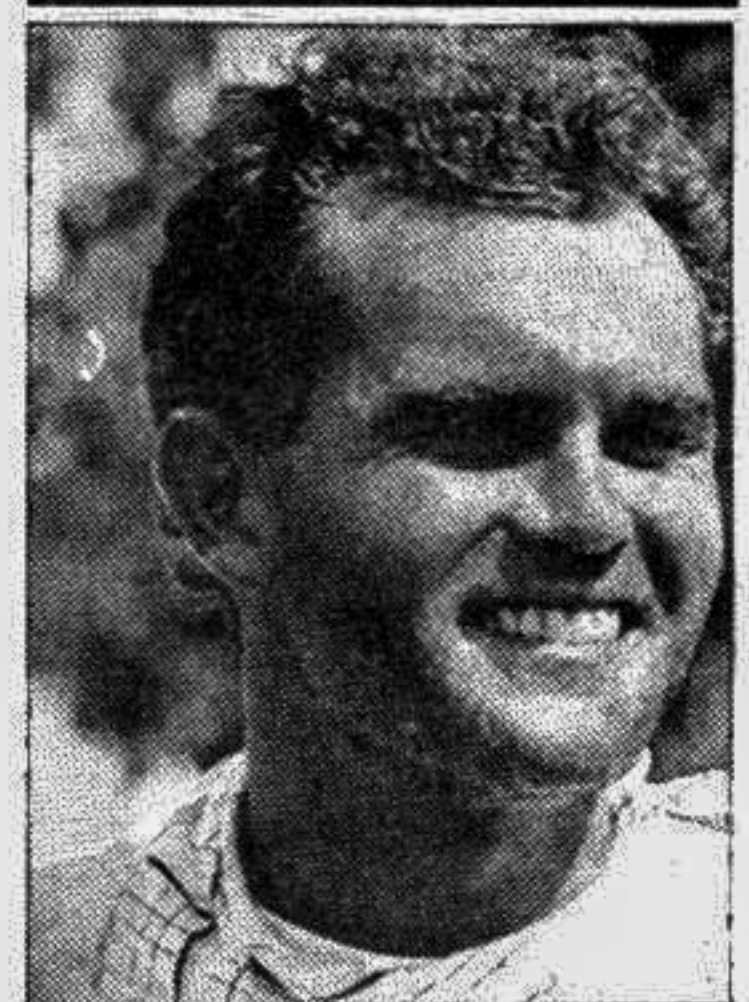


Column One

SPORTS TALK



Martin Crowe
(Former New Zealand captain)
"If we can get our bowling and fielding up to top-notch standard, and that is the key in restricting your opponents, then we'll do well."
On New Zealand's prospect in the World Cup.

Boost sports WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN
Competition-115

✓ Tick the Correct Answers
Post to The Daily Star
Win attractive prizes
Competition closes at 8 pm
May 7, '99 and draw shortly afterwards

- Who will replace Bob Woolmer as South African cricket coach?
Ford Stewart Marsh
- When England last hosted cricket World Cup?
1975 1987 1993
- Umpire Steve Bucknor is a
Guyanese Jamaican Trinidadian
- The final match of the 1999 cricket World Cup will be held at
Edgbaston Lord's Oval
- The World Cup match between Bangladesh and Scotland will be played in
Edinburgh Belfast Cardiff

Name
Class Roll No.
School Address
Phone: (If any)



Biman Cup
Joypurhat in final



Joypurhat moved into the final of the Biman Cup under-14 national football championship beating Nilphamari 2-0 at the Joypurhat Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

The hosts will take on Chittagong in the final on Saturday at the same venue.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain will be present in the final as the chief guest.

In the day's match, Firoz scored both goals for the winners. Nannu of Joypurhat was awarded a yellow card.

IUB chess
At the end of the third round of the third IUB chess tournament yesterday, 5 players were leading the points table after winning their respective matches. They are Rafiqul Rahman, Roni, Numayr, Enam, Mahmudul, Mahmud Razaque and Asif Altaf, says a press release.

In this round, defending champion Roni played with black pieces and defeated his opponent Alok Azeem in 27 moves initiating the Sicilian Defense (Taimanov Variation). Numayr beat Shyam, Mahmudul beat Riyadh, Mahmud beat Murad and Sajjad edge past Kamrul.

F'ganj's BGM
Sports Reporter

The biennial general meeting of Farashganj Sporting Club will be held at the Lalkuthi auditorium in Sutrapur today. The opening session will start at 9:30 am.

All the members of the club have been asked to be present in the day long programme.

Best outside bet

WELLINGTON, May 6 (AFP) - The Cricketer magazine, somewhat flatteringly, recently ranked New Zealand the fourth best one-day side in world cricket.

The editor of the cricket bible Wisden, Matthew Engel, in contrast, questioned their credentials and labeled them the globe's least charismatic side.

The truth, as the World Cup approaches, probably lies somewhere in the middle. Stephen Fleming, however, will be quite happy if his squad is overlooked and underestimated during the tournament.

The New Zealanders of 1992 were not taken seriously either yet, inspired by Martin Crowe, they dominated the first round of the tournament before losing to eventual winners Pakistan in the semi-finals.

It was their third semi-final appearance after 1975 and 1979 and they can boast World Cup victories over every Test-playing nation. Against England, they have won as many as they have lost, while they have won three of five encounters against India.

Yet the Kiwis' image remains unchanged today - a team of shooting stars, capable of beating any opposition on their day but who rarely put together a significant run of success.

They lived up to that at the start of this year. First, they beat India in a home Test series before drawing the one-dayers 2-2, then - admittedly after being outclassed in the Tests - they lost the limited-over internationals 3-2 against South Africa, ranked the world's best one-day team.

The Proteas, fresh from giving the West Indies a drubbing, had to fight back from 2-1 down and only just made it. In the fourth game they scored a six off the last ball to scramble victory.

Former South African all-rounder Mike Procter predicted then that New Zealand would continue to surprise top teams.

Coach Steve Rixon wants more. He argues the team, so often divided in the past by the clashes of huge cricketers egos, are now such a happy and united unit that victory in the World Cup is a "achievable target".

To progress from group B, however, they will have to get the better of at least one of Australia, West Indies and Pakistan, as well as Bangladesh and Scotland.

Several problems persist - solid opening partnerships have been rare, the top order remains brittle, batsmen fail to develop good starts into substantial scores and a predominantly medium-paced attack looks dangerously predictable and short on wicket-taking teeth.

But in Nathan Astle.



FIXTURES
New Zealand Group B
First-round
May 17: v Bangladesh, Chelmsford
May 20: v Australia, Cardiff
May 24: v West Indies, Southampton
May 28: v Pakistan, Derby
May 31: v Scotland, Edinburgh

Matthew Horne, captain Stephen Fleming, Craig McMillan, Chris Harris and Chris Cairns, the side has batting to mount a challenge against any attack.

All are exciting stroke-makers. The Black Caps are most dangerous when chasing rather than defending.



The 'Black Caps' are young, eager and exciting. —Star file photo

They also have a useful stable of all-rounders. Harris is a highly effective one-day player, his canny slow-medium often reserved for the 'slog overs', as is Dion Nash. Opening bat Astle can also chip in with useful medium pace.

The key element, however, comes in the shape of Chris Cairns, son of former Test player Lance. His right-arm pace has never been as effective as hoped, but his batting can be murderous. In Christchurch in January he hit the 13th-fastest one-day international century in history, reaching the mark against India in 76 balls.

Cairns has since suffered a serious hamstring injury against South Africa but is expected to return in time.

The return of Chris Cairns will help the balance, and with Dion Nash, his all-round abilities will be a bonus to the batting and bowling areas," says former New Zealand great Sir Richard Hadlee.

This side also masters the other core component of the one-day game - fielding. Against South Africa, probably the best fielding side in the world, they showed they are not far behind, taking several brilliant catches and hitting the wickets with a high percentage of throws.

County cricket on Glenn's mind

CARDIFF, May 6: Australian pace bowler Glenn McGrath is considering a move to an English county next season, reports AFP.

"County cricket is an option for me, it is something I would like to do," said the 29-year-old, who has taken 232 Test wickets. "I'm talking to a few clubs at the moment, and my manager is coming over shortly to see whether or not I will come to England in the 2000 season."

McGrath has taken advice from West Indies record Test wicket-taker Courtney Walsh and South African speedster Allan Donald about what he might expect in English cricket.

Former Gloucestershire captain Walsh and Warwickshire favourite Donald enjoyed illustrious careers in the English domestic game.

"I look at guys like Courtney and Allan Donald - they played a lot of county cricket and just seemed to be able to keep going and going," McGrath said.

"Maybe there is a secret behind playing cricket 12 months a year. I feel that during pre-season, you are at a bigger danger of picking up injuries, and maybe if you play all year around, then you take out that injury risk."

"I had a chat with Courtney recently during our West Indies tour about the specific demands of English county cricket, and it is something I would really look forward to and enjoy doing."

A couple of seasons here is not going to kill me," he added.

Donald ducks Lara!

HOVE, England, May 6: South African fast bowler Allan Donald Wednesday tried to play down a highly-publicised row with West Indian captain Brian Lara ahead of the World Cup, reports AFP.

The Daily Express newspaper published an extract from Donald's forthcoming autobiography which described how Donald made a derogatory remark at Lara from the South African dressing room.

Donald wrote that he had "lost all respect for him (Lara) as a captain" after Lara led West Indies to a humiliating 5-0 Test series defeat in South Africa last season.

In Hove Wednesday, though, Donald said the extract had been taken from an early draft of the book, "White Lightning", which will be published in London Monday.

"I was very disappointed with the way it came out," said Donald, who claimed he had told ghost writer Pat Murphy not to use the section.

"I was typed up when I started writing," said Donald, "but when the proofs were sent to me while I was touring New Zealand I said it needed toning down."

Daily Express reporter Colin Bateman said the extract had been checked with publisher Harper Collins.

Donald, who is in Hove preparing for the World Cup with the South African team, admitted he was not sure what was in the final version of the book, although he said Murphy had read a revised version over the telephone.

The fast bowler said: "It doesn't put me in a good light. Brian Lara and I have had our differences and in South Africa we came at each other hard. I don't think it should carry on, though."

Even though Donald said he regretted the publication of the extract, he said he would not apologise to Lara for what had appeared in print. "I won't talk to him about it. I didn't mean to offend anybody."

The dressing room row came after Lara refused a request by Donald for a pair of Lara's batting gloves to auction at a benefit function.

Lara later gave Donald a pair of gloves "without saying a word".

Donald claimed Lara failed to provide the strong leadership the West Indies needed in South Africa. "He seemed to spend more time playing golf than being with his squad."

Div III cricket

Chandpur Pioneer defeated Pallabi Cricket Club by 20 runs in the Third Division Cricket League at the T&T ground yesterday, reports UNB.

Opting to bat Chandpur Pioneer scored 82 for 9 in curtailed 15 overs with Siddiq Ali making an unbeaten 19 off 24 balls. Khatib, Masum and Zahid took two wickets each.

In reply, Pallabi CC were all out for 62 with one ball to spare. Masum scored 13 runs off 22 balls. Hasnat, Siddiq and Zakir captured two wickets each.

Office soccer final today

Neer Limited will meet Janata Bank in the first-ever Uttara Finance Office Football League's final today, reports APB.

The match will be played at the Mirpur Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at 4:00 pm. State Minister for Sports, Youth and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader will distribute trophies as the chief guest.

The Daily Star Sport

Countdown Gallery

5

4

3

2

1

7

6

days to go

Can Flemo strike form?

—Star file photo

Casual elegance personified

WELLINGTON, May 6 (AFP) - New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming looks dangerously casual at times when batting. Everything appears effortless - including his dismissals.

Like the Englishman, he is unimpressive. Like Gower, Fleming looks dangerously casual at times when batting. Everything appears effortless - including his dismissals.

Accusations that he cannot concentrate, however, have dissipated over recent years as he has begun to compile major scores.

A fine rugby player in his youth, Fleming made his debut as a 20-year-old in the 1993/4 season against India and scored 92, then made 90 in his first one-day international. But it was not until 1997, against England at Eden Park, that he finally made three figures in a Test.

Today, that psychological barrier is well and truly broken. Last May, in the first Test against Sri Lanka, Fleming scored his highest score of 174.

A tall, elegant left-hander,

Fleming is the team's most naturally talented batsman. Exuding class, he is at his best driving straight in the 'v' between mid-on and mid-off and at his worst against fast bowling angled across him. Kiwis see him as their version of David Gower.

He led them to a 1-0 home Test series victory against India at the end of last year before being injured in the opening game of the one-day series at Taupo.

That ruled him out of the series against South Africa, leaving Dion Nash to take over the reins. Outclassed in the Tests, the team performed creditably to lose the limited-over series 3-2.

Fleming's return should boost a side needing at least one victory against Australia, Pakistan or West Indies to have a chance of making the second round in the World Cup.

His average of 32.36 in the one-dayers - he has scored nearly 3,000 runs in his 100 internationals - will come in handy, as will his close catching - he boasts the joint world Test record of five catches in an innings and seven in a match.

not out.

By then he had already been made New Zealand's youngest captain, taking over from the hard-working but mediocre Lee German in 1997. He is already the most successful skipper, in terms of Test wins, that the team has ever had.

He led them to a 1-0 home Test series victory against India at the end of last year before being injured in the opening game of the one-day series at Taupo.

Chris misses Class Cairns

LONDON, May 6 (AFP) - Chris Cairns has spent most of his staccato career as a man for the future, forever labeled as a potential great who, one day, would compare with the likes of Richard Hadlee, Ian Botham and Kapil Dev.

With his 29th birthday fast approaching, however, time is running out. The World Cup may be his last chance to make an impact at a major event.

For a hugely talented natu-

ral, Cairns, son of the Test-playing Lance, has promised much but delivered significantly less.

Everything looks so right about him on the outside that one is tempted to suspect problems on the inside.

Cairns is a nicely-balanced right-arm pace bowler and a classical-looking batsman. At his best, he is a pleasure to watch.

But think of Cairns and inevitably you remember sporadic, murderous performances rather than extended runs of success.

There was his Test hundred off 86 balls against Zimbabwe in Auckland in 1996. Or his 75-ball century this year against India, the 13th fastest international one-day century in history.

Nottinghamshire fans still remember every one of his record 61 sixes he heaved for them during the 1995/96 season.

Look at the body of his work, however, and there are more sketches and doodles than finished canvases.

Injuries to his back and feet, hampering his bowling, have not helped. Nor has playing in an unsuccessful side. Cairns, however, has been unable to inspire those around him as New Zealand greats Hadlee and Martin Crowe did before him.

No one now seriously talks about Cairns in the same breath as the game's legends. They simply do not inhabit the same stratosphere. After 10 years of cricket, the New Zealander boasts 109 Test wickets. Kapil Dev ended his career with 434.

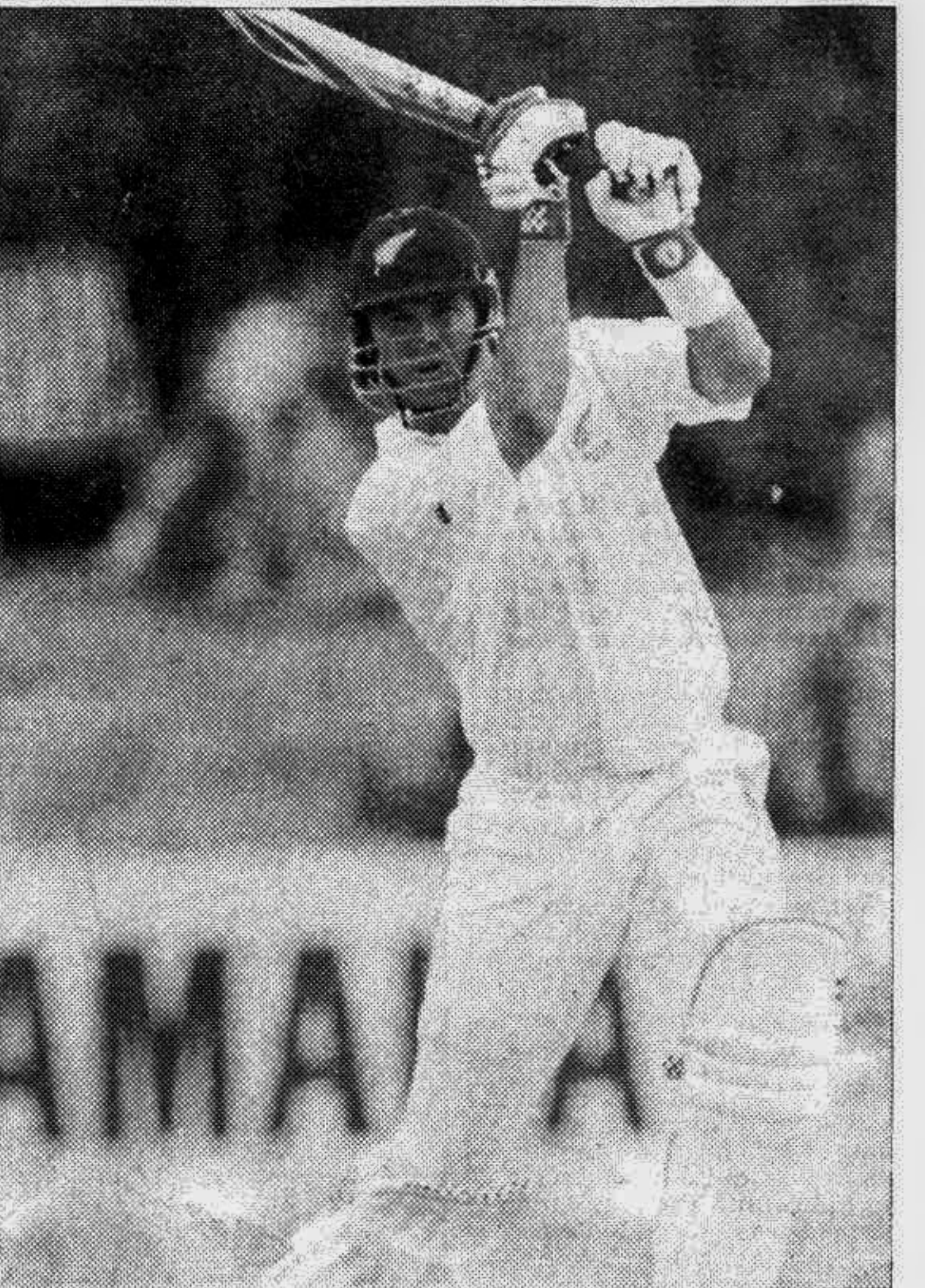
Cairns' record, however, also fails to compare with that of South African Shaun Pollock, the benchmark for today's all-rounders.

Pollock's Test wickets cost him 21.60 runs apiece and 23.21 in one-dayers. Cairns is around 10 runs more expensive in both formats. The New Zealander cannot keep up with the bat either. He averages less than 28 in Tests, almost five less than Pollock despite having played some games as a specialist batsman, and under 27 in one-dayers compared to the South African's 29.55.

New Zealand's former coach Glenn Turner, in a recently published book, suggested Cairns did not have the character or discipline to exploit his talent and claimed he often exploded with "uncontrollable rage" when told to follow team rules.

His critical view is shared by many New Zealanders.

The World Cup will provide Cairns with the perfect stage - the biggest stage of all - to rebut the criticism. The omens, however, are not good. To date, in 11 previous cup outings, he had managed just one half-century and a meager four wickets at 92 runs apiece.



Cairns can really clobber. —Star file photo

Gavo the Kiwi keel

WELLINGTON, May 6 (Reuters) - Gavin Larsen, New Zealand's "Mr Consistency", the slow medium bowler whose accuracy has undone the world's best batsmen.

His ability to put the ball on the spot with unfailing regularity makes him an automatic choice in the limited overs team and one of New Zealand's most effective weapons in the shortened version of the game.

Martin Crowe, who was Larsen's captain during the 1992 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, said: "Gavin has been around for a while and has never been found wanting."

"He has all the attributes needed for an all-rounder in the one-day game and is always a potential match-winner."

Larsen goes into the forthcoming tournament in England keen to exercise two particular World Cup ghosts.

One was the agony of watching Inzamamul Huq wrest the initiative from New Zealand by smashing 60 off 37 deliveries to power Pakistan to victory in the 1992 semifinals in Auckland.

"The frustration of that match is still around," Larsen told the news agency. "We had them on the ropes before Inzamam, in particular, literally cut loose."

Larsen agonised four years later when a torn calf muscle forced him to sit out the quarter-finals in Madras as New Zealand piled up 286 for nine against Australia, only to be thwarted by Mark Waugh stroked a match-winning 110.

"We thought 286 was enough to win it," said Larsen, "and we were doing well, until Mark Waugh came in played one of those awesome innings of his."

Crowe describes the World Cup as Larsen's forte. "Mentally, he is pretty focused and above all he is very intelligent and knows his limitations."

"But he doesn't want to fall into the trap of over-practising and risking injury, because he really is so vital to New Zealand's chances."

Larsen's haul of 107 wickets in 113 one-day internationals at an economy rate of 3.79 per over underlines his value.

Gavin's ability to hit that same spot just short of a driving length means that batsmen have to play him from the crease," says Crowe.

"On slowish wickets like we have in New Zealand and England, he is potent. To counter his bowling you have to go after him and that's what gets him so many of his wickets."

While the one-day game may be Larsen's speciality, he would like nothing more than still to be playing in Tests. His eight appearances have brought him a batting average of just 14.11 but a respectable bowling effort of 24 wickets at 28.70.



GAVIN LARSEN

Although no decision has been announced, Larsen is likely to be one of the New Zealand side to return home after the World Cup to make way for others on the subsequent four-Test tour of England.

"If that's the case then so be it," he said. "But it would be great to put in some one-day displays which make it tough for them to send me home."

Larsen believes New Zealand's Cup hopes centre on overcoming Scotland and Bangladesh and one of Australia, Pakistan or the West Indies in Group B to reach the second stage.

"It's a tough group but I think we have the ability to get through," Larsen says. "I know it's a bit of a cliché, but when we have the best team on the field on our day we can beat anyone."

Nepal welcomes cricket legends

KATHMANDU, May 6: A limited-over cricket series involving the stars of yesterday opened in Nepal today, reports Reuters.

Organisers said the four matches, including the final, of the World Legends' Cup 1999 would be played between teams from India, Pakistan and a World XI. The final will be held on Sunday.

Among those taking part are India's Kapil Dev and Kris Srikanth, Mazid Khan and Abdul Qadir of Pakistan, New Zealand's Danny Morrison, South Africa's Andrew Hudson, West Indian Deryck Murray, England's Greg Thomas and Ravi Ratnayake of Sri Lanka.

The tournament is being organised by India's Zee television, a private TV network, and the Cricket Association of Nepal.

India and the World XI took the field on Thursday for the inaugural match at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University grounds.