



It's the final countdown today.

Breaking Boundaries.



MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT POSSIBLE

Stage set for final showdown

From Nizamuddin Ahmed at Lord's

June 19: The stage is set for tomorrow's final of the 1999 Cricket World Cup. Everything is spick-and-span, trim and proper. The Lord's is bedecked for the big day no less than London is today for the Royal wedding of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones.

Forty-one matches since June 14, when it all began on this very ground, the Wembley of cricket, the Cannes of the gentleman's game, reigning runners-up Australia will take on 1996 quarterfinalists Pakistan in the combat that will decide who will kiss 'the golden globe and the three silver columns', worth stupendously more than the measly 27,000-sterling pounds it took to craft it.

The war (or 'Waugh') of words is on. Australia have issued their Warne-ing, Pakistan are 'Inza-mood' to play positive. Everyone is going crazy around here. Fatigue? Relief that the last of the marathon competition is finally here? Or, more likely, high expectations of the Millennium's last final? Seeding has changed over the past three years. Steve Waugh admitted Australia, only survivor of the 1996 semi-finals.

have learnt lessons from their Lahore final defeat to Sri Lanka. Nor are Pakistan suffer-

ing from any inferiority hang-up for not making the grade last time. This is a whole new ball

game. The two finalists have proved to be generously gifted of See page 14



THEY HAD BEEN ON THIS ROAD BEFORE: Wasim Akram (L) the Pakistani skipper is playing in his second final while his Australian counterpart Steve Waugh is in his third. By the end of the day one will be smiling for the second time in their careers. —Star file photo

BITS & PIECES



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LONDON, June 19 (AP): Shane Warne's four-wicket haul against South Africa on Thursday propelled Australia into the World Cup final and earned him heaps of praise. But the Aussie leg spinner still couldn't escape the critical eye of some of the British media.

Friday's tabloid Mirror newspaper reported Warne's effort under the headline: "It Ain't Over Until The Fat Boy Spins."

Warne is used to taunts about his weight and is certain to brush it off as "the opinion of someone who has no idea." He might have been happier with the Daily Star headline "Shane in the Neck."

But South Africa's Lance Klusener, a regular match winner for his country, might not be so understanding about the back-page headline which described his last-over mixup with Allan Donald as "Klueless."

Donald and Klusener face hands Aussies place in Lord's final" was how the Mirror explained Donald's run out when, after leveling the score at 213 apiece, Klusener tried to force the match-winning single.

What it didn't mention was that he'd belted 31 runs off 16 balls to put South Africa into contention and he was the leading strike-rate batsman throughout the tournament with 281 from eight innings and dismissed just once. See page 14

Skippers trade salvos



LONDON, June 19: Wasim Akram and Steve Waugh exchanged verbal blows here on Friday after the Pakistan skipper claimed Australia would go into the cricket World Cup against Pakistan struggling "mentally and physically," reports AFP.

Akram said Australia's tough run-up to Lord's final on Sunday would count against them.

"They must be tired mentally and physically. To have to win to get to the semi-finals and then again to get to the final must be tough."



"It has been a lot of stress for them. If it affects anybody, it will be to our advantage."

Australia have just played two of the most mentally-draining one-day games in the World Cup's 24-year history.

Last Sunday they beat South Africa with two balls to spare, thanks to an unbeaten 120 off 110 balls from Steve Waugh.

In the semi-final re-match at Edgbaston on Thursday, the sides tied on 213 runs - the first tie in 199 World Cup games since the tournament began in 1975.

Australia, who took the last South African wicket with two balls remaining, scraped through because of a better second innings. See page 14

Geared-up McGrath Lightning assassin

LONDON, June 19 (Reuters/Internet): Glenn McGrath returns to the scene of his greatest personal triumph on Sunday to lead Australia's attack in their quest to lift the World Cup.

When McGrath takes the field at Lord's for the final against Pakistan it will be two years to the day since he embarked on his most memorable fast bowling performance.

It was June 20, 1997, in the rain-hit second Ashes Test against England when McGrath captured the first three wickets of his superb haul of eight for 38 - still his best figures in Tests as well as being the best by an Australian at Lord's.

Playing at the game's traditional headquarters on a big occasion brings out the best in most cricketers from abroad but Australians always seem to be particularly inspired. McGrath is no exception.

Sunday's final offers the prospect of a fascinating comparison between the skills and style of the tall and rangy New South Wales paceman and Pakistan's last bowling spearhead Shoaib Akhtar.

Shoaib is the fastest bowler in the tournament, with some deliveries registered at 95 mph by the speedometer which measures the pace of the ball and displays it on a monitor screen at the boundary.

McGrath does not rely purely on speed. From a straight run-up he bowls close to the stumps, enhancing his ability to trap batsmen leg before, and his high action enables him to achieve significant bounce.

An effective slower delivery and impeccable control add to his armoury.

Part of Australia's strategy for the final rests on exposing Pakistan's batting by taking two or three top order wickets early to put pressure on the succeeding batsmen. They will look to McGrath for the telling strikes. See page 14

UNDATED, June 19 (AFP/Internet): Pakistan pace bowler Shoaib Akhtar said here on Friday breaking the 100-mile-per-hour barrier in the cricket World Cup final against Australia would be nothing compared to winning the trophy.

The 23-year-old, dubbed the 'Rawalpindi Express' after his bowling was timed at 95mph during the tournament, said:

"I'll be thinking about winning the final and getting the job done for my team."

"Expectations always make me scared but thankfully things have gone well for me here - but as for 100mph, I've been playing for a few months and I'm a bit knackered."

Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, however, has stressed throughout the tournament that Akhtar was still learning



"I'll try my level best to bowl at 100mph but I'm not thinking about it."

to combine control with his pace. See page 14

Test of toughness

LONDON, June 19 (Internet report): Wasim Akram is backing his Pakistan team to beat Australia at their own game when the two sides meet in Sunday's World Cup final at Lord's.

In a showdown both captains admit could well be won and lost as much by mental strengths and weaknesses as by cricketing ability, Wasim believes his team can more than match the Aussies' world-renowned never-say-die attitude.

"The amount the whole Pakistan side have had to go through over the last couple of years has made us tougher than any opposition in the world," said Wasim.

"We have stuck together and qualified for the final and we are now just one match away from winning the trophy."

"I have tried to pass all this on to the younger players - how best to prepare for big games - and hopefully they are learning from me and they have re-



Australia are widely acknowledged as the toughest side in world cricket, with captain Steve Waugh epitomising their refusal to give an inch to the opposition, notably in their titanic battles with South Africa over the last week.

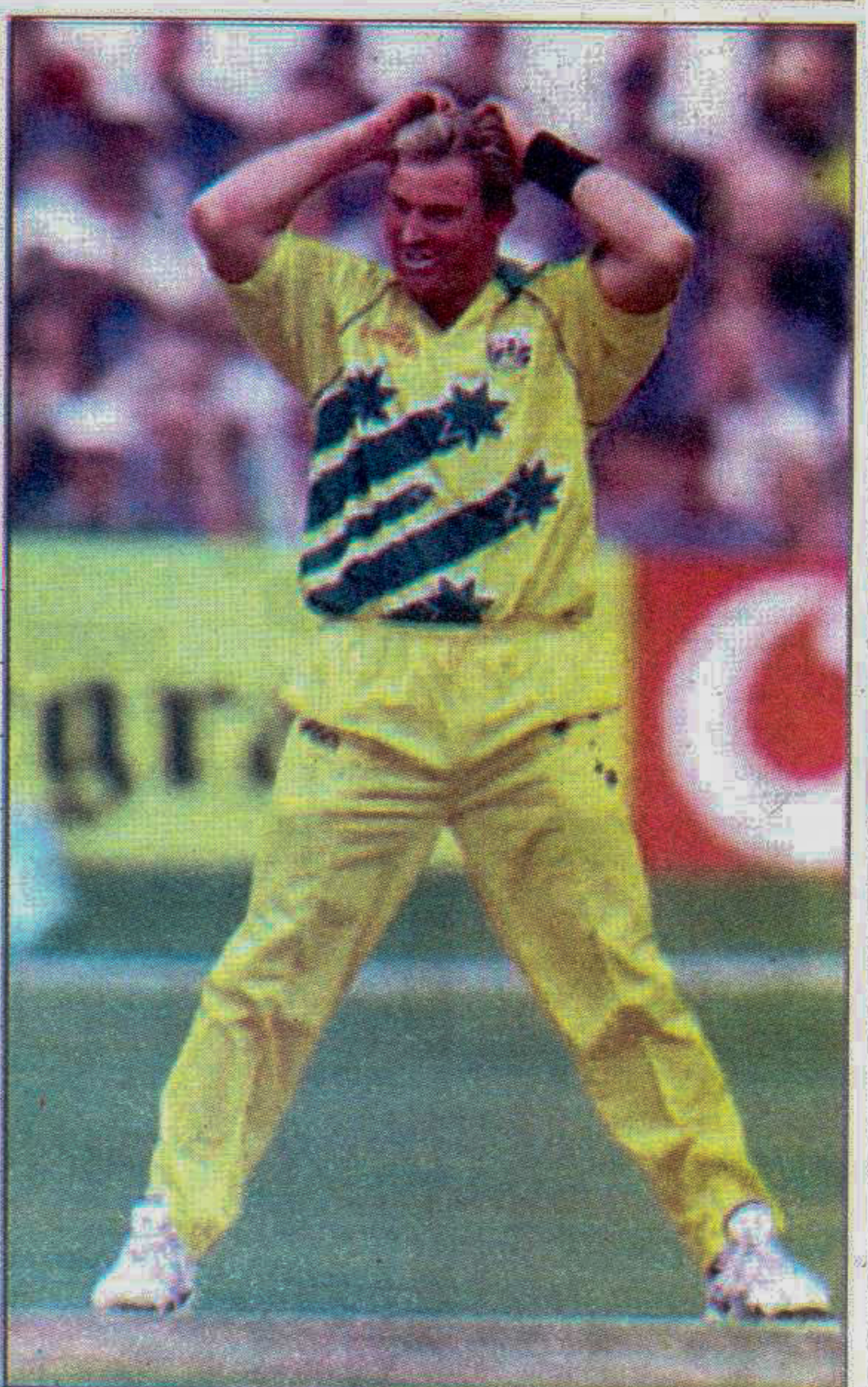
But with just over 24 hours before the two sides collide in front of a capacity Lord's crowd, Pakistan captain Wasim not only questioned the strength of the Australian psyche but also insisted his side of alleged volatile temperaments are the hardest and toughest of them all.

Wasim also believes the Pakistani resolve could not be any stronger than it is.

Wasim's views, particularly given the explosive temperaments contained in the Pakistan dressing room, will surprise many people. Not least of them will be Waugh, who responded to the Pakistan captain's comments about mental toughness by saying: "That's a good laugh."

The Aussie captain added: "I think we're the toughest side going - that's why we're number one in Test cricket and hopefully after Sunday we'll be number one in one-day cricket as well."

"We've been on the road for the last nine months, and I haven't been at home for the last nine months. See page 14



WHAT'S UP HIS SLEEVES TODAY? The world's best leg spinner can win the final single-handedly for Australia. —Internet photo

Good Luck to the Finalists

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