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South African captain Hansie Cronje stands his ground while bowler Shane Warne and Steve Waugh celebrate Cronje's controversial dismissal. —Internet photo

His heart bleeding

BIRMINGHAM, June 18 (AP): South Africa's World Cup hopes, nurtured by victory after victory during their month-long labours on the cricket pitch, were dashed to pieces by one run, reports AP.

After their loss to Australia Thursday — the closest South Africa have come to the World Cup final in their three attempts — the team was too stunned and shocked to react, said captain Hansie Cronje.

Favourites to win the tournament, South Africa are now out of it. They lost the quarter-final to the West Indies in 1996 and to England in the 1992 semifinal, when they were robbed of a finals berth due to an unfair rain rule.

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The Australian camp was equally stunned.

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But as he tried to take the winning single on the third ball, Allan Donald on the non-striker's end responded late and was run out. South Africa were all out and their World Cup campaign lay to tatters.

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"We were very quiet afterwards and obviously very dark. The World Cup is the biggest prize of one-day cricket," he said.

"You do experience a lots of highs and lows in your career. It doesn't get more exciting than this. It is unfortunate that we were on the wrong side today," Cronje added.

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blame either Donald, for not running quickly enough, or Klusener, for attempting a risky run when he still had two balls to accomplish the task.

"When a drive goes straight, the non-striker is always anxious that the ball might hit the stumps so he has got to try and stand his ground," Cronje said.

"Obviously with the crowd so noisy he couldn't hear the batsman's call. You can't blame him or Lance," he said.

"Lance has pulled us out of many games and you can't blame an individual. We are far more mature than that," he said, adding that there was lot of sympathy for Klusener, who brought the team so close to victory with his 31 runs in 16 balls.

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