Ranjan has fine day

SPORTS REPORTER

Local boy Ranjan Ram advanced to the quarterfinals of the Dhaka Bank 22nd Bangladesh International Junior Tennis tournament beating Skharulidze Sergi of Georgia 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 in the boys' singles qualifying round match at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday.

In the boys doubles, Ranjan and Lin Keng Cheng of Chinese Taipei moved into the quarterfinals eliminating Liska Pavel of Czech Republic and Juan Antonia Los Santos of Malaysia 6-4,6-2.

Probhat clinch Gold Cup

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Probhat 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 at the Shaheed Miraz-Tapan Stadium here yesterday.

Opting to bat first Probhat scored 169 in 44.2 overs with contributions from Tutul (31) and Saikat (24). Shahin took four while the left-armer 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 Probhat while Ripon took two.

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

·Steve's arrival delayed

AFP, London

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," said England and Wales Cricket Board managing director Hugh Morris.

"It is anticipated that he will now join the Test squad in New Zealand in the early part of next week"

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. Things have settled and I am just happy to move forward," said Arthur, who ruled out chances to use two spinners in the first Test.

"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. That's probably the format we are going with in the first Test and have a look at it as the series continues."

Missing Pollock

FROM PAGE 17

When drawn his attention to Ricky Ponting's comment that cricketers quitting international career and joining the leagues in India is bad for cricket, Smith said: "May be he is right. But at the end of the day a lot of these players were at the end of their careers, probably had retirement on their minds before the IPL came along.

"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. That's where our heads are on.

"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.

After five years, what were Bangladesh's chances to put on a decent fight against South Africa at home?

"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

Cricket

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 it's 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.

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.

discussions with the BCCI but fied," the source said. But as a result nothing has been firmed up. Things will become clearer in a day or so," the source said. "The first priority is still to get Australia to come over but if they don't come, options have to be and are being examined.

chief operating officer Shafqat 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 schedule in the current FTP.

The current Pakistan administration is said to be unhappy over their predecessor's work on the last And a well-placed source 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 "There have been informal something that needs to be recti- Australia."

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 Two PCB officials, including the 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 is to fill the gaps in Pakistan's in Chennai on March 26. Where is the

Ahsan Malik, the PCB spokesman, explained the board'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

Pakistan eye hattrick title

FROM PAGE 17 skills against their peers from

around the world. The competition has often been tougher and more unpredictable than at the senior level, where Australia are the undisputed champions in both Test and one-day cricket with three successive World Cup titles.

At the junior level, the young Aussies have won just one of the past five World Cups since 1998. England and India have both taken it home once, while Pakistan have been the dominant force of late.

They won the 2004 event in Bangladesh with a 25-run victory over the West Indies, before conjuring a stunning upset over arch-rivals India two years later in Sri Lanka.

In a sensational final at Colombo's Premadasa stadium, the feisty Pakistanis defended a

modest total of 109 by reducing out stages. India to 9-6 by the fourth over

Three cities, Kuala Lumpur, Johor before skittling them for 71 in just and Penang, will host the tourna-18.5 overs. ment, which ends on March 2. The three seamers who fash-

Five qualifiers and hosts ioned Pakistan's win -- Jamshed Malaysia will join the ten regular Ahmed (2-24), Anwar Ali (5-35) and cricket nations -- Australia, Akhtar Ayub (3-9) -- have yet to play England, India, Pakistan, the West at the senior level, but India gave its Indies, Sri Lanka, South Africa, New young talent an early break. Zealand, Bangladesh and Leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who took four wickets and scored Zimbabwe. an unbeaten 25 in the final, was

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

Gilly's last show at WACA

Twenty20 regular.

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 one, a "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 AUSTRALIA 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 Extras: (b-1, lb-1, w-4, nb-1) 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 Bowler

never able to accelerate their scor-

ing, losing the last eight wickets for just 65 and their last four wickets for four, seemingly handing Sri Lanka the initiative. With Malinga troubling Australia with his pace to snare 4-

playing a Test against England a

month later and captain Rohit

Sharma is now a one-day and

reputations. In 2006, cricketing

non-entity Nepal stunned 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-

Young guns are not daunted by

47, it was the second successive match the home side had failed to last the allotted 50 overs. Opener Matthew Hayden failed to deal with a sharp rising delivery

from Malinga and made just four, a score matched by Andrew Symonds, while captain Ricky Ponting looked in better touch but guided a Chaminda Vaas delivery straight to first slip on 25.

Clarke suffered bruised ribs when struck by a Malinga delivery and was unable to field. SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the tri-series oneday international between Australia and Sri Lanka at WACA Ground in Perth on Friday:

Gilchrist c Kapugedera b Malinga Hayden c Maharoof b Malinga Ponting c Jayawardene b Vaas 25 Clarke st Sangakkara b Muralidaran Symonds c Sangakkara b Maharoof Hussey c Jayawardene b Kulasekera 25 Hopes c Jayasuriya b Kulasekera Hogg b Malinga Lee b Malinga Johnson run out Bracken not out Total: (All out in 49.4 overs)

Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-66, 3-171, 4-

177, 5-206, 6-217, 7-232, 8-232, 9-

OMRW

233, 10-236.

Malinga 1 47 4 Maharoof Kulasekara 52 2 Muralidaran 10 0 47 1 SRILANKA Dilshan b Johnson Jayasuriya c Hopes b Bracken Sangakkara b Lee Jayawardene c Ponting b Johnson Silva c Symonds b Bracken Kapugedera c Hussey b Hopes 26 Maharoof c sub (Haddin) b Hogg 7 Vaas c Gilchrist b Hogg Kulasekera c Symonds b Bracken 0 Malinga b Johnson Muralidaran not out

Extras: (lb-7, w-3, nb-1) Total: (All out in 45.3 overs) Fall of wickets: 1-29, 2-35, 3-71, 4-76, 5-129, 6-159, 7-159, 8-160, 9-173, 10-173, Bowler Lee 8.3 0 49 Bracken 2 21 Johnson 29 Hopes 26

1 41 Result: Australia won by 63 runs. Man-of-the-match: Adam Gilchrist. Toss: Australia Umpires: Daryl Harper, Rudi Koertzen.

10

Hogg

Team

India

Third umpire: Peter Parker. Match referee: Jeff Crowe. TRI-SERIES STANDINGS Standings after the tri-series oneday match between Australia and Sri Lanka on Friday M W L NR BP Pts

Cricket made their first significant contrithird-wicket partnership before over. AFP, Auckland Bell was unfortunate to be given 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 flayed 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.

England needing nearly a run a ball, Collingwood switched into a ting collapse. higher gear.

before a tame single off Oram ended overs. 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.

out leg before wicket to Vettori for

England stay alive

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 With seven overs to play, and solid back up Oram needed as he rescued New Zealand from a bat-The home side, who had pro-

In consecutive overs he belted duced commanding performances eight off Chris Martin, 11 off Kyle in the first two matches, were Mills then 17 off Paul Hitchcock struggling at 53 for four after 15 Brendon McCullum was back in NEW ZEALAND

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

The out-of-sorts Peter Fulton Oram c Bell b Sidebottom could only manage four off 25 Vettoric Shah b Collingwood deliveries before being bowled by Mills c Cook b Broad Collingwood, and when Ross Hitchcocknotout

Kevin Pietersen and Ian Bell Taylor became the England captain's second victim for 31, New butions of the series with a 107-run Zealand were 95 for six in the 30th

> 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:

Ryder c Mascarenhas b Anderson McCullum c Cook b Anderson How c Collingwood b Broad Taylor lbw b Collingwood Styris c Mascarenhas b Broad Fulton b Collingwood

Martin not out Extras: (lb-4, w-2, nb-2)

Total: (For 9 wkts in 50 overs) 234 Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-40, 3-40, 4-53, Oram and Vettori prevented a 5-64, 6-95, 7-169, 8-199, 9-223. Bowler OMRW Sidebottom Anderson Broad 10 1 32 3 Collingwood Mascarenhas Wright 4 0 22 0 ENGLAND

> Cook c Martin b Oram Mustard run out (Vettori) Bell lbw b Vettori 73 Pietersen lbw b Vettori Collingwood not out 70 Shah not out Extras: (w-2, nb-1)

Total: (For 4 wkts in 44 overs) 229 Did not bat: Mascarenhas, Wright, Broad, Sidebottom, Anderson. Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-31, 3-138, 4-149.

Martin 7 0 45 0 Oram 9 1 45 1 0 56 0 Hitchcock 1 23 2 Vettori 1 0 6 0 Styris Result: England won by six wick-

Man-of-the-match: Paul Collingwood. Toss: England

Umpires: Asad Rauf (PAK), Gary Baxter (NZL) 11 Match referee: Alan Hurst (AUS)

Issue with CA resolved: IPL

CRICINFO, undated

The contracts tussle between Cricket Australia and the Indian Premier League (IPL) has been resolved, ending weeks of uncertainty over the availability of top Australian players for the Twenty20

tournament. "The issue has been resolved," IPL Commissioner Lalit Modi told Cricinfo. "Two or three Australian players have already signed up with IPL. Hopefully, in the next 24 hours, this will go down the line. The process has already begun. Now it's just a matter of getting through to the Australian players and their agents," Modisaid.

The dispute revolved round protecting the rights of the Australian team's global sponsors during the tournament, which will be telecast live in Australia by Channel Ten. However, asked whether the compromise that has been worked out involved compensation or protection to Australia's sponsors, Modi said: "No. We have made it clear."

A resolution to the issue was on the cards, given that the last day for players to sign up for the IPL -- as indicated by Modi -- was Sunday. On Thursday, a senior Indian cricket board official had told Cricinfo that the contracts tussle was nearing a resolution. "It's not a conflict situation any longer. We are looking at a resolution now," the official had said.

The IPL organizers are now looking for some clarity to emerge on Australia's impending Test tour of Pakistan before the deadline. Cricket Australia's security advisors have warned against going ahead with the tour and a cancellation will enable the biggest names, including Ricky Ponting, the captain, and fast bowler Brett Lee, to appear for the IPL.

Bird immortal in bronze

AFP, London

Legendary cricket umpire Dickie Bird said he "never dreamed" of being immortalised in bronze as he unveiled a statue of himself in his

The 74-year-old took the wraps off a scale model of a six foot statue which features him in his trademark flat cap and with upraised finger giving a batsman out, that will stand in Barnsley from October.

on display in Melbourne and Mumbai,

Cup finals and I was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the 173 | British Empire medal) in 1986, but this moment is right up there with those," said Bird. "Growing up in Barnsley, I never

> me in the middle of the town." He was not keen on the first model produced by sculptor

> appeared too stern but said he was happy with the artist's 'second innings', remodelled to show Bird with a smiling face. "Now Graham has got the

> life-size Dickie Bird sculpture at a series of workshops this year. Bird, who as a young cricketer played in the same Barnsley club team as future England batting great Geoff Boycott, had a modest first-class career with Yorkshire and

Fiery clash in prospect

Football

AFP, 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

season" for PSG given their role of the underdog. "In my eyes, this match is a real trap for Marseille because PSG will

match would be "the easiest of the

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,"

At Australia's Boxing Day sales there

are stampedes as crowds of shop-

pers rush for ridiculously priced

items. People are crushed in the

frenzy for \$50 washing machines

and \$5 shoes and the greedy proces-

sion is filmed for television news.

The few winners show off their

prized purchases like World Cups,

Australia's best cricketers are

Indian Premier League (IPL), which

Cricket Australia, would get them a

public-holiday bargain in any

department store. Currently, they

are the shoppers and the white

the same for the rest of the world as

seal a payment with more zeroes

than Glenn McGrath, who is back

for potential reward have been

neutral venue remains a possibility-

- but the players are already calcu-

lating with their managers, and

arguing with Cricket Australia,

turely, Andrew Symonds can't

collect some bonus time off.

about what they can gain if they

cricketers sprint for Twenty20 cash.

bruising and demeaning.

he said. "These stories of favourites lighted the individual skills 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 high-

Le Mans v Lyon, Lens v Nice, Sochaux v Caen, Lille v Rennes, Auxerre v Toulouse, Metz v Valenciennes, Lorient v Strasbourg, St Etienne v Nancy

Monaco v Bordeaux, Marseille v PSG

and underdogs really make me squad as the main reason behind this season's success rather than Diouf admitted that some of the 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 thefirst half was almost non-existent. We were combative but that's the most basic of things at a high level,"

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

> Bottom club Metz host sixthplaced Valenciennes, while Caen travel to Sochaux, Lille play Rennes, Auxerre entertain Toulouse, and Strasbourg face an away game at Lorient.

Rash dash for cash

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

home town of Barnsley, northern England.

Replicas of the work will also be

"I have umpired at four World

dreamed there would be a statue of Graham Ibbeson because it

stance just right, the Reebok trainers and my 'finger of fate' pointing in the air," Bird said. School children from across south Yorkshire will help create the

to walk out in the IPL. If the Pakistan series is cancelled, players and their managers. Sri Lanka 4 1 2 1 0 6 Leicestershire. the Australia squad members must

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

heaving wallet. 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 but overall the whole process is desire to protect the Future Tours Programme. Which is why the lure always busy on Boxing Day, but their of the Champions League tournaeagerness to be involved in the ment later in the year -- it would run as well as the IPL -- is attractive and still relies on permission from 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 goods are pots of Indian gold. It is not-for-profit contest was being staged at the same time as the Olympics. Darwin will host only For a few weeks' work they could three one-day internationals instead, and the stars who have complained about being jaded from from retirement, managed in a year. too much cricket are likely to receive Money is undoubtedly attractive what they originally craved. Only, and sportspeople have earned the now many of them don't want a

right to lots of it, but the back-flips lighterwinter. The turnaround of the players' astounding. The March tour to unions has been swifter than that by Pakistan has not been called off -- a 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 Ricky Ponting wants a window has been so loud and regular, it has become as numbing as shopping-

for the tournament so international centre background music. performers don't retire prema-In 2006 Tim May, the FICA chief understand why Cricket Australia is executive, was worried players might turn to drugs to cope with the "putting up a heap of red tape", and Brett Lee is confident of a plan that punishing schedules, but now he hasn't had too much of a go in the will make "everybody happy". Look and his ACA counterpart, Paul out for a Champions Twenty20 Marsh, are fighting for a quick fix. league that the current players can They want a six-week window free of appear in later in the year, leaving Tests and one-day internationals so the recently retired men and those their members can switch between back into the game and a score of not engaged in international duties board and IPL demands. Of course the idea wins support from the

At least the associations' change 2200 GMT on Tuesday.

stay at home, resting and preparing in stance is not a surprise. They push for what their group wants. Previously it was less, now it is more.

Cricket and money. Arguments about the Twenty20 being easier because of its shorter time scale have been rejected by those who know the demands. The Australians were surprised by the intensity of last year's abbreviated World Cup in South Africa and suffered a series of injuries. Earlier this month Ponting, who was recovering from a back problem, revealed he would have been more comfortable in a one-day international than the Twenty20 match he missed against India because of the for-

mat's exertions. Everybody is learning about the new game and wondering how far it can go. Channel Nine, the traditional broadcaster of summer cricket in Australia, is not convinced of the off-season worth of the concept and did not bid for the IPL rights. They were picked up by the smaller Ten Network, which has paid up to A\$15m for matches that

will start here around midnight. In Australia the various football codes will hold more attraction to cold sport followers from late April to the final in June, but the promise of potential riches is swaying more than players. The charge towards the IPL is as unseemly as any shop-

ping-centre crush. 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

last few weeks, couldn't really pick up the pieces. "We were always up against it, but fortunately Jacob Oram got us

230 wasn't too bad." The penultimate match of the

five-game series starts in Napier at

structured right, it can certainly be a benefit to the game," he said.