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AN INNINGS TO BEHOLD: India's VVS Laxman drives the ball through the off side during his sublime knock of 109 on the second day of the second Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday.

## VVS Laxman

AFP, Sydney

VVS Laxman once again lived up to his "Very, Very Special" tag with his third consecutive Test century at the Sydney Cricket Ground for India against Australia on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Hyderabad batting maestro delighted his admirers with another innings of pure quality to give the tourists renewed hope of stopping the Australian juggernaut in the second Test.

At stumps on Day Two of the second Test, India were 216 for three in reply to Australia's 463 first innings with Sachin Tendulkar not out nine and Sourav Ganguly on 21.

Laxman fully stretched Ricky Ponting's team with classic strokeplay for his 12th hundred in his 88th Test. He averages 113 at the ground in four innings. In Australia he averages 59.46 compared to his career average of 44.46.

Laxman, so much an unsung hero behind Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid in India's pedigree batting

side, relished his return to the venerable ground, producing his trademark sumptuous drives, scoring 109 off 142 balls with 18 fours to breathe new hope into the tourists after Australia's formidable first innings total of 463.

Before Laxman's arrival shortly after lunch on the second day of the second Test, Andrew Symonds had dominated with his unconquered 162 in Australia's first innings.

But the Indian right-hander joined Rahul Dravid at the crease to restore morale after the tourists' 337-run drubbing in the first Test in Melbourne.

Laxman and Dravid fell late in the day, six minutes apart. Dravid was out for a battling 53, caught at first slip by Matthew Hayden off Mitchell Johnson, and Laxman was taken by Mike Hussey off leg-spinner Brad Hogg.

"Getting a hundred on this ground previously definitely gives you a boost because you've done well and it's familiar conditions," Laxman said.

"I was disappointed that we lost

two quick wickets because I really wanted to be not out and carry on tomorrow."

Laxman and Dravid, who have proved Australia's nemesis with two huge partnerships in the past, amassed 175 runs for the second wicket.

They are renowned for their match-turning 376-run partnership in the second innings of the "Miracle of Calcutta" Test triumph, which ended Australia's march of 16 consecutive wins in 2001.

Australia paid dearly Thursday for Laxman having a life on 77 when he was put down by Adam Gilchrist, fumbling a right glove chance off Brett Lee.

Laxman careered to his half-century off 43 balls and in one Johnson over plundered 18 runs with four boundaries and a two.

In contrast, Dravid crawled along as he did in the Melbourne Test with his half-century coming off 158 balls in four hours.

Dravid was playfully barracked by the Australian crowd, cheering each time he played a non-scoring

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## Bravo rocks Proteas

AFP, Cape Town

West Indies vice-captain Dwayne Bravo took two wickets in a marathon spell as the tourists made South Africa struggle for runs on the second day of the second Test at Newlands Thursday.

South Africa were 125 for four at tea in reply to the West Indies total of 243.

With fast bowler Fidel Edwards off the field with an injured right hamstring, the medium-paced Bravo bowled unchanged into a stiff south-easterly wind from before lunch until the tea interval to take two for 31 from 18 overs.

His persistent accuracy was rewarded in his 15th over when he claimed the key wicket of Jacques Kallis, who was caught behind for 36, and he trapped Hashim Amla leg before for 32 with an in-swing in his next over.

Kallis and Amla put on 59 for the third wicket and appeared to be playing South Africa into a strong position, although they were unable to score quickly against disciplined bowling with boundaries in short supply because of a slow outfield.

But Bravo's double strike put the teams back on an even balance, with South Africa also having a fast bowling casualty in Dale Steyn, who did not take the field at the start of the day when his team

quickly dismissed the last two West Indian batsmen.

A West Indian spokesman said Edwards was receiving treatment and that it was hoped he would be able to return to the field during the first innings, while a South African spokesman said Steyn had a minor strain in his right hamstring and that the medical staff were working to get him ready to bowl in the second innings.

Jerome Taylor also bowled well for the West Indies, dismissing both openers, Neil McKenzie and Graeme Smith, at a cost of 25 runs in an unchanged spell of nine overs either side of lunch.

Taylor had McKenzie caught at slip for 23 after McKenzie and South

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West Indies fast bowler Dwayne Bravo (L) celebrates the dismissal of South African batsman Hashim Amla (R) during the second day of the second Test at Newlands in Cape Town yesterday.

## 9TH NAT'L CRICKET LEAGUE Khulna & Rajshahi go for title

SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna's stand-in captain Nahidul Haque Shaon admitted that this was the best finish to the National Cricket League in its nine-year history.

"It has never come down such a conclusion. I think it will be a great final round," said the portly Shaon from Khulna where they face Barisal.

"We are just a point ahead of Rajshahi and we will keep an hourly update on the proceedings of Dhaka and take decisions on that."

Rajshahi, on 95 points, are up against hosts Dhaka while in the match of little consequence, Chittagong take on Sylhet at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

During their last round encounter, Khulna captain Shaon declared their first innings 37 runs short of Rajshahi's target but with a wicket left to fall. He did this to deprive Rajshahi of a bonus point that in the end, despite their defeat to Rajshahi by 29 runs, kept them ahead of Rajshahi.

"I will employ such tactics if the situation demands. As I said earlier, certain decisions will be taken on what is happening in Dhaka," informed Shaon.

Khulna, who are on top of the points table with only two wins, have done well with the bonus points.

Rajshahi, who refused to party after their one-day success, have put a lot of value on this NCL competition and will look to finish it off ahead of Khulna to end the most excitement first-class competition in an even eventful manner.

## BFF to go for DFAs first

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), who on January 1 hinted that they would decide on a date for an emergency general meeting (EGM), have taken a new turn.

They decided to form District Football Associations (DFAs) ahead of scheduling their EGM meeting, supposed to be called to solve the current crisis in the BFF; it was informed yesterday.

BFF was also going to request AFC and FIFA representation in the EGM, after which they will get a roadmap of the election, it was said on Tuesday.

But now they have gone into a different direction altogether with the DFA decision.

## Sr Div soccer

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Wanderers Club played out a goalless draw with Purbachal Parishad in their opening match of the Metropolitan Senior Division Football League at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Sepoy Mohammad Mostafa Stadium at Kamalapur yesterday.

Both the teams failed to score at the regulation time although having some scoring chances in the entire proceeding.

## Shakil wins

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Abu Sufian Shakil earned full four points with his win over Englishman Goodger Martyn in the sixth round match of the Masters Chess Tournament of the 83rd Hastings Chess Congress in England on Wednesday.

Two other Bangladeshi FIDE Masters Aminul Islam and Mehedi Hasan bagged three points each after their matches.

Mehedi Hasan Parag lost to India's International Master Swayang Satyapragyan while Aminul Islam conceded to FIDE Master Eames Robert.

## U-16 chess from Jan 9

SPORTS REPORTER

The 28th national sub-junior chess championship will begin at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall-room on January 9.

Interested boys and girls can enroll their name by January 7 at Bangladesh Chess Federation office with their age certificate from respective educational institutions. The tournament has no entry fees.

Interested players from districts can also enroll their name by January 8 with a letter from their respective District Sports Associations along with age certificate.

The event will be held in Swiss-League system.

## A brisk 50

Cricket

MOHAMMAD ISAM

From despair in Dhaka, heartbreaks in Multan and Fatullah to unparalleled joy in Chittagong, Bangladesh have seen the good, the bad and the ugly as they mark the golden jubilee of Tests today.

Since the inaugural Test against India in November 2000, the Tigers have managed to play 49 action-filled Test matches. And at the University Oval in Dunedin, another chapter in the short history of Bangladesh cricket is set to be played out when they take the field to do battle for the 50th time today.

From Day One, the Tigers have at times looked like fish out of water but have also managed to look the part in certain instances. Defeats have ranged from one-wicket thrashings by an innings and 310 runs but on this occasion, the good and the gallant shall be remembered.

Left-arm seamer Mahmudul Hasan (previously known as Bikash Ranjan Das) who played the inaugural Test, which was his only appearance for Bangladesh, remembers Aminul Islam's spar-

ling 145 the most.

"When Bulbul bhai reached his century, I saw tears in the late Eddie Barlow's eyes," said Hasan, who took the new-ball with Hasibul Hossain on the second day.

"Barlow told us that we have all the potential to do great things. He was such a great coach and a fantastic motivator."

For the record, five draws and one win apart from conceding 43 losses are all that the Tigers have mustered.

Two of those losses could have easily turned into earth-shattering

victories. Against Pakistan in Multan, Khaled Mahmud's men fought valiantly but fell short in front of the colossal Inzamamul Haq, who saved his career with that match-winning hundred. It took another captain's knock, that from Ricky Ponting in April 2006, to save Australia from ignominy in a match that Bangladesh could have won through Shahriar Nafees's brilliant 138.

The only win, though, came through two beautiful bowling performances from left-armers Mohammad Rafique and Enamul Haque Jr.

Bowling has always been the underrated skill as batting hogs most of the limelight in Bangladesh. Batting, of the opening type especially, has been every coach, captain and selectors' bane. Whenever a Test match is near, apprehension of Tigers' batting performance comes ahead of every other thought. It was no different in the first Test played at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and it is still the same till date.

There was never any doubt about Bangladesh's ability to fit into the elites of international

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### BANGLADESH'S SCOREBOARD

M	W	Lost	Tied	Draw
50*	1	43	0	5

### 50TH TEST (in terms of years or seasons)

Country	First Test	50th Test	Span
Bangladesh	2000	2007	7 years
Zimbabwe	1992	2001	9 years
Sri Lanka	1982	1993	11 years
Pakistan	1952	1965	13 years
Australia	1877	1896	19 years
England	1877	1896	19 years
India	1932	1956	24 years
New Zealand	1930	1958	28 years
West Indies	1928	1953	25 years
South Africa	1889	1924	35 years

## THE DEBUTANTS



Name: Tamim Iqbal  
Age: 18  
Teams: Bangladesh, Chittagong, Old Dohs  
Batting

Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100	50
21	21	0	455	54	21.66	62.50	0	3
15	26	1	1083	118	43.32	69.73	2	8



Name: Zunaed Siddiqui  
Age: 20  
Teams: Bangladesh, Rajshahi, Mohammedan  
Batting

Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	SR	100	50
3	3	0	29	15	9.66	41.42	0	0
14	26	1	714	114*	28.56	50.17	1	3



Name: Sajidul Islam  
Age: 19  
Teams: Bangladesh, Barisal, Indira Road  
Bowling

Mat	Inns	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	5w
22	41	76	5/61	7/87	25.61	2.91	52.7	1



The Bangladesh team is going through a fielding drill at the University Oval in Dunedin on Thursday ahead of the first Test against New Zealand starting today.

## Debutants overjoyed

Cricket

TIGERCRIKET.COM, Dunedin

Left-handed opening pair of Tamim Iqbal and Zunaed Siddiqui will make their first Test appearances while rookie paceman Sajidul Islam will also debut when Bangladesh take on New Zealand in the first Test of the two-match series at the University Oval today.

The Tigers also welcome back Aftab Ahmed in the heart of the middle order after a gap of 20 months. The match marks Bangladesh's 50th Test match since the inaugural Test against India in November 2000. It will be a momentous occasion for 34-year-old batsman Habibul Bashar who will take the field as the only cricketer for Bangladesh to have appeared in all the Tests.

Bashar will also be on the brink of another milestone. Bangladesh's highest scorer in Tests is just 47 runs shy of completing 3000 career runs.

"Obviously it feels great to be still playing at this level after eight

years. To be a part of the country's Test Golden Jubilee is a matter of pride for me. I am not really thinking about the milestone now because if I play on then it will come," said Bashar. The former Tigers captain is due to come in at number three with Mohammad Ashraf, Shahriar Nafees Ahmed and Aftab Ahmed to follow.

The debutants meanwhile, were excited by the prospect of wearing the Test cap.

"This was a childhood dream. I always wanted to appear in Tests

for Bangladesh because that is the ultimate goal for every aspiring cricketer. I feel wonderful.

"I can still remember the day when Bangladesh got Test status. I was about 10 then and I asked my brother (Nafees Iqbal) what was going on and he told me that from now on we were going to play against big teams. Tomorrow we play our 50th Test and that's a very moving feeling for me," said Tamim.

Zunaed said the real challenge starts now for him.

"I am over the moon but if I don't perform out there in the middle then that's no use. I want to make the position my own. I feel confident. I am seeing the ball early and leaving well too."

Left-arm seamer Sajidul thought the conditions were perfect for his kind of bowling.

"My strength is the swing and I can move the ball both ways. Here I hope to get a lot of encouragement from the wicket. It is my debut game and everyone has told me to pitch the ball in areas where the batsmen just have to play."

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**Did U Know?**  
In 1922 a new tennis complex was built at Church Road for 14,000 spectators, which helped enlarge the popularity and fame of the Wimbledon Championships.

**TALK TURKEY**



**Andrew Symonds**  
(Australia all-rounder)  
"I was out when I was 30 -- given not out. I can sit here and tell you about some bad decisions as well, but I won't. That's the game."  
About what went down on Day One of the SCG Test.

**What to WATCH**

**TEN Sports**  
South Africa v West Indies  
First Test, Day Three  
Live from 2:30pm

**SAB tv**  
New Zealand v Bangladesh  
First Test, Day Two  
Live from 4:00am (Saturday)

**STAR Cricket**  
Australia v India  
Second Test, Day Four  
Live from 5:30am (Saturday)

**WORKS EVENTS**

National Cricket League  
(Round Ten, Day One)  
Dhaka v Rajshahi  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur

Sylhet v Chittagong  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

Khulna v Barisal  
Venue: Khulna Divisional Stadium