



Misbah keeps team alive

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Pakistan rode on Misbahul Haq's fighting half-century to boost their chances of avoiding a follow-on in the third and final Test against India here on Monday.

The tourists were 369-5 in their first innings at stumps on the third day in reply to India's mammoth 626, needing 58 more runs to avoid the follow-on.

Misbah (54 not out) and Kamran Akmal (32 not out), who made centuries in a similar situation in the previous Test at Kolkata, rallied Pakistan with an unfinished 81-run stand for the sixth wicket.

Pakistan were in trouble at 288-5 before Misbah and Akmal denied India further success. Misbah has so far struck eight fours in his second half-century.

India also made a dubious record of conceding 70 extras, their previous highest being 60 against England in 1979.

"It's not easy to keep wickets on this surface as the ball is sometimes keeping low," said India's Sourav Ganguly, who claimed the day's first wicket.

"The first session tomorrow will be important as the ball does something in the morning. They have the last pair of specialist batsmen at the crease and if we get an early

wicket, it'll be difficult for lower-order batsmen."

The hosts lead 1-0 in the series following their six-wicket win in the opening Test in New Delhi. The second match ended in a draw.

Pakistan were strongly placed at 221-2 before stand-in captain Younis Khan was bowled attempting a reverse-sweep off spinner Harbhajan Singh, starting a slide that saw his team lose three crucial wickets in the space of 67 runs.

Younis, leading the team in a second successive Test in the absence of unfit Shoaib Malik, batted confidently during his 156-ball 80 before he fell playing one reverse-sweep too many.

He had played the same shot with success on a couple of occasions in the morning session but missed the line this time off Harbhajan, bowling round the stumps. He struck 12 fours in his 20th half-century.

Younis, who scored a match-saving hundred in the previous Test, propped up the innings with a 90-run stand for the second wicket with Salman Butt (68) and 72 for the next with Mohammad Youssuf (24).

After the reverse-sweep came a poor stroke that led to the dismissal of Youssuf, who uppishly drove left-arm seamer Irfan Pathan to Yuvraj Singh at point a few deliveries after exchanging words with India skipper Anil Kumble.

Pakistan threw away two vital

wickets just when Younis, seven overnight, and Youssuf looked set to play long innings on a track which had little for seamers and spinners even on the third day.

The Indian captain kept changing his bowlers but the next success came with the second new ball, with inexperienced Ishant Sharma making amends for a below-par performance by removing Faisal Iqbal.

Seamer Sharma, playing only his second Test, struck in his third over with the new ball when he surprised Iqbal (22) with extra bounce to have him caught by Gautam Gambhir at short-leg.

India struggled for success in the morning on a placid track as Younis batted comfortably against both pace and spin to help his team add 94 to their overnight total of 86-1.

It was part-time seamer Ganguly who provided the much-needed breakthrough when he dismissed left-handed opener Butt, who could add only 18 to his overnight score of 50.

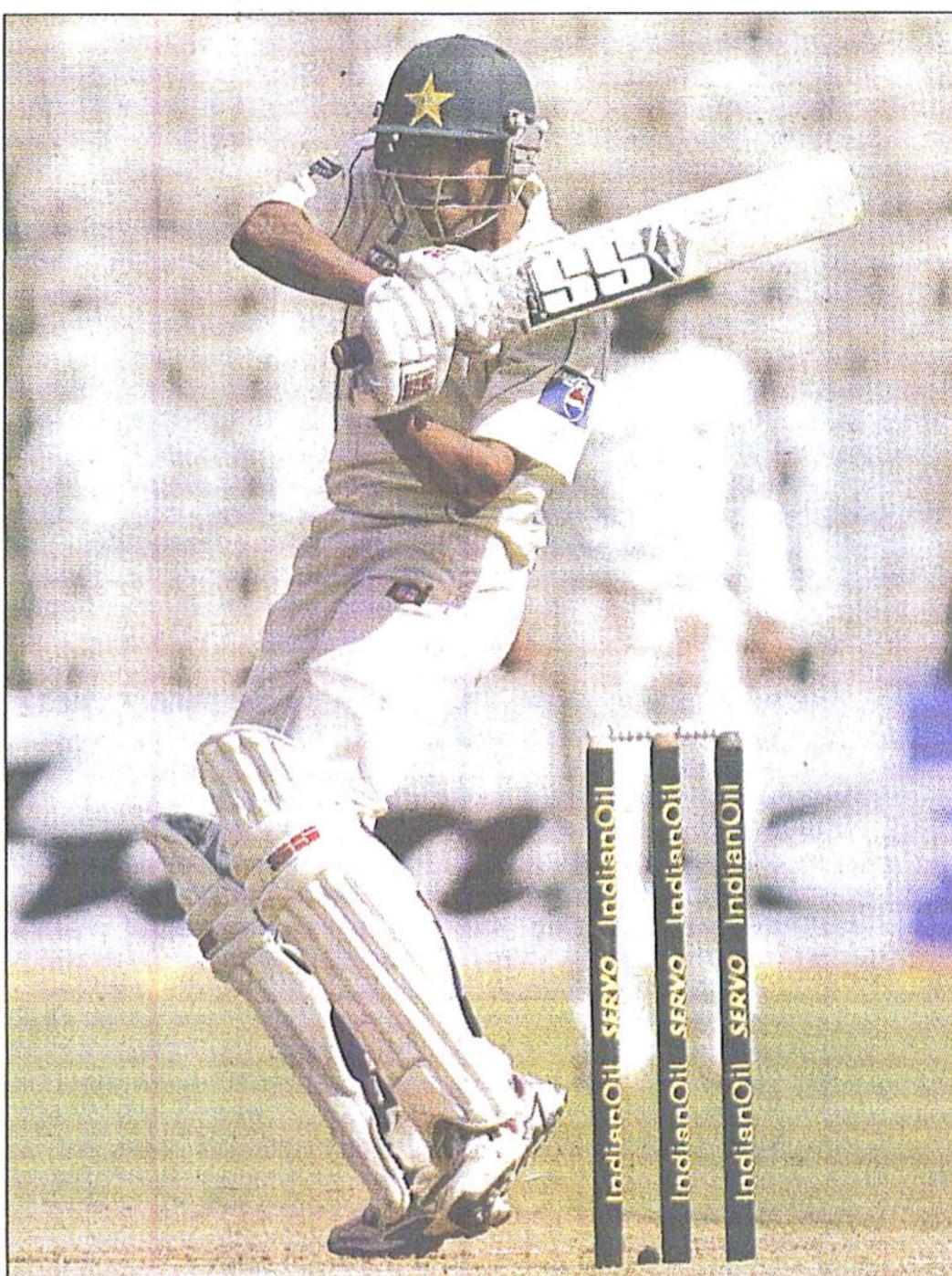
SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the third and final Test between India and Pakistan on Monday:

INDIA: First innings 626 (Ganguly 239, Yuvraj 169, Pathan 102; Arafat 5-161, Kaneria 3-168)

PAKISTAN: First innings (overnight 86-1)

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U-19 team announced for SL leg

SPORTS REPORTER

A 15-member Bangladesh Under-19 squad was announced yesterday to play a five-match one-day series against the visiting Sri Lanka Under-19s.

Sohravardhi Shuvo was retained as captain in the team that returned home two days back, after a successful trip in Pakistan.

Three new faces -- Nadimuddin Mintu, Hamidul Islam and Ashraful Islam were included in the side from the last squad as the dashing left-handed opener Tamim Iqbal takes up duty with the national side while Zabid Hossain has been ignored for the home leg.

The 15-member Sri Lankan Under-19s arrived in Dhaka yesterday.

The first three matches of the series will be played at the Shaheen Chandu Stadium in Bogra on December 12, 14 and 15 while the last two games are scheduled for the Fatullah Cricket Stadium on December 18 and 20.

SQUAD

Sohravardhi Shuvo (captain), Dollar Mahmud, Marshall Ayub, Ashraful Aziz, Shubhashis Roy, Rubel Hossain, Gulam Kibria, Rony Talukder, Mahmudul Hasan, Nasir Hossain, K. M. Shakil, Nadimuddin Mintu, Mithun Ali (wicketkeeper), Hamidul Islam and Ashraful Hossain.

Ganguly wants to play thru '08

CRICKINFO, undated

Sourav Ganguly has said that his forced exile from international cricket made him more determined to prove a point. He also said that he intends to play through 2008.

"Not better, but probably more determined," Ganguly told the Kolkata-based Telegraph. "I wish to add that the circumstances and the manner in which I got dropped just weren't right. I don't have an issue with being left out, that's part of the game, but the manner wasn't right."

Ganguly had differences with the then coach Greg Chappell and the issue snowballed after one of Chappell's emails to the board was leaked in September 2005. On November 22, the selectors ended his five-year reign as Test captain when they picked Rahul Dravid to lead the side for the series against Sri Lanka. Dravid had been handed the one-day captaincy a month before. Ganguly was dropped from the one-day side in October and the Test team in December and made his comeback in to both teams a year

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Premier League or not!

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) officials had a meeting with the general secretaries of the district sports associations (DSA) yesterday with a view to ease the way to the coming elections of the proposed DFAs (district and divisional football associations).

BFF president SA Sultan, acting general secretary Manzoor Hossain Malu, vice-presidents and other officials were present.

The BFF listened to suggestions how the DSA secretaries could be involved with the DFAs.

Sultan told reporters after the meeting that they have thought about forming an advisory council for the DFAs where the DSA secretaries would be included.

The final decision, however, will be taken in BFF's executive committee meeting tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the BFF will finally sit today with the players and organisers, who have been repeatedly demanding a general meeting of the councillors to discuss the election issues, especially the formation of the DFAs.

Tigers donate Tk 1.61 lakh to CA's fund

SPORTS REPORTER

The New Zealand-bound Bangladesh cricket team handed over a cheque of Tk 1.61 lakh to Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed yesterday for the relief fund of the Cyclone Sidr victims.

Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful, middle-order batsman Tushar Imran and tour operations manager Sadru Amin Bhuiyan went to the Chief Adviser's office to hand over the cheque.

"Fifteen players who are selected in the one-day side and eight officials have donated their four days' tour allowances," informed Ashraful.

"The BFF officials seem happy to be under the immunity of FIFA but we are not afraid of any ghosts. We want the BFF to announce the date of an emergency general meeting immediately," Badal added.

Abahani director Kazi Nabil Ahmed said that the gap between the BFF and the government must be bridged.

Former footballers Kaiser Hamid and Nurunnabi both



Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful hands over a cheque to Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed at his office yesterday. Bangladesh cricket team donated Tk. 1,61,000 to the Chief Adviser's Relief Fund for the Sidr victims.

Even going at Colombo

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Hosts Sri Lanka warded off England's early threat as the rivals waged a grim struggle to take control of the second cricket Test here on Monday.

Sri Lanka, replying to England's first innings total of 351, recovered from 22-2 to post 105 without further loss by close of the second day's play at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

Opener Michael Vandort and skipper Mahela Jayawardene frustrated England's bid to run through the top order by adding 83 runs for the unbroken third wicket.

Left-handed Vandort was unbeaten on 50 and Jayawardene was on 43 on a batsman-friendly wicket that is expected to assist spin towards the end of what has turned out to be an absorbing match.

England, seeking a series-leveling win after losing the first Test in Kandy by 88 runs last week, battled with both bat and ball in a bid to seize the advantage.

Wicketkeeper Matthew Prior hit a second successive half-century and put on 74 runs for the eighth wicket with tailender Ryan Sidebottom (17) after England were struggling at 272-7 within the first hour of play.

Prior followed his 63 in the Kandy Test with a defiant 79 before he was last man out to the record-breaking Muttiah Muralidaran, who finished with his 62nd five-wicket haul.

The off-spinner, who surpassed Australian Shane Warne's world record tally of 708 wickets in Kandy, finished with 5-116 as England lost their last three wickets for five runs.

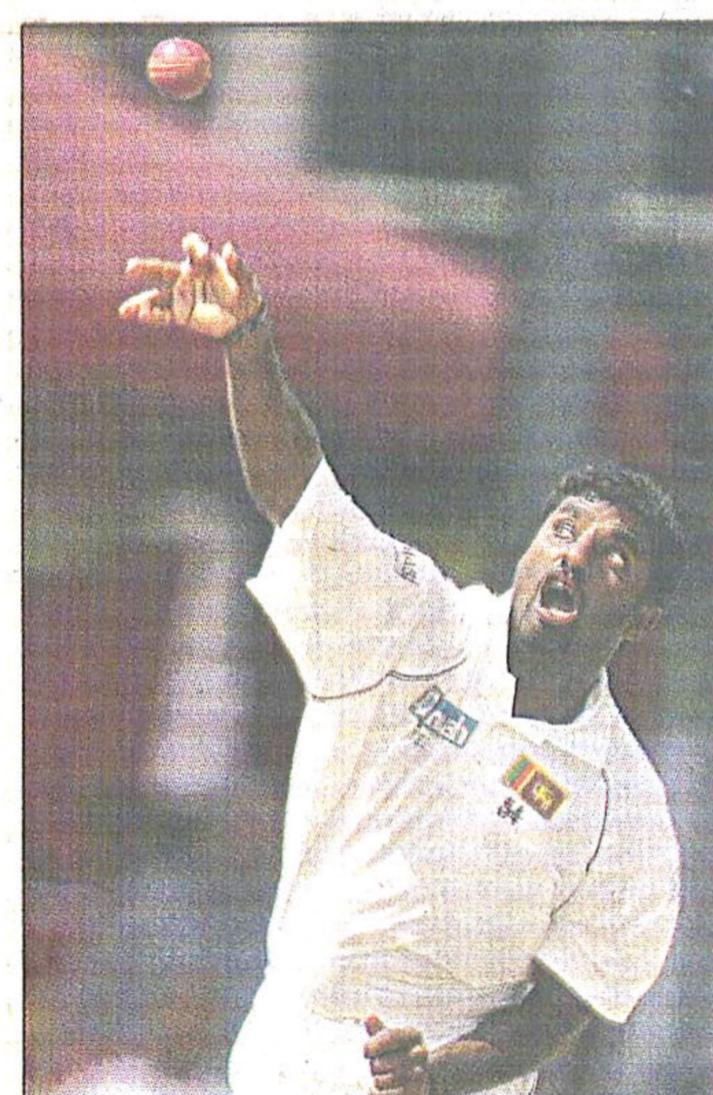
Sri Lanka, however, began poorly as Sidebottom and Prior combined once again to remove recalled opener Upul Tharanga (10) and the in-form Kumar Sangakkara (one) by the ninth over.

Sangakkara's wicket was crucial after the left-hander's 152 at Kandy

had made him the first batsman in Test history to compile 150-plus scores in four consecutive matches.

"We are pretty happy with the situation at this stage," said Sri Lanka's Australian coach Trevor Bayliss.

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Sri Lanka's master spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, who took 5-116, lets go yet another venomous delivery during the second day's play of the second Test at Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo yesterday.

An ultimatum to BFF

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Ex-footballers and organisers gave the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) an ultimatum of one week to take an acceptable decision about forming the district and divisional football associations with government involvement.

In a roundtable meeting at the NSC conference room yesterday, speakers agreed they were in favour of government's involvement in the game for the betterment of football.

The executive committee of the BFF, which expired last April but has been given a year's time by the FIFA to form DFAs and hold the federation election, has been trying to follow the FIFA directive to exclude government officials from

football associations.

The game is backed by the government, which owns and maintains grounds and stadiums across the country.

"We ask the BFF to stop the current proceedings of forming the DFAs and sit with FIFA, AFC, the government and organisers outside the federation within a week to find an acceptable solution," said former BFF general secretary Harunur Rashid.

"BFF president SA Sultan has showed interest to sit with us and discuss the issue but he has been barred by his BFF colleagues," he added.

Senior sports journalist Manzurul Haque, who supported the concept of DFA, said that the BFF should explain the pros and cons of the idea induced by football's world governing body FIFA.

Former footballers Kaiser Hamid and Nurunnabi both

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