

Eng clinch a cliffhanger

Hosts beat Australia by 2 runs to go level

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

England beat Australia by just two runs to win a dramatic second Ashes Test on the fourth day at Edgbaston here Sunday and level the series 1-1.

England's victory, the closest in Ashes history, was achieved with more than a day to spare, and more than made up for the crushing 239-run defeat at Lord's last month in the opening match of the five Test series.

Australia resumed Sunday on 175 for eight, still needing a further 107 runs to win.

But their last two wickets added 104 to take them within sight of a famous victory.

Brett Lee, who top scored with 43 not out, almost saw Australia home after stands of 56 for the ninth wicket with Shane Warne (42) and 59 for the tenth with Michael Kasprovicz 20.

England, who had dominated most of a game they so nearly lost, won through when Kasprovicz gloved a Harmison delivery down the leg-side and was caught by wicketkeeper Geraint Jones.

Earlier Warne and Brett Lee launched a superb rearguard action lasting 56 balls with both batsmen scoring well-struck boundaries.

But after Warne trod on his stumps against all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, Australia still needed 62 runs to win.

Then Simon Jones at third man dropped last man Kasprovicz on 18 off Flintoff with 15 runs needed.

"It was an epic game and full credit to the way Australia came out this morning," said England skipper Michael Vaughan.

"We could not afford to have gone down 2-0 in the series. In a game like this you don't want to lose like that."

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PHREW... THAT WAS CLOSE! Teammates rush to England fast bowler Steve Harmison after he had taken the last Australian wicket to seal a victory by two runs on Day Four of the second Test at Edgbaston on Sunday.

Bashar debuts as selector

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Habib Bashar got hot under the collar after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had dismissed his plea to appoint a long-term captain instead of a tour-by-tour appointment policy.

But after his first official meeting with the selectors at BCB's corporate office in Gulshan on Sunday, the 32-year-old said that he had thoroughly enjoyed the new role.

"For the first time I met the selectors and took part in a lively discussion. It was really fantastic. I expressed my desires and also learnt their opinions about the team," said the most successful national captain. Bashar, who took over the hot job from Khaled Mahmud in January 2004, has not been a part of the selection panel, headed by Faruque Ahmed.

The Board this time however decided to give Bashar a leeway by announcing him as captain for the forth-coming tour of Sri Lanka well

ahead of the revelation of the final squad for the three one-day internationals and two Tests.

The early announcement allowed Bashar to sit with coach Dav Whatmore and Athar Ali Khan in the first selection meeting in absence of Faruque, who is now in the United States to fulfill family commitment.

Although the meeting ended inconclusively, Bashar believed that it helped him a lot to collect information about a few finer points that would be a great help for him during matches.

"I've learned many things from the discussions and it will ultimately help me to properly handle a player on the field. Besides, I've got a clear idea about the International Cricket Council's (ICC) new one-day rules," said Bashar.

"We have discussed a lot about the super-sub. I had a preconceived notion that we need a bowler as a super-sub since we have always played with one bowler short. But the meeting was an eye-opener for me," said Bashar, who turns 33 on the 17th this month.

"Applying the new ICC rules in Sri Lanka will not be an easy job. I think we need to put a lot of thinking on the

new field restrictions (power play) against some world-class attacking batsmen. As a captain it is a big challenge for me," he said.

Bashar informed a 15-member team for the three-match one-day series is likely to be announced within two or three days.

"We talked about both one-day and Test teams, but a final decision would be made in consultation with the chief selector," he said.

Bashar refused to make any comment about his desired team for the tour, but it was learnt that a change in the one-day side that played in England two months ago was highly unlikely.

There is however a strong possibility for in-form Tushar Imran to get back into the Test team.

"I don't want to make any comment on the selection, but it is true that Tushar gave us food for thought. He was playing good cricket in England with the Bangladesh A team, especially his two hundreds in the longer-version matches impressed everybody. You should not be surprised if you see him back in the Test side," said Bashar.

Yuvraj takes India home

CRICINFO/AFP, Colombo



Denesh Ramdin scored a wonderful unbeaten 74 to keep West Indies in the hunt till the end, but Ashish Nehra bowled an excellent last over, conceding only four runs, as India sneaked home by seven runs to make it to the final of the Indian Oil Cup.

West Indies made an all-or-nothing assault on the tall target of 263 and provided fireworks but lost wickets to the growing pressure and their inexperience.

Runako Morton anchored the innings, remaining unbeaten on 42 while the dashers kept coming and falling by the wayside.

The winners will take on hosts Sri Lanka in the day-night final in Colombo on Tuesday.

Earlier, Yuvraj Singh smashed a blistering century under pressure to help India post a challenging 262 for 4 on Sunday.

The left-hander came in to bat in testing conditions after India had lost three wickets for a paltry 51 and had one batsman injured in the early overs of the day-night game at the Premadasa Stadium.

Yuvraj, 23, rose to the occasion, adding 165 for the fourth wicket with Mohammad Kaif (83 not out) to pull his team out of trouble with his third hundred in 120 one-dayers. He hit one six and 11 fours in his 114-ball knock.

The winners of this game will clash with Sri Lanka in the day-night final on Tuesday.

The Indian batting wobbled after skipper Rahul Dravid had won the toss and elected to bat. Sourav Ganguly retired hurt on two after being struck on the left arm by a rising delivery from fast bowler Daren Powell.

Ganguly was taken to hospital for an X-ray and did not bat again. Venkatsai Laxman was the first to go, caught behind off Powell for seven. A few balls later, struggling Virender Sehwag (six) was given out leg-before off left-arm paceman Deighton Butler.

India suffered another setback when off-spinner Omari Banks

bowled in-form Dravid for just 10. Yuvraj then counter-attacked vigorously to neutralise the West Indies' early advantage. He continued to dominate the attack with a wide range of strokes before falling in the closing overs.

India had been struggling at 84-3 after 25 overs before Yuvraj stepped up the run-rate with his hard and clean hitting.

Yuvraj was caught by Tino Best at fine-leg while attempting to reverse-sweep spinner Narsingh Deonarine, but not before setting the stage for a closing-overs onslaught.

India plundered 89 runs in the last 10 overs to set a stiff target for the West Indies, thanks to Yuvraj and Kaif.

Kaif played a supporting role

remarkably well, rotating the strike during his 103-ball knock which contained six fours.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni made merry in the closing stages, smashing a 13-ball 28 with two sixes.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the sixth and final first phase match of the Indian Oil Cup match between India and West Indies in Colombo on Sunday:

INDIA	
Ganguly retired hurt	2
Sehwag lbw b Butler	6
Laxman c Ramdin b D Powell	7
Dravid b Banks	10
Yuvraj c Best b Deonarine	110
Kaif not out	83
Dhoni not out	28

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McGrath's Ashes tour looks over

CRICINFO, undated

Glenn McGrath will find out in the next 48 hours whether his Ashes series is over, as he awaits news on the ankle injury he sustained on the morning of the second Test at Edgbaston.

McGrath, 35, stepped on a cricket ball during a pre-match warm-up and suffered a grade two tear of his lateral ligament. After recording figures of 9 for 82 in the first Test, it was a major blow to Australia's fortunes, and to McGrath's own.

McGrath has now dispensed with the crutches on which he arrived at the ground on Friday morning, and has been spending time in the swimming pool in a bid to regain his mobility.

DAY'S EVENT

Premier Football League
Mohammedan vs Sheikh Russel (5:00 pm)
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Abahani's strong comeback

ABAHANI-3, DIPALI-1

SPORTS REPORTER

Three second-half goals inside 15 minutes helped Abahani avoid a major embarrassment as they came back from behind to beat bottom club Dipali Juba Sangha 3-1 on Sunday.

Ugandan striker Idris Mutubi had given Dipali a shock lead in the first half against the run of play but the Sky Blues sealed their sixth win with strikes from Tipu, Farhad and Ndem Kiyek.

The victory kept Abahani mathematically alive in the title race. They moved two points within Muktiyodha, who are in third with 25 with five games remaining. Table toppers Brothers however are ten points ahead of the Sky Blues.

Abahani, who have never finished below third in the top flight of local football, now must beat Muktiyodha on Wednesday to brighten their chances of maintaining that record at least.

Winless Diplai, who fought bravely in their 5-3 loss to Abahani in the first-leg, survived an opening

salvo before going ahead in the 15th minute.

Ibrahim and Farhad forced fine saves by Dipali's second-choice custodian Sameer but Abahani paid for being too attacking when Idris, breaking an off-side trap with a through from Rubel, went round goalkeeper Nizam to put the ball into an open net.

In the rest of the first half, it was all Abahani as centre-back Tarek cleared the ball a couple of times from the goalline and Sameer pulled off two spectacular saves against Ghanaian Ibrahim before denying Farhad from point-blank range. Another opportunity went begging as Tipu rattled the sidebar.

Ibrahim, whose robust runs

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	M	W	D	L	GF	GA Pts
Brothers	13	10	2	1	28	9 32
MSC	13	9	4	0	28	10 31
Muktiyodha	13	8	1	4	22	17 25
Abahani	13	6	5	2	21	13 23
Russel	13	5	3	5	23	11 18
Farashganj	13	5	3	5	13	12 18
Arambagh	13	2	6	6	14	19 12
Wanderers	13	1	6	6	12	27 9
Youngmen's	13	2	2	9	14	37 8
Dipali	13	0	2	11	16	37 2

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Nafees flays Durham

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Shahriar Nafees led by example as Bangladesh A amassed 299-6 against Durham in a one-day game at Riverside Ground, Chester-le-Street on Sunday.

The left-handed batsman, who has been going through a lean-patch in the tour, returned to form with a cracking 133-ball 147 to set up a daunting task for the home side.

In reply, Durham were struggling on 69-4 after 20 overs. Pacemen Syed Russel and Shahadat Hossain evenly shared the wickets.

Shahriar opened the innings with Mehrab Hossain Jr, who was promoted to the opening slot for the first time in the tour, after deciding to bat first. The move paid off handsomely as the two left-handers tore apart the Durham attack in a 209-run stand made in contrasting fashion.

Mehrab was happy to play second fiddle to his rampaging captain. The teenager made a patient 59 (123 balls) while Shahriar clobbered 20 fours and a six.

In a cameo innings, young Nazimuddin blasted three sixes and two fours in his hurricane 7-ball 28 while in-form Tushar Imran added

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Indian batsman Yuvraj Singh is delighted after reaching his hundred against the West Indies at Colombo on Sunday.