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SHAWN SHUNS STEVE: South African speedster Shawn Pollock starts celebrating the fall of Australian skipper Steve Waugh at Edgbaston yesterday. —AFP photo

Black Caps can hold their heads high

MANCHESTER, England, June 17 (Reuters/AFP): Former All Black rugby captain John Graham does not like losing.

Yet there were no complaints from Graham, now manager of the cricket side, after New Zealand team lost to Pakistan by 10 wickets in Wednesday's World Cup semifinal.

"We're a small country," Graham reflected. "And at least we didn't just roll over."

The reality is that qualifying for the semifinals ahead of West Indies, England and India was a triumph for a team of modest ability whose sum was far greater than its parts.

"Would any New Zealander get into the South African side?" Graham asked rhetorically. "No. In the Australian side? No. In the Pakistan side? No."

"Geoff Allott might get in the Indian team but he'd be the only one."

Allott was one reason New Zealand got as far as they did in the tournament.

The lively left-arm pace bowler troubled all opening batsmen in the competition until Wednesday when he looked innocuous against Pakistan's openers Saeed Anwar and Wajahatullah Wasti.

The other major contributor was left-hand batsman Roger Twose, an expatriate Englishman who was never in contention for a place in the England side during his time with Warwickshire.

Asle didn't even manage to

get an average in double figures as he concluded his tournament in the same wretched fashion that he began it.

In his first Cup innings, against Bangladesh, the right-hander had made four on Wednesday, against Pakistan, he got to three before Shoaib Akhtar sent a high-speed delivery through his defence.

Regarded as New Zealand's top one-day player, Asle's loose technique outside the off stump was exposed. He batted nine times, reached double figures three times, had a top score of 26 and finished with an average of 8.8.

Matthew Horne, his partner, managed 74 against India but not much else on note with his way to an average of 24.87.

Number three Craig McMillan, touted as dangerous, pugnacious and a man to watch at the World Cup, finished with an average of just under 17.

McMillan, unable to indulge in his powerful front-foot strokeplay after being pinned back by the quicks, played what they call a 'nothing shot' to fall caught behind off Wasim Akram.

For McMillan, it has been a nothing World Cup.

Fleming did at least give his team a total to defend by hitting 41 against Pakistan. But the elegant left-hander knows a tournament average of 26 is not good enough for a number four.

New Zealand's collective

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Pakistan batsman Ijaz Ahmed asking pitch invaders to back off during the closing moments of the semifinal against New Zealand. —AFP photo

Sorry Youhana

OLD TRAFFORD, England, June 17: Injured Pakistani star Younus Youhana was facing a World Cup heartbreak today after his captain all but ruled him out of the final, reports AFP.

Wasim Akram said he doubted that the young batsman, an automatic choice at the start of the tournament, would be fit for Sunday's final — then suggested he would not be risked even if he were.

Akram said: "I don't think he will be fit... hamstrings are such a problem that it occurs again and again."

He hoped the 24-year-old right-hander would make it, only to add that he was not really concerned since his side were playing so well.

Akram said the pressure was off the batting at last, with Ijaz Ahmed finally finding form in the nine-wicket romp over New Zealand here on Wednesday.

Ijaz only played a cameo role of 28 not out after the World Cup record first-wicket stand of 194 between Saeed Anwar and Wajahatullah Wasti, but Akram said the way he played was important.

"Ijaz is looking good. He was brilliant today and that is a relief to me," he said.

The Lahore-born Youhana played in the opening games, impressing at number six. He played important innings

against the West Indies and Australia, as well as an 81 against Scotland.

But he then missed out with a hamstring injury. On his return against South Africa, he again damaged the same muscle.

That led to Akram changing the balance of his side, first trying pinch-hitter Shahid Afridi up the order, then drafting in Wasti as a specialist opener.

Akram seemed to hint that Wasti's success — he scored 84 in the semi-final virtually ruled

out a return for Youhana, even if he recovers in time.



Jubilant Pakistan fans gather on the Old Trafford pitch after the semifinal victory against New Zealand. —Internet photo

Party time in Pakistan

KARACHI, June 17: Thousands of youth thronged the streets in jubilation Thursday after Pakistan trounced New Zealand and qualified for the prestigious World Cup final, reports AFP.

Groups of youths danced to drum beats and exchanged hugs and greetings after opener Saeed Anwar scored the winning shot for Pakistan against the Kiwis.

Chasing 241, Pakistan pulverised New Zealand with a resounding nine-wicket victory in the semi-final.

Fans celebrated the victory by blowing horns, blasting fire crackers and firing in the air amid all-night revelry. Many

said they were confident that Pakistan will lift the 1999 World Cup.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, himself a cricket fan, congratulated skipper Wasim Akram and the rest of the team for their victory.

Praising them for bringing "glory" to the country, Sharif said he hoped the side would demonstrate the same skill and spirit in the final at Lord's on Sunday.

If Pakistan succeed it will be their second World Cup final triumph, after Imran Khan led the side to their first victory in the 1992 World Cup when they beat England in Australia.

Pakistan will play the win-

ner of the second final, between South Africa and Australia on Thursday.

Fans celebrating the win over the Kiwis said they believed the Pakistani side was strong enough to achieve the goal.

"Now our batting line up has clicked and we have proved that we are good chasers as well," one supporter Ahmed Shah said. "Only a conspiracy can defeat us now."

Pakistani fans have a love-hate relationship with cricketers, who are idolised after a win and accused of match-fixing after defeat.

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Interesting Internet

LONDON, June 17 (AFP): Whatever else it is remembered for, the 1999 World Cup will go down as the cricket tournament with a record number of hits.

Internet page 'hits', that is.

By the time the last ball is bowled in next Sunday's final, millions of cricket lovers will have followed the ins and outs of the five-week tournament on the handful of web pages saturated in statistics, scores and, occasionally, satire.

Cricket finds the world over used to face two major problems in following live matches. Fans based in countries with little cricket pedigree have always been stumped by sporadic or non-existent local television or radio coverage.

Secondly, matches like this week's World Cup semifinals tend to stretch through at least part of the working day, a state of play which used to leave the fan-at-work fumbling furtively with the radio dial when the boss wasn't looking.

Not any more.

Worldwide web spinners say there is something about the game, its leisurely pace and literary tradition, that lends itself perfectly to the desktop diehards.

Add in the geographical gaps in television and radio broadcasting footprints, which, for example, deprived the 1.5 million Indians living in the United States of traditional coverage, and a potentially huge market emerges.

"There aren't many other sports that fit as well on the net," said Ron Victor, who maintains the www.worldcupscore.com site with the help of four colleagues based in Silicon Valley, California. Visitors get real-time scores and can order five-over updates by email.

"It has continuous action through the whole day and there is sufficient interest globally, with people watching in geographies where the event is not available live on TV."

For Alex Balfour, chief operating officer of the popular [Cricinfo](http://www.cricinfo.org) site (www.cricinfo.org), the internet medium is perfect for cricket's time-honoured traditions of wry commentary and trainspotter-type statistics.

"The pace of the game suits the medium," Balfour said. "You can render the action in text format and there is a dearly loved tradition of cricket commentary. It's a game with a literary sensibility."

With its cheeky asides and exhaustive database, Cricinfo now claims to be the world's

biggest single-sport site. With more than eight million hits during last week's passionate encounter between India and Pakistan, it is a serious claim.

The site lures visitors with its wickedly facetious reflec-

tions on the action, noting everything about a match from a sock peaking through a hole in a bowler's boot to the length of sideburns sported by a fielder.

"People are streaming into

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DEADLY DONALD: Champion fast bowler Allan Donald is elated after finding the edge from Darren Lehmann yesterday. —AFP photo



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