

Boro on course for third successive title after latest romp

THE odds on Middlesbrough landing their third successive league championship shortened further as a combination of circumstances saw them take back top spot.

The bookies' favourites jumped for joy before a ball was bowled as the match involving leaders Guisborough was washed out because of an unfit ground at Bishop Auckland, and when Hartlepool were unexpectedly beaten by Marske and Marton couldn't force a win against Richmondshire.

Boro's romped to an eight-wicket victory at Northallerton with Paul Johnston, hitting his first century of the season. His unbeaten 105 came from 120 balls with 13 fours and a six and his bound-

Darlington Building Society NYSD Premier Lg

by Chris West

ary count included the one which won Boro the match with nine of the 48 overs to spare.

Johnston, who is now close to 650 runs, shared in partnerships of 83 with Tom Hodgson and 53 with Adil Ditta as Boro chased 153 to win. James Beaumont (3-44 in 20 overs) was again the star bowler despite 62 from Northallerton's pro, Rashmi Parida.

If either Marton or Hartlepool had won they would have taken over the lead but it wasn't to be, although the village side came close in a tight finish which saw two Richmond-

shire wickets fall in the last over.

Marton were involved in a batting collapse after their innings was split by the tea interval following a late start. They sank from 99-5 to 117 all out with the Dalesmen's professional, Shani Dissanayake (4-27) and Matthew Brown (3-19) enjoying late successes.

Earlier, Graham Shaw had hit ten fours and a six in a smart knock of 66 with Jonny Spillane contributing 22.

Richmondshire's reply started badly with their first two wickets gone for 15 runs, but they recovered as Clive Layfield top scored with 32, to reach 87 for 5 only to lose their next four wickets for 23 runs as they began to stare defeat in the face.

Ironically they were only eight runs away from victory, but settled for draw points. For Marton, Zaheer Shahbaz (3-20) and Mohammed Zahid (3-32) caused problems.

Marske's defeat of Hartlepool saw them scoring at the rate of over four an over for 46 overs to reach the 196 needed.

The four-wicket success was spearheaded by Gary Lynch who hit 50 from 50 balls with seven fours, Colin Haslett (39), Neil Pratt (31) and Karl Bramwell, who hit three sixes in an unbeaten 28 from 23 balls.

Hartlepool had star quality in Alan Tebbett (55 with eight fours) and Chris Fawcett (44). Chris Allinson (Marske) and Marc Symington (Pools) each took four wickets.

Thornaby provided another surprise beating fifth-placed Normanby Hall by four wickets. The newly promoted club celebrated a third win to lift from second bottom to 10th place after scoring 119 runs.

Normanby relied on Gary Scott (37), David Cross (31) and Henry Blakett (27) in another match reduced to 37 overs after a delayed start. Leigh Beaumont (5-44 from 19 overs) and Khurram Shehzad (2-70) bowled right through before Andrew Emmerson (33) and Ian MacDonald (20) paced Thornaby's response until Richie Rennard won the game with a mighty six hit. Paul Wiseman (3-26) and Gary Scott (3-46) couldn't swing the result their way.

Bottom club, Billingham

Synthia, whose game with Great Ayton was called off-face the threat of relegation. They are 32 points behind Blackhall and Northallerton who have now plunged into the bottom three. Blackhall's game with Darlington was another casualty of the weather.

In Division One, Stokesley are waltzing away with the promotion slot as closest rivals Barnard Castle lose ground. They lost their second successive game on Saturday and are 33 points adrift.

Will Brown, with an unbeaten 60, was Stokesley's star performer as they knocked off a challenging target of 184 against Saltburn. Andrew Weighell had earlier bowled 16 tight overs to take four wickets.

DARLINGTON BUILDING SOCIETY NYSD PREMIER LEAGUE, PREMIER DIVISION

Table with match results for Darlington Building Society NYSD Premier League, Premier Division. Includes matches like Normanby Hall v Thornaby, Marton v Richmondshire, and Middlesbrough v Northallerton.

DARLINGTON BUILDING SOCIETY NYSD PREMIER LEAGUE, DIVISION ONE

Table with match results for Darlington Building Society NYSD Premier League, Division One. Includes matches like Stokesley v Saltburn, Middlesbrough v Redcar, and Barnard Castle v Richmondshire.

SATURDAY'S SCORES

Table listing scores for various leagues including NEWROC Homes Darlington and District League, Darlington Building Society NYSD Premier League Division Two, and others.