



Action from yesterday's Araf Apparel's 21st National Youth Hockey Championship match between BKSP and Rajshahi at the Maulana Bhasani National Stadium.

Malik finds his slot

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Pakistan finally woke up but it's still likely to be too late. Spirited they were through the third day, but it felt a defeated spirit, at best a statement perhaps ahead of the second Test that South Africa will not have it so easy again.

For much of this match Pakistan have looked jumbled in a previous era, not a team moving into another. Twice as many spinners as fast bowlers seemed a new way of doing things, though possibly not the best. But even Mohammad Asif and Umar Gul have rarely looked so defeated by a surface. The spinners were supposed to have feasted like kings on this pitch, but have instead reigned the holymouth, until today.

In the bigger picture, Shoaib Malik scrapping away this afternoon was no bad thing. The uncertainty over his promotion to the captaincy revolved more around the timing, not so much the potential. In 18 Tests, he hadn't fully nailed down his place in the middle-order: two of his six fifties and

his only Test century have come while opening, so where, if at all, is he best utilised?

There's no if now, for he is leader and on the evidence of today, the middle-order isn't a bad area for him to be in. For one, if conditions are right, there isn't a kind of spinners he seems incapable of playing. His only Test century was an eight-hour match-saving one, and unlike his top order, he made the switch from 20 overs to five days without breaking sweat. Solid defence mixed calmly and eagerly with the odd biff, broken up occasionally by a thoroughly correct drive or clip.

The only blemish came in his demise, an ugly, dancing swipe about as necessary as a hole in the head. The situation at the time means that will attract unhealthy attention; a century in his first Test as captain would've been some statement, but a century 73 isn't a bad way to start.

For all Pakistan's spunk today, however, South Africa have bossed this from the start. Makhaya Ntini apart, they have felt more tangibly up for it everywhere, in the field, with the bat, with the ball. Andre Nel has been the best fast bowler on

view, charging in as a bull might to red cloth, twiddling his action, his pace and lengths but never his commitment. It is the way Nel is and so doesn't come as a surprise.

Paul Harris, on the other hand, looked the most threatening spinner, which did come as a surprise. He sparked Pakistan's slide yesterday and completed it today in the process completing his first five-wicket haul. If you thought a South African spinner taking a five-for was rare - the last time that happened was three years ago - when was the last time a South African spinner took the new ball, as Harris did today?

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