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Atherton, Smith forge tons to brace England

Records roll, result remote

England were 541 for seven at lunch on the final day of the fifth Test against West Indies in St John's, Antigua, according to a message received in Dhaka late last night.

Earlier on Wednesday, century-makers Mike Atherton and Robin Smith shared a record 303-run third wicket stand against the West Indies.

But England were still not entirely safe from defeat in the fifth and final Test.

Smith, back to form with 175, and his captain Atherton, who made 135, could only



ROBIN SMITH... 175

watch as England slid from 373-2 to 442-6 at the close.

With one day remaining, that left England 151 behind with only four first innings wickets to fall.

Atherton, scoring his second century of the series, said: "It came at quite an important time as we were trying to save the game."

The opener added: "It's not safe yet, but if we bat through to lunch tomorrow we should be okay."

In a game already distinguished by Brian Lara's world record test score of 375, Smith and Atherton's 303 partnership beat the previous third wicket record by England against the West Indies.

That had stood since 1923

when Ken Hutton and Wally Hammond made 264 at the Oval. It was Smith's ninth Test century and his best ever score at this level.

But when he and Atherton departed, a familiar middle order failure ensued. Graeme Hick was bowled by Kenneth Benjamin on 20 and Graham Thorpe fell to the spin of young Shivnarine Chanderpaul for nine.

But wicketkeeper Jack Russell (18) and all rounder Chris Lewis (12) batted out to the close without further loss. On a pitch generally so docile it broke even Curtly Ambrose's heart any other result than a draw would require a remarkable chain of events.

Resuming on 185-2, England made good progress in the first session with both Smith and Atherton reaching their centuries.

Smith's hundred contained 16 fours and two sixes. He faced only 185 deliveries to the captain's 263.

Smith had a slice of luck when he was "bowled" on 74 by a Courtney Walsh no-ball, the second time in his innings he had been "out" to a no-ball.

Having celebrated his 50th Test appearance with 26 fours and three sixes, Smith finally fell bow to Kenny Benjamin.

Atherton followed him back to the pavilion four overs later, a near nine-hour stay ended by a flick outside off stump at Ambrose.

Hick and Thorpe went quite quickly before Russell and Lewis steadied the boat again.

More than 1,000 people, most of them England supporters, were temporarily evacuated from their seats just after the start of play following a hoax bomb scare.

Smith's 175 was a timely riposte to a suggestion from England manager Keith Fletcher that commercial interests might be distracting him.

"There are a lot of fringe things that can affect players, like making money, and I think they are affecting Robin," Fletcher had said when asked to explain Smith's recent dismal form.

Smith replied: "People seem to hit you when you are down, the game means more to me than it's ever meant. "When things are going well you have to make sure you set yourself up a little for the future."

SCOREBOARD

Scorecard at lunch Thursday, on the final day of the cricket Test between England and the West Indies.

WEST INDIES: First innings 593 for 5 declared

ENGLAND: First innings (Resumed at 442 for 6)

Atherton c Murray b Ambrose 135

Stewart c Ambrose b Kenny Benjamin 24

Ramprakash lbw b Kenny Benjamin 19

Hick b Kenny Benjamin 20

Thorpe c Adams b Chanderpaul 9

Russell c Murray b Winston Benjamin 62

Lewis not out 54

Caddick not out 50

Extras: 43 (b-7, lb-15, nb-21)

Total (for 7): 541

Fall of wickets: 40

(Stewart), 70 (Ramprakash),

373 (Smith), 393 (Atherton),

401 (Hick), 417 (Thorpe), 535

(Russell).

To bat: Angus Fraser, Phil

Tufnell.

Bowling O M R W

Ambrose 33 13 59 1

Walsh 33 7 106 0

W Benjamin 36 13 85 1

K Benjamin 37 7 110 4

Chanderpaul 24 1 94 1

Adams 14 1 61 0

Arthurton 2 1 4 0

Smith lbw b Kenny Benjamin 175

Hick b Kenny Benjamin 20

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Willow key to desert duel

SHARJAH, Apr 21: Both India and Pakistan believe their batsmen will win them the Australasia Cup on a gentle wicket in Friday's final, reports Reuter.

"We are pretty confident and the boys are raring to go," acting Indian manager Sunil Gavaskar said. "With the wicket playing easy it's the batsmen who'll be calling the shots and we have a very good batting side down to number 10.

"It is unlikely we'll field the spinners, given the nature of the pitch," added Gavaskar, standing in for Ajit Wadekar, who suffered a heart attack on the first day of the tournament.

Pakistan skipper Salim Malik was blunt: "We will win. Our batsmen—with a world record partnership under their belt—are doing well, and so are our bowlers. We're only worried about the fielding, which was not up to the mark."

The odds are even for the final, though Pakistan enjoy the advantage of having beaten India by six wickets a week ago.

Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq and Aamir Sohail both hit centuries against New Zealand in Wednesday's semifinal, breaking the record for a one-day partnership with a 263 runs.

India, against all expectations, beat Australia by seven wickets in their semifinals.

India will be once again looking to Sachin Tendulkar for a solid start while Pakistan will be banking on Saeed Anwar, who scored the tournament's fastest 50 runs in 41 balls.

Fast bowler Wasim Akram gives Pakistan the edge. He needs only four more wickets to equal Kapil Dev's record of 252 wickets in one-day cricket.

Scherbo upstaged

BRISBANE, Apr 21: Ivan Ivankov upstaged Olympic champion and Belarus compatriot Vitaly Scherbo to seize the all-round title at the World Gymnastics Championships on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Scherbo, winner of six gold medals at the 1992 Barcelona Games, could manage only third place after making two costly errors.

The defending champion fell awkwardly on his dismount from the parallel bars and failed to hold a strength move on the rings.

In contrast, Ivankov produced consistent displays on all six apparatus to win his first major title. Russian Alexei Voropaev took the silver.

Ivankov, from Minsk, had an agonising wait after completing his programme during the afternoon session.

But none of his rivals challenged his overall score of 57.012 on the six apparatus—floor, horizontal bar, vault, pommel horse, rings and parallel bars.

Voropaev scored a combined 56.924 ahead of Scherbo's 56.350.

Short, Anand stay on course

MOSCOW, Apr 21: Britain's Nigel Short and India's Viswanathan Anand are through to the quarter-finals of the Kremlin Stars '94 chess championship after beating Estonia's Jaan Ehivest and Israel's Ilija Smirin respectively on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Short is now slated to play Ukraine's Vasily Ivanchuk who beat Georgia's Zurab Azmatparashvili in a tie-break.

Anand will play Ukraine's Vladimir Malanuk who beat Kamsky of the United States.

Shabana back on top

Former champion Syeda Shabana Parveen Nipa took solo lead in the 15th national women's chess championship at the end of fourth round at the chess room of National Sports Council yesterday, reports UNB.

Nipa, who dominated the points list jointly with Zakia Sultana of Narayanganj on Wednesday, advanced to the top place securing three and a half points beating her younger sister Syeda Afsana Parveen Nira in 39 moves.

Defending champions Zakia Sultana and Tanima Parveen of Chittagong closely followed the leader with three points each.

Tanima beat Nurun Nahar in 50 moves while Zakia drew with Afroza Khanam Bablee of Ansars also in 50 moves in their fourth round encounters.

Three players—International Women's Master (IWM) Rani Hamid, Afroza Khanam Bablee and Roxana Gulshan Nikkon—are in the third position collecting two and a half points each.

Rani Hamid defeated Selina Banu Tuhi in 28 moves while Nikkon beat Jahanara Hoq Runo on the 40 moves in day's other encounters.

Maradona relives magic



SALTA, Argentina, Apr 21: Diego Maradona, displaying the close control and vision of old, scored his first international goal in four years and made another as Argentina beat Morocco 3-1 on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

A 13th minute strike from Abel Balbo, who latched onto a lethal Maradona pass, and a third goal nine minutes from the end by Hugo Perez sealed victory, cancelling out a 17th minute equaliser from Moroccan forward Kachoul.

Maradona, playing his first match in three months, was given free licence by Argentina coach Alfio Basile to roam behind strikers Balbo and Gabriel Batistuta.

Donning the captain's armband once again, he responded perfectly, lasting 78 minutes of a fast and physical encounter.

Maradona, 33, had warned that he would last just 45 minutes and that he was less than 50 per cent fit, having put on excess weight since February while threatening to quit soccer.

After just five minutes, however, the resurgent midfielder was denied by Moroccan goalkeeper, Alaoui, who tipped over his curling free kick from 15 metres.

Eight minutes later Maradona fed Balbo, who escaped his marker with ease and fired home from the left-hand side of the box to give Argentina

the lead. Argentina's joy was short-lived. Their defence showed a familiar vulnerability to fast counter-attacks as Kachoul fired home an equaliser from just outside the area.

From then on Argentina lost rhythm. Lacking the guile of the injured Fernando Redondo, the midfield laboured and resorted too often to speculative long balls.

With the game in danger of deteriorating after the break, Maradona brightened the gloom with a series of nonchalant flicks as the pace dropped.

He then sent the crowd wild with a calmly-executed

Hodgson relents

GENEVA, Apr 21: Swiss national soccer coach Roy Hodgson has relaxed a "no sex" ban imposed on his World Cup players, reports Reuter.

The Swiss daily Blick on Wednesday quoted the coach as saying wives and girlfriends could visit the players in their hotel rooms after the opening game against the United States on June 18 and the last group match against Colombia on June 26.

Hodgson had earlier ordered his players to lead celibate lives from June 7, the date of the squad's departure for America.

Switzerland has qualified for the final rounds of the World Cup after a 28-year absence.

Milla returns to action

YAOUNDE, Apr 21: Veteran Cameroon international Roger Milla is to play in a friendly against Zambia on Sunday, coach Henri Michel said, reports Reuter.

Michel is under increasing pressure to include the 42-year-old striker in his squad for the World Cup finals but he made it clear on Wednesday that no decision had been made on Milla.

Milla retired after playing a key role in Cameroon reaching the World Cup quarter-finals in 1990. But he made a comeback last January with his former club Tonnerre.

Milla said he would be travelling to France next week to continue training for the World Cup.

"I've been ready for the challenge for several months. It's going to be difficult but I know that if you want it, nothing's impossible," he said.

"I just have to be much more hard-working, much more serious about training to get back at least 80 per cent of the fitness that I had in 1990 in Italy."

Nat'l wrestling begins tomorrow

The 17th national senior wrestling championships, organised by the Bangladesh Amateur Wrestling Federation, begins on Saturday at the National Sports Coaching Centre, reports UNB.

New novae in county horizon

LONDON, Apr 21: Brian Lara and Jonty Rhodes, two of the most dynamic young talents on cricket's world stage, are set to become the show-stoppers of the English season which gets under way today, reports Reuter.

West Indies left-hander Lara, who made newspaper front pages worldwide after he amassed the world record Test score of 375 on Monday, makes his county debut with Warwickshire.

Rhodes comes to England on South Africa's ground-breaking tour in the second half of the summer with a reputation as the most outstanding fieldsmen in world cricket, evoking memories of the brilliant Colin Bland almost 30 years ago.

Bland's speed and throwing accuracy took the art of fielding to new heights when the South Africans made their last tour of England in 1965.

Since the Republic's emergence in 1991 from two decades of sporting isolation, Rhodes has taken up the standard carried by Bland.

Rhodes' athleticism and boundless vitality in the field first captured the public's imagination outside his own country during the 1992 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. His development as an aggressive middle order batsman has made him a key element in South Africa's team.

While Rhodes is enhancing his reputation as an electrify-

ing fielder, Lara is sure to win more admiration with the sublime batsmanship that marked his monumental feat in the final Test against England in St John's, Antigua, where he broke Sir Gary Sobers's record for the highest individual Test innings.

Ironically, when Lara signed for Warwickshire earlier this month he was their fourth choice as stand-in overseas player for South African fast bowler Allan Donald.

West Indian opener Phil Simmons, Australian batsman David Boon and Indian all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar, who agreed terms but was then ruled out by back trouble, were approached before Lara's signing.

After Lara's record-breaking performance, Warwickshire chief executive and former England batsman Denis Amis said: "We knew he was something special when we signed him and now we have been able to see for ourselves how good he is."

Lara is among the traditional crop of West Indians on the county circuit, including Simmons at Leicestershire where he is making his debut following paceman Winston Benjamin's decision to switch to Hampshire.

There is an added dimension to this season's Caribbean influx with the arrival of two prospects for the future—all-rounder Otis Gibson at Glamorgan and fast bowler Cameron Cuffy at Surrey.

Barbadian Gibson, who has the unenviable task of follow-

ing Viv Richards as Glamorgan's overseas player, was first spotted by county captain Hugh Morris 13 months ago.

"Otis is a genuinely quick bowler and an aggressive, lower middle order batsman," said Morris. "What impressed me was not just his pace but his control. He is on a three-year contract and we have no doubt he will succeed."

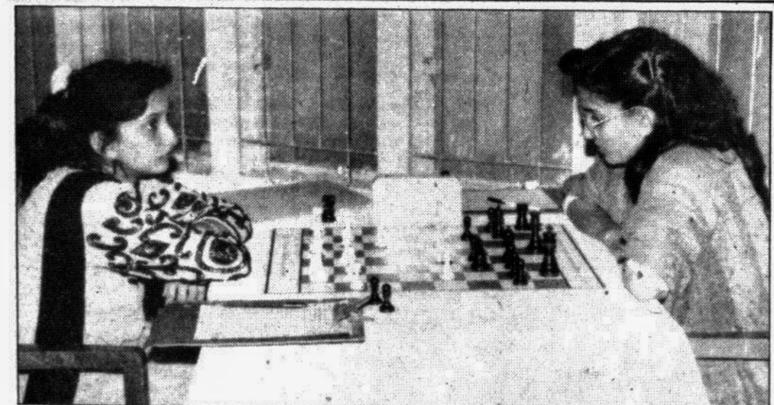
Windward Island's paceman Cuffy, replacing Waqar Younis this summer when the Pakistan fast bowler will be touring Sri Lanka from mid-July, was recommended to Surrey by their former England captain and fast bowler Bob Willis, who is in the Caribbean for the current Test series as a television commentator.

Cuffy, as tall as West Indies fast bowler Curtly Ambrose, captured 24 wickets at an average of 14.87 in the recent Red Stripe Cup regional competition.

Middlesex, whose depth of batting and well-balanced attack make them favourites to retain the county championship, give the season its familiar Lord's launch when, as champions, meet England A team. The match starts today.

New Zealand, a team in transition under the captaincy of Ken Rutherford, arrive at the weekend for a tour including three Tests and two one-day internationals.

South Africa, whose itinerary follows a similar pattern, are likely to offer England tougher opposition.



Participants pondering over their next moves during the fourth round of 15th national women's chess championship at the chess room of the National Sports Council yesterday. — Star photo

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