



India's cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar (second from R) gifts a book to Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan at the '60 Not Out' event while master batsman Sachin Tendulkar (L) and former cricketer Gundappa Biswanath look on in Mumbai on Thursday.

Gayle wants new beginning

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Chris Gayle wants West Indies' tour of Australia to be the new beginning of the region desperately needs after another round of strikes and disputes. While Gayle was a key figure in the four-month boycott as the side's captain, he is now charged with leading the reunification process that starts with the three-Test series of Australia.

It won't be easy as the old players mix with the new but one benefit of their marathon trip from the Caribbean to Brisbane, extended by half a day due to a delay in London, was that the 15-man squad has had plenty of bonding time. Before they departed the players spoke about leaving the distractions at home. While they were in the air Viv Richards was saying Gayle would have to change his attitude to show he wanted to be in charge.

Gayle is one of the most targeted men in the game, mostly for his love of lucrative one-day leagues over Test cricket. Now he is hoping to focus on peace and unity. "That's life," he said of Richards' comments. "I am trying to move on, it doesn't make sense to fight with each other. That's not the real cause to be here (in Australia)."

While Gayle is so laidback—even when severely jet-lagged—that he makes hippies seem stressed, he could snap if the criticism continues from the

big names back home. "Our main focus is to represent West Indies well," he said after the side finally arrived in Brisbane on Friday afternoon. "The negativity, I won't take it on too much unless something might trigger out a line, and then I'll have to take it on, but that's the situation. If that situation occurs we'll deal with it at that point in time."

Since Gayle's last Test in England in May, West Indies



CHRIS GAYLE

have lost at home to Bangladesh while the main players were on strike over the pay and contractual disputes. He arrived in England a couple of days before the opening match, preferring to boost his bank balance with more games in the IPL, and was soon backtracking after saying he wouldn't be so sad if Test cricket died.

When asked on Friday what the series in the Caribbean last year—which Australia won 2-0—meant, Gayle said he could-

n't remember much about it. The critics would say it showed his lack of interest in the game's traditional format but he did miss two games of that campaign with a groin injury and his head has been in the clouds for most of the week.

He does regret the damage caused by the strike that fractured an already split cricket region. "That's the last thing we wanted to do, bring the game into disrepute," he said. "Having said all that, it's after. This is a new beginning and hopefully things can be better from here on in."

As captain Gayle is now working with David Williams, the coach, and Joel Garner, the manager, in moulding the group into a unified unit. However, he knows they are starting from behind following the Bangladesh defeat and their early exit at the Champions Trophy.

"I set us back, to be honest," Gayle said. "But at the same time we have to move forward, trying to forget about what happened in the past. We're back to square one, it's a rebuilding process right now. Even though we're rebuilding we have a good chance of winning."

SQUAD

Chris Gayle (captain), Adrian Barath, Suleiman Benn, Dwayne Bravo, Shivnarine Chandepaul, Narsingh Deonarine, Travis Dowlin, Brendan Nash, Denesh Ramdin, Ravi Rampaul, Kemar Roach, Darren Sammy, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Jerome Taylor, Gavin Tonge

DRU cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Channel i and Bangla Vision moved into the final of the Pepsi-DRU six-a-side Cricket tournament thrashing their respective rivals in the semifinals at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The final is billed for Saturday with the champions getting Tk 50,000. The runners-up will be awarded Tk 25,000.

Channel i thrashed Shamokal by five wickets as they raced to 40 for no loss in reply to Shamokal's 39 for two. Asif Iqbal of Channel i was adjudged man of the match.

Bangla Vision also recorded an identical five wickets win against Jugantor to storm into the final as they reached 51 for no loss after restricting Jugantor to 48 for one. Mahfuzur Rahman of Bangla Vision was named man of the match.

Nayeem's

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Quazi Kamrul claimed three wickets but he was the most expensive, conceding 61 runs while Forhad Reza picked up three wickets for 51 runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
MOHAMMEDAN-GAZITANK
Venue: SBNCs
GAZI TANK: 259-6 in 50 overs (Nazimuddin 43, Nafees 70, Kapali 24, Misbahul Haq 51, Nayeem 66 not out, extras 2; Saqlan 2-37).

MOHAMMEDAN: 261-7 in 49.5 overs (Shamsur 43, Ashraf 100, Riyad 29, Mahroof 36 not out, extras 19; Kamrul 3-61, Forhad 3-51).
Result: Mohammedan won by three wickets.

Smith intrigued by Strauss absence

INTERNET, undated

Graeme Smith has stopped short of calling England a weaker team without Andrew Strauss in the line-up for the two Twenty20 internationals starting Friday, but admits he is slightly surprised by the captain's absence.

Strauss no longer plays cricket's shortest format at the highest level meaning he is on a one-week break during his country's two-and-a-half-month tour to South Africa. Paul Collingwood is set to lead the team at the Wanderers and then Centurion on Sunday and with both sides looking to land the first blow, the Proteas skipper is keen to see how the visitors cope without their main opener.

"He must have his own reasons," Smith said. "Looking at it from a team's perspective, he's obviously playing well and scoring runs."

He added: "He started the tour games and has gone well in the warm-up games. He's a new captain and I guess he'd want to stamp his mark and sort of get his personality on the environment."

"So him stepping away for a week, I don't know. One thing it does do is it probably keeps him fresh throughout the tour."

"It's something I guess the England team will have to cope with. It's an interesting dynamic and I don't know how it's going to affect them." Strauss and Smith were of course the focal point in the two sides' last meeting during the Champions Trophy in September when the former denied the latter a runner.

Free-to-air Ashes!

Cricket

AFP, London

The England cricket team's home Ashes matches with Australia could be forced on to free-to-air television under a review of televised sport in Britain, reports said Thursday.

The inquiry is expected to place the Ashes under the heading of the "crown jewels" of British sport which must be seen by the widest possible audience when its recommendations are published on Friday, several newspapers said.

Ashes matches in this year's series were only shown on pay-per-view broadcaster Sky, owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

The report by David Davies, a former executive of the English Football Association, is also expected to list football World Cup and European Championship qualifiers involving England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is equally likely to recommend "protecting" the Wimbledon tennis championship and the Open Golf championship, which are already shown on terrestrial television in Britain.

Supporters of changes to the current system

argue that England's win in the 2005 Ashes, shown on free-to-air Channel Four, was watched by millions more viewers than this year's series broadcast by Sky.

But the government is not obliged to follow the recommendations, and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will protest that the financial impact would be devastating for the sport which has a 300 million pound (500 million dollar, 330 million euro) deal with Sky.

An ECB spokesman said the organisation had not seen the report, adding: "We have not been given the courtesy of being shown the report ahead of publication."

The Evening Standard newspaper claimed that Prime Minister Gordon Brown was prepared to accept the recommendations to strip Sky of its exclusive TV rights in revenge for his treatment at the hands of the Murdoch-owned Sun tabloid.

Brown phoned Murdoch to complain about the Sun's criticism of his government's handling of the war in Afghanistan.

The prime minister's office said the pair spoke on Tuesday at the height of a row over Brown's apparent misspelling of a dead soldier's name in a hand-written letter of condolence to the victim's grieving mother.

Sachin takes fresh guard

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But Tendulkar has scaled the summit, scoring more Test runs (12,773) and centuries (42), and more one-day runs (17,178) and hundreds (45) than any other batsman.

And he is not done yet. One of his cherished dreams is to win the World Cup in front of millions of worshipping home fans when India co-hosts the 2011 showpiece with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Tendulkar has appeared in five World Cups and helped India reach the final in South Africa in 2003, but Sourav Ganguly's men failed to emulate Kapil Dev's winning feat in England in 1983.

Tendulkar, born in a mid-

dle-class family of a Marathi novelist and named after famous Bollywood music director Sachin Dev Burman, is a multi-millionaire in a country where he is revered like a demigod.

But retirement has not even crossed his mind despite the wear and tear of a 20-year grind that has left him nursing injuries to the shoulder, elbow, back, hamstring and feet.

"I know there is lot of cricket left in me because I am still enjoying it," said Tendulkar. "I am not thinking of retirement. At some stage, I will have to, but I don't think about it right now."

Teammates and rivals alike

rejoice at his feats. Australian spin legend Shane Warne rated Tendulkar as number one on his list of 50 contemporary cricketers prepared for the London-based Times newspaper.

Former captain Ganguly calls him "the king of cricket", West Indian great Viv Richards, one of Tendulkar's childhood heroes, regards him as "99.5 percent perfect."

Sri Lankan captain Kumar Sangakkara says the Indian is the "greatest modern cricketer."

For his countless fans, Tendulkar is a joy to behold. For there may never be another like him again.

Nadal eyes No. 1 spot

Tennis

AFP, Paris

Battling Rafael Nadal moved into the Paris Masters quarterfinals on Thursday with a 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 win over Tommy Robredo underlining his threat to unseat Roger Federer as world No. 1 by the end of the season.

With Federer a shock loser to Frenchman Julien Benneteau on Wednesday, a win for Nadal in Sunday's final would leave him just 305 points adrift of his arch-rival with the season-ending ATP World Tour Finals to come in London later this month.

Nadal ended Federer's long reign as world No. 1 after winning the Beijing Olympics last year, but Federer bounced back to regain the top spot in July after winning both the French Open and Wimbledon titles.

Nadal had needed to save five match points to get past Spanish compatriot Nicolas Pietrangeli in a second round marathon of over three hours on Wednesday, and he wobbled again against Robredo, another countryman and a player he had beaten in straight sets in all five of their previous encounters.

Robredo even served for the match at 5-4 in the deciding set but once again Nadal produced his best with his back to the wall to pull through by winning the final three games of the match.

"I was a little less lucky than yesterday," Nadal said. "He served for the match and it was in his hands, but I won anyway."

"I wasn't playing my best, but I played better than yesterday."

Joining Federer on the sidelines though was fourth seed Andy Murray who found two matches in one day too much to handle as he lost 1-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Radek Stepanek of the Czech Republic.

The Scot, who won a sea-

son-best sixth title in Valencia on Sunday was taken to 1:45 am the night before in defeating James Blake 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4).

"I said last night it was going to be difficult to come back and feel 100 percent. It's obviously limited recovery after a long match," he said.

"But you still come out and you try to give it your best shot. Wasn't good enough."

Nikolay Davydenko meanwhile became the seventh player to qualify for the eight-man London Tour Finals despite losing 6-3, 3-6, 6-4 to Sweden's Robin Soderling in another third round match.

Placed seventh in the stand-

ings coming into Paris, the loss briefly left the Russian at the mercy of the four other players in with a chance of playing in London from November 22-29.

But then Spain's Fernando Verdasco, who was holding on to the eighth and final slot, lost 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Marin Cilic of Croatia.

His defeat meant that Davydenko was assured of finishing the week no lower than eighth which stamped his ticket for London.

Verdasco was left having to sweat it out while keeping an eye on the progress of the three other potential finalists -- Soderling, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, who reached the last eight here

with a 6-2, 6-3 win over French compatriot Gilles Simon, and Chile's Fernando Gonzalez.

Gonzalez though saw his hopes dashed in the final match of the day when he let slip seven match points in the second set to US Open champion Juan Martin del Potro of Argentina before abandoning at one set all 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (8/6).

Soderling, who reached the French Open final last time he was in Paris in June, will still have to at least reach the final at Bercy to have any chance of making it through to London.

Next up for him, with a place in the semifinals at stake, will be third seed Novak Djokovic, who cruised past French qualifier Arnaud Clement 6-2, 6-2 in 75 minutes.

The 2008 Australian Open champion from Serbia, last year's Tour Finals winner, is seeking to lift back-to-back titles following his win in Basel last week where he beat Roger Federer in the final.

He is also eager to win his first Masters Series title of the year having lost in four finals.

"Robin has a chance to qualify for the Masters Cup so he will give his best in the quarter-finals," Djokovic said.

"He is a big server and is having the best year of his career. I played him recently in Beijing and won so, hopefully, I can do the same here."

Title-holder Tsonga, who needs to defend his title to qualify for London, said after his win over Simon that he refused to let himself become obsessed with qualifying for the season's finale.

"I'm not here for the Masters. I'm here for Bercy," the French No. 1 said.

"I will only be qualified if I win this tournament, so I'm not thinking about London."

Benneteau, who said his win over the world No. 1 Federer was the best moment of his career, failed to carry his form into Thursday losing 6-4, 6-3 to compatriot Gael Monfils.

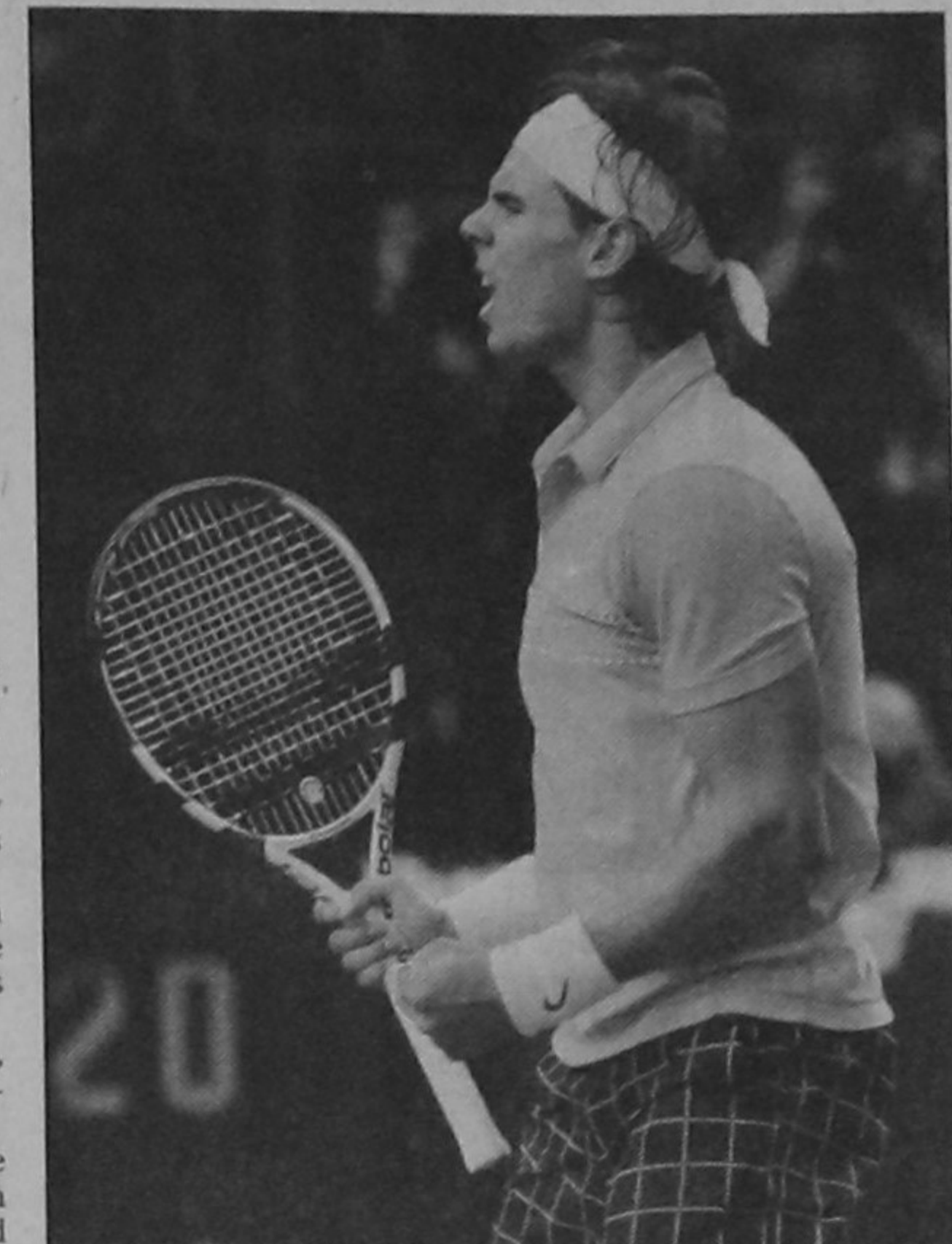


PHOTO: AFP

Spaniard Rafael Nadal celebrates his third round match victory against compatriot Tommy Robredo at the Paris Indoor Master tournament on Thursday.

Prime Bank Golf

SPORTS REPORTER

The two-day 7th Prime Bank Captain Cup Golf tournament got underway at the Kurmitola Golf Club today.

Army chief General M Abdul Mubeen declared the meet open, said a press release. Senior vice president of Kurmitola Golf Club Major General Mohammad Mahbub Haider Khan, Prime Bank Ltd chairman Azam J Chowdhury and managing director M Ehsanul Haq were among others present.

Asian TT

SPORTS REPORTER

A 10-member Table Tennis squad left here yesterday for India to take part in the Asian Table Tennis Competition to be held from November 16 to 22 in Lakhle.

Manosh, Hamlet, Mahbub and Mostafa will compete in the men's event while Soma, Rumi, Joyati and Rahima will be playing in the women's section. Samiruddin will accompany the members of the squad. Federation general secretary Shamsul Alam will also be part of the team.

It's not

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CCDM," said match referee Selim Shahed.

It was learnt that the match referee has recommended imposing a one-year ban on this official and a fine of Tk 20,000.

"We have got report from the match referee and will sit tomorrow (Saturday) to decide on the matter. But we should protect our match officials to uplift the spirit of the game. Both of them are highly regarded umpires in the country. One may have disappointment over any on-field decision but he should be careful about his reaction," said GS Hasan Tamim, CCDM chairman. Pavel, however, admitted that he hurled abusive language but he came down heavily on Saikat.

"It was Saikat who irritated me most. As a BCB employee he can't order me to get out from the stadium as I am a councillor. They may hand me punishment if found guilty, but Saikat has no right to order the security guards to send me out of the stadium," said Pavel defending his position.

He said that Gazi Tank will appeal to CCDM on four grounds, firstly, not to appoint Nadir Shah as umpire in their next matches; secondly to terminate Saikat, thirdly to bring foreign umpires and lastly to seek explanation on why some Mohammedan officials were in the umpires room after the match.

And with both Trott and South Africa born Kevin

McCullum not deflated

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Brendon McCullum, New Zealand's stand-in captain, is not looking too much into defeat to Pakistan in the first Twenty20. McCullum oversaw a 49-run loss in the first of two fixtures after New Zealand lost Daniel Vettori to a concussion, Kyle Mills to a shoulder injury and Jacob Oram to paternal leave, but was not too crushed at defeat against the world champions.

McCullum's decision to field was prompted to a degree by Australia's capitulation for 108 at the same venue in May, but it proved a costly one as Pakistan raced to 160 thanks largely to the opener Imran Nazir's 38-ball 58. "We looked at the stats and looked at the pitch and thought it might offer some assistance to the bowlers," McCullum said. "I thought it did that -- we just didn't execute as well as what we should've with our fourth and fifth bowler. I think 140 was probably a par score."

In their chase, New Zealand were forced to bring on a half-fit James Franklin as a substitute when Aaron Redmond (who didn't come out to bat) picked up a groin strain while bowling. Despite that setback, McCullum said he believed New Zealand could succeed. "You always think

it's a chaseable target. If they had got 300 I'd still believe we were capable of winning. 160 was more than what we wanted to give up, it was more than what the par was but I still believed we were going to be a good enough team to chase it down."

McCullum and Martin Guptill helped launch New Zealand's chase by taking 17 off the first over, but within 15 deliveries the innings collapsed to put Pakistan on track for a sixth straight Twenty20 victory. "In Twenty20 that can happen," said McCullum. "You get it a metre either side or you get a bit of luck go your way with some of the other dismissals and you can get some momentum back but unfortunately we happened to find the fielders and nicked the balls."

"The strategy was to consolidate at times but in 20 overs a lot can happen in a short space of time. We needed to consolidate a little better than what we did but I thought they bowled well too."

One positive from the loss was the continued form shown by Tim Southee, who took 3 for 28 from his four overs. "He desperately wants to be a regular member of this team," said McCullum. "And the way he's come back -- I thought he bowled brilliantly in the one-dayers as well -- and again tonight, he was fantastic. It's a real plus to have a guy like him in your squad."

Trott debate heats up

Cricket

AFP, London

South Africa coach Mickey Arthur has revealed his frustration at the sight of Jonathan Trott playing cricket for England rather than the land of his birth.

Middle-order batsman Trott, 28, came through the South African system and represented the Proteas in both the Under-15 and Under-19 World Cups.

And West Indies great Vivian Richards waded into the nationality row by insisting "you are English or South African, you can't be both."

Trott, a British passport holder courtesy of his English father, joined county side Warwickshire in 2002 and in August his century on Test debut helped England regain the Ashes at the Oval.

Now Trott is in the England squad on tour in South Africa and Arthur told the Wisden Cricketer magazine: "It does (frustrate) a little bit, to be honest."

"He wouldn't be in our top six at the moment because our line-up is settled and has a lot of steel but he'd be there or thereabouts. Hats off to him; he's gone away and forged a successful career for himself."

Former England captain Michael Vaughan recently queried Trott's loyalties after saying he'd been celebrating with South Africa following their series-clinching win at Edgbaston 15 months ago.

And with both Trott and South Africa born Kevin

Pietersen set to occupy places in England's top four, the team's selection policy is in the spotlight once again, with the players accused of rejecting their homeland for financial gain and English officials of devaluing the meaning of international sport.

But there are those in South Africa, notably former all-rounder Clive Rice, who insist a quota policy designed to boost the prospects of non-white cricketers left the likes of Pietersen with little choice but to leave.

Richards, two of whose three Test match double centuries came in 1976 against an England side captained by South Africa born Tony Greig, told Thursday's Daily Mirror: "You can't have one foot in and one foot out."

"Either you are English or you're South African, you can't be both."

Critics point out that, unlike the apartheid era when South Africa was banned from international cricket, players from the Republic can now represent the Proteas in Tests -- an opportunity denied the likes of Allan Lamb and Robin Smith, who both played for England instead, early in their careers.

"There have been guys who played for England like Allan Lamb -- he was brave as a lion and he put his head on the line to represent England," an admiring Richards said.

The 1976 West Indies side that toured England were angered by Greig's pre-series comment that he wanted to make them "grovel", a remark the all-rounder insisted was meant as a

reference to their supposed mental fragility rather than a racist insult but one he later accepted was ill-judged.

Richards responded by scoring 829 runs at 118.42 in a series the West Indies won 3-0, including innings of 232 at Trent Bridge and 291 at The Oval.

Pak too hot

FROM PAGE 17
a six to give Pakistan's innings a final flourish.

New Zealand stand-in captain McCullum said a string of injuries affected the performance.

"We were struck with injuries," said McCullum. "But those who came in got the opportunity. We weren't at our best today but we have the potential to turn this around."

New Zealand started the match without captain Vettori who was ordered to undergo a CT scan after being hit on the grill of his helmet during the second one-day international at Abu Dhabi and began to feel unwell.

McCullum led the team, which was also missing pacemen Kyle Mills (shoulder) and James Franklin (back).

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: 161 for 8 in 20 overs (Nazir 58, Akmal 13, Afridi 24, Razzaq 26 not out; Bond 2-17, Southee 3-28).

NEW ZEALAND: 112 all out in 18.3 overs (McCullum 19, Watling 22, Broom 14, McCullum 22; Aamir 2-21, Razzaq 2-9, Afridi 2-21, Ajmal 2-18).

Result: Pakistan won by 49 runs.