



PHOTO: AFP

DOWN BILLY! Charismatic New Zealand umpire Billy Bowden is reduced to his knees after being hit by the ball during the third day of the first Ashes Test in Brisbane on Saturday.



Did U Know?

Lala Amarnath holds the unique distinction of being the only Indian bowler to dismiss Don Bradman courtesy of a hit-wicket.



Brett Lee

(Australian fast bowler)
"Other than cricket, music is my passion. When I was told I would be singing with a legend like Asha Bhosle, I was glad."

What to WATCH

- ESPN**
- Australia v England
First Ashes Test, Day 4
Live at 6:00 pm
 - South Africa v India
Third ODI
Live at 2:00 pm
- English Premier Football League**
- Man United v Chelsea
Live at 10:00 pm
- STAR Sports**
- South Africa v India
Third ODI
Live at 2:00 pm
 - Primera Liga
Valencia v Real Madrid
Live at 11:55 pm
 - Bilbao v Sevilla
Live at 2:00 am (Monday)

Annihilation awaits England

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

Australia were digging a massive hole for beleaguered England to escape from, as the tourists faced a demoralising defeat in the first Ashes Test at the Gabba here Saturday.

Merciless skipper Ricky Ponting refused to enforce the follow-on after Australia dismissed the Ashes holders for just 157 to seize a massive 445-run innings lead.

Instead Ponting sought to give his four bowlers the luxury of putting their feet up and resting as cracks widened on the wearing Gabba pitch under a baking sun to aid his master leg-spinner Shane Warne with two days to play.

The Australians swelled their advantage to 626 runs cruising to 181 for one by stumps on the third day with Justin Langer unbeaten on 88 and Ponting not out 51, the pair putting on an unbroken 113-run partnership.

The highest losing fourth innings total in an Ashes Test was 417 scored by England in Melbourne 1977.

Ponting was hellbent on raming home the psychological advantage on the flattened tourists with a massive first-up victory here heading into the second Test of the

series, starting in Adelaide next Friday.

The Australian skipper now has to decide when to call a halt to the run avalanche and unleash his bowlers on England to try and wrap



McGRATH... 6/50

up a victory set up by three lopsided days of cricket.

The Australians Saturday only lost the wicket of Matthew Hayden, who perished on 37 going for a risky second single. The video umpire needed several replays before

giving him out, fractionally beaten home by James Anderson's throw from backward square leg.

Ponting, who mastered the England attack for 196 in the first innings, became the third Australian to pass 9,000 Test runs when he reached 12 during his second innings.

The other Australians are Allan Border (11,174) and Steve Waugh (10,927).

The day's star was Glenn McGrath, who captured his 29th five-wicket haul in Tests and 10th against England to finish with 6-50 as England folded in their first innings.

"When we decided not to enforce the follow-on, it was more about that we're only two and a half days through the Test match, so it's not how quickly you can try to win a Test match," McGrath said.

"So we thought let the bowlers freshen up a little bit even though we were keen to go again if required."

"With each day you can see the wicket getting worse. The cracks are opening up so that'll be something that's definitely be playing on their minds."

McGrath, who turns 37 next February, now has taken 548 Test wickets, the third best of all-time.

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BCB reveals ticket details

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced yesterday that the ticket selling for the Bangladesh and Zimbabwe series will get underway at Khulna today.

The City Bank Limited, which holds the BCB's ticket selling right, will sell the tickets for the Twenty20 International and first one-dayer to be held at Khulna on November 28 and November 30 respectively from its Khulna branch. The gallery tickets will be also available at the counter of the stadium.

Tickets will be on sale for the second and third ODIs to be held on December 3 and 5 respectively in Bogra from December 1 at the local branch of the bank and the gallery tickets will be available at the stadium.

The sale of tickets for the last two ODIs, which will take place at Dhaka on December 8 and 9 respectively, will start from December 6 but board has yet to decide about the pricing as they are yet to finalise the venue.

"We are delaying to fix the price of tickets for the last two ODIs as there is a possibility of holding the matches at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur. We are very hopeful that the new venue will get ICC approval by this time," said Khondokar Jamiluddin, chairman of the BCB's seating and ticket committee, at a press conference yesterday.

The Dhaka tickets will be available at six City Bank branches-- BB

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Bashar eyes winning start

Zimbabwe face Board President's XI today

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Habibul Bashar promised to set the tone from the very beginning against visiting Zimbabwe by a convincing win in the lone limited-overs warm-up match at the BKSP cricket ground today.

The 33-year old Tigers skipper who will lead a youthful BCB President's XI side in the match, stated that he was confident that his young teammates could make their mark in the encounter to inspire the seniors to light up the inaugural Twenty20 international as well as the five-match one-day series against the southern African nation.

"The result is always important whatever status the match has. My main objective is to win the match ahead of the main battle. I am confident about the young guys who have already showed their potential at different levels," said Bashar.

And the focus definitely will be on Mehrab Hossain who is going to give his first try as an opener after making his international debut against the same opponents in the ICC Champions Trophy in India.

"You all know we are going to try a new opening pair in the series. We definitely want to take a look at the young left-hander (Mehrab), how he responds in his first test. I think it's an opportunity for Mehrab," Bashar informed.

"There are some players with whom I played together in the team but I have little experience with the others, so it gives me an opportunity to play with them as they are all considered as promising players. I'm really excited to lead the young guys in the match," he said.

It was already disclosed that Bashar himself decided to lead the team to make up for his lack of match practice.

"I couldn't play the National Cricket League matches due to a slight injury. So, I thought that it would be better to take the opportunity to play the match. But it would also help me to look at my opposition before the series," he explained.

"Whatever people think, I must

Nadif Chowdhury, Nazmus Sadat, Mahmudullah Riyad, Forhad Reza, Nazmul Hossain, Tapash Baisya, Mushfiqur Rahim, Marshal Ayub, Musherar Hossain and Ziaur Rahman.

ZIMBABWE (from): Chamunorwa Chibhabha, Hamilton Masakadza, Brendan Taylor, Stuart Matsikinyeri, Elton Chigumbura, Gary Brent,



PHOTO: STAR

WATCHING HIM FALL! Zimbabwe pacer Anthony Ireland sets up a video camera on a tripod during a training session for the tourists at the Fatuallah Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

say that we are very focussed on the series because we lost the away series against them (Zimbabwe)," he added.

TEAMS
BCB PRESIDENT'S XI: Habibul Bashar (captain), Mehrab Hossain,

Prosper Utseya (Captain), Anthony Ireland, Mluleki Nkala, Sean Williams, Keith Dabengwa, Christopher Mpofo, Blessing Mahwire, Ryan Higgins and Tinotenda Mawoyo.

Pitch may suit tourists

Third India-South Africa ODI today

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

After the hammering they got in Durban, Cape Town was perhaps the best place for India to come for some rest and recuperation and preparation. Unfortunately, they also have a match to play on Sunday, albeit on a surface that should suit their players more than most in South Africa.

The pitch for the game looks bone-dry and has just a smattering of grass here and there, and though the locals expect it to be bouncy, it won't be anywhere near as fast as those they played on at Benoni and Kingsmead.

South Africa, who won their last game here (a day-night affair) by 196 runs against Australia, have few worries. On a pitch that might give the slow bowlers some assistance, Robin Peterson could come in for Charl Langeveldt. He will be the least of India's worries. Though Makhaya Ntini had an off day in Durban, the trio of Shaun Pollock, Andre Nel and Jacques Kallis is immense, scything through the middle-order in the time it took for some punters to grab a beer and get back to their seats.

At this most picturesque of cricket venues, India also has a selection dilemma or two. Munaf

Patel's ankle remains sore and will now be reassessed before the Port Elizabeth match on Wednesday. With a three-Test series to follow, the team management certainly won't be taking any chances. His absence should result in a recall for Anil Kumble, so impressive in the warm-up game at Benoni. Kumble, like Harbhajan Singh, relishes bowling on pitches with a little extra bounce, and unless Sunday dawns very overcast, he should edge out Sri Sreesanth in the playing eleven.

Irfan Pathan, whose swing bowling has fetched him six wickets against South Africa in four games, will also return, with either Dinesh Mongia or Suresh Raina making way. Raina has always been regarded as an investment for the future, and on this less-than-lightning-fast pitch, he may get one last opportunity to keep the selectorial axe at bay.

Dinesh Karthick also batted a fair amount in time in the nets, an option at the top of the order just in

case Sehwag wakes up with a recurrence of the soreness that forced him to miss the Durban game. It's hardly an ideal situation. As Rahul Dravid pointed out at the press conference, most of the younger brigade have no experience of such conditions, and South Africa's attack will ensure that any lessons they learn are tough ones.

There have only been five-day games at Newlands, and the team batting second has won three of them. But in the only day-game played here over the past five years, South Africa crushed England by 108 runs, after a Herschelle Gibbs century, a Kallis half-century and a late blitz from Justin Kemp powered them to 291 for five. Gibbs has been in poor form since his epic 175 at the Wanderers in March, but his travails are trivial compared to those of an Indian team that a p p e a r s

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Glenn licking his lips

Cricket

AFP, Brisbane

The cracks are widening both on the dry Gabba pitch and in the stressed England team as Australia close in on an expected huge victory in the first Ashes cricket Test at the Gabba. Glenn McGrath bowled the Australians into contention with 6-50 off 23.1 overs as England were rolled over for 157, leaving them a massive 445 runs in arrears.

Australian skipper Ricky Ponting continued the mental torture on the beleaguered Ashes holders by not enforcing the follow-on and instead looked for more runs to put the tourists firmly up against the wall with two days to play.

The Australians swelled their

advantage to 626 runs cruising to 181 for one by stumps on the third day Saturday with Justin Langer unbeaten on 88 and Ponting not out 51, the pair putting on an unbroken 113-run partnership.

McGrath, who turns 37 in February and has taken his Test career tally to 548 wickets, sees little way out for Andrew Flintoff's shattered team.

"Each day the wicket is getting worse. The cracks are opening up more and you saw today (Saturday) it hit the cracks a few times so that'll be something that's definitely be playing on their minds," McGrath said.

"When you get 600-plus it takes them well and truly out of the game and out of the equation."

"It's a funny thing cricket, when

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PHOTO: AFP

UNDER PRESSURE: A grim-faced Indian coach Greg Chappell (R) watches his team train at the Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town on Saturday.