

Dizzy hangs up boots

Former Australian fast-bowler Jason Gillespie announced his retirement from first-class cricket Friday.



JASON GILLESPIE

sure what I was going to do -- whether I was going to play on another season with SA.

"I am grateful to Cricket Australia for sticking by me early in my career when I was plagued by injuries," he said.

Gilly talks down glove furore

Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist has played down the furore over Indian counterpart Mahendra Singh Dhoni's illegal gloves.

"I do know that the guy who makes those gloves makes my gloves as well and I've had match referees check my gloves and they're fine," he added.



Did U Know?

The current English Premier League champions are Manchester United, who won their ninth title in the 2006/07 season.

Rain halts Pak, SA Semifinal resumes today



Cricket

KUALA LUMPUR

Heavy rain brought play to an early end in the under-19 World Cup semi-final day-night clash between Pakistan and South Africa here on Friday.

The teams will return to the Kinrara Oval on Saturday to finish the match with Pakistan, chasing a revised target of 252 from 47 overs.

The defending champions will resume a further 166 runs in 28.1 overs with opener Ahmad Shehzad on 40 and Umar Amin on 22.

Earlier, South Africa made 260-8 after being sent in to bat in overcast conditions.

The winner will play India in Sunday's final.

South African captain Wayne Parnell grabbed the wickets of Umar Akmal and Shan Masood with his left-arm seam bowling to reduce Pakistan to 17-2 in the third over.

Shehzad and Amin launched Pakistan's fightback by adding 44 for the third wicket before rain halted play for almost an hour.

Pakistan, who were 61-2 in 12 overs at that stage, took the total to 85 without further loss by the 19th when another spell of heavy rain drove the players back to the pavilion.

The players spent the forced rest learning the nuances of the Duckworth-Lewis system for calculating scores in rain-affected matches.

If seven more deliveries had been bowled on Friday to complete a minimum of 20 overs that constitute a match, Pakistan would have needed only five runs to surpass the required score of 91.

Instead, as the rain continued, the defending champions were left to chase their entire revised target of 252 when play resumes on Saturday.

Shehzad and Amin, who have already put on 69 runs for the unbroken third wicket, must take a fresh guard on Saturday to continue Pakistan's victory bid.

South Africa, who were comfortably placed at 219-4 in the 45th over, lost three wickets for seven runs before Reeza Hendricks smashed an unbeaten 27 off 17 balls to lift his team past the 250-run mark.

Pakistan captain Imad Wasim was the most successful bowler, claiming 3-44 with his accurate left-arm spin. Seamer Mohammad Rameez and Shahzad picked up two wickets each.

England players do not feature in the 44-day inaugural event which gets underway on April 18.

The dates clash with New Zealand's tour and the start of the English county championship season.

"We are working towards that in the coming years," IPL chairman Lalit Modi told Reuters on Friday.

"It cannot happen overnight. They (English players) were interested (this year), but we could not accommodate them because of their commitments," he added.

Seventy-five leading international names were snapped up by the eight IPL franchises at a players' auction earlier this month with annual pay cheques starting at six figures.

Three New Zealand players who have been signed up by IPL teams -- captain Daniel Vettori, Jacob Oram and Brendon McCullum -- are in talks with their board about arriving in England just 10 days before the first test on May 15 to allow them to play six IPL matches.

The international cricket community is already asking the game's governing body to set aside a clear slot for the league to avoid a clash of interest for players on national duty.

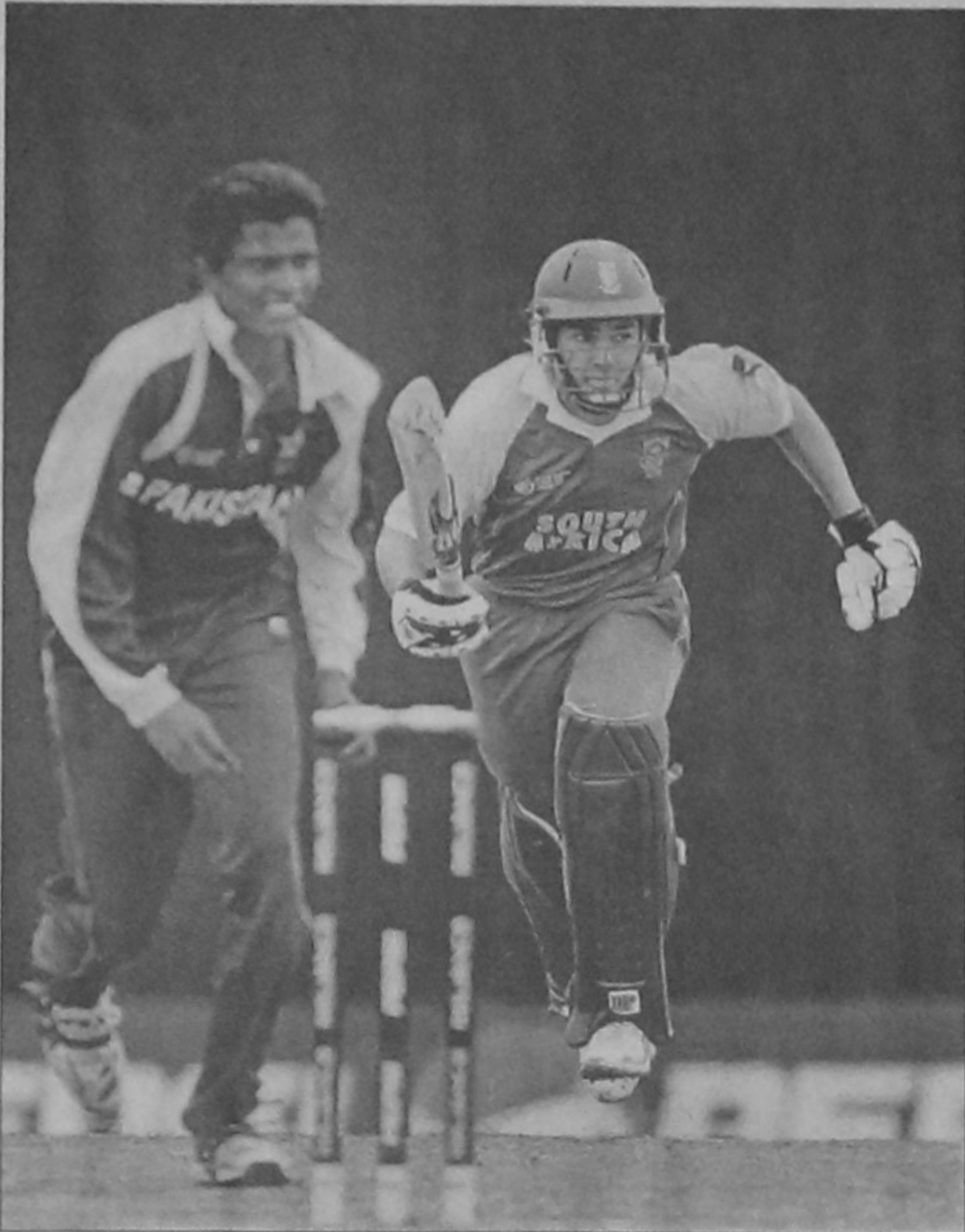


PHOTO: AFP

South African opener Jon-Jon Smuts takes off for a tight single as a fretful Pakistan seamer Adil Raza awaits for the throw from mid-on during the ICC Under-19 World Cup semifinal at the Kinrara Oval in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

No super league for Arambagh

SPORTS REPORTER

Arambagh Krira Sangha failed to reach the super league of the Senior Division Football League when they wasted their last chance yesterday.

Arambagh, the only professional club of Dhaka to field a team in the Senior Division, drew goalless with Badda Jagarani in the final and 12th round match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium to end their first-leg campaign on 14 points.

Badda, however, secured a super league berth with 19 points. Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool will look to move atop the table when they meet Wari Club today while Agrani Bank meet Mohakhali Ekadash in the other match.

IPL to oblige counties'

REUTERS, Mumbai

The Indian Premier League (IPL) will look to reschedule its calendar in future to accommodate England players in the multi-million dollar Twenty20 tournament.

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Rohit says right stuff

PTI, Sydney

Young Indian batsman Rohit Sharma feels the youngsters in the team would need to rise up to the occasion to win the cricket tri-series finals against Australia starting Sunday.

"In the absence of seniors there is pressure and it would be good for the youngsters if we were to win the trophy," said Sharma.

Rohit has played in all the games of the triangular league and scored a mere 167 runs at 33.40 but a couple of his knock have drawn heaps of praise from the likes of Ian Chappell and Sachin Tendulkar.

Chappell has been very impressed with Sharma's technique and so has been the case with Tendulkar who rates his backfoot play of good quality.

Sharma, though, feels he has not quite done justice to his talent in the series.

"I feel I could have done better and in this regard this series has been a learning experience. I have learnt how to build innings when I walked in to bat against Australia in Melbourne we were five down for 102, needing 160 runs to win.

"The one advice (Mahendra Singh Dhoni) Mahi gave me was if we stayed at the wicket the runs would come and so it happened," he said.

India put it across Australia in that game of the triangular series and Sharma feels that it's not beyond them to beat the world champions again in the best-of-three finals.

Samuels denies any offence

CRICINFO, undated

In a week when he was banned from bowling after his action was ruled illegal, Marlon Samuels' troubles appear to have grown with news that an internal West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) investigation into bribery allegations has found there is enough evidence to charge him with misconduct.

"He has been charged and the matter referred to the disciplinary committee," WICB spokesman Tony Deyal told the caribbean.cricnet.com website. Deyal declined to go into any details of the investigation, which was undertaken by Jamaican attorney Derek Jones.

CHANCE FOR REVENGE

First final tomorrow

AFP, Sydney



With the war of words between the sides, the stage is set for a thrilling conclusion to the last triangular one-day series when the finals get underway with a clash between arch rivals Australia and India here on Sunday.

It has been a bitter campaign between the sides, especially since the second Test in Sydney in early January, but the Indians can gain revenge for their 2-1 loss in the Test series by upsetting the home side in the best-of-three finals.

The tri-series concept will be scrapped at the end of this tournament and victory would give Mahendra Singh Dhoni and his men evidence to back their claims that they are the challenger to Australia's dominance of world cricket.

There will be no shortage of motivation for the two sides, after all the ill feeling between the sides over the last two months.

The bad blood first surfaced during the second Test, when Harbhajan Singh copped a three-match suspension for allegedly racially abusing Andrew Symonds, a suspension overturned at an International Cricket Council appeal hearing.

This week tensions exploded again, with Ishant Sharma fined for a verbal exchange with Symonds and the Indians countering with a complaint about provocative behaviour by the Australians.

Matthew Hayden then called Harbhajan an "obnoxious weed" on radio and the Indian spinner responded by saying the big opener was one of the least liked players in world cricket.

While plenty of words have been exchanged, the Indians notched just one win over the home side in their four qualifying matches and have just one victory from their last 10 one-day games against the Australians.

However, they have taken confidence out of their narrow loss to Australia at their last meeting, also in Sydney, on Sunday.

Set a mammoth 318 to win, India lost by just 18 runs despite a top order collapse.

Encouragingly for India, several of their most important batsmen appear to be hitting their straps at the right time.

Star batsman Sachin Tendulkar produced his first meaningful innings of the tournament in India's final qualifying game against Sri Lanka on Tuesday, belting 63 from just 54 balls in an ominous sign ahead of the finals.

After a terrible summer with the bat, the enigmatic Yuvraj Singh has finally shown signs of his best form with brisk knocks of 76 and 36 in India's last two matches against Sri Lanka.

Gautam Gambhir has been in superb form, with 113 and an unbeaten 63 in his last two innings, while Robin Uthappa showed his potential with a half-century against Australia last Sunday.

With Dhoni in top form with the bat throughout the series, the Indian batting has the potential to make the finals very interesting.

Speaking after his team's win over Sri Lanka on Tuesday, Dhoni said he believed his side was peaking for the finals.

However, Australia will also fancy their chances as they attempt to send retiring duo Adam Gilchrist and Brad Hogg off in winning style.

Dhoni noted that Australian captain Ricky Ponting was ready to make a big impact, having finally burst out of a form slump with a commanding century at the SCG last Sunday.

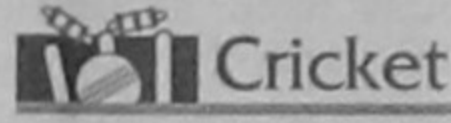
Throughout the series, Australia's seam bowlers have shown they were capable of defending just about any total, with Brett Lee, Nathan Bracken, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart Clark and all-rounder James Hopes all performing with distinction.

But India has its own trump cards with the new ball in teenage rising star Sharma and swing bowler Irfan Pathan.

Although the fiery Shantha Sreesanth has been out of form, Praveen Kumar stepped up with four wickets in the win over Sri Lanka on Tuesday.

TEAMS AUSTRALIA: Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden, Michael Clarke, Andrew Symonds, Michael Hussey, James Hopes, Brad Hogg, Brett Lee, Mitchell Johnson, Nathan Bracken. INDIA: Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Sachin Tendulkar, Robin Uthappa, Gautam Gambhir, Yuvraj Singh, Rohit Sharma, Irfan Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Ishant Sharma, Praveen Kumar, Shantha Sreesanth.

CA seek big boys



Cricket

MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia officials are to hold a high-level meeting with the country's top players to address growing dissatisfaction with the ruling body.

The Australian newspaper reported Friday that a "summit" would be held at the conclusion of the current tri-series with India and Sri Lanka following an international season packed with controversy.

CA spokesman Peter Young confirmed a meeting would take place, although he said the exact timing was yet to be confirmed.

He played down its significance, saying it was simply an appropriate time for players and officials to come together and discuss the many issues that have dogged them this summer.

"Calling it a summit is perhaps overstating it," he told AFP. "We and the players are proposing to catch up soon after this series is finished. We think it is an appropriate time to reflect on where we are going."

Outspoken Australian batsman Matthew Hayden has voiced his displeasure with CA for being reprimanded under its code of conduct for calling Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh an "obnoxious little weed."

"It saddens me that my employer has to discipline me for my behaviour," he told the Daily Telegraph newspaper in comments published Friday.

"I can see that my comments were insensitive but they were not intended to be denigrating and especially not contrary to the spirit of cricket."

"The cricket environment I have grown up with is probably a little bit different from today."

The Australian Cricketers' Association backed Hayden, chief executive Paul Marsh saying he was disappointed the batsman was punished for expressing his personal opinion.

Several Australian players had previously voiced unhappiness with CA after they believed a deal was brokered to allow Harbhajan's three-match suspension for alleged racial abuse to be overturned during their Test series.

The Australian newspaper reported that Australian captain Ricky Ponting was concerned players from the warring sides were not being treated equally.

"Matty says that and they (Indian players) have got all sorts of comments again through the newspapers, a lot of which have no fact or truth in them whatsoever, but that's what we've had to deal with right the way through the summer," Ponting said.

He said that the Hayden hearing had affected the opener's preparation for Friday's clash with Sri Lanka at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

With bad blood with India, the uncertainty over a tour of Pakistan and the controversy over the Indian Premier League, Ponting said it had been the most difficult season he could remember.

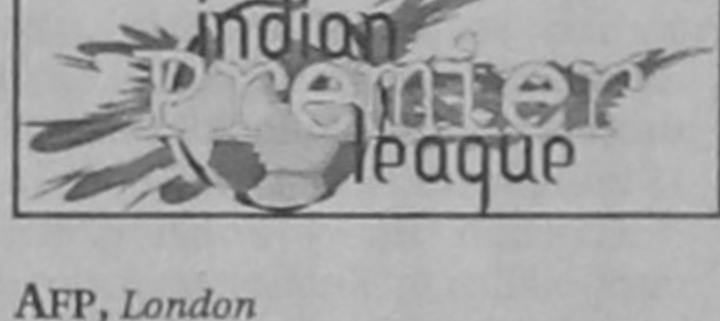
Young, speaking to The Australian, played down any rift.

"It's fair to say that from time to time, even in the best of families, there are disagreements on issues," he said.

"But I think the nine other Test-playing nations would give their right arm to have the relationship we have with our playing group."

"Part of the strength of the relationship is that we do have the ability to argue about things. We have in the past and we will in the future."

KP's no to IPL



Cricket

LONDON

England batsman Kevin Pietersen has revealed that he was offered the chance to play in the Indian Premier League but insisted that he would never "turn my back on England," in return for a bumper payday.

The IPL, a new Twenty20 competition, has attracted a host of the world's top players with the likes of Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds set to pocket 1.35 million dollars per year for the next three years.

Top English players are effectively prevented from cashing in however because the April 18-June 1 schedule for the first season of IPL clashes with the opening of the English county campaign and England's first one-day matches against New Zealand.

Pietersen insisted there was "no way in this world" he would give up playing for England in order to join the IPL.

"I know there is interest and, yes, there have been offers, etc, but it's not something I'm particularly interested in," Pietersen told the BBC from New Zealand, where England are currently on tour.

The South African-born batsman had to play county cricket for four years to qualify for England after deciding that his opportunities in his native country would be limited.

He said he would always be grateful for the chance England had given him to realise his potential to be one of the world's best.

"Money's not really too important, it's not as if I need money right now," he said. "I'm really enjoying doing what I'm doing."

England has given me a fantastic opportunity to a fantastic life at the moment. So I'm fully committed 100 percent to playing for England, to winning games for England, to scoring thousands more runs for England.

"I love playing for England and there will be nothing that will lure me away from England just yet."

"I'm really enjoying what I'm doing. It's a great challenge, challenging myself against the best players in the world in Test and one-day cricket."

The head of the IPL, Lalit Modi, said this week that the dates of future competitions could possibly be moved to accommodate the likes of Pietersen.

LOCAL SNIPPETS FROM PAGE 17

Cox's Bazar a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Noakhali to reach the zonal final of the 4th JFA Cup Under-15 Football Championship.

Sohan put Noakhali ahead at the Cox's Bazar Stadium after seven minutes of the second semi-final but Ariful struck in the 51st and 52 minutes to set the home side's final date against Chittagong.

Kushita became zonal champions to reach the final round when they edged Bogra 6-5 the tiebreakers in the final at Pabna Stadium.

SCHOOL HOCKEY UNB adds Armanitola High School set a final clash with Ahmed Bawany Academy in the Dhaka Bank Shaheed Smriti School hockey tournament beating Mirpur Academy 2-0 in the second semifinal at the Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium.

Adnan and Rakib scored one goal each for the winners, who led the first half 1-0. The final will be held tomorrow at the same venue at 3.30pm.

Result: Sri Lanka won by 13 runs. Man-of-the-match: Adam Gilchrist.

Toss: Sri Lanka. Umpires: Daryl Harper (AUS), Tony Hill (NZL). TV umpire: Bruce Oxenford (AUS). Match referee: Jeff Crowe (NZL).

Harmison takes five



Cricket

DUNEDIN

It's never easy to tell what's going through Steve Harmison's head, but on a day when he produced his first five-wicket haul of the New Zealand tour, the good vibes were more clearly visible than usual.

While his fellow bowlers succumbed to injury and illness -- and in Chris Tremlett's case, ended up being booked on a flight back to England -- Harmison bowled ten overs off the reel to finish with figures of 5 for 100, a performance that sparked his side's fightback against the New Zealand Select XI.

Even so, Harmison has suffered too many barren days of late to allow one day of success to go to his head. "I got marginally better the more and more I bowled," he said. "It feels as though I'm getting better, and to get a five-wicket haul is great. I've been in the country eight days, I've bowled in three innings and I've got eight wickets. There's a lot of improvement to come from that, and hopefully it will carry on through the three Tests."

Harmison's arrival in New Zealand was delayed by five days following the birth of his fourth child, Charlie, which put a significant dent in his preparation time, especially since he had not bowled competitively since the tour of Sri Lanka before Christmas. "I wouldn't swap the world for coming here late," he said, "but I am the sort of bowler that does take time to (get used to) being in a different country. I've acclimatised better than I thought."

Though he bowled with good rhythm and stamina in the Sri Lanka series, Harmison admitted his performances at the end of last year would count for little now. "It's a new scenario and new pitches because I've had six weeks off," he said. "But I feel in as good a shape as I've ever been. I had a good blowout after Christmas as every-one needed, but then I got into the gym and worked hard for five or six days a week. I've been working on my strength and stability, and I'm not as floppy as I used to be, and I feel as though that has shown today."

His rhythm and control was slightly awry at the start of today's spell, but Harmison found his line and length as the innings went on. "I get better through lengthy spells," he said. "I'm going to take each day as it comes, keep going and keep trying. I was picking things up and changing things the more the day went on, but today a few things clicked in my action and I came up with a few wickets."

To be tinkering with his approach so close to a Test match is far from ideal, but Harmison conceded that where his form is concerned, there's no real alternative. "I'm as frustrated as anybody, but it's the way I am and it's not for want of trying," he said. "I try my nuts off every time I go on the field. Sometimes at the top (of my action) things aren't going right, but it's at the top and you can't drag it back. All I've ever done is to try my best on the field, and sometimes on trips things get better through time."

Harmison, however, admitted he wouldn't find his full range until he takes the field at Hamilton for the first Test. "There's still a bit more in there," he said, "but that always comes with adrenalin, when you're being watched by 10-15,000 people. The intensity always up when it's a Test match and you're representing England against another country. That's not a negative thing, it's just something you do as an individual, to lift that one or two percent more."

"I bowled some quick balls, some good balls, and some bad balls as well," he said. "But the more and more this trip has gone on there have been more good balls in an over than bad. I've got to be relatively happy."

He was also relatively happy with the way England's warm-up match had panned out. "Sometimes you need days like that," he said of England's first-innings collapse. "If you bowl a team out for 80 and get 500 it's a waste of time. You want to be tested and do a bit of soul-searching, lick your wounds and have a look deep inside. I think the majority of us have done that and it's the ideal workout for Hamilton next week."

Lawson's ultimatum for Akhtar PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's chief coach Geoff Lawson on Friday backed down from giving full support to the inclusion of Shoaib Akhtar in the national team, saying the fast bowler's return to the side would depend on his focus on his cricket.

Lawson, who has been propagating the importance of having Shoaib in the team, told reporters here that Pakistan had enough back up talent to manage even if the fast bowler was not available.

There is no doubt he has some years of cricket left in him but it is totally up to him what he wants to do. Whether he wants to focus on his cricket or do other things. But he can be in the team only if he is mentally and physically fit," Lawson said.

"My insistence is on only having players in the team who are 100 per cent fit mentally and physically and have their focus on cricket rather than other things," he added.

Shoaib is facing a disciplinary hearing by next week in which he has been charged with criticising the policies of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) despite being under a one-year probation after being banned for 13 matches and fined 3.4 million rupees last year on four charges of misconduct.

Tremlett out of NZ tour REUTERS, Wellington

Seam bowler Chris Tremlett has aggravated a side injury and is to return home from England's tour of New Zealand, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Friday.

Tremlett left the field complaining of pain in his left side after only five overs on the rain-affected second day of the tourists' match against a New Zealand Selection XI in Dunedin.

Prince, Boucher, Peterson, Steyn, Morkel, Ntini.

Table with 5 columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Mortaza, Shahadat, Rafique, Razzak, Shakib, Ashraf, Aftab.

BANGLADESH: Tamim Iqbal, Zunaed Siddique, Abdur Raqab, Mohammad Ashraf, Shahrar Nafees, Aftab Ahmed, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Rafique, Mashrafe Morkat, Shahadat Hossain. Toss: South Africa

SCOREBOARD Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and South Africa at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium on Friday.

Table with 4 columns: South Africa, First innings, McKenzie not out, Smith not out, Extras, Total.

To bat: Amla, Kallis, De Villiers,