

Ranjan has fine day

Local boy Ranjan Ram advanced to the quarterfinals of the Dhaka Bank 22nd Bangladesh International Junior Tennis tournament...

In the boys doubles, Ranjan and Lin Keng Cheng of Chinese Taipei moved into the quarterfinals...

Prokhat clinch Gold Cup

Prokhat Sangha fended off an inspiring spell from former national player Morshed Ali Khan Shumon to win by 44 runs against Dashora Palli Mongol Samity (DPMS) to lift the Gold Cup title...

Opting to bat first Prokhat scored 169 in 44.2 overs with contributions from Tutul (31) and Saikat (24). Shahun took four while the left-armed Shumon snapped up three wickets.

DPMS faltered in their chase of 170 runs as they were bundled out for 125 in 30.2 overs with Pallab hitting 25 and Morshed scoring 15. Anchal and Saikat took three each for Prokhat while Ripon took two.

Shumon was adjudged man-of-the-final while Shahin was chosen as the player-of-the-tournament.

Steve's arrival delayed

England fast bowler Steve Harmison will join up with his teammates for the upcoming Test series in New Zealand next week after being given leave to stay at home for the birth of his fourth child.

He was due to arrive in New Zealand with fellow Test specialists Michael Vaughan and Matthew Hoggard on Friday but was informed he could stay in England to witness the birth.

Following discussions with the national selector Geoff Miller and the head coach Peter Moores, Stephen has been given dispensation to remain in the UK to attend the birth of his fourth child.

SA focus

FROM PAGE 17 cricket on the back page where it should be. We got a job to do here and we are going to get the job done.

"We have been really successful with the format that we've used and I don't see any reason to change that just yet. We've used three bombers and a spinner who come useful in the second innings of the game."

"It doesn't really affect us at the moment as a team. There hasn't been a distraction. Obviously we want to do well for South Africa. This year is probably the biggest opportunity we've all had to have a really successful season."

"Our concentration is on South Africa, winning tours here, India, Australia and England and that's why we want to be successful in the season. It's up to the players what they are going to achieve."

"I understand that Bangladesh's under-19 team are pretty strong, obviously guys coming through. But the international team are also pretty young still."

"They need to gain experience. We have seen them struggle abroad and the conditions that don't suit them and I think that's going to be the challenge for them. You keep play on low and slow wickets then you go abroad you will struggle. But as I said in this condition they are going to be a formidable force."



Great Britain's Sian Bayliss makes a forehand return while her partner Lisa Whybourne watches during their girls' doubles match against Chinese Taipei pair at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

PCB mulls options

Wants India if Aussies pull out



CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan are considering inviting India for a quickfire series of ODIs if, as is becoming increasingly likely, Australia pull out of their scheduled tour in March-April.

Doubts about whether Australia will come for their first tour in nearly a decade have increased day-by-day over the last week, the latest coming from Ricky Ponting, the Australian captain.

The Pakistan board has all along insisted its priority is to get Australia to come to visit, but has privately admitted they are working on alternative options, which include inviting another country over.

And a well-placed source revealed to Cricinfo that informal talks had been held with the BCCI about a series of ODIs in Pakistan in case Australia don't come.

"There have been informal discussions with the BCCI but nothing has been firmed up. Things will become clearer in a day or so," the source said.

Two PCB officials, including the chief operating officer Shafiqat Naghmi are currently touring India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh for bilateral board talks regarding scheduling ahead of an ICC meeting to devise the Future Tours Programme (FTP) till 2013.

The ostensible purpose of the mission is to fill the gaps in Pakistan's schedule in the current FTP.

The current Pakistan administration is said to be unhappy over their predecessor's work on the last FTP, which has left Pakistan with a number of gaps in their cricketing calendar.

"Pakistan played half the number of Tests that Australia did according to that FTP and that is something that needs to be rectified," the source said.

But as a result of Australia's hesitancy, the trip has become an opportunity for Pakistan to try and arrange an alternative contest with countries who are free in March-April.

Both boards, however, are officially denying the development. India, as ever, is hemmed in by a hectic schedule. Between their return from Australia and the first Test against South Africa, an ODI series, even just across the border, seems unlikely.

"It's not possible," a senior BCCI official told Cricinfo. "The Indian team returns from Australia on March 8 and the first Test against South Africa starts in Chennai on March 26. Where is the time?"

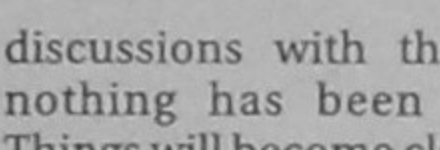
Ahsan Malik, the PCB spokesman, explained the PCB's focus was on getting Australia over. "This is an official trip with regards to the FTP till 2013. They wanted to meet boards and have a pre-scheduling round of meetings with them. Our full concentration is on playing Australia."

modest total of 109 by reducing India to 9-6 by the fourth over from skitting them for 71 in just 18.5 overs.

The three seamers who fashioned Pakistan's win -- Jamshed Ahmed (2-24), Anwar Ali (5-35) and Akhtar Ayub (3-9) -- have yet to play at the senior level, but India gave its young talent an early break.

Leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who took four wickets and scored an unbeaten 25 in the final, was playing a Test against England a month later and captain Rohit Sharma is now a one-day and Twenty20 regular.

Young guns are not daunted by reputations. In 2006, cricketing non-entities Nepal stumped South Africa in the preliminary league and went on to beat New Zealand in the Plate final -- held for teams who failed to qualify for the knock-



CRICINFO, undated

outs stages. Three cities, Kuala Lumpur, Johor and Penang, will host the tournament, which ends on March 2.

Five qualifiers and hosts Malaysia will join the ten regular cricket nations -- Australia, England, India, Pakistan, the West Indies, Sri Lanka, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

The regional qualifiers are Namibia (Africa), Nepal (Asia), Papua New Guinea (East Asia-Pacific), Ireland (Europe) and Bermuda (Americas).

The 16 teams have been divided into four groups, with the top two qualifying for the quarterfinals. The knockout matches and the final will all be played in Kuala Lumpur.

Gilly's last show at WACA

FROM PAGE 17 Jayawardene said his side bowled well, but lost too many early wickets and failed to offer enough support for Sangakkara.

"It was gettable, but we lost our way up front," he said.

When Gilchrist brought up the milestone with a push to long-on for a single off Muttiah Muralidaran, it was the signal for a celebration.

The crowd rose as the "Gilly" chant went up around the ground and Gilchrist savoured the moment, gesturing repeatedly to teammates, family and the crowd in what became an extended break in play.

Gilchrist did not produce the fireworks of his 57-ball Test century at the same venue just over a year ago, or his 104-ball 149 against the Sri Lankans in the World Cup final. But his century on Friday still took just 117 balls and 172 minutes.

However, his timing was impeccable from the moment the innings began and there were still shots that were vintage Gilchrist, most notably a big six straight down the ground off Farveez Maharoof and another over square leg off Nuwan Kulasekera to bring up his 50.

He attempted to lift the tempo after reaching his ton, lofting another massive six over backward square leg off Kulasekera before Malinga finally struck.

Gilchrist lacked support as the Australians lost their way after being well-placed at 171 for two.

He teamed up with Michael Clarke (43) to add 105 for the third wicket, but the Australians were never able to accelerate their scor-

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England stay alive



AFP, Auckland

Skipper Paul Collingwood led from the front as England bounced back from two drubbings to win the third one-day international against New Zealand here Friday to keep the series alive.

After taking three for 43 with the ball, Collingwood played 70 runs off just 50 balls to drag his side across the line when their momentum slowed.

England were set a revised target of 229 in 47 overs following a rain disruption at the start of their innings after New Zealand notched 234 for nine, thanks largely to a knock of 88 by Jacob Oram.

With seven overs to play, and England needing nearly a run a ball, Collingwood switched into a higher gear.

In consecutive overs he belted eight off Chris Martin, 11 off Kyle Mills then 17 off Paul Hitchcock before a tame single off Oram ended the match with 18 balls to spare.

At the other end, Owais Shah contributed six runs in the same period to finish 18 not out and ensure the five-match rubber stays alive.

Phil Mustard helped the tourists to a flying start with 15 off nine balls before he was run out by New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori while Alastair Cook fell to Oram for nine to leave England 31 for two.

Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell made their first significant contributions of the series with a 107-run third-wicket partnership before Bell was unfortunate to be given out leg before wicket to Vettori for 73.

Television replays indicated the ball clipped his bat first. Two overs later Pietersen was also given out lbw to Vettori for 41.

But just when New Zealand sensed they had a chance to press home their advantage, Collingwood had other ideas.

While Vettori pinned down the batsmen at one end, finishing with fine figures of two for 23 off 10 overs, Collingwood made the bowlers at the other end suffer as he drove England towards victory.

Earlier, Vettori had acted as the solid back up Oram needed as he rescued New Zealand from a batting collapse.

The home side, who had produced commanding performances in the first two matches, were struggling at 53 for four after 15 overs.

Brendon McCullum was back in the pavilion for four in the second over, Jamie How scored 10, Jesse Ryder 23 and Scott Styris three as James Anderson and Stuart Broad took control with two wickets apiece.

The out-of-sorts Peter Fulton could only manage four off 25 deliveries before being bowled by Collingwood, and when Ross

Taylor became the England captain's second victim for 31, New Zealand were 95 for six in the 30th over.

Oram and Vettori prevented a total collapse, putting on 74 for the seventh wicket before Vettori became Collingwood's third victim, caught by Owais Shah for 42.

The usually big-hitting Oram continued in tempered fashion, reaching 88 off 91 balls with four fours and four sixes before he launched into a full toss by Ryan Sidebottom only to be caught at mid-wicket by a diving Ian Bell.

Broad, with three for 32, and Collingwood, with three for 43, were the most successful of the bowlers.

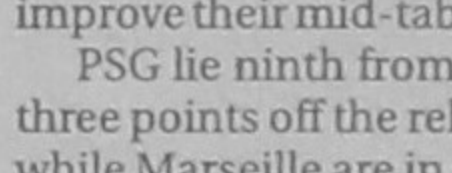
The remaining matches in the series are in Napier on Wednesday and Christchurch on the following Saturday.

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard of the third one-day international between New Zealand and England at Eden Park in Auckland on Friday: NEW ZEALAND

Table with 5 columns: Player Name, Runs, Wickets, Overs, etc.

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Fiery clash in prospect



APP, Paris

PSG face arch-rivals Marseille in French football's biggest derby this weekend with nothing to lose as the faltering Parisians bid to improve their mid-table standing.

PSG lie ninth from bottom, just three points off the relegation zone while Marseille are in fifth with five more points, and pushing Nice for the fourth spot.

Marseille's outspoken president Pape Diouf claimed that Sunday's match would be "the easiest of the season" for PSG given their role of the underdog.

"In my eyes, this match is a real trap for Marseille because PSG will come as the outsiders," Diouf said.

"They will make us favourites, like they did in the final of the French Cup" in 2006 which Marseille lost to PSG, said Diouf, whose team is fresh from a 3-0 midweek hammering of Spartak Moscow in the UEFA Cup.

Marseille's Belgian coach Eric Gerets preferred not to get dragged into a game of cat-and-mouse semantics.

"PSG has a lot to lose, as we do," he said. "These stories of favourites and underdogs really make me laugh."

Diouf admitted that some of the sparkle had been taken out of the fierce rivalry that surrounds games between two of French football's giants, notably because "the two clubs are no longer struggling at the top of the league".

Around 2,000 PSG fans are expected at the Stade Velodrome for what will undoubtedly be a highly-charged atmosphere and Diouf expressed his confidence that there would be no security issues with home supporters.

League leaders Lyon, seeking a seventh consecutive title, face eighth-placed Le Mans, a massive 15 points behind in the standings.

Fresh from a flattering 4-1 defeat of Sochaux last weekend, Lyon captain Juninho has highlighted the individual skills of the squad as the main reason behind this season's success rather than the overall team performance.

"We showed that our individual qualities were still there but we didn't offer up a great team performance," admitted the Brazilian after the Sochaux match.

Bordeaux, flying high in second just four points adrift of Lyon, travel to Monaco in Sunday's other match bidding to rebound from their 2-1 UEFA Cup away loss to Anderlecht.

Bordeaux coach Laurent Blanc hinted at which areas his team needed to improve on from that disappointing defeat. "The quality of our game in the first half was almost non-existent. We were combative but that's the most basic of things at a high level," he said.

In Saturday's other matches, third-placed Nancy travel to St Etienne, and Nice will look to consolidate their fourth spot away to Lens.

Table with 4 columns: Day, Home Team, Away Team, Score

Rash dash for cash



CRICINFO, undated

At Australia's Boxing Day sales there are stampedes as crowds of shoppers rush for ridiculously priced items. People are crushed in the frenzy for \$50 washing machines and \$5 shoes and the greedy procession is filmed for television news.

The few winners show off their prized purchases like World Cups, but overall the whole process is bruising and demeaning.

Australia's best cricketers are always busy on Boxing Day, but their eagerness to be involved in the Indian Premier League (IPL), which still relies on permission from Cricket Australia, would get them a public-holiday bargain in any department store.

Currently, they are the shoppers and the white goods are pots of Indian gold. It is the same for the rest of the world as cricketers sprint for Twenty20 cash.

For a few weeks' work they could seal a payment with more zeroes than Glenn McGrath, who is back from retirement, managed in a year. Money is undoubtedly attractive and sportspeople have earned the right to lots of it, but the back-flips for potential reward have been astounding.

The March tour to Pakistan has not been called off -- a neutral venue remains a possibility -- but the players are already calculating with their managers, and arguing with Cricket Australia, about what they can gain if they collect some bonus time off.

Ricky Ponting wants a window for the tournament so international performers don't retire prematurely. Andrew Symonds can't understand why Cricket Australia is "putting up a heap of red tape", and Brett Lee is confident of a plan that will make "everybody happy".

Look out for a Champions Twenty20 league that the current players can appear in later in the year, leaving the recently retired men and those not engaged in international duties to walk out in the IPL.

If the Pakistan series is cancelled, the Australia squad members must

stay at home, resting and preparing for the two-month trip to the West Indies. The team is due to leave on May 10, three weeks before the IPL final, so any Indian adventure would be brief. It would also increase the likelihood of injury despite the compensation of a hefty waiverlet.

Apart from protecting its corporate backers, Cricket Australia is also reluctant to let its contract holders go because of conflicting tour dates, training camps, Centre of Excellence appointments, and its desire to protect the Future Tours Programme. Which is why the lure of the Champions League tournament later in the year -- it would run as well as the IPL -- is attractive and figuring prominently in the current Australia-India board negotiations.

The off-season series with Bangladesh lost its two Tests when Cricket Australia finally realised the not-for-profit contest was being staged at the same time as the Olympics. Darwin will host only three one-day internationals instead, and the stars who have complained about being jaded from too much cricket are likely to receive what they originally craved. Only now many of them don't want a lighter winter.

The turnaround of the players' unions has been swifter than that by the men in the middle. For years the Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) and the Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA) have had one major platform, screaming about burnout and overload. The noise has been so loud and regular, it has become as numbing as shopping-centre background music.

In 2006 Tim May, the FICA chief executive, was worried players might turn to drugs to cope with the punishing schedules, but now he and his ACA counterpart, Paul Marsh, are fighting for a quick fix. They want a six-week window free of Tests and one-day internationals so their members can switch between board and IPL demands. Of course the idea wins support from the players and their managers.

At least the associations' change

Skipper pleased

FROM PAGE 17 He said: "They came at us pretty hard but the thing that has stood out for us in the last couple of games has been our top-order batting and unfortunately we didn't get off to the start we were after on a reasonable wicket."

"Our middle-order, which hasn't had too much of a go in the last few weeks, couldn't really pick up the pieces."

"We were always up against it, but fortunately Jacob Oram got us back into the game and a score of 230 wasn't too bad."

The penultimate match of the five-game series starts in Napier at 2200 GMT on Tuesday.