

F'pool stay on course

UNB, Dhaka

Youngmen's Club Fakirerpool crushed Wari Club 4-0 in the Metropolitan First Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mohammad Mostafa Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

They led the first half 2-0. Raju opened Youngmen's account in the 28th minute, Kamal doubled the winners margin in the 41st minute, Ronny netted the third goal in the 68th minutes and Sabuj scored the final goal a minute later.

With the day's feat, Youngmen's Club secured 27 points from 12 matches to top the point table. In the day's another match, Agrani Bank beat Mohakhali Eleven 1-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium with Pashbon scoring the match winner in the 14th minute.

Rani, Eva on top

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champion and International Women's Master Rani Hamid is jointly on top of the Aromatic Gold 29th National Women's Chess Championship with Nazrana Khan Eva at the end of the eighth round yesterday.

Both players are locked on seven points each, with Rani beating Roxana Tithi of Chittagong and Eva trouncing Arifa Khatun Moni at the federation hall room. Women's FIDE Master Shamima Akhter Liza is in second position with 6.5 points after her draw with Syeda Shabana.

Kishaloy crush Jhankar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Kishaloy Krita Chakra crushed Jhankar Krita Chakra by 86 runs in the Naheed Cotton First Division Cricket League at the local stadium here yesterday.

Batting first, Kishaloy reached 211-9 in 45 overs with Shaheen scoring 38. Jhankar could not meet up to Kishaloy's score, being bowled out for 125 in 28 overs.

Deputy Commissioner of Gaibandha Abu Mohammad Yousof formerly inaugurated the tournament in the morning.

CDS missing

FROM PAGE 17 "The decision was solely of the BCB's, that I can only tell you," the venue manager stuck to his lone answer when asked by The Daily Star whether they made any efforts for the giant screen.

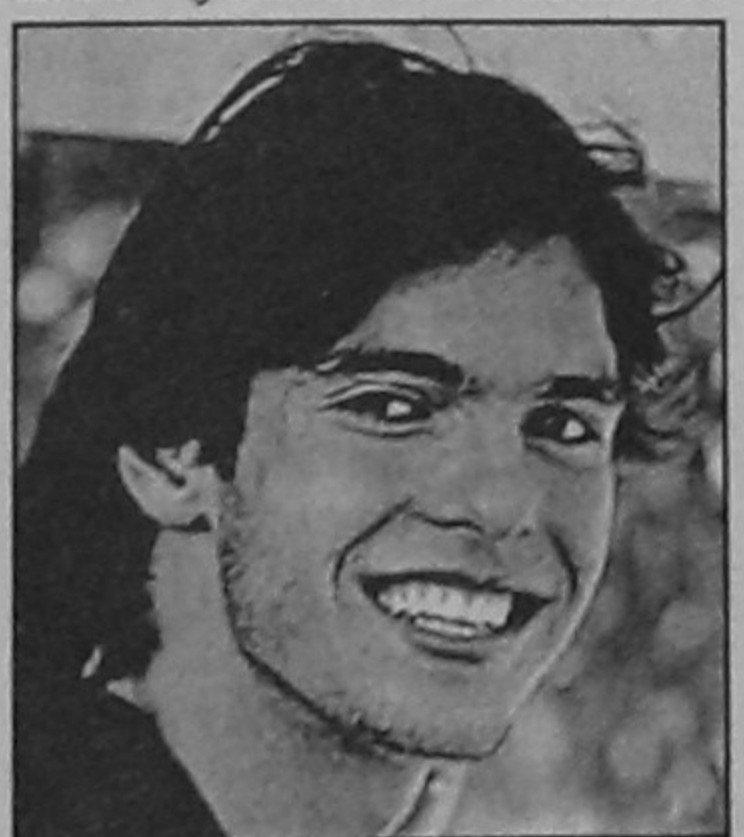
In a frantic search for a satisfactory answer to the non-availability of the giant screen, this correspondent approached few more people within the BCB and local organisers. "It could have been arranged had there been timely initiatives from the concerned officials," they replied.

"The giant screen you got last year during India-Bangladesh match was indeed a complimentary gift to the BCB from a private company being offered to the cricket fans as part of its (the company) promotional programme," revealed a young BCB official, who preferred not to be named.

He said, "I heard that our concerned officials had approached before the company who refused this time to give the giant screen on complimentary basis and demanded unbelievable cash for providing the facility that actually prompted the BCB not to go for the giant screen."

The young BCB man however regretted that he had no knowledge of the actual amount the aforesaid company asked for.

Ali Abbas, eminent local sports organiser and media coordinator in Chittagong Test, expressed his frustration over the matter. But he too avoided the core query with a diplomatic smile.



Kaka (AC Milan's Brazilian superstar) "I think I will stay at Milan until the end of my career. I've got used to the life here and I'm settled in the city. I can't see myself going anywhere else, even if we never know what will happen in life." After extending his contract with AC Milan until 2013.

SA meet India in final



AFP, Kuala Lumpur

South Africa crushed defending champions Pakistan by 98 runs in a rain-hit semifinal on Saturday to set up a clash with India in the under-19 World Cup final.

Pakistan, set a revised target of 252 in 47 overs in a match spread over two days due to bad weather, were shot out for 153, dashing their hopes of a third successive title in cricket's premier junior event.

Off-spinner Mohammad Vallie lifted South Africa home with 4-25 as opener Ahmad Shehzad played a lone hand for Pakistan with a fluent 60 containing six boundaries and a six.

Proteas captain Wayne Parnell and Roy Adams chipped in with two wickets each as Pakistan lost their last eight wickets for 67 runs.

The day-night final will be played at the Kinrara Oval on Sunday with a reserve day set aside in case of bad weather.

The semifinal was carried over

to a second day after rain on Friday brought play to an early end with Pakistan on 86-2 from 18.5 overs in reply to South Africa's challenging 260-8.

Pakistan were unlucky to bow out after needing only five runs in seven balls if the stipulated 20 overs had been bowled on Friday.

When play finally began two hours and 20 minutes late on Saturday -- due to a wet outfield caused by heavy overnight rain -- Pakistan made the worst possible start.

Umar Amin, who was on 22 overnight after sharing a 69-run stand for the third wicket with Shehzad, fell first ball to a brilliant piece of stumping by wicketkeeper Bradley Barnes.

Barnes collected a delivery from Pieter Malan bowled wide down the leg-side and whipped off the bats with left-handed Amin short of his crease.

"Bradley's stumping had a huge role to play," said a beaming South African coach Ray Jennings. "We planned that dismissal."

Pakistani coach Mansoor Rana said the early setback cost his team dearly.

"The idea was to bat around

Amin who would be the anchor at one end while the others went for the runs," said Rana.

"I told the boys to forget what happened on Friday and see it as a 29-over game in which we needed 166 more. But losing Amin off the first ball changed the whole game." Jennings said he looked forward to the final against India, who beat his team by six wickets in the preliminary league.

"We are the underdogs because there are huge expectations on India, but I like it that way," he said. "We have had a tough semifinal and the boys will be playing for a third day in a row, but they are in good spirits for the final."

Pakistan were dealt a blow when star batsman Ali Asad was given out LBW to Adams by Sri Lankan umpire Tyrone Wijewardene even though the ball appeared to pitch outside leg stump.

South Africa removed danger man Shehzad and Umar Mir in the space of three balls to leave Pakistan in tatters at 124-6 in the 30th over.

Shehzad miscued a lofted on-drive off Adams to point and Mir was bowled by Vallie for no score.

Vallie then took three of the last four wickets to seal Pakistan's fate.

Dhoni's focus on cricket

CRICINFO, Sydney

Mahendra Singh Dhoni is proud that his young team has reached the finals of the tournament given the scepticism that greeted the squad's announcement. And, as at the World Twenty20 in South Africa last year, he has asked his players not to worry about the end result.

"Winning is important, but winning is not everything," Dhoni said on the eve of the finals when asked if lifting the trophy would be a fitting answer to those who questioned his decision to back youth over experience. Then, his voice more animated, he added: "His doubt about this young side when we came in should now analyse how good this side has been from the previous teams that played in Australia. They should analyse the capabilities of the youngsters, how good they are at the international level."

Dhoni has led by example -- India wouldn't have reached this stage without his rescue acts with the bat and his assured captaincy -- but believes the team has been improving since the crushing defeat in the Twenty20 game against Australia. "From then, this team, after the eight ODIs, has shaped up very well. The bowling, batting and running are improving but it can be better still."

While providing a word of caution to his team -- "It doesn't matter if it's the finals or the semis, we have to get the basics right" -- Dhoni emphasised the need to keep things in perspective. "Sometimes we are desperate to win and that's when the pressure mounts, so it's important to be relaxed."

That mantra worked for Dhoni when he led an unfancied and inexperienced side to victory at the World Twenty20. They faced some tough situations during the campaign but managed to stay focused, hold their nerve and emerge victorious. The key was Dhoni's leadership.

Dhoni knows the finals will not be easy, especially given the controversies in the lead-up, like the Ishant Sharma-Andrew Symonds incident and Matthew Hayden being reprimanded for his remarks on Harbhajan Singh, that have distracted both teams.

Dhoni says he doesn't mind the aggression but his primary focus will always be cricket. "Throughout the series many things have been said about individuals but we have still gone on to play good cricket. Cricket is about batting, bowling and fielding. The verbal part remains but we should focus on our cricket."

ICC CHAMPIONS TROPHY England earn seventh seed

BBC ONLINE, undated

England have been made seventh seeds for September's one-day ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

Holders Australia will be named the top seeds on the March 12 cut-off date after the completion of the preliminary CB Series matches down under.

The Aussies will head the rankings irrespective of how they fare against India in the three-match CB Series finals.

South Africa, winners of the inaugural Champions Trophy in 1998, will be seeded second for the tournament. New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England and the West Indies will all then be seeded in sequence.

The groupings will be announced on March 12. It will be the sixth edition of the ICC Champions Trophy, which was previously known as the ICC Knock-out, with matches to be played in Karachi and Lahore.

Mansoor touts India to win

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan's under-19 coach Mansoor Rana believes India are the favourites to win the World Cup final against South Africa in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

Mansoor was on Saturday disappointed after his team's 98-run loss to South Africa in the semifinal. But he thought India had some talented players who had the temperament to tackle the pressure in the final against the Proteas.

"The South Africans are a very clinical outfit and their bowlers bowled in the right areas against us and their fielding was up there."

"But India has some players who can perform in the final and that is a very important factor," Mansoor told PTI from Kuala Lumpur.

Mansoor said India had been performing very well in the tournament and if they won the toss they would field first in the title clash. "They won against New Zealand in the semifinal because the ball gets wet under the lights making it easier for the batsmen," he said. Mansoor said his players had been talking about a possible final with India, but unfortunately things did not go as planned.

Murali's final exit

AFP, Melbourne

It was the scene of the lowest point of his career, but Sri Lankan star Muralidaran said his one regret about playing cricket in Australia was that he did not perform better at Test level.

Muralidaran, and fellow veteran Sanath Jayasuriya, bid farewell to Australia as international cricketers in Friday's tri-series clash with the home side at the MCG.

The Australian team formed a guard of honour for each player as they came out to bat and although the match carried little weight, with Sri Lanka missing the finals, Muralidaran and Jayasuriya went out on a winning note, the tourists recording a remarkable 13-run victory.

Both veterans played key roles in the result, Muralidaran bowling superbly and picking up two crucial wickets, while Jayasuriya secured the win when he bowled Brett Lee with his first ball when

brought on in the 49th over. Muralidaran, 35, said he bore no grudges against Australian cricket, despite being called for throwing in Melbourne in the 1995 Boxing Day Test and also later in Adelaide.

However, he said he would always regret not performing with more distinction in Australia in Test cricket.

"Sometime there were ups and downs in Australia, but still I enjoyed my cricket here," he said here after Friday's game.

"The Boxing Day was most memorable for me, it was hard. I got over it, but still I want to play after that in Australia."

"So I tried to perform, but the only country I couldn't really perform in Tests was Australia."

"I played only five Tests and my average was not good enough, but in one-dayers I did really well in the Australia."

"But that disappointment will be there forever."

Muralidaran has taken 723 Test wickets, but managed just 12 wickets in five Tests in Australia at 72.41.

He was appreciative of the

Australians recognising him and Jayasuriya.

"It's going to be the last tour for me, I won't be able to come any more to Australia, so it was a good honour," he said.

"We have been involved in the game for the last 17 years, Sanath for almost 20 years."

The 38-year-old Jayasuriya, who struggled to have his usual impact with the bat in the tri-series, said he would have fond memories of Australia.

"This is my last tour to Australia and I've enjoyed my cricket in Australia," he said.

"I'm disappointed only that we couldn't make the finals."

Despite a generally poor series, Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene was pleased his side finished the tour with a win.

"It has been a disappointing tournament, but the way we finished today (Saturday) showed a lot of character and we can take a lot of positives out of this game," he said.

"We had a lot of opportunities but we didn't take those opportunities and we can learn from that."

Ponting expects bounce back

AFP, Melbourne

Australian captain Ricky Ponting said he believed Friday's shock loss to Sri Lanka was a timely wake-up call for his side ahead of Sunday's first tri-series final against India at the SCG.

Australia appeared to be cruising at 107 for no wicket chasing 222 to win, but collapsed to be all out for 208, handing Sri Lanka an unexpected 13-run win.

The defeat boosted spirits in the Indian camp, but Ponting said the poor performance was just an aberration and expected his side to bounce back.

"I guess the positive for us to come out of tonight is that we have got that performance out the way now," Ponting said after the loss.

"We can worry about the finals and I would rather that perfor-

mance came tonight than on Sunday."

"It is always painful when you lose, especially when you seemingly have a game in the bag like we did tonight."

"But it's not the end of the world, we've got some finals games to start on Sunday."

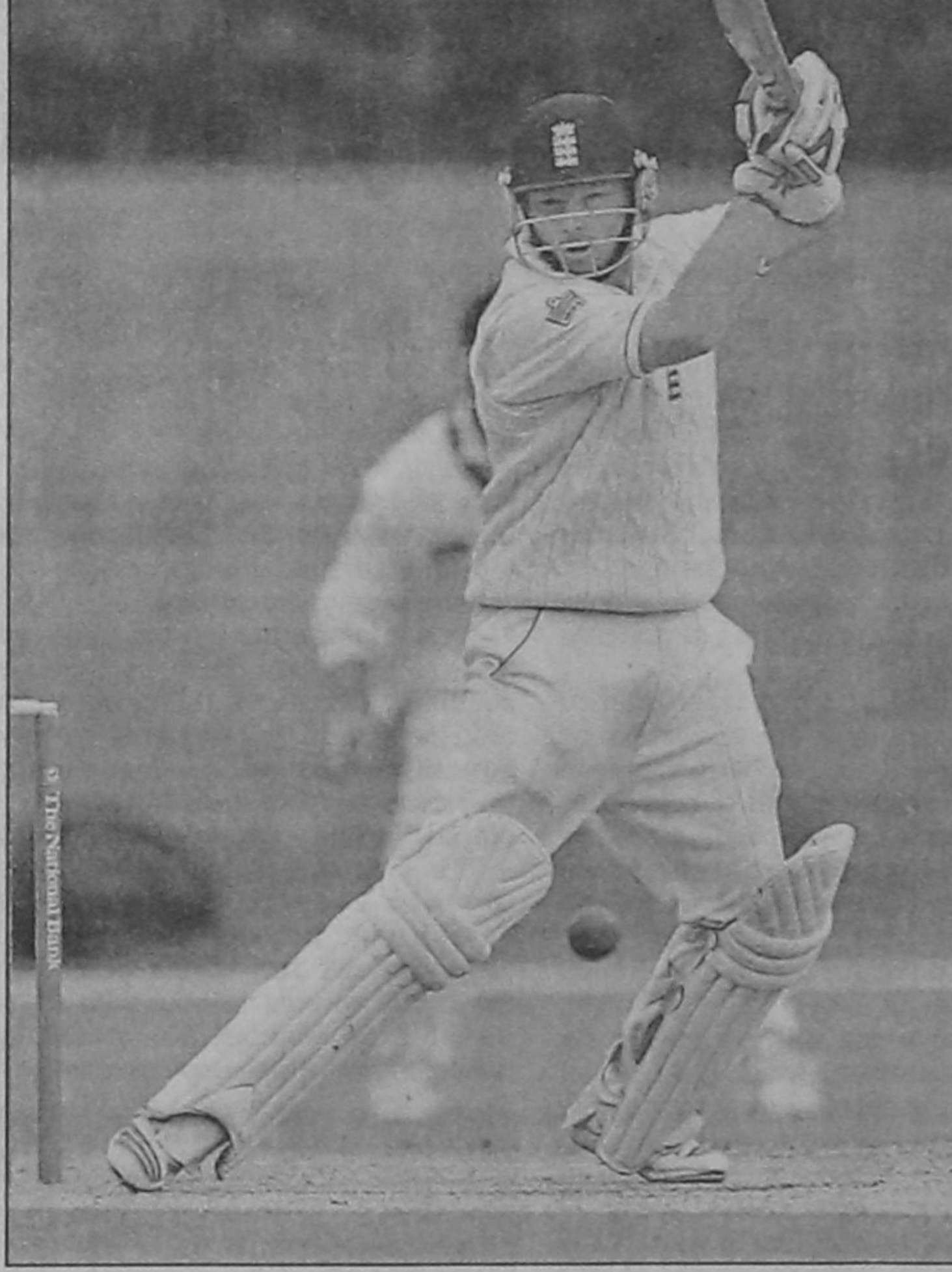
While it was another disappointing batting performance by the Australians, Ponting said he was confident his batsmen were generally in good form.

Ponting said he believed some of his players were guilty of looking ahead to Sunday's final.

"We've known for a while we were playing India in the finals," he said.

"Our guys have shown through the series at different times that they are in good form."

Wicketkeeper-batsman Adam Gilchrist, who belted 83 from 50 balls against Sri Lanka but blamed himself for the defeat because he believed he threw his wicket away, echoed Ponting's thoughts.



England batsman Ian Bell spent valuable time in the middle making an unbeaten 104 against New Zealand Select XI at University Oval in Dunedin yesterday.

English to play next IPL: Modi

CRICINFO, undated

Indian Premier League commissioner Lalit Modi will stand by an "informal understanding" with the ECB that keeps England players out of the IPL for the first season as it clashes with the county season. However, he has warned things could be different in the future.

"I know a lot of our owners are in touch with the English players," he told the Daily Telegraph. "I know that the players' agents have been in touch with me, and I've been telling them we cannot do anything for the moment. After this season, it will be more difficult to do that."

Modi had earlier suggested that the dates for future IPL events could be altered to ensure that it doesn't overlap with the English county season to allow England players to be accommodated.

In exchange for ensuring England players are out-of-bounds to franchise owners in the first season, Modi wants the counties to keep out any player connected with the unofficial Indian Cricket League.

"We accept that people are committed to certain pre-existing contracts, but it's not acceptable for any county to knowingly sign an IPL player," he said. "They need to keep to that understanding, otherwise the trickle-down effect is that none of the English counties could end up being invited to the Champions Twenty20 Trophy in the autumn."

Strauss, Bell make merry

REUTERS, Wellington

Andrew Strauss and Ian Bell both scored centuries for England in their drawn practice match against a New Zealand Invitational XI on Saturday.

Strauss retired on 104 and Bell finished 104 not out as England made amends for their dismal first innings total of 131 by making 325 for seven in their second knock.

The match was abandoned at tea on the third and final day at Dunedin's University Oval because of rain with neither side in a position to push for a win.

Strauss virtually assured himself of a recall to the Test side for next week's opening match against New Zealand with a patient display over four and a half hours.

Bell continued his impressive form in the series with a chanceless innings including 15 fours and a six but Paul Collingwood failed to get some valuable practice ahead of the test, departing for a fourth ball duck.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers for solving.