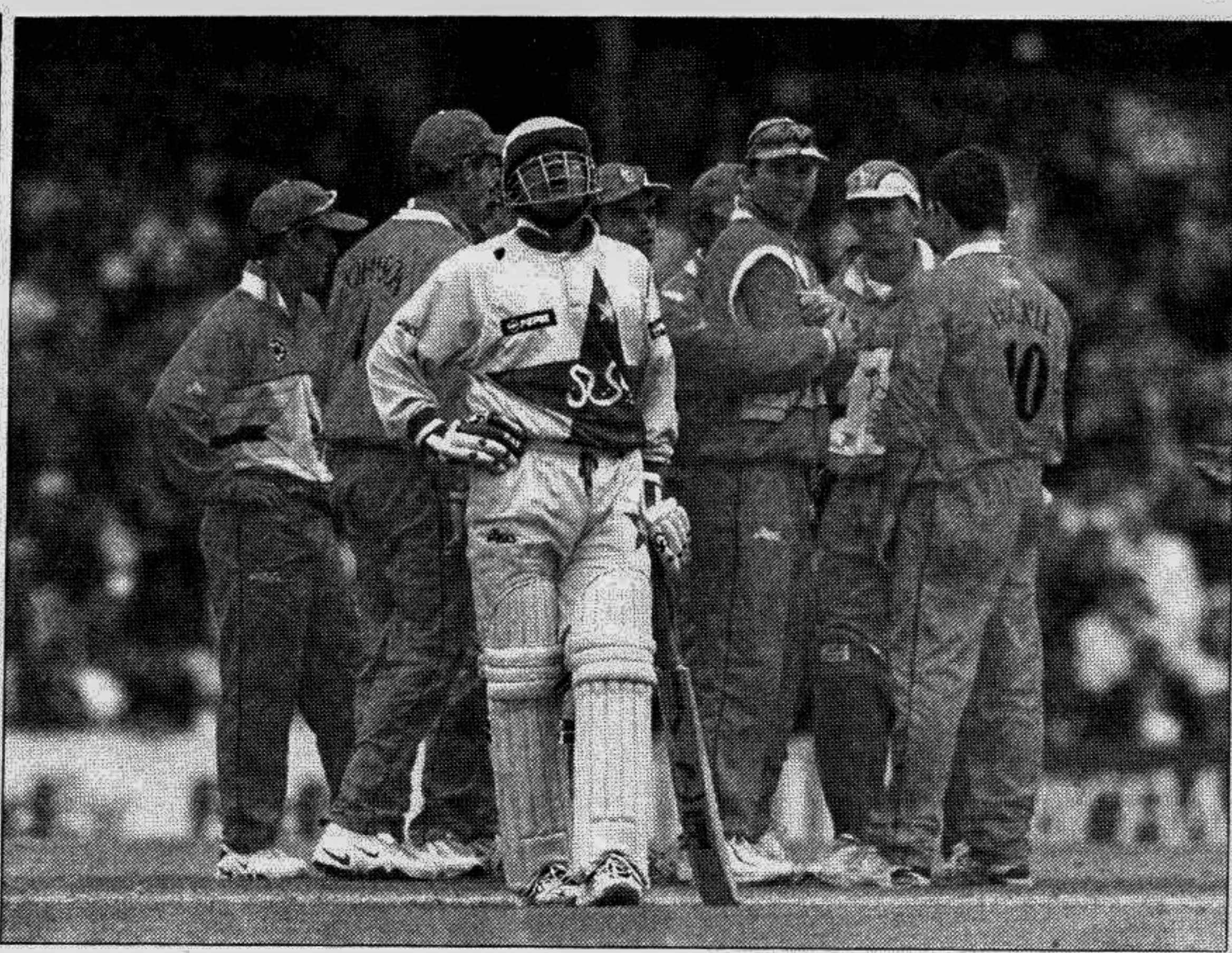
From page 13
ment. "I do not think we have played badly. We just had one bad day, and unfortunately, it has come back to haunt us," Dravid mused.

There was some good news for India with the recovery of Dravid's fellow early batsman Saurav Ganguly, who came through a net session well yesterday after his knee injury and was fit to take his place against the Kiwis today.

Ranatunga

From page 13
from the first stage of the World Cup. In a written statement sent here from England, Ranatunga vowed to continue playing. Seven members of the Sri Lankan squad returned last week, while the others stayed in England.

Sri Lanka's miserable World Cup ended with an unconvincing 45-run win over Group A minnows Kenya. Sri Lanka had earlier lost to England, South Africa and India, and won against Zimbabwe.



Moin Khan, the Pakistani wicketkeeper-batsman, anxiously waiting for the third umpire's decision during the Super Six game against Zimbabwe at The Oval on June 11. Moin was out.

Turning points

LONDON, June 12 (AFP): Ten key moments during Pakistan and Zimbabwe's World Cup Super Six clash at the Oval here on Friday.

• Saeed Anwar, on 20, is dropped at slip by Alistair Campbell off seamer Mpuemelele Mbangwa in the eighth over. The left-hander goes on to make 103.

• Jaz Ahmed is run out as Anwar first accepts, then turns down his call for a sharp single.

• Inzamam-ul Haq falls to a bizarre stumping. Flower appears to miss the chance by knocking the balls off with his gloves. But Inzamam does not realise what has happened, giving Flower the time to pull out the middle stump and complete the dismissal.

• Heath Streak yokes Abdul Razzaq to reduce Pakistan to 231 for eight. Saqlain Mushtaq denies the bowler a hat-trick.

• Shoab Akhtar's first ball smashes into Neil Johnson's helmet and lobs to wicket-keeper Moin Khan. Johnson stays on the back foot for the rest of the over.

• Razzaq, replacing Akhtar, has Murray Goodwin caught in his first over. Razzaq later removes Andy Flower and Alistair Campbell.

• Guy Whittall hangs his bat out to a wide ball from Azhar Mahmood and the edge flies to lone slip Shahid Afridi.

• Neil Johnson is given out leg before for 54 by West Indian umpire Steve Bucknor.

• Akhtar returns for his second spell and removes Paul Strang, caught one-handed in the slips by Mahmood, to make Zimbabwe 110 for seven.

• Saqlain Mushtaq traps last man Mbangwa leg before to seal Pakistan's win with the second hat-trick in World Cup history.

Pakistan hold Holland

BRISBANE, Australia, June 12: World and Olympic champions Netherlands salvaged a 2-2 draw with Pakistan here today as they struggled to defend their title in the men's Champions' Trophy field hockey tournament, reports AP.

The Dutch were beaten 3-2 by South Korea in their opening match on Friday.

Remco van Wyk opened the score for the Dutch when he converted a penalty corner in the 23rd minute and Martin Eikleboom salvaged a draw two minutes from time after Pakistan had gone 2-1 up through captain Atif Bashir, 26th minute, and Mohammed Sarwar, in the 39th.

Sarwar, who had scored in Pakistan's 1-1 draw with Spain on Thursday, struck when the Netherlands had midfielder Jacques Brinkman in the sin bin for dissent.

The Dutch had looked beaten until Eikleboom deflected a pass from veteran Stephan Veen inside the circle.

Jaap Derk Buman missed a controversial penalty stroke for the Dutch, when he shot straight at the Pakistani goalkeeper in the 64th minute.

Who versus who

HEADINGLEY, England, June 12 (AFP): Australia v South Africa player head-to-heads:

MARK WAUGH V SHAUN POLLOCK
These two will clash early during the Australian innings. Waugh, an elegant right-hander, is running into his best form after making 83 against India and 104 against Zimbabwe in his last two innings, becoming Australia's highest one-day run-scorer on the way.

Pollock, meanwhile, a gangly right-arm pace bowler, is desperate for wickets after claiming just four in seven matches. He has only conceded three runs an over and has troubled all his opponents, but the wickets have not come his way. The pressure he has created, however, has helped the bowlers at the other end cash in.

STEVE WAUGH V HANSIE CRONJE
Cricketers don't come grittier or flintier than these two captains. Neither is known for smiling, or flinching under pressure. Cronje has the upper hand, knowing his side are al-

ready through to the semifinals. He has not had the best of tournaments with the bat, but a pugnacious 39 off 22 balls — which included two successive sixes — and tow wickets with his slippery medium-pace against New Zealand showed what he can do. Waugh has not done too much bowling either, due to a shoulder injury but has added weight to Australia's batting strength. He has made 222 runs from seven matches at an average of 55.50. He knows he must come good against South Africa.

MICHAEL BEVAN V LANCE KLUSENER
These two all-rounders are key men to their respective sides but their methods could not be more different. Bevan is a supreme worker of the ball and organiser of run chases; Klusener, who has only been dismissed once in the World Cup while hitting 214 runs, is a massive hitter. Their bowling styles also contrast. Bevan bowling left-arm googlies or chinaman, while Klusener is a right-arm fast-medium merchant. Both are supremely athletic fielders, at their best in the deep.

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BATTING, BOWLING SO FAR

LONDON, June 12 (Reuters): Top batting and bowling performances at the cricket World Cup (* denotes not out):

BATTING
183 — Saurav Ganguly (India) v Sri Lanka, May 26, Taunton
145 — Rahul Dravid (India) v Sri Lanka, May 23, Taunton
140* — Sachin Tendulkar (India) v Kenya, May 23, Bristol
132* — Neil Johnson (Zimbabwe) v Australia, June 9, Lord's
104* — Rahul Dravid (India) v Kenya, May 23, Bristol
104 — Mark Waugh (Australia) v Zimbabwe, June 9, Lord's
103 — Saeed Anwar (Pakistan) v Zimbabwe, June 10, The Oval
100* — Ajay Jadeja (India) v Australia, June 4, The Oval
97 — Saurav Ganguly (India) v South Africa, May 15, Hove
96 — Jacques Kallis (South Africa) v India, May 15, Hove
91 — Herschelle Gibbs (South Africa) v New Zealand, June 10, Birmingham

88* — Nasser Hussain (England) v Kenya, May 18, Canterbury
88 — Alec Stewart (England) v Sri Lanka, May 14, Lord's
83 — Mark Waugh (Australia) v India, June 4, The Oval
82 — Maurice Odumbe (Kenya) v Sri Lanka, May 30, Southampton
82 — Gary Kirsten (South Africa) v New Zealand, June 10, Birmingham

81* — Younis Youhana (Pakistan) v Scotland, May 20, Durham
81 — Inzamamul Haq (Pakistan) v Australia, May 23, Leeds
80* — Roger Twose (New Zealand) v Australia, May 20, Cardiff
80* — Ridley Jacobs (West Indies) v New Zealand, May 24, Southampton.

BOWLING
5 for 14 — Glenn McGrath (Australia) v West Indies, May 30, Manchester
5 for 21 — Lance Klusener, (South Africa) v Kenya, May 26, Amstelveen
5 for 27 — Venkatesh Prasad (India) v Pakistan, June 8, Manchester
5 for 31 — Robin Singh (India) v Sri Lanka, May 26, Worcester
5 for 35 — Saqlain Mushtaq (Pakistan) v Bangladesh, May 31, Northampton

4 for 7 — Chris Harris (New Zealand) v Scotland, May 31, Edinburgh
4 for 17 — Allan Donald (South Africa) v England, May 22, The Oval
4 for 25 — Courtney Walsh (West Indies) v Bangladesh, May 21, Dublin
4 for 34 — Darren Gough (England) v Kenya, May 18, Canterbury
4 for 37 — Alan Mullally (England) v Sri Lanka, May 14, Lord's
4 for 37 — Geoff Allott (New Zealand) v Australia, May 20, Cardiff
4 for 37 — John Blain (Scotland) v Bangladesh, May 24, Edinburgh
4 for 40 — Wasim Akram (Pakistan) v Australia, May 23, Leeds
4 for 42 — Neil Johnson (Zimbabwe) v Kenya, May 15, Taunton
4 for 56 — Debashish Mohanty (India) v Kenya, May 23, Bristol
4 for 64 — Geoff Allott (New Zealand) v Pakistan, May 28, Derby.

The official World Cup anthem "All Over the World" has made even less of an impact on the tournament than the England team.

Released in a masterpiece of bad timing on the day England were eliminated in the first round, sales of the Dave Stewart composition have been minimal.

This week a London radio station offered an overseas holiday to anybody who would sing a few lines of the song, which is supposed to promote the World Cup without once mentioning cricket.

The offer closed two hours later without a single call.

Warne worries

From page 13
been struggling during the World Cup.

His last two outings have seen him thrashed for 48 runs by India off 6.2 overs and for 55 runs in nine overs by Zimbabwe, with Neil Johnson hitting four fours off one Warne over at Lord's.

The Australian has taken 10 wickets in the tournament but, against the Test-playing teams, his record is six for 209, at an unimpressivecon rate of 4.6 an over.

Wane has one grabbed the headlines on - ironically, not for his play but for suggesting that Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga should retire because he was no longer good enough to play a top level.

Warne's poor World Cup showing comes at the end of a troubled period for the player, during which he said his life had been turned into a "soap opera".

He was dropped from the Test team a few months ago, for the first time in seven years, and last year became embroiled in a scandal after admitting accepting money from a bookmaker for giving him pitch information.

He also missed six months following shoulder surgery. Many critics say he has yet to rediscover his best form.

Warne, however, writing in The Times newspaper on Saturday, said his form should be put into context.

"Neil Johnson decided to have a go. Fair play to the guy, he battled brilliantly," he wrote, but argued: "Even between 1992 and 1996, my golden years, I copped to odd tie in one-day cricket."

"I know there're more golden years ahead... I am happy with my form in the tournament overall."

English support for India

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this posed a grave family dilemma.

Poor Croft fancied England would be in the final. And so he told his wife he would not be at the birth of their child on the day of the final. As it transpired, England did not make the cut into the Super Six itself, which meant the father could be very much at the bedside of his wife when they are expecting their child.

The timing is extraordinary though. The Crofts can name their son after the man of the match in the final or the winning captain, provided they have a son. But then to have a son or a daughter is a 50:50 chance. The odds on England getting to the final must have been a great deal more than even money.

Zimbabwe the spoilers

TRENT BRIDGE, England, June 12: India were left cursing their jinx team Zimbabwe, Pakistan and the cricket World Cup rules here on Friday after being knocked out of the tournament, reports AFP.

India players looked on from their armchairs as their fate was sealed at The Oval as Zimbabwe went down to Wasim Akram's Pakistan by 148 runs.

Team coach Anshuman Gaekwad, whose team had lost to Zimbabwe earlier in the competition, said: "In reality, Zimbabwe have done us in twice."

The defeat to Zimbabwe (in the first round) has proved costly for us.

"All of us were glued to the television, hoping Zimbabwe could do us a favour."

"But we still want to win our last match against New Zealand on Saturday - we may as well go out with a bang."

India lost to Zimbabwe by three runs, the narrowest margin of the tournament, on May 19 at Leicester.

Battle of wills

From page 13
against Zimbabwe.

To add to the rivalry, Australia won a home three-match Test series against South Africa in controversial circumstances last year.

Cronje's team looked set to win the third Test at Adelaide and square the series when Mark Waugh, after fending away a ball, swung round and hit down his stumps.

The umpires, however, judged 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 and save the game.

They had gone into the game with the key batsman Sachin Tendulkar, who had returned to India to attend his father's funeral.

India looked set for victory but lost their last three wickets in the 49th over to paceman Henry Olunga.

Gaekwad said he felt the World Cup organisers should look at the points system.

Zimbabwe admitted they were delighted with snatching a point against New Zealand. The African side were struggling when the rain came down and washed out the Super Six match at Headingley.

Gaekwad said: "They may have to do something about the rain rule. One point each may not be right. You can two points for winning and half for not playing at all."

"Maybe three points for a win could be looked into."

Nowhere in Britain!

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Byas shows tykes the way

LONDON, June 12: Yorkshire captain David Byas led his side by example as a six-wicket English County Championship win over Hampshire at Basingstoke Friday, reports AP.

Yorkshire, chasing a victory target of 139, lost openers Greg Blewett and Michael Vaughan for four apiece and with just 13 on the board.

But Byas underpinned Yorkshire's charge with a sparkling 95, before falling leg before to former Yorkshire bowler Peter Hartley, who finished with match figures of 11 for 113.

Once he departed, Yorkshire were just two short of victory, which left Anthony McGrath to strike the winning runs.

Middlesex also celebrated a win inside three days as Glamorgan eventually succumbed to an innings defeat at Cardiff.

A seventh-wicket partnership of 72 in 22 overs between Mike Powell (83no) and Keith Newell (28) only held up Middlesex's success.

Essex became the third victors of the day with a comfortable nine-wicket win over Derbyshire after bowling the visitors out for 131.

Ricardo Anderson was the hero with a five for 37 haul, which left Essex with the meagre target of 136.

Lancashire put up a brave fight against Warwickshire at Southport before succumbing to a 19-run defeat.

Ed Giddins and Dougie Brown snared three victims

Ben will run alone

TORONTO, June 12: The Ben Johnson saga took another bizarre twist on Friday, reports AP.

Morris Chrobotek, Johnson's agent, wanted the sprinter to compete Saturday at a meet in Kitchener, Ontario. But mindful that anyone who runs in a race with Johnson is subject to suspension until his reinstatement appeal is dealt with by the International Amateur Athletic Federation, Chrobotek said Johnson would run against the clock, rather than other competitors.

The idea was to show the 37-year-old Johnson can run under the Canadian 100-meter standard of 10.6 seconds, the time needed to qualify for the national championships.

But the Ontario Track and Field Association said if Johnson wants to run, he has to do it before or after the meet — not as part of it.

Association director Cecil Smith said the decision was made because had Johnson run, all meet competitors would face disqualification under the IAAF's "contamination rule."

"We don't want to hurt or contaminate anyone," Chrobotek said. "We just want to show that Ben is capable of running under the standard."

"All I'm looking for is someone to fire the gun and let him take off from the blocks. Ben can't contaminate a clock, can he?"

The IAAF, track's world governing body, banned Johnson after a second positive drug test in 1993.

Johnson, who raced against a car and two horses in a charity event earlier this year, already has tried to register to compete at the Canadian championships. But Athletics Canada denied the application for the June 25-27 meet at Winnipeg because Johnson remains under suspension until the IAAF rules on his reinstatement appeal Aug. 17.

Arbitrator Graeme Mew ruled April 19 that Johnson be reinstated in Canada because Canadian track authorities failed to make all of Johnson's appeal options clear in 1993. But the report stated Johnson couldn't compete in Canada before the IAAF decided his fate.

Even if Johnson runs under 10.6 and the IAAF deems him eligible for the Canadian championships, he couldn't compete because he didn't beat the standard at a sanctioned competition.

That doesn't bother Chrobotek. "We'll be there no matter what," Chrobotek said. "If they want to recognize it, they will. If they don't, they don't. It won't be our problem."

Head-to-head

Australia won the last three-match Test series against South Africa 1-0, but Hansie Cronje's team ended the third Test feeling cheated after Mark Waugh was given not out after hitting his stumps. His unbeaten century helped Australia avoid defeat and win the series. South Africa have had the upper hand in recent one-dayers. They won six games in a row up to January 1998, but then lost the next two as Australia stole a home tri-nation tournament. The last time they met was in an unofficial encounter at the Commonwealth Games, when an under-strength South Africa beat Steve Waugh's full-strength team in the final. Pollock took four for 14 that day, with Steve Waugh hitting 90 not out.

1999 WORLD CUP RESULTS

Australia: Beat Scotland by six wickets, lost to Pakistan by 10 runs, lost to New Zealand by five wickets, beat Bangladesh by seven wickets, beat West Indies by 6 wickets. Super Six: Beat India by 77 runs, beat Zimbabwe by 44 runs.

South Africa: Beat India by 4 wickets, beat Sri Lanka by 89 runs, beat Kenya by 7 wickets, beat England by 122 runs, lost to Zimbabwe by 48 runs. Super Six: Beat Pakistan by 3 wickets, beat New Zealand by 74 runs.