



Stewart hits a ton on his birthday

England fare well on Day 1

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Apr 9: A birthday hundred from Alec Stewart gave England some respite from their Caribbean problems on the first day of the fourth Test on Friday, reports Reuter.

Stewart batted almost five hours to score 118, his first century for 17 Tests, as England reached 299 for five at the close of a day which at one stage promised even greater prosperity.

Stewart and his captain Mike Atherton had begun to put the West Indies under unaccustomed pressure with a fine opening stand of 171, but once Atherton departed for 85, some of the familiar doubts returned.

Winston Benjamin grabbed the wickets of Mark Ramprakash, Robin Smith and Stewart in the post-tea session and Graham Thorpe also perished late in the day as West Indies produced one of their familiar fightbacks.

Stewart's 191-ball innings on his 31st birthday contained 15 fours, but the efforts of the opening pair again threatened to be squandered by their teammates.

England, already 3-0 down in the five-Test series, lost the first Test in Jamaica after reaching 121-0 in the first innings, and spiralled from 173 for two to 322 all out in the second Test in Guyana.

Their performance at the Kensington Oval, where West Indies have not lost a Test for almost 60 years, was at least a marked improvement on the third Test debacle in Trinidad.

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Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh both finished the first day without a wicket which was scarcely what captain Richie Richardson had in mind when he won the toss and invited England to make first use of a good batting strip.

England advanced serenely to 83 without loss at lunch and at tea 171-0 for no wicket, the threat of a 5-0 whitewash in the series seemed to have receded.

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