

Pakistan save best for last

India crushed by 168 runs at Bangalore

AFP, Bangalore



Leg-spinner Shahid Afridi triggered a sensational Indian collapse with three top wickets to masterpiece Pakistan's 168-run victory in the third and final Test here on Monday.

Pakistan drew the series 1-1 after India, chasing a 383-run target, were shot out for 214 just before close of play on the last day.

The hosts lost their last nine wickets for a meagre 106 on a Chinnaswamy Stadium wicket which was still good for batting.

The opening Test was drawn at Mohali, while India won the second Test in Kolkata by 195 runs.

Leg-spinner Danish Kaneria completed Pakistan's dream victory when he trapped Laxmipathy Balaji leg-before with just 6.1 overs remaining.

The 25-year-old Afridi, the only third spinner after Kaneria and Arshad Khan, did the trick by catching the ultra-defensive Indian batsmen on the wrong foot.

Even Sachin Tendulkar, who became India's leading scorer after surpassing Sunil Gavaskar's record of 10,122 runs, looked a pale shadow of his former attacking self. He made 16 off 98 balls after surviving a chance on nine.

The Indian tail-enders, led by gutsy Anil Kumble (37 not out), offered stiff resistance by lasting as many as 20 overs to delay the inevitable.

Afridi never allowed the Indian

batsmen to settle down with his fastish leg-breaks, removing Tendulkar, Venkatsai Laxman and out-of-form captain Sourav Ganguly to finish with 3-13 off 17 overs.

Off-spinner Arshad, playing his first Test in five years, finished with 2-21.

The famed Indian middle order failed to cope with the pressure as Pakistan grabbed four wickets in the second session to reduce the hosts to 135-5 after getting just one in the morning.

India's hopes of chasing the target virtually ended after the run out of Virender Sehwag (38), capable of tearing apart any attack with his amazing stroke-play.

He had been looking dangerous during his stay at the wicket, smashing seamer Abdul Razzaq for three consecutive fours and then lofting Kaneria for two boundaries.

But once Sehwag was run out, failing to beat a Razzaq direct-throw to the non-striker's end following a mix-up with Gautam Gambhir (52), India went on the defensive.

The hosts, who resumed at 25 for no loss, scored 77 in the first session and 38 in the second.

Even the draw seemed a remote possibility when India lost four wickets in the space of 27 runs in the second session, with Afridi taking two and Arshad and paceman Mohammad Sami one apiece.

Pakistan came back into the match after lunch when they removed Gambhir and Rahul Dravid in the space of 10 runs to reduce the hosts to 118-3.

Venkatsai Laxman also did not survive long, trapped leg-before by Afridi.

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A MOMENT TO SAVOUR: Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria (C) is the toast of his ecstatic teammates after he claimed the final Indian wicket of Laxmipathy Balaji (not in picture) late on the final day of the third Test at Bangalore yesterday.

One Test ban on Inzamam

AFP, Bangalore

Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq on Monday was suspended for one Test and fined 30 per cent of his match-fee for contesting an umpiring decision during the third and final Test against India here.

"Match-referee Chris Broad of England held a hearing with Inzamam after the match and handed him a one-Test ban and fined him 30 per cent of the match-fee," Pakistan team manager Salim Altaf told AFP.

The ban means Inzamam will miss the first Test of a two-match

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U-19s to play two ODIs Down Under

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-19 cricket team will play two official U-19 one-day internationals during their four-week tour of Australia starting next month.

The young Tigers, who depart Dhaka on April 6, will play back-to-back ODIs against their Australian counterparts in Brisbane on April 12 and 13.

As part of their preparation for the forthcoming U-19 World Cup, the Bangladeshis will play eight more limited-overs games at different venues in Queensland -- the sunshine state of Australia.

Their other matches are against Sunshine Coast Scorchers (April 15, 16), QAS Regional Squad (April 20, 21, 25, 27) and Tropical North Queensland (April 30, May 1).

The team will return home on May 2.

PHOTO: AFP

'Defensive India helped us'

Captaincy doesn't worry Ganguly

AFP, Bangalore



A jubilant Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq said Monday his team cashed in on India's defensive batting to level the series with a 168-run victory in the third and final Test here.

"I was surprised by their defensive strategy. India went on the defensive after lunch which allowed us to attack and force a win," said Inzamam.

"The situation at lunch was difficult because we had got only one wicket. We realised they were going for a draw and our last resort was to attack which we did," Inzamam said, referring to India's lunch score of 102-1.

India batted defensively in a bid to save the game, with star batsmen Sachin Tendulkar taking 98 balls for his 16. Even Rahul Dravid and Venkatsai Laxman batted slowly.

"I could not have asked for a better

100th Test. I scored a hundred and then we won the match to level the series," said Inzamam, who scored 184 on his 100th Test appearance.

"It was a great team effort. Shahid Afridi, Danish Kaneria, Younis Khan did their best, but on the whole it was a combined effort," said Inzamam.

Leg-spinner Afridi grabbed three key wickets to plot India's dramatic collapse, which saw the hosts lose their last nine wickets for 106 runs.

Pakistan bagged four wickets in the second session and five in the last to complete a dream victory.

"Drawing the series is a very big achievement for this young team," said Inzamam. His side has lost seven of their last 12 Tests.

"It's very tough to come from behind to level the series against the home team and this win will help this team in future."

Indian captain Sourav Ganguly said he did not believe his team wanted to play for a draw.

"We had decided to play normal cricket. There were no conscious efforts to get defensive," Ganguly

said, adding that the run out of hard-hitting opener Virender Sehwag turned out to be crucial.

"Sehwag's run-out pushed us back. Then we lost four wickets in the second session which put us under pressure," said Ganguly.

Sehwag, who hammered 201 in the first innings, was run out for 38 following a mix-up with partner Gautam Gambhir early in the day.

Ganguly said the 1-1 result was disappointing.

"It's disappointing to end the series this way after being 1-0 up on home grounds," said Ganguly who had a bad series, scoring just 48 in three Tests.

"I am not worried about the captaincy," he said when asked whether there was any threat to his leadership.

"It's for the selectors to decide because I have captained India in 40-odd Tests and have nothing to prove to anyone," said Ganguly.

"It's disappointing to be the captain and not scoring. But I have been in this situation before and have come back."

Tendulkar on top

REUTERS, Bangalore

Sachin Tendulkar overtook former captain Sunil Gavaskar as India's highest run-scorer in the third and final Test against Pakistan on Monday.

He reached the milestone by steering Mohammad Sami for a single to third man to get to 10,123 runs in his 123rd Test.

The 31-year-old was out in the final session for 16, caught by Asim Kamal at forward short-leg off occasional leg-spinner Shahid Afridi.

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Rain hampers Dhaka

Rajshahi, Barisal prosper



SPORTS REPORTER

After a high-scoring sixth round that saw nine centuries the seventh round of the Ispaphani Sixth National Cricket League began at a less hectic pace yesterday.

Runaway leaders Dhaka, after three straight wins in the first-class competition, saw their march spoilt by rain at the Sylhet Stadium.

Inclement weather could allow only 27 overs of play with the hosts finishing at 55-5.

But there was no rain-intervention at Chittagong or Barisal.

Rajshahi continued their dominance at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium when the visitors, fresh after their one-day success, bowled Chittagong out for 206 with the pace trio of Sumon Saha, Shahajada and Alamgir Kabir sharing nine wickets.

Rajshahi were 81-2 at stumps.

Although Chittagong were under pressure at home, Barisal prospered in their backyard against Khulna.

The home side were 220-5 at stumps thanks to an unbeaten 80 by Proshenjit Bose.

RAJSHAHI-CHITTAGONG

Chittagong made a disastrous start after opting to bat first when they soon slumped to 62-6 before number eight batsman Sabir Khan (48) joined national discard Faisal Hossain (32) to repair the damage adding 43 runs for the seventh wicket.

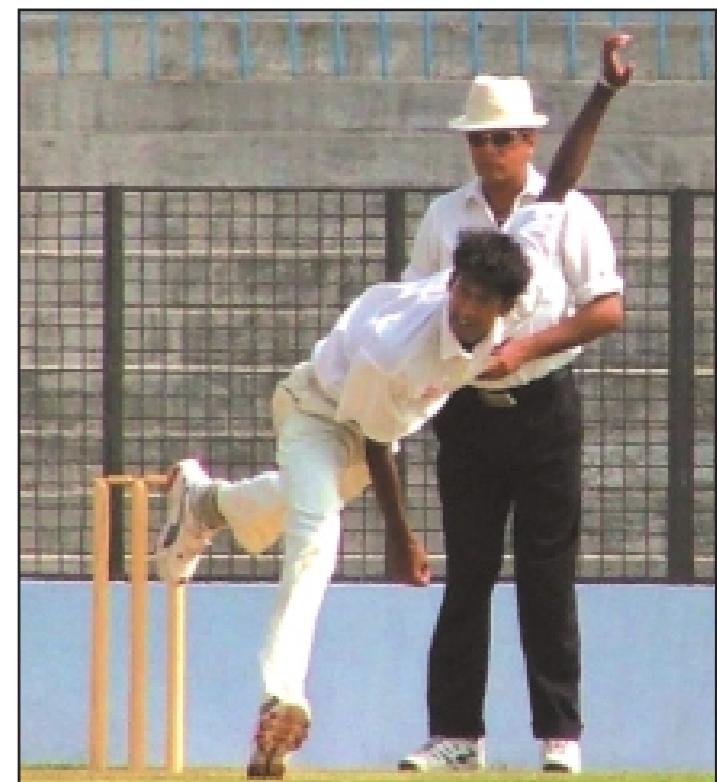
Besides, Ahsanullah Hasan made 38 and Waskurni Palash (20 not out) helped to guide the Chittagonians to respectability.

Sumon claimed four for 55.

while Shahajada picked up 3-42 and Alamgir Kabir took two wickets in 21 runs.

Speedster Palash then gave Chittagong a double breakthrough dismissing Rajshahi openers Zohirul Islam for 32 and Rajibul

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Rajshahi paceman Sumon Saha, who took four wickets, sends down a delivery during his side's National Cricket League match against hosts Chittagong yesterday.

Australia in control

Cricket

AFP, Auckland

A feisty half-century from Adam Gilchrist and two quick wickets from a fired-up Glenn McGrath gave Australia a stranglehold over New Zealand at stumps on the third day of the third Test here Monday.

A typical Gilchrist assault carried Australia to 363 in their first innings, a lead of 91. Then McGrath had New Zealand on 11 for two in their second innings, still trailing by 80 runs and with openers Craig Cumming and James Marshall back in the pavilion.

A stop-start day with four stoppages for rain and bad light failed to deter an Australian side determined to ram home their dominance after winning the first Test inside four days and being denied by rain from taking the second.

The onslaught included 10 fours and a six, and shattered New Zealand when they had a chance of getting back in the game after capturing three wickets within the space of six runs with the new ball.

As he warmed to his counter-attack Gilchrist gave early chances, twice edging Chris Martin just wide of the slips cordon before he had reached double figures. But he then settled down with three chanceless boundaries in a one over off James Franklin.

He shared a 74-run partnership with Michael Kasprowicz for the ninth wicket in which Kasprowicz

contributed 23.

Australia had reached 297 for five, for a five-run lead on the first innings, when Martin revived New Zealand's fortunes with the dismissal of Jason Gillespie.

Left-arm Frank Franklin then cap-

tured the wickets of Simon Katich and Shane Warne in the space of five balls and Australia were 303 for eight.

Gillespie had proved a more than useful nightwatchman as he and

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SACHIN TENDULKAR

Afridi, to finish the match with a career aggregate of 10,134.

Gavaskar scored 10,122 in 125 Tests. The two are joint world record holders for Test centuries with 34.

INDIA'S TOP FIVE

Runs	Batsman	T	Ave
10,134	S Tendulkar	123	57.25
10,122	S Gavaskar	125	51.12
7,696	R Dravid	89	57.86
6,868	D Vengsarkar	116	42.13
6,215	M Azharuddin	99	45.03

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The absence of Abahani and

Mohammedan, both knocked out