

Sport

Bits and pieces

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based punter has placed 125,000 Australian dollars (\$82,500) on South Africa to beat Australia in their World Cup semifinal, a spokesman for a Australian betting firm said today, reports Reuters.

Australia and South Africa meet in the semifinal at Edgbaston today.

A spokesman for Darwin All Sports said the punter backed South Africa at \$ 1.65 Australian dollars or at odds of 6-4 on, to reach the final. If successful he would make an \$81,000 Australian dollars profit.

Man of the moment

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They won the title under Imran Khan in 1992 beating England before 100,000 Australian fans at the Melbourne cricket ground.

Anwar, a 30-year-old computer engineer from Karachi, has 17 one-day centuries to Tendulkar's record-setting 22. But his 194 against India at Madras two years ago remains unsurpassed.

The Indian attack holds special fascination for Anwar.

In the inaugural Asian Test match at Calcutta yesterday, Anwar carried his bat for an undefeated 188 in the second innings as Pakistan recovered from a seemingly hopeless 26 for six on the first morning to win the match.

It surpassed his 176 against England at The Oval in 1996.

Anwar was almost lost to cricket two years ago when he returned from Australia with what was later diagnosed as fatigue syndrome.

"I was tiring easily," Anwar remembered. "I got out of bed and could not walk. I thought I would die."

Anwar exhausted and suffering from cramps in the unbearable Madras heat, needed a runner in the later part of his innings of 194. But he believes the time is not far when a batsman would get 200 in a one-day match.

"It can be done, specially on the flat sub-continent wickets where the bat dominates the ball," he said.

"I was too tired at Madras. But I have always dreamt since then of reaching 200."

Akram and the whole of Pakistan will settle for much less if he can get a third successive World Cup century in the final at Lord's on Sunday.

Pin-up boy

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was the Sun's caption of Akhtar's action photo, and described one-sided the semi-final as an 'open and shut case.'

The Mirror, under the headline Runaway Akhtar railroads Kiwis', said his 'breath-taking speed and ruthless approach brought New Zealand to their knees.'

The paper gave due credit to the record first-wicket stand between century-maker Saeed Anwar and Wajahatullah Wasti, but said 'the abiding memory of this sadly one-sided semi-final was the explosive bowling of Shoaib.'

"There has been no more thrilling spectacle than the Rawalpindi Express accelerating to the wicket off that fearsome 30-yard run-up, frequently followed by a splintering of stumps."

The papers, however, came down heavily on the unruly fans who invaded the pitch when Pakistan still needed six for victory and were relieved none of the players were injured.

"It was a grotesque, indeed an unacceptable way for an international match to conclude," the Telegraph said, adding: "If security arrangements are not tightened for Sunday's final at Lord's, the competition could yet end with a serious disturbance."

Interesting Internet

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the ground," it noted at the start of one match in Birmingham, "no doubt seeking refuge from their city."

"There's some hilarious irreverence on the site," enthused one frequent user, a London lawyer who naturally wanted his internet diversion to remain anonymous.

"It's not perhaps something you'd do at home, but while I'm at work it's a useful way of staying in touch. People would have bought in radios before, but now they can use this."

Other sites offer less spin and a more straight-up-and-down delivery. Khel (www.khel.com), seven-man operation based in Bombay, is more clinical, though no less exhaustive in its ball-by-ball coverage.

The UK-based site www.cricinfo.com offers up-to-the-minute news, scores and features while providing easy links to other sites.

www.cricworldcup99.com, for its part, offers a scrolling commentary running across the screen and an optional live feed from BBC radio.

In all cases, site access is free. Operations rely on advertising revenues, and Cricinfo estimates it has run up half a million dollars during the World Cup alone.

"That's the way the internet operates -- it is advertising-driven," said Rajesh Jain, director of IndiaWorld Communications which runs the Khel site.

For the Pakistan-India game we had 1.2 million page views," Jain said. "For our nine Indian and international advertisers, that's pretty good exposure."

"A lot of sites will naturally die once the World Cup is over, but we have built a community and will continue bringing live cricket to our visitors."

Black Caps

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failure was underlined by Tweste, regarded as little more than a canny, stubborn journeyman, scored 46, following an 80 not out against Australia, 54 not out against Scotland and 60 not out against India.

Batting at five, he finished with 318 runs in nine games. His World Cup average of 79.5, extraordinarily was three higher than the combined average of the four men above him.

Jeremy Coney, captain of the only New Zealand to win series in England and Australia, believes a lack of technique is the chief problem facing the current outfit.

"If you haven't got technique to fall back on, then you've got problems," he said.

New Zealand's other concern is their bowling, which apart from Allott looked short of class during the World Cup.

In response the New Zealand management are sending pace bowler Carl Bulfin and left-arm spinner Matthew Hart home after the Cup and flying in leg-spinner Brooke Walker.

Simon Doull, not required during the World Cup, is one of the best swing and seam bowlers in the world and will return for the England series and Matthew Bell will replace Astle as an opening bat.

"England are probably struggling a little after going out of the Cup," said Fleming. "But England are a good side."



Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne celebrates the fall of a South African wicket yesterday. — AFP photo

QUOTABLE QUOTES

LONDON, June 17: (AFP): Who said what during the Super Six second round of the 1999 cricket World Cup:

"He had Australia for breakfast, lunch and dinner." India coach Anshuman Gaekwad on Sachin Tendulkar, who hit three consecutive centuries against the Green Caps last year.

"I couldn't say I was out of form because I haven't been out there long enough to know." Australian batsman Darren Lehmann.

"It's not the Pakistani players we fear, but the fans." Indian captain Mohammed Azharuddin ahead of their politically-sensitive match at Old Trafford.

"It's only a game, after all." Pakistani cricket captain Wasim Akram appeals for calm before the match against India.

"Party away! Feel the warm glow. Wake up feeling good. Savour the moment, make it last." The Indian Express newspaper, after the victory over Pakistan.

"The jubilation today reminds me of December 16, 1971, when men, women and children came out of their homes to celebrate the victory of our independence war ... again the whole nation has awokened for another victory." Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after the team's win over Pakistan.

"It's not up to us any more. We don't want pushing and shoving while some idiot, who's had 26 pints, tries to wrestle the stump off us." A World Cup umpire after declaring they did not want to be responsible for protecting camera-stumps from fans during pitch invasions.

"It was the greatest day of my cricketing career. I hope they think they lost someone who could have played for them." Zimbabwe's Neil Johnson after taking three wickets and scoring 76 in the shock win over South Africa, the side that rejected him.

"I've just got a bad knee, ankle, groin and back. I'm an old man now." 29-year-old Zimbabwean Neil Johnson, after limping his way to 132 not out against Australia.

"Run, Inzlie, run!" Pakistan fans to Inzamamul Haq, a notoriously bad runner between the wickets.

"I haven't a clue when I was last out. World record, no, I didn't know. What world record? Wow, that's good, thanks." South African Lance Klusener on being informed he had overtaken Javed Miandad's record of 395 runs without being dismissed.

"They have the best fast bowler in the world in Allan Donald and a couple of world class players in Jacques Kallis and Daryl Cullinan in the middle-order. Then there is Klusener." New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming on South Africa.

"When he grows older, he will tell it's not all about being fast." South Africa captain Hansie Cronje after Pakistan pace sensation Shoaib Akhtar conceded 17 runs in the last-gasp defeat to the South Africans.

"I heard that even during practices, the players were using their mobile phones. They behaved as if they could not function without cellular phones." Sri Lankan cricket board chief Thilanga Sumathipala after the team's early World Cup exit.

"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." Pakistan manager Zafar Altaf after ball-tampering allegations were levelled at his players.

"I've been saying he's the best off-spinner ever that I've seen, and he showed that again today by taking a hat-trick." Wasim Akram after Saglan Mushtaq's heroics against Zimbabwe.

"I'm really not sure what people want from him. If they want to try and take the guy down and lose one of Australia's greatest ever cricketers, they're going the right way about it." Steve Waugh on press criticism of Shane Warne.

"Sometimes teams get written off too early, sometimes too much is written about some sides ... Other teams should be more concerned about us." Steve Waugh on press criticism of his team before they qualified for the semifinals.

"You can't blame Gibbs, it happens." South African skipper Hansie Cronje after Herschelle Gibbs dropped Steve Waugh off a sitter. The Australian captain went on to make 120 not out and win the game, depriving South Africa of an easy semi-final against Zimbabwe.

Cricket in America

RESTON, Virginia, June 17: (AP): The most vital pieces of equipment at this cricket match weren't the bats, balls, wickets or even water jugs in the 32-degree Celsius (90-degree Fahrenheit) heat of a Saturday afternoon.

Nope. The match between the Fairfax Cricket Club and Mobil 2 might not have been possible without a good supply of cellular phones, useful for tracking developments an ocean away.

Thirty-five balls, 36 runs, three wickets left" yelled one of the waiting FCC batsmen, holding a phone to his ear and excitedly licking off a barrage of statistics that mean nothing to 99 per cent of Americans.

"They're in contract, you can believe that," said Hal Sheik, taking in the numbers as he also waited his turn to bat. "The world of cell phones."

Make no mistake. Everyone who came to this Washington Cricket League match at Lake Fairfax Park loves to play the game. But the World Cup was taking place at the same time — specifically, a Super Sixes match between Pakistan and South Africa — and the distraction was just too great to ignore.

Someone had to stay behind, watch the game on television and phone in with the updates.

"You don't know how hard it was to come, leaving that game," said Faraz Haider, who moved to the United States from Karachi six years ago and paid 275 dollars for the full, 42-game World Cup package on pay-per-view.

With barely a ripple of attention in the land of baseball, the World Cup is of major importance to the 500 or so cricketers in the 26-team WCL, including David Roll, the only American-born player in the entire league.

"I'm fairly recognised because I'm the American guy," said Roll, the league's vice-president. "It's a sad statement. It's more due to a lack of exposure. A lot of people don't know it's played here, unless you stumble across a game."

Rolls tumbled across the few years back. He watched on television as England's Graham Gooch scored an amazing 333 against India. Roll saw a few other matches in person and was hooked.

Now, if he could only win over some of his countrymen.

"Most Americans complain about a baseball game that

takes 3, 3 1/2 hours," said Roll, who lives in Randallstown, Maryland. "So a cricket game that takes seven hours is going to be a hard sell."

There are cricket hotbeds scattered around the country in places such as Boston, New York, Washington and California, but they are dominated by immigrants from cricket-playing countries.

Roll estimates that 98 per cent of the players in the WCL come from the West Indies or the Indian subcontinent, with only a smattering from other major cricket nations — Australia, England, New Zealand, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

In fact, most cricket-lovers come to this country expecting their playing days to be over.



South Africa opener Herschelle Gibbs is bowled by Shane Warne yesterday. — AFP photo

Murali puts Surrey in spin

LONDON, June 17: Muttiah Muralitharan kept Lancashire in contention on the second day of their county championship match against leaders Surrey with another six wicket haul at The Oval, reports Reuters.

The Sri Lankan spinner, who took 14 wickets in the match on his championship debut last week, finished with 6087 as Surrey were dismissed for 298, giving them a first innings lead of 104.

England captain Alex Stewart artfully came good again, making his highest score in any class of cricket this season before being bowled by Muralitharan for 95.

Lancashire's former England skipper, Mike Atherton then followed suit by making 52 in his first game since recovering from the back injury that forced him to miss the World Cup.

By the close Lancashire had reached 100-3 in their second innings, still trailing by four runs.

At Southampton, second placed Hampshire were indebted to half-centuries from Robin Smith (78), Will Kendall (52) and Jason Laney (50) as they closed at 239-4 in reply to Leicestershire's 405 all out. Ben Smith, 126 not out overnight, was Leicestershire's last man out for 154 made off 310 balls with 16 fours.

England A batsman Chris Read hammered the day's top score of 160 — his maiden century — against Warwickshire at Trent Bridge. Read and Chris Tolley (51) shared a seventh-wicket stand of 148 to help Nottinghamshire recover from 10 for two overnight to reach 327 all out for a lead of 11. Warwickshire closed at 24-2.

At Canterbury, Steve James' second championship century of the season put Glamorgan in a strong position against Kent. James (103) shared century stands with Alun Evans (50) and Adrian Dale (46 not out) as the Welsh county closed 49 runs in arrears on 283-2.

At New Road, bottom of the table Worcestershire lead Somerset by 149 runs with seven second innings wickets in hand. At Headington, Yorkshire struggled to 124-7 in their second innings against Sussex for a lead of 203. Sussex had trailed by 79 after being all out first time round for 192.

At Eastbourne, the side that

after losing to Graf and ultimately struck an official of the WTA Tour before being led sobbing back to the court by her mother Melanie Molitor.

"There's no way that could happen again," she said at Eastbourne, where she is playing doubles in the grass-court warm-up for Wimbledon.

"I'm still young and I hope I can learn from it," she added.

Steve does it again

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as the one at Headington last Sunday that was differentiated by only two balls.

At World Cup's second semi-final, the combat to win the right to face Pakistan at the Lord's final, there was nothing to separate the two sides.

It was Jacques Kallis versus Mark Waugh, Allan Donald against Glenn McGrath.

Herschelle Gibbs pitted opposite Adam Gilchrist, Hansie Cronje facing Steve; the list goes on.

Pakistan, favourites now with South Africa to lift the trophy, could relax nonchalantly in their hotel room because whoever wins today, the date at Lord's would be equally challenging, a memorable contest. Despite the arguments against the methodology that ICC derived to pick the top two, the Lord's final coming Sunday promises

to be fitting finale to a wonderful tournament.

On a cold morning Hansie Cronje won a vital toss. When two bulls are equal to the task, it matters which one decides the sequence. Following Australia's miraculous win at Headington in the final Super Six match, thanks to Steve Waugh, Cronje just could not risk allowing the Aussies to chase again. They have proved they are good at it. He looked up. It was cloudy. And he decided to field. Mark Waugh, nay Shaun Pollock, proved him right almost instantly.

While acknowledging the spring in the wicket that put rubbed off much of the Aussie shine, full credit must go to the superb fielding of the South Africans. They were on full alert, not letting almost anything go, urging each other on.

This was Allan Donald's home ground. More than that,

the South African paceman owns a house in the suburbs of Birmingham, a stone's