



Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar looking to leave the ball from South African fast bowler Andre Nel on the second day of the second Test at the Kingsmead Stadium in Durban on Wednesday.

Sachin lives to fight

Cricket
AFP, Durban

Sachin Tendulkar played a watchful innings as India dug themselves out of early trouble before bad light brought an early end to the second day of the second Test against South Africa at Kingsmead Wednesday. India were 103 for three in reply to South Africa's 328 when the stoppage came half an hour after tea. Tendulkar, who escaped a straightforward catching chance, was unbeaten on 46. India lost their first three wickets for 61 and it could have been worse if South African captain Graeme Smith had caught Tendulkar when the total was 69 with the batsman on 21. With India holding a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, Tendulkar and VVS Laxman looked determined to ensure their team would earn at least a draw. They batted cautiously as the light deteriorated to add an unbeaten 42 for the fourth wicket. Tendulkar batted for 135 minutes and faced 89 balls. Careful defence was mixed with judicious stroke selection and he hit eight fours. Laxman was with Tendulkar for 69 minutes and faced 49 deliveries,

hitting a single boundary in scoring 10 not out. It was a frustrating day for both teams. India were unable to finish off South Africa's first innings early in the day to give themselves a platform to dominate the match, while South Africa clawed their way back into contention, adding 71 for their last two wickets and then striking hard at the Indian top order, only to be thwarted by the weather conditions. Tendulkar's let-off came when India's master batsman edged Andrew Hall to first slip but Smith could not hold a waist-high offering to his left. By contrast, AB de Villiers held two good catches at second slip as India made a poor start to their innings after South Africa, led by century-maker Ashwell Prince, kept India in the field for an hour and a half at the start of the day. De Villiers held his first catch, leaping high and to his right, when Virender Sehwag was out first ball, slashing at Andre Nel. Then he had to go low to hold an edged drive by Wasim Jaffer off Makhaya Ntini. Jaffer made 26, his highest score of the tour. In between Indian captain Rahul Dravid was leg before to Nel for 11 when he was trapped on his crease by a ball which slanted in. Nel bowled impressively to take two for 26 on another hot, steamy

day at Kingsmead. Prince, who was 98 not out overnight, top-scored for South Africa with 121 as the hosts kept the Indians in the field for an hour and a half earlier in the day, advancing their total from an overnight 257 for eight. Shanthakumaran Sreesanth was India's most successful bowler with four for 109. The left-handed Prince reached his fifth Test century in the third over of the morning when he drove Sreesanth through the covers for four. Prince found capable support from new cap Morne Morkel, a right-arm bowler and left-handed batsman, as the pair added 39 for the ninth wicket. It took the second new ball to break the stand when Prince, immediately after hitting a scorching cover drive off Sreesanth, drove at a wide ball and edged a high catch to Laxman at second slip. Prince batted for 316 minutes, faced 212 balls and hit 16 fours. Morkel and last man Makhaya Ntini added another 32 before Anil Kumble wrapped up the innings when he trapped Ntini leg before for 16 with a straight ball that hurried through. Kumble finished with three for 62. The tall Morkel, who looked comfortable at the crease and played some fluent off-side strokes, was unbeaten on 31, made off 52

balls with three fours. **SCOREBOARD**
Scoreboard at close on the second day of the second Test between South Africa and India at Kingsmead on Wednesday:
SOUTH AFRICA: First innings (overnight 257-8)
Smith c Tendulkar b Zaheer 5
De Villiers c Tendulkar b Sreesanth 9
Amla lbw b Zaheer 1
Gibbs c Dhoni b Sreesanth 63
Prince c Laxman b Sreesanth 121
Boucher b Sreesanth 53
Pollock c Sehwag b V Singh 11
Hall lbw b Kumble 0
Nel b Kumble 0
Morkel not out 31
Ntini lbw b Kumble 16
Extras: (lb-3, nb-14, w-1) 18
Total: (All out in 91.3 overs) 328
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-13, 3-28, 4-122, 5-222, 6-256, 7-257, 8-257, 9-296.
Bowler O M R W
Zaheer 23 7 83 2
Sreesanth 24 4 109 4
V Singh 13 1 60 1
Kumble 28.3 1 62 3
Ganguly 3 1 11 0
INDIA: First innings
Jaffer c De Villiers b Ntini 26
Sehwag c De Villiers b Nel 0
Dravid lbw b Nel 11
Tendulkar not out 46

Hughes hails McCarthy

AFP, Blackburn
South Africa striker Benni McCarthy won plaudits from manager Mark Hughes after scoring the decisive goal in Blackburn Rovers' 1-0 win against Liverpool here at Ewood Park. McCarthy's 10th goal of the season ended the Reds' run of four successive Premiership games without conceding a goal and made sure the good work of Rovers keeper Brad Friedel didn't go waste as Blackburn bounced back from a 6-2 hiding by Arsenal last time out. Victory was also Blackburn's first in a decade against their north-west rivals as Liverpool dropped to sixth place in the Premiership table. Former Manchester United striker Hughes knows better than most what it takes to succeed in the Premiership and he was in no

doubt McCarthy had the right stuff after the South African striker scored in the 49th minute following fine play by Tugay and Morten Gamst Pedersen. "It was a good move and Benni doesn't miss from that range. He is adjusting to the pace and power of the Premiership, but still scores goals and that's the mark of a true striker," said Hughes. At the other end Friedel, playing despite a leg injury, pulled off several magnificent saves and repeatedly denied Peter Crouch after the England striker was recalled by his club for the first time in a month. Victory left Rovers four points clear of the relegation zone and former Wales international Hughes said it was his former Liverpool goalkeeper's performance that had been the foundation of the home side's victory. "Brad Friedel was magnificent," he said. "He made some crucial saves, commanded his box and

was an inspiration to everybody. "The rest of the team grew stronger because of his presence on the pitch and there were some great performances from those in front of him. "It was very important to get back to winning ways after losing 6-2 at Arsenal. We knew it would be difficult and we didn't get to grips with Liverpool in the first-half. "They were nice and solid, but we sorted it out in the second-half and pushed back Liverpool." Craig Bellamy, Luis Garcia and Xabi Alonso also suffered from Friedel's fantastic show, but Crouch's first-half failure to beat the keeper from point-blank range was the real talking point. Benitez soon lost patience with Crouch and substituted him after only 57 minutes, but insisted he is not interested in selling the

Head-butt inspires new fashion range

AFP, Rome
An Italian fashion designer has launched a new range of leisurewear inspired by Zinedine Zidane's infamous head-butt on Marco Materazzi in this year's World Cup final. The logo on Alessandro Ferrari's new line of t-shirts and fleeces features a man head-butting another man, but condemns the Frenchman's violent reaction to Materazzi's provocation. The two figures are set beside a target symbol made up of the colours of the French and Italian flags, signifying the coming together of the two nations after the final. Ferrari's new range is called Xqua -- pronounced 'Perqua' -- a play on words following the now legendary 'Pourquoi, Zidane?' ('Why, Zidane?') exclamation made

Ronaldo extends United lead

AFP, Manchester
Cristiano Ronaldo's remarkable holiday period continued at Old Trafford Tuesday when he scored twice within four minutes of appearing as a half-time substitute in Manchester United's 3-1 victory over Wigan, to put the Premiership leaders four points clear. Sir Alex Ferguson gambled by resting five key members of the starting line-up that won 3-0 at Aston Villa on Saturday, a victory that featured two goals from Ronaldo, and his decision seemed a potentially costly one as an injury-hit Wigan doggedly withstood a first half of constant pressure.

By the interval, Ferguson had clearly acknowledged the error of his tactic and brought on Ronaldo, in place of Scotland international Darren Fletcher, in a move that brought instant results. With defending champions Chelsea having earlier dropped two points in a 2-2 home draw with Reading, the Ronaldo-inspired victory could not have come at a more welcome time for United. It took Portugal Ronaldo just 68 seconds to succeed where his teammates had failed in the previous 45 minutes. Paul Scholes's accurate corner found the head of Ronaldo eight yards out and the powerful finish that followed gave Wigan keeper Chris Kirkland no chance.

The goal energised a Premiership-record 76,018 Old Trafford crowd which did not have to wait long for further production from Ronaldo. This time he scored from his own missed penalty after a clumsy challenge by Gary Teale on Ji-Sung Park left referee Mike Riley with little choice but to award the spot kick. Having seen his initial shot well

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Man Utd	20	16	2	2	44	11	50
Chelsea	20	14	4	2	35	15	46
Arsenal	20	10	6	4	37	18	36
Bolton	20	11	3	6	24	16	36
Portsmouth	20	10	5	5	30	18	35
Liverpool	20	10	4	6	28	16	34

saved by Kirkland, Ronaldo slotted the rebound into the open goal. With Wigan having started with just one man up front, and having failed to create a solitary first half opening, the only question now left to be answered concerned the number of goals United would eventually score. A third followed just before the hour, and meant United had claimed three goals in around 13 minutes. John O'Shea's ball forward was met by Wayne Rooney, outjumping Emmons Boyce and flicking on the ball for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer to speed away from Fitz Hall and slot the ball under the advancing Kirkland.

Chelsea in pain

Football
AFP, London
Jose Mourinho admits Chelsea are struggling to cope with a mid-season injury crisis after their title bid was dented by a 2-2 home draw with Reading. The reigning Premiership champions are now four points behind leaders Manchester United and have produced some uncharacteristically lax performances in recent weeks, conceding six goals in their last three matches. Chelsea might revel in their reputation as one of the game's richest clubs but Mourinho has attributed their recent wobbles to

his squad's lack of adequate cover for injured stars John Terry, Petr Cech, Joe Cole and Arjen Robben. All are vital players, but it is England captain Terry whose absence has been most keenly felt. Terry is currently out with a back problem and Mourinho is waiting anxiously for confirmation of whether the defender requires surgery. He deployed Michael Essien as a make-shift centre-half against Reading, but the Portuguese is uncomfortably aware of a lack of defensive depth in his squad, which he attributes to the pre-season departures of the centre-halves William Gallas and Robert Huth.

"To lose Petr and John at the same time is a very difficult problem to solve, especially in a squad without more central defenders," he said. "We lost Gallas and Huth in the summer. We don't have enough cover so at this moment we are having problems. "I've no idea when John will be back. I read something in the press saying he'd be back soon but they obviously know more than me, because I have no idea. "Nobody has said whether he will go for surgery or need some other type of treatment. I don't know how long he will be out for -- three days, three weeks or three months. The medical department will have to make a decision quickly."

Figo set for Saudi venture

INTERNET, undated
Inter midfielder Luis Figo might leave the San Siro outfit in January to move to Saudi Arabian club Al Ittihad, according to reports in Portugal. The player is not happy with the limited playing time granted by Coach Roberto Mancini and is reportedly close to finalising an 18-month deal with the Jeddah club, for around 3.2 million pounds. The daily newspaper Correio da Manhã suggests that the move may take place as early as next week and the speculation is also being fuelled by the Arabian club's website, which states that "Figo will play for the side from January 5." Jose Peseiro, the Coach of Al Hilal, currently top of the table, also confirmed that the 34-year-old player is close to starting a new



Manchester United striker Cristiano Ronaldo (C) is feted by teammates after scoring one of his brace against Wigan Athletic in their Premiership clash at Old Trafford on Tuesday.



Brazil's new generation star Robinho (L) jokes with former great Romario during a benefit soccer match in Santos, Brazil on Tuesday.

Platini offers olive branch to Totti

INTERNET, undated
Juventus legend Michel Platini has written a letter to Roma captain Francesco Totti, in an attempt to put an end to their recent falling out. The Frenchman, a candidate to be named as the new President of UEFA, had suggested that the Giallorosso should be suspended for his decision to snub the Italian national side, as he believed no player should turn down the opportunity to appear for their country. Er Pupone had preferred not to comment on Platini's words, but had silenced his critic by dedicating the brace in Week 13 against Sampdoria to the former French international. "Dear Francesco, you are an artist of football, a true number 10, just as I was, so how can you and I have an argument? It's impossible," wrote Platini in the new

Fergie savours feud with Jose

AFP, Manchester
Sir Alex Ferguson savoured scoring a psychological victory over his title rival Jose Mourinho as Manchester United moved four points clear of Chelsea at the top of the Premiership. Chelsea opened an eventful Boxing Day programme by dropping two home points in a 2-2 draw with Reading before United's clinical 3-1 demolition of Wigan at Old Trafford, featuring two goals from Cristiano Ronaldo and a third from Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, pushed Ferguson's side clear at the top of the table. "Jose said the other day that we will drop points before the end of the season," said Ferguson. "But he is forgetting that they will drop points as well between now and the end of the season. "That is the nature of football and you just hope you are consistent

enough that you don't drop too many and can win the league. "There will be some difficult days ahead and you have to handle those days and recover, as we did when we lost to West Ham last week. "We showed we have the character and desire to do that. But there are still a lot of roads to travel yet and there will be points dropped. "I didn't expect that today but that's the nature of football. Look at West Ham. No one expected us to lose that game but we did. "It just tells you football can knock you on your head, it turns the tables on you all the time but what is going to win the league is consistency and we have shown that so far this season. "Ronaldo scored a header and converted his own missed penalty kick within five minutes of coming on as a half-time substitute after Wigan had frustrated the home side in a goalless first half. Added to the two goals the

Portuguese winger scored in Saturday's 3-0 win at Aston Villa, they took Ronaldo's tally for the season into double figures and marked a fabulous Christmas weekend for the United fans' favourite. "I thought he could always change the game with the form he is in," said Ferguson of his half-time introduction of Ronaldo. "But to score from a corner kick that's a header was a marvellous start and I was really pleased with the way we started the second half and put them on the back foot. "Cristiano has been in great form and I thought at half-time we needed a quick response after the first half. Cristiano lights up the crowd and managed to get two goals into the bargain. "Solskjaer's seventh goal of the season made it three before Leighton Baines scored a last minute penalty for Wigan. Ferguson was delighted to see the injury-plagued striker on the

scoresheet again. "I said before he was injured he is definitely capable of scoring 15 goals a season if he stays fit," said the manager. "And he showed that today. "Wigan manager Paul Jewell and his injury-depleted squad drew little consolation from a defeat that leaves them plummeting worryingly down the Premiership table. "We had a game plan that wasn't pretty to watch," said Jewell. "And it was working to an extent. But the last thing I said to the players when they went out for the second half was not to concede from a set-piece and lo and behold that's exactly what they did! "They're a brilliant team, a magnificent football club and we were beaten by the better team." However, having lost to Chelsea and Manchester United over the weekend, Jewell refused to make a prediction about the possible outcome of the title race. "It will be a dead heat," joked the Wigan manager.