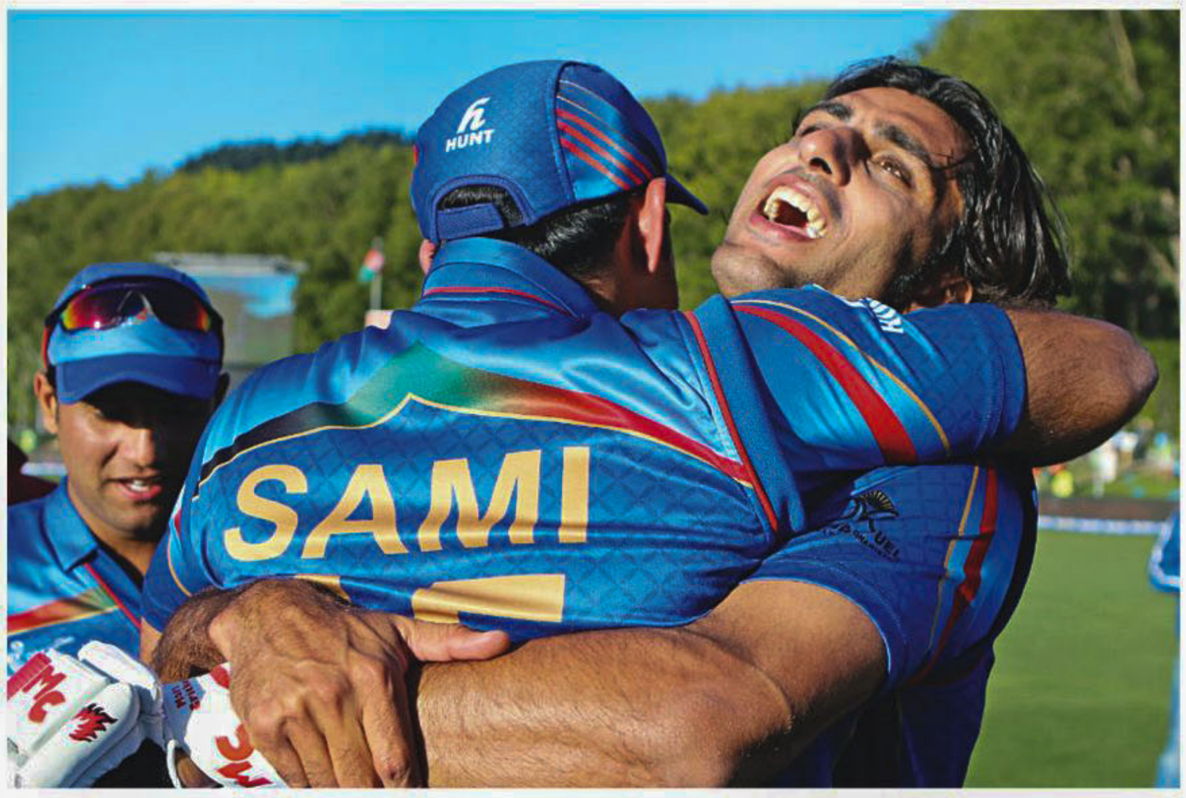

Afghanistan players celebrate their maiden World Cup victory over Scotland at the University Oval in Dunedin yesterday.

PHOTO: ICC

Maiden win for Afghans

AFP, *Dunedin*

Afghanistan posted their first-ever victory at the World Cup on Thursday with a nail-biting one-wicket win over Scotland in Dunedin on Thursday.

Afghanistan chased down their target of 211 with just three balls to spare, bringing up a remarkable win for the minnows, appearing in their first World Cup.

Samiullah Shenwari who like many of the Afghan players learned his cricket in refugee camps after fleeing civil strife back home, rescued the side with a defiant 96 after they had collapsed to 97 for seven.

Javed Ahmadi contributed 51, while tail-ender Shapoor Zadran scored the winning runs, courtesy of a last-over boundary off Scotland paceman Iain Wardlaw.

Shapoor, who had earlier excelled with the ball, fell face down on the ground with relief after seeing Afghanistan home as the gutted Scots looked on.

The loss left Scotland still seeking a first win at a World Cup, with their overall record now standing at 11 defeats from as many matches over three campaigns at the tournament.

The Scots were all out for 210 off the final ball of their allotted 50 overs at Dunedin's University Oval after losing the toss and being sent into bat in this Pool A clash.

Afghanistan's decision to bowl first paid dividends on a green wicket as left-arm paceman Shapoor took four for 38 in his maximum permitted 10 overs.

But a 62-run stand for the ninth wicket took Scotland past 200 for the first time at a World Cup to provide a defendable total for their bowlers.

Several of the Scottish batsmen made starts but could not convert them in the face of Afghanistan's spirited bowling effort.

The Afghans made a strong start to their chase, with opening batsman Ahmadi notching his fifth one-day international half century off 48 balls.

Ahmadi's knock had Afghanistan at 85 for two after 18 overs, putting them into a good position for an all-out assault late in the innings.

But his departure sparked a dramatic collapse, with Mohammed Nabi gone two balls later followed by a first-ball duck for Afsar Zazai.

It could have been worse for Afghanistan, with Shenwari dropped on 20 by Majid Haq in the slips.

Haq soon made amends for his mistake, catching Najibullah Zadran and Gulbadin Naib in quick succession to leave Afghanistan teetering on 97 for seven.

But Shenwari made the most of his reprieve and kept the innings alive, working with the tail to patiently graft a Test-like innings of 96 from 147 balls.

When he finally decided to unload, Shenwari plundered three sixes off a single Haq over but was caught on the boundary going for a fourth.

That left Afghanistan needing 19 off 19 balls from the unlikely pair of Shapoor and Hamid Hassan.

Shapoor capitalised after Richie Berrington delivered a wide in the penultimate over, hitting a boundary off the extra delivery.

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Jubilation everywhere

AFP, *Kandahar*

Hundreds of jubilant Afghan cricket fans flooded onto the streets of major cities Thursday, dancing, waving flags and firing AK-47s in celebration at their team's historic World Cup win over Scotland.

Afghanistan, making their World Cup debut, secured a nailbiting one-wicket win over the Scots in Dunedin, chasing down the 211 target with just three balls to spare.

In Kandahar, the southern city once famous as the Taliban heartland and now a bastion of cricket, ecstatic fans danced in the streets and fired off their weapons -- a traditional Afghan gesture of celebration.

"After Afghanistan lost the seventh wicket, I smashed my phone in anger and cursed my team. Now they have won, I cannot believe it, but I am very happy," Abdul Samad told AFP.

There was more dancing and celebratory gunfire in the eastern city of Jalalabad, where university student Mirwais Rahman gave his classmates an unexpected surprise.

"I was in my class, but was not listening to the teacher, I had an earplug listening to the cricket on the radio," he told AFP.

"When four balls remained and Shapoor hit the winning boundary I cried out in happiness."

In Kabul groups of fans drove the city's streets, waving flags and chanting slogans from car windows.

After the win, President Ashraf Ghani issued a statement extending congratulations to the Afghan cricketers and urged them to carry on their exploits in their next game.

Shenwari's simple job done

AFP, *Dunedin*

Samiullah Shenwari insisted he'd simply "done my job" after his superb 96 set-up Afghanistan's first-ever World Cup win with a thrilling one-wicket victory over Scotland in Dunedin on Thursday.

Afghanistan collapsed to 97 for seven in pursuit of a modest target of 211 and were all but out of this Pool A clash at University Oval.

But for the second time in as many days, following Ireland's nailbiting win over the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday, two non-Test nations produced a dramatic climax to a World Cup match.

Shenwari turned this contest on its head with a 147-ball innings featuring seven fours and five sixes.

But when he holed out off spinner Majid Haq, trying to go for another six, Afghanistan still needed 19 more runs off as many balls with just one wicket standing.

However, the last-wicket duo of Hamid Hassan (15 not out) and Shapoor Zadran (12 not out) held their nerve, with Shapoor looking anything but a No 11 as he struck the winning boundary off Iain Wardlaw three balls into the last over.

"It was difficult because we lost early wickets but I did my job," said man-of-the-match Shenwari.

After he was out, Shenwari could be seen sitting with his head in his hands, seemingly in despair at costing Afghanistan the match.

"It was a very poor shot," he admitted. "I was trying to get another six but it was a very good win for us."

Afghanistan captain Mohammmad Nabi thought his side had thrown away their chance with the bat after restricting Scotland to 210 all out in an innings where left-arm paceman Shapoor took an impressive four for 38 in his maximum permitted 10 overs.

"The pressure was extreme again but Shenwari batted brilliantly," said Nabi. "It's good to put two points on the board. This is our first win in the World Cup and everyone [in Afghanistan] will enjoy this."

For Scotland, now appearing in their third World Cup, the wait for a win in the tournament goes on after they looked certain to break their duck in Dunedin -- the Gaelic name for Edinburgh.

NZ take casual approach

AFP, *Auckland*

Veteran spinner Daniel Vettori said Thursday that New Zealand would stick with their tried and trusted "casual" pre-match routine rather than let the enormity of Saturday's World Cup clash against Australia overwhelm them.

Saturday's match between the tournament co-hosts at Auckland's Eden Park promises to be a high-class contest, with two title contenders battling for pole position in Pool A, a finish which would mean they faced the relatively weaker fourth and final qualifier from Pool B in the last eight.

But Vettori, a veteran of 289 one-day internationals, with 57 against Australia, was trying to keep a lid on all the hype surrounding the match.

"The casual build-up has worked pretty well for us. I don't think there'll be much difference with the way we'll go about things," Vettori told reporters during a New Zealand training session on Thursday.

"We will look forward to Saturday rather than fear it," added the left-arm spinner, who stressed he had featured in "bigger" games than the latest trans-Tasman clash,

"World Cup semifinals are the biggest games I've played in," said Vettori, who featured in New Zealand's defeats by Sri Lanka in the last four of both the 2007 and 2011 editions.

"Which is not to say there's a keen sense of anticipation of what lies ahead," added Vettori, also a a member of the New Zealand side that lost to Australia in the 2009 Champions Trophy final in Centurion, South Africa.

"That won't change the New Zealand philosophy going into the game," said Vettori, with he Black Caps the form team of this World Cup so far after three wins in as many pool matches.

Rangpur stamp their authority

SPORTS REPORTER

As the final day of the National Cricket League drew to a close, Rangpur Divison were at the top with 11 points, followed by Khulna and Barisal, both at 8 points each.

At the BKSP, Chittagong started the day at 53 for 2 against Barisal. Nafees Iqbal's valiant 108 runs in Chittagong's first innings was followed by a duck in the second innings as they looked to be struggling after they were asked by Barisal to follow on. However, Tasamul Haque (120) and Irfan Sukkur (104) stayed at the crease till the game was safely drawn at 324 for 3.

At Fatullah Khulna finished their innings at 600 for 9, helped by Ziaur Rahman's knock of 110 in 139 balls, before declaring and putting the onus on Dhaka to survive the day. Dhaka played patiently with Abdul Mazid scoring 104 off 142 and Rony Talukder managed 78 off 120 before the match concluded as a draw at the end of 45 overs.

Rangpur cruised to a win at the BKSP's Ground number three against Rajshahi. Rajshahi were following on, beginning the day at 85 for one. They managed to put up 263 in their second innings, falling one run short of Rangpur's total. Muktar Ali was 70 not out, but he was the only one putting up a fight after Mizanur Rahman fell in the 43rd over for 61 runs. Sajedul Islam was the chief destroyer, picking up four wickets for 66 runs in 20 overs as Rangpur won by an innings and one run.

Dhaka were the other winners on the day as they won by a large 135-run margin against Sylhet. Sylhet began the day on 33 for one, but Dhaka's bowlers ran riot, with Sharifullah taking 3 wickets, while three other bowlers took 2 wickets each.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BARISAL: 597 for 9 v **CHITTAGONG:** 339 and 324 for 3 in 97 overs (Tasmul 120 not out, Irfan 104 not out; Nasum 1-101)
Result: Match drawn.

DHAKA: 366 and 216 for 2 (Mazid 104, Rony 78) v **KHULNA:** 600 for 9 (Tushar 158, Ziaur 110; Shahadat 2-62)
Result: Match Drawn

RAJSHAHI: 263 and 263 all out (Muktar 70; Sajedul 4-66, Subashis 2-50) v **RANGPUR:** 527 for 6 declared.
Result: Rangpur won by an innings and one run.

DHAKA METRO: 264 and 264 for 8 v **SYLHET:** 171 all out and 222 all out in 101.2 overs (Ruman 39; Sharifullah 3-44, Ayub 2-19)
Result: Dhaka won by 135 runs.

INFO ZONE

SOUTH AFRICA V WEST INDIES

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUPS

M	W	L		M	W	L
5	3	2		5	2	3

IN ALL ODIS

M	W	L		M	W	L
57	42	13		57	13	42

Last Meeting : 28 th Jan 2015 at Super Sport Park,Centurion. South Africa won by 131 runs.

KEY PLAYERS

DAVID MILLER		CHRIS GAYLE
37.76	BAT AVG	37.44
8	INNS	261
99.66	STRIKE RATE	84.82
1473	RUNS	9136
138*	HS	215
8	50S	46
2	100S	15
22	LAST MATCH	215 &2/35

FAN ZONE

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka fans took over the MCG yesterday, while the Afghans took to the streets to celebrate their first ever World Cup win.

Towheed Hussain: The Lions are roaring and the Tigers can only purr about it.
Murad Mamun: Good luck Tigers! Let's fight back, let's roar again, and let's show the world we can rise.