

## Clark happy to shed rust

AFP, Darwin

Seamer Stuart Clark said Australia's lopsided one-day series against Bangladesh has been a worthwhile hit-out ahead of next month's tough tour against fierce rivals India.

The three-match series, in which Australia has an unbeatable 2-0 lead after 180-run and eight-wicket thrashings this week, wraps up on Saturday.

It was initially scheduled as a warm-up for the now-postponed Champions Trophy, meaning Australia's next commitment is a gruelling, and possibly contentious, four-Test tour of India.

"It's hard when you haven't played for a while and you need to come back in, sometimes the best way to do it is to play," Clark said.

"Okay, the opposition haven't been as good as they'd like to be, but it's still a very good lead-in and experience for what's ahead."

Australia depart for India on September 21 and the first Test in Bangalore starts on October 9.

India's Test and one-day matches in Australia earlier this year were marred by a series of spats including a racially charged dispute between Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds.

Clark said Darwin's heat and humidity conditions were good preparation for conditions in India.

"It's been tough," Clark said. "I won't lie and say it's been easy, it's been tough because of the humidity."

"It's part of playing cricket, it's what the conditions are like in many places around the world where we play, so it's something we really need to get used to."

Neither Clark or leading pace-man Brett Lee have played Test cricket in India, but the seamer was confident that inexperience wouldn't be a problem.

"We're lucky enough to have all played cricket (in India), whether it be one-day cricket or IPL," Clark said.

"We'll look at some sort of footage and draw on the experiences of the guys who did play there in 2004."

"We're going a little bit early now, and make our own adjustments to conditions that aren't like Australia."

Clark added Australia were looking for another big win on Saturday to compete the clean sweep of Bangladesh.

## Cox assures Symonds

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Symonds's future with the Australian team will be decided once he makes himself available for selection, and the decision will be based purely on cricketing grounds, Jamie Cox, one of Australia's selectors, said in Bangalore.

"As far as selection is concerned, it's up to Andrew on when he makes himself available," Cox, currently touring India with the Australia A team, said. "The decision (to send him back) was made by a group of senior players with the support of Cricket Australia. And we hope Andrew is back quickly."

Cox was quick to dismiss notions that Symonds would be an automatic choice in the team if he made himself available for selection. "As of now Andrew has been given time to sort things out. We will make a decision (about his selection) when that time comes around," he said. "But the decision to pick him will surely be on cricketing grounds. It will have nothing to do with whatever has happened recently. Disciplinary issues will have no bearing on that decision."

Symonds was sent home from Darwin ahead of the ODI series against Bangladesh by the team's leadership group after he chose to go fishing while skipping a team meeting. The latest misdemeanour -- he had once turned up drunk for an ODI against the same opponents in 2005 -- has invited criticism from a few former players, while others, including teammate Shane Watson, have come out in support of the allrounder.

## Ford rejects NZ talks

BBC ONLINE, undated

Kent coach Graham Ford has dismissed speculation linking him with taking up a similar role with New Zealand.

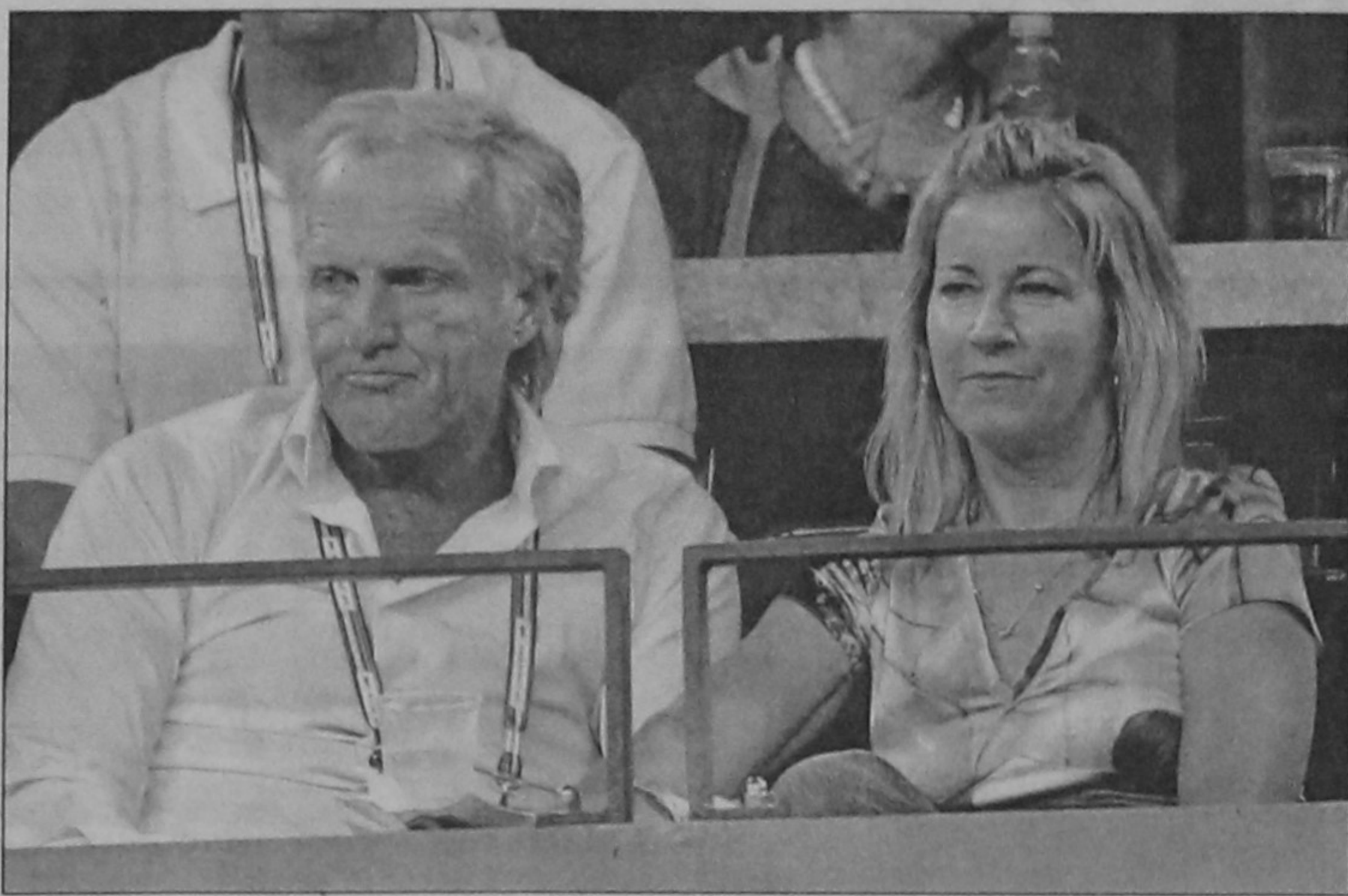
Newspapers in New Zealand are suggesting Ford is on the shortlist to replace John Bracewell.

The South African, 47, has admitted he expressed an interest in the role but said there has been no contact since.

He told BBC Radio Kent: "When New Zealand were touring here they did speak to me but I'm pretty sure they've got their man."

He added: "It was only a brief phone call and I did express some interest to explore the option but since then I have heard nothing from New Zealand cricket."

"It would have to be something pretty tremendous to lure me away from Kent, I'm thoroughly enjoying myself and we have had an enjoyable summer."



Australian golfer Greg Norman (L) sits with his wife, former tennis player Chris Evert, during the US Open quarterfinal match between Novak Djokovic and Andy Roddick at Flushing Meadows on Thursday.

## Vaughan given time

CRICKET

INTERNET, undated

Michael Vaughan looks set to be given the remainder of the season to impress the selectors enough to secure a place in England's Test squad for the pre-Christmas tour to India.

The 33-year-old Yorkshire batsman made it clear when he resigned as Test captain a month ago that he had set his sights on regaining his form in county cricket to warrant selection for the two-Test series in India.

He struggled on his return to action last week, scoring 10 and nought against Kent at Scarborough, but England are to give him more time to justify his selection by delaying the announcement about the Test squad until the end of the season.

England's selectors are next week due to announce the squads for the trip to Antigua to play in the multi-million dollar Stanford match and the seven-match one-day series in India after considering performances during the stunning 4-0 NatWest series triumph over South Africa.

Their deliberations for the Test squad, which is due to play two Tests in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, are on-going, however, to give Vaughan and other players hoping to force their way onto the plane an extended opportunity to impress.

"It would seem fair to let everybody play," confirmed coach Peter Moores.

"We've got a few people out there playing for form so it makes sense to get the Stanford and one-

day squad announced over the next week and then sit down and announce the Test squad towards the end of the county season."

That would give Vaughan a maximum of six further championship innings to impress, starting with Yorkshire's current match against Sussex at Scarborough while he has further matches against Somerset at Headingley starting on September 17 and the final match of the season against Sussex at Hove on September 24.

Vaughan's ability to withstand challenges from players like Owais Shah, Ravi Bopara, Robert Key and Joe Denly will be the major talking point for the selectors when they pick the Test squad, but the one-day party seems a far more straightforward choice.

The outstanding performances in the five-match one-day series against South Africa have almost picked the 13-man squad to travel to Antigua and India, although Moores and the selectors may consider other candidates over the next few days.

Moores admitted: "With people playing so well it makes selection easier but to be fair to everybody it's important we go away and let the dust settle and look through it all."

"There have been a lot of lads working very hard in domestic cricket to put themselves forward as well, but when you have a successful side and create a winning environment there's a lot of emphasis on keeping that and those players because they've been successful at the moment."

Having dominated South Africa in every match until the last, when rain washed out play after just three overs at Cardiff's SWALEC Stadium, Moores and England will enter their

break on a high having been propelled to third in the world rankings.

But Moores concedes the next big test will be succeeding during a gruelling series in India, when they will embark on seven matches in 19 days all in different venues.

"I'm excited by this side," said Moores. "It looks good on paper, it looks like it's repeatable and the formula looks right -- it's got the ingredients to be successful."

"It has been successful to start with and we've got another really tough test in India in different conditions and if we can come through that and win that series then we really will have made a mark."

"There's not as much change between the two sides as there was and the captain is the same and what we're trying to do is keep the environment the same."

"When you get belief and success in a team you want that to ride through both sides. We've been successful in one-day cricket with this side first and what we're hoping is that we can take that momentum into Test match cricket."

He added: "We won the one-day series in Sri Lanka with a very young team last year and we're going to be taking a stronger team to India so if we can deliver there as well that would be two sub-Continent wins in one-day cricket in a row, which would be a real plus."

"We know playing Test matches in India are historically very difficult to score the runs and get them out so that's going to be a really hard test for us."

"We want to have a strong first half to the winter so we can back that up with a good series against West Indies in the new year."

## Empty stands upset coach

CRICINFO, Darwin

Australia's coach Tim Nielsen has told Darwin cricket fans they risk losing their already infrequent international cricket fixtures if they do not turn out in greater numbers. The first two ODIs between Australia and Bangladesh attracted about 4000 fans each and while the figures have pleased Northern Territory Cricket, Nielsen believes it will be hard to justify continually playing in front of such small crowds.

"I'd probably like to see a few more people here to support the games and really come out and show that, even if they aren't necessarily cricket people, they're willing to support international sport (in Darwin)," Nielsen said. "If that can't happen it's going to be more and more difficult I think for Cricket Australia and international teams to keep coming here."

Darwin fans have one more chance to see Australia take on Bangladesh, on Saturday. The three games have been the first full international matches held in Darwin since 2004, which was the second year that Cricket Australia experimented with the Top End tours.

The crowds have not been helped by the fact that the games are being televised live into Darwin. Andrew Ramsay, the chief executive of Northern Territory Cricket, felt 4000 per match was a good result despite the Marrara ground having held up to 17,500 spectators for Australian Rules football games.

"We have a population of only 100,000 here in Darwin," Ramsay said, "and you can only squeeze the orange so much." Ramsay is hopeful that Darwin can host its third Test in 2010, when Bangladesh are scheduled to return.

The Northern Territory climate allows Australia to squeeze in out-of-season home fixtures against sides that would struggle to draw big crowds in the major Australian centres in summer. The ICC's future tours programme requires regular home-and-away clashes between all the full member nations and Nielsen said if games in northern Australia remained viable, the players would be happy to play there.

"Darwin is a good location for us at this time of year," Nielsen said. "It's obviously cold and wet down south. It's nice for our blokes to get some sun on their backs and run around and be playing international cricket at this time of the year. Normally we're overseas, so it's nice to be doing that in Australia."

## Former umpire Egar no more

CRICINFO, undated

Col Egar, the former Test umpire and Australian cricket administrator, has died in Adelaide at the age of 80. Egar was one of the leading umpires during the 1960s and went on to serve as the chairman of the Australian Cricket Board from 1989 to 1992.

He officiated in 29 of Australia's 30 home Tests during the 1960s and is probably best remembered for his part in the Ian Meckiff throwing incident. In the first Test of the 1963-64 series against South Africa, Egar no-balled Meckiff, the Australia fast bowler, four times in his first over.

It finished Meckiff's career and also brought death threats for Egar, who went on to continue umpiring at the highest level for five more years. He also stood in the tied Test between West Indies and Australia in Brisbane in 1960-61 and, along with his colleague Col Hoy, earned the praise of the visiting captain Frank Worrell for their calm and unobtrusive officiating.

After retiring from on-field duties, Egar joined involved with the game by staying the board of the South Australian Cricket Association. He was a board member from 1971-72 to 1999-2000, including 12 years as vice-president, and sat on the Australian board from 1981 to 1998. During that time Egar managed several Australian tours, including the 1988 visit to Pakistan when he helped keep the tour on course despite disputes over umpiring standards.

Creagh O'Connor, the Cricket Australia chairman, said Egar had given lifelong service to the game. "Col will be best remembered by cricket followers as an outstanding international cricket umpire who was involved in several historic moments on field," O'Connor said.

"But those of us who knew and worked with Col will also remember him with high regard for his selfless service to SA and Australian cricket as an administrator and volunteer, and as a manager of Australian touring cricket teams. He gave a lot to cricket and the Australian game is all the better for that."

## Rain threatens semis

BBC ONLINE, New York



US Open organisers are preparing for major weather disruption

as Britain's Andy Murray waits to take on world number one Rafael Nadal on Saturday.

The remnants of tropical storm Hanna are forecast to hit the New York area, with heavy downpours expected.

It is understood officials are prepared for play to stretch on until Monday.

The men's semifinals, including Murray's clash with Nadal, are due to start at 1500 GMT, with the women's final from 2300 GMT on Sunday.

The US Open is unique among the four Grand Slams in holding both men's semifinals and the women's final on the same day, dubbed 'Super Saturday'.

However, tournament officials and the United States Tennis Association have issued an inclement weather warning to ticket holders due to attend.

Murray goes up against Nadal for the sixth time in his career, and the second Grand Slam tournament in a row.

The 21-year-old Briton was

soundly beaten at Wimbledon earlier this year, making the head-to-head record 5-0 in the Spaniard's favour.

However, Murray ran Nadal very close on the Australian Open hardcourts last year, taking a two sets to one lead before wilting in a five-set epic.

In their four meetings since, he has not won a set but their encounters indoors in Madrid last year and at the Canada Masters this season were closely fought.

"The one thing that I need to improve is the return," said Murray after his quarterfinal win over Argentine Juan Martin del Potro. "The first couple of times I played him I returned very well. The last two or three matches I didn't return well at all. That's the only thing that I need to do."

"If I take the match at Wimbledon away, the times I played him on hard courts, I've had quite a few close sets, really tough matches."

"It comes down to who returns better and who gets the breaks of serve. Normally that's the best part of my game. The last few times I've played him, I've not done that."

Like Murray, Nadal will get his first taste of 'Super Saturday' after the beating Mardy Fish to reach the US Open semifinals for the first time.

The 22-year-old French Open and Wimbledon champion has

dropped a set in each of his last two matches on a surface he has struggled with in the past.

But after losing just one match since early May and collecting six trophies, Nadal will be expected to get the better of Murray.

The top seed knows he will have to be at his best.

"Andy is playing very well and having a very good summer so it's going to be a very tough match," he said.

"I know how good Andy is and how good he can play. I know the only way for me to win is play my best tennis."

"I played one of my best matches against him at Wimbledon. I beat him in the semifinals in Toronto too, but it was a very close match and I played well."

The other men's semifinal sees four-times defending champion Roger Federer face world number three Novak Djokovic in a repeat of last year's final.

Federer is through to his 18th straight semifinal, but defeat will leave him without a Grand Slam title to his name for the first time in more than five years.

Djokovic, who beat Federer in the last four on his way to the Australian Open title in January, can push the Swiss down to third in the world rankings if he goes on to win the title.

## Bring in the Ks

CRICKET

INTERNET, undated

A quick glimpse at the ongoing three-day between India A and Australia A provides ample ammunition for the school of thought that is pro a shake-up in the former nation's batting order.

In the midst of a superb season in the Ranji Trophy, which sees him file in at fourth on the domestic tourney's run-scoring charts, Mohammad Kaif racked up an impressive 94 against an attack led by Oz Test hopefuls Doug Bollinger and Ashley Noffke in Bangalore.

Virat Kohli, fresh from his sound showing in his first ODI series for the senior side, weighed in with a steadfast 49 as the hosts continued to hold the upper hand over the visitors from Down Under.

Kaif, whose lengthy wait for a Test recall now borders on preposterous proportions, has worked hard on his batting and should at least get a berth in the squad for the Test series against the Aussies.

Often found wanting on the drive, reports out of India claim the right-hander has corrected his shoulder movement and is now much more fluent on the front foot. Against the pace of Brett Lee, Mitchell Johnson and the like, that alteration to his technique would reap great reward if given a deserved chance.

Having last played Test cricket in June 2006, Kaif inexplicably

received the boot on the back of a lean string (0, DNB, 13, 6) against the West Indies. The selectors quickly forgot about his 46 not out and 148 not out in Tests one and two of that series, resigning him to the international wilderness since.

Why is it that a mere three fruitless knocks led to his axing, while the recent shoddy performances over twice as many innings by Rahul Dravid (averaging 24.7), Sourav Ganguly (16) and Sachin Tendulkar (15.8) are passed off as "these things happen in cricket" by Anil Kumble's perplexing to say the least.

Going on to fight the beleaguered cause of the old guard further, Kumble explains: "They have done so much for Indian cricket in the last 15 years. We should not forget their past contribution." The modern era has little space for loyalty and even less for sentimentality, and the Indian Test captain's desperate words serve only to fuel the call for a shake-up in the order.

Complementing Kaif's campaign is that of Kohli. Thrown in the deep end in the wake of Virender Sehwag's injury, he took to the big occasion with maturity beyond his years in the one-day series against Sri Lanka. With that mettle-proving experience added to his world cup-winning leadership at the helm of the under-19 team earlier this year, initial signs are Kohli has the temperament needed to take on Ricky Ponting's world beaters.

Currently playing his trade at six in the order against Oz A, the 19-year-old seems the logical replacement

for one of the erring trio. VVS Laxman's prowess is wasted down at six, and the rookie's call-up would prove a two-fold move in the right direction as the stalwart would subsequently move up the order.

Also, Kaif and Kohli would add a much-needed vibrancy in the field, with the current ageing crop offering a defined lack of dynamism and exuberance.

Then there's the little matter of a looming second chance for Yuvraj Singh. Tendulkar's slow recuperation from an elbow injury might be just the opening for Yuvraj's recall, the latest prognosis on the little maestro's participation against Australia a mere "maybe". Singh's hopeful transition from ODI specialist to Test cricketer still falters (average 24.3 in last 10 Tests).

But such is the confrontational nature of his approach (see swash-buckling 169 against Pakistan, December 2007), India can ill afford to leave him out of the equation upon the arrival of Ponting's bunch. If not for the series opener, then surely the second clash on the back of more inevitable failure from Dravid or Ganguly.

As it is, Kohli and Kaif have the rest of the Bangalore encounter and a second match against the same opposition next week to nourish the powers-that-be with food for thought. Dravid, Ganguly and Tendulkar in the meantime, may want to consider handing the baton to the new school before it's forcefully taken from them.

## Future in franchise, says Greg

CRICKET

AFP, Singapore

Former India coach Greg Chappell believes cricket's future lies in privately-owned Twenty20 club franchises around the world with Tests taking a back seat.

Chappell, who was this week appointed as the new head coach of the Cricket Australia Centre of Excellence, said he could envisage cricket being organised along the lines of European football clubs.

"I can see a future where a Mumbai club plays New York, plays London, plays Singapore," the former Test batsman told the Straits Times here.

"There'll be club teams based all over the world and I think that's a

good development.

"We're going to get to the stage where it is like soccer -- the players will play for their clubs and occasionally for their country. So there's always the possibility of conflict, like we see in soccer."

The recent boom in Twenty20 cricket, sparked by the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) this year, has led to concern in some quarters about the future of traditional Test cricket.

There are fears that the riches on offer to players in Twenty20 tournaments will make the next generation focus on the big-hitting need to flourish in the 20-over game rather than the more disciplined style of five-day Tests.

Chappell said that if the game was to grow beyond its traditional borders, then Twenty20 was the format.

## Sachin batted

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remove the haematoma but team physio (Nitin Patel) didn't want this treatment to be performed over here."

A haematoma is a collection of blood outside the blood vessels, generally as a result of internal bleeding.

Tendulkar was advised not to take any further part in the match, but came out to bat in the second innings in a losing cause. How much further damage that might have done is unknown, but as Tendulkar continues to receive treatment for his injury it is obvious that he would not have been fit to play in the Champions Trophy.

India's next assignment is a four-match Test series at home to Australia beginning on October 9, and the hope is that Tendulkar will be fully recovered.

"Sachin may be able to play the series against Australia," Dr Harip vented.

## Man jailed for blackmailing

AFP, London



A goalkeeper who blackmailed a top English Premier League footballer over a sex video was jailed for 20 months on Friday.

Former Manchester City trainee Ashley Timms, 22, demanded 15,000 pounds (18,600 euros, 26,600 dollars) from the star, who cannot be named for legal reasons.

Timms made a series of threats to publish the images if the player failed to pay him the cash.

The video clip showed the footballer and a 19-year-old woman having sex at his home in September last year.

Timms pleaded guilty last month and was jailed on Friday at Manchester Crown Court in north-west England after admitting making a series of demands and threats.

Sentencing Timms, Judge Andrew Gilbert said: "Blackmail always calls for a custodial sen-

tence. The abuse of your friendship for simple greed is an aggravating feature.

"This was a calculated attempt to extract money for your own benefit."

"It is depressing that in a society where there is supposed to be more sexual freedom, some popular newspapers and magazines continue to dress their interest in it as some form of moral indignation when what they are actually doing is making money from their readers' interest in sex and salacious gossip."

Timms and the player, known only as witness A, had become friends and were part of a "fantasy world" of fast cars, money and girls.

It was "commonplace" for footballers to film each other having sex with women, the court heard.

Prosecution lawyer David Friesner told the court Timms used a mobile phone to video the footballer having intercourse.

But the two men drifted apart as Timms' football career "withered" because of his poor attitude and as his earnings plummeted and he

dropped out of the high-spending world of top players, Friesner said.

Then "out of the blue" he contacted the Premier League player in March, telling Witness A he needed 15,000 pounds for a deposit to buy a house.

Timms told the player he could "buy" the sex footage and then destroy it. Over a series of text messages, he told the player: "I have got loads of pictures and the video of you."

"If you want them, make me an offer."

The player contacted officials at his club and a meeting was called at a hotel during which Timms said: "What's it worth? I want thousands."

He also hinted he could "lose" the phone in a taxi -- and that the footage might end up on the YouTube video sharing website if it was not destroyed.

Witness A became so concerned that his performance on the field suffered. Police were eventually called in and Timms was arrested on April 4.