

## Sehwag show on Day 3

AFP, Bangalore



Virender Sehwag yet again proved to be Pakistan's nightmare as he hammered a ro-bust 201 to help India avoid follow-on in the third and final Test here on Saturday.

The free-stroking opener's double-century enabled the hosts to post 379-6 at stumps on the third day in reply to Pakistan's massive first-innings total of 570.

Sehwag, 26, smashed two sixes and 28 fours off 262 balls in a magnificent display of stroke-making on a batting track to reduce the Pakistani bowlers and fielders to a state of helplessness.

Sehwag, who also scored a triple-century against Pakistan last year, became the fastest Indian to complete 3,000 Test runs during his 10th three-figure knock in 55 innings, surpassing former captain Mohammad Azharuddin (64).

India were in trouble for a brief spell when they lost in-form Rahul Dravid (22) and Sachin Tendulkar (41) in the afternoon session, still needing 114 more runs with seven wickets in hand to avoid the follow-on.

The hosts were just 34 short of the follow-on target of 371 when Sehwag departed, offering an easy return catch to Danish Kaneria (3-97) two balls after completing his double-century.

Sehwag played a risky shot on 199 when he lofted the same bowler in the covers behind two fielders for a brace to reach his double-hundred.

India then lost out-of-form skipper Sourav Ganguly (one), who was

stumped off Kaneria only a ball after he was dropped by Younis Khan at silly-point. He has so far made 46 in his last four innings.

India required 28 to make Pakistan bat again with the last five wickets in hand, but Venkatsai Laxman (51 not out) saw to it with his sensible knock that Sehwag's brilliant effort did not go waste.

India's total owed much of its substance to Sehwag, who put on 98 for the opening wicket with Gautam Gambhir (24), 74 for the next with Dravid, 85 for the third with Tendulkar and 80 for the fourth with Laxman.

Sehwag's liking for the Pakistani attack began last year at Multan, where he became the first Indian to score a Test triple-century.

He continued in the same vein, scoring 173 in the opening Test at Mohali and 81 in the second at Kolkata. He was again among runs, finding plenty of gaps in the field with breath-taking strokes on both sides of the wicket.

Sehwag, 39 overnight, gave a sharp chance when on 43 off spinner Arshad Khan but Asim Kamal fumbled with the ball at forward short-leg.

Pakistan had to pay dearly for their fielding lapse as Sehwag did not curb shots and reached his 150 by lofting Kaneria over long-on for the second six.

Pakistan did well in the second session to remove Dravid and Tendulkar, but could not put pressure on Sehwag, who continued to dominate the rival attack.

Dravid, who made a century in each innings of the second Test,

was

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**SIZZLING SEHWAG:** Dashing India opener Virender Sehwag nudges the ball on the on-side on way to scoring a double-century against Pakistan on the third day of the third and final Test at Bangalore yesterday.

## No complaints about wickets



SPORTS REPORTER

There may be a lot of things cricket authorities can do to turn the country's only first-class competition into a true professional one, but one thing has pleased the leading cricketers this year is the pitches.

With the completion of the sixth round of the Ispahani Sixth National Cricket League already saw a flurry of hundreds and many believe it has happened because of good wickets, a long cherished demand from the players.

"We had a bitter experience of playing on wickets where the ball hardly bounced above the knee and at times rolled after pitching. But this year things have dramatically improved and I must admit we have played on some good wickets," said Dhaka captain Khaled Mahmud ahead of the seventh round that commences today.

"We have so far played six games in Bogra, Chittagong and Fatullah and they are really fantastic compared to what we had experienced last year," said the 32-year-old all-rounder.

The first six rounds of the first-class competition saw as many as 28 hundreds with the last round alone producing nine centuries.

Mahmud however was critical about the non-appearance of some leading national cricketers in the meet, but he was amazed at the fighting spirit some young players.

"It is unfortunate that some leading players did not take part for no valid reasons. But some young boys really seized the opportunity. I've never seen such a huge number of

cricketers coming out with big hundreds," said Mahmud.

Although Mahmud did not point his finger towards any definite direction, he was understandably disappointed with his left-arm spinner and country's leading wicket-taker Mohammad Rafique.

Rafique vanished from the National League scene after playing in the first round.

Bangladesh skipper Habibul Bashar also echoed the voice of his predecessor, but also shouted for a few bowler-friendly wickets.

"If we want to play better cricket abroad we should prepare true sporting wickets. It is nice to see some good batting tracks but there should be something for bowlers as well," said the country's premier batsman and Khulna captain.

National wicketkeeper and Rajshahi captain Khaled Mashud also satisfied with the wickets so far.

"I have taken part in all the five previous National Leagues and I must say wickets this time are far better and that's why we saw a lot of big innings," said the ever-energetic stumper.

Mashud also appreciated the Board's idea of involving the national selectors in finalising the rosters of the six participating teams.

But Mashud urged for a better financial package for the players.

"This is the number one domestic cricket competition but to frank we are getting less than what a Second Division cricketer is being paid," said Mashud.

Bashar was even brash in his comment.

"Why does a player have to take the League seriously where he gets only Taka 450 a day as appearance fee?"

PHOTO: AFP

## 'I know one way to play'

REUTERS/AFP, Bangalore



A blistering 262-ball 201 would satisfy most batsmen but Virender Sehwag was left disappointed with the manner of his dismissal against Pakistan in the third and final Test on Saturday.

The 26-year-old was caught and bowled by leg-spinner Danish Kaneria, India losing two more wickets in quick succession to finish the third day on 379 for six, still 191 behind Pakistan's first-innings 570.

"I lost concentration," Sehwag told reporters. "If I had had a one-over gap after reaching my double-century, I would definitely have scored more."

The explosive opener, who

scored his career-best 309 against the same opponents at Multan last year and slammed 173 in the first Test in Mohali.

"I score against all teams, not just Pakistan," he said. "I only know one way to play. I don't change my game in Tests and one-day cricket...when you're successful you don't need to."

Sehwag, who was dropped on 43, added: "Since we don't want to lose to Pakistan, we'll have to go out there tomorrow and get as many runs as we can."

"If we can bat till lunch tomorrow and get another 100, the pressure will be on them."

"Then, they'll either have to set us a target or just bat out for a draw, which won't be easy against our spinners."

"I knew I had to add runs for each wicket and I am happy that I was

involved in four good stands," Sehwag said, adding he did not believe his team could lose the match.

"We are not in a losing position," he said.

But, the dashing opener criticised the pitch.

"How can you say it's a good Test pitch? More than nine hundred runs have been scored in three days."

"A true Test pitch is the one which favours both batsmen and bowlers," said Sehwag, who has so far made 506 runs in the ongoing three-match series.

Sehwag said scoring big against Pakistan was always his aim.

"I try to make runs against other teams as well, but since we don't want to lose against Pakistan, the aim is to always score as much as possible," said Sehwag.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CRICKET

## Titas Gas win big

SPORTS REPORTER

Rahat Khan led his side from the front with an unbeaten hundred as Titas Gas Adarsha High registered a six-wicket victory against University Laboratory in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers National School Cricket at the Orient Sporting Club ground yesterday.

The captain's 105 not out helped Titas to score 155 for 5 in 21.3 overs in reply to Laboratory's 154 all out in 26 overs.

Shahadat Hossain missed out on a ton for six runs at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium but his effort enabled his side Sheikh Abdullah Mollah High School (257 all out) earn a massive 129-run victory against Sunnydale (128-10).

At the Mirpur outer stadium, National Bangla High (155-8) pulled off an exciting two-wicket win against Sourav Smrity High School (151 all out).

In the day's other matches, Ashrafabad High (269 all out) defeated Maniknagar Model High (227 all out) by 42 runs at the Gulshan Youth Club ground, Motijheel Govt. Boys High (128-1) outplayed St. Joseph High (127 all out) by nine wickets at the Dhanmondi Club ground and Rayer Bazar High (76-3) mesmerised St. Gregory's High (70 all out) by seven wickets at the Lalmitia Housing Society ground.

## Proteas touch down in the Caribbean

REUTERS, Durban

South Africa will use their first two days in the Caribbean to acclimatise and overcome the effects of the long journey after arriving in Antigua late on Thursday.

They start a training camp on Sunday before leaving for Guyana, the venue for next week's first Test, on Tuesday.

The South Africans arrived in the middle of an ongoing dispute between the West Indies Cricket Board and captain Brian Lara and six other players.

Their disagreement centres on a potential clash between West Indies' main sponsor, Digicel, and the seven players' personal contracts with Cable and Wireless.

The other six are Ramnaresh Sarwan, Chris Gayle, Dwayne Smith, Dwayne Bravo, Ravi Rampaul and Fidel Edwards.

None of the seven have been named in the West Indies squad for the first Test, which starts on March 31.

"It is unfortunate and disappointing, because we want to play against their best team," South

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## MSC-BU battle today



SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club and Brothers Union lock horns today to decide who plays Muktiyoddha in the final of the Independence Day Gold Cup Football tournament. The second semifinal kicks off at 4:45 pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The winners go on to meet Muktiyoddha, who eliminated Abahani 4-0 and were hoping for a repeat performance against another crowd-puller.

"Nothing can stop us from starting the domestic season with a title," said confident Sujon, who praised Russian forward Victor Edward and Moroccan midfielder Inani.

Both Mohammedan and Brothers camps will be at full strength as none of their players are injured or cautioned.

situation. We are starved of success so that might motivate us tomorrow," said Mohammedan captain Alfaz Ahmed.

"We lost our last match because of our goalkeeper's mistakes. But this time Biplob won't make the same errors."

On the other hand, Brothers captain and national defender Mohammad Sujon said that they were riding high after thrashing Abahani 4-0 and were hoping for a repeat performance against another crowd-puller.

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## Lanka arrive in New Zealand

BBC ONLINE, undated

Sri Lanka arrived in New Zealand on Friday for their re-scheduled Two-Test series which was postponed in January following the tsunami in Asia.

And captain Marvan Atapattu says it is important that the series goes ahead.

"Most people have been asking when we are going to start. They are pretty keen to watch us again. It's more than a game for Sri Lankans," he said.

The first Test starts in Napier on April 4, with the second match beginning in Wellington a week later.

Before that the tourists will play a three-day match against the Major Associations XI in Christchurch, starting on Saturday.

Atapattu's men have not played Test cricket for almost five months but their next opponents have had a tough time of it on the field of play.

New Zealand have been compe

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## NZ slip late in the day



AFP, Auckland

Australia shattered a valiant New Zealand start to the third Test Saturday seizing the initiative with three late wickets to have the Black Caps at 199 for five at the close of the first day's play.

It was a rapid turnaround of fortune after New Zealand had cautiously made their way to 179 for two as Hamish Marshall and Stephen Fleming amassed a 126-run partnership.

But they fell within four runs of each other and Lou Vincent came and went for two as Australia took the first-day honours after losing the toss.

The bowling honours were shared across the board, but the damage was prepared by spells of inspired miserly bowling from pacesman Glenn McGrath who sent down 24 overs, including 17 maidens, and took one for 20.

With Australia leading 1-0, New Zealand made a shaky start in their bid to draw the series, slipping to 53 for two before Marshall with 76 and Fleming, who returned to run-scoring form with 65, gave the innings some backbone.

Marshall, in only his fifth Test, played with the patience of a veteran coupling a solid defence with flowing strokes through mid-wicket and behind point.

He had the added inspiration of sharing a 38-run partnership with his identical twin brother James who was making his Test debut.

Hamish Marshall's 208 ball innings, which included nine fours, eventually came to an end when he popped a bat-pad catch straight into the hands of Ricky Ponting to give Warne his first wicket.

Fleming relished the opportunity

to bat at his customary No. 4 position after scoring just 36 runs from four innings as a makeshift opener in the first two Tests.

He came in with the score at 53 for two and received an ironic cheer from the crowd when he survived his first ball from McGrath who had claimed the New Zealand skipper in his last three innings.

Immediately after lunch, when Ponting curiously kept McGrath out of the attack, Fleming took to Warne hitting him for three fours and a six.

The only trouble he had against the champion leg spinner was three overs before tea when umpire Jeremy Lloyds gave the batsman the benefit of the doubt in a close lbw appeal.

McGrath continued to cause headaches for Fleming and his second six-over spell included five maidens, as Fleming took 50 minutes and 33 balls to move from 32 to 33, however he was to be denied the New Zealand captain's wicket.

That honour when to Michael Kasprovic when Fleming's concentration finally left him just four runs after Marshall's dismissal and he chopped the ball onto his stumps.

Australia had snared two early wickets to have New Zealand 67 for two at lunch. New Zealand added an unbeaten 75 runs between lunch and tea, and in the final session Australia took three for 57.

Craig Cumming was the first wicket to fall, out for five when adjudged lbw after failing to offer a shot to a Jason Gillespie ball that appeared to seam and bounce sharply from outside off stump.

James Marshall opened his Test career by edging Gillespie for four through third man and otherwise looked comfortable against the swing of McGrath and Gillespie. However, his undoing came in

the 22nd over when he could not resist dabbling at McGrath outside the off stump and succeeded only in steering the ball straight to Matthew Hayden.

In an exceptional days work by McGrath it took a four from Nathan Astle in his final over of the day to lift the number of runs conceded above the number of maidens bowled.

At stumps Astle was not out seven, while Gillespie had two for 50 and McGrath, Kasprovic and Warne had one wicket each.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the first day of the third Test between New Zealand and Australia at Eden Park on Saturday:  
**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings  
 Cumming lbw b Gillespie 5  
 J Marshall c Hayden b McGrath 29  
 H Marshall c Ponting b Warne 76  
 Fleming b Kasprovic 65  
 Astle not out 7  
 Vincent b Gillespie 2  
 McCullum not out 1  
 Extras: (b-4, lb-8, nb-2) 14  
 Total: (For 5 wks in 90 overs) 199  
 Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-53, 3-179, 4-183, 5-194  
 To bat: Vettori, Franklin, Wiseman, Martin

**Bowler** O M R W  
 McGrath 24 17 20 1  
 Gillespie 20 7 50 2  
 Kasprovic 23 6 57 1  
 Warne 19 4 50 1  
 Ponting 4 1 10 0

**AUSTRALIA:** Ponting, Hayden, Langer, Martyn, Clarke, Katich, Gilchrist, Warne, Gillespie, Kasprovic, McGrath.  
**Toss:** New Zealand.  
**Umpires:** Jeremy Lloyds (England) and Rudi Koertzen (South Africa).

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### What to WATCH

#### DD Sports & TEN Sports

India vs Pakistan  
 Third Test, Day Four  
 Live at 10:30 am

ESPN

#### New Zealand vs Australia

Third Test, Day Three  
 Live at 4:30 am (Monday)

#### STAR Sports

WC Soccer Qualifier

Iran vs Japan  
 Taped Version at 10:00 am

India vs Pakistan

Third Test, Day Four  
 Highlights at 8:30 pm

#### TEN Sports

WC Soccer Qualifier

Iran vs Japan  
 Taped Version at 10:00 am



**Younis Khan**  
 (Pakistan vice-captain)  
 "I never think of records, so I'm not disappointed at missing a triple-century. It was really never on my mind."  
 After he was out on 267 on the second day of the Bangalore Test.



#### Ispahani Nat'l Cricket League

(One-dayer)  
 Dhaka vs Sylhet  
 Venue: Sylhet Stadium  
 Chittagong vs Rajshahi  
 Venue: CDVS

Barisal vs Khulna  
 Venue: Barisal Stadium

#### Independence Day Cup Football

Second Semifinal

Mohammedan vs Brothers Union (4:45 pm)

Venue: BNS



**CELEBRATION GILLESPIE STYLE:** Australia paceman Jason Gillespie after taking the wicket of New Zealand opener Craig Cumming on the first day of the third Test at Auckland yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP