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Terrific Tendulkar

Cricket

AFP, Adelaide

India superstar Sachin Tendulkar posted a fairytale century to lift his side towards a challenging total on the first day of the fourth and final Test against Australia here Thursday.

In what seems certain to be his last Test in Australia, and at the home ground of his idol Donald Bradman, Tendulkar shook off a personal hoodoo at Adelaide Oval with his 39th Test hundred to boost India's hopes of squaring the series.

After captain Anil Kumble won the toss and elected to bat, the tourists were 309 for five at stumps, with the 34-year-old Tendulkar on 124 and Mahendra Singh Dhoni six.

India are 2-1 down in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series but have momentum after winning in Perth, following defeats at Melbourne and at the explosive second Test in Sydney.

Tendulkar assessed his innings as one of his most significant hundreds, but said India needed to push on past 400. Australia took the new ball for the last over before stumps.

"In the first innings, to put a big total on the board will be the key," Tendulkar said, adding that spinners Harbhajan Singh and Kumble would play a big role when Australia bat.

"Later on, I think the wicket might

have some big cracks, so the first innings becomes very important.

"We would look to score as many runs as possible tomorrow because that is going to be the key."

Australian spinner Brad Hogg said the home team were looking for quick wickets on Day Two.

"At the end of the day the game's pretty even at the moment," Hogg said.

"If we can make some inroads with the new ball tomorrow and roll India before they get to 400 I think we're in the box seat if we can bat well and get in front."

Several of his teammates squandered promising starts, but Tendulkar was rarely troubled by the Australian bowlers.

The "master blaster" went into the match with just 122 runs at 20.33 in his three previous visits to Adelaide Oval, but his intent was clear the moment he replaced Rahul Dravid (18).

He was savage on Hogg, lofting him for two sixes and scoring at better than a run a ball against him.

Tendulkar did not dally in the nineties, hitting spinner Michael Clarke straight for six, then caressing him through the covers from the next ball to reach a majestic hundred.

He had been at the crease for 198 minutes, faced 133 balls and hit nine fours and three sixes.

Tendulkar has 451 runs in the series at 90.20 and is now five international centuries clear of retired duo Sunil Gavaskar and Brian Lara,

with Australian captain Ricky Ponting one further back on 33 on the all-time list.

A cautious Dhoni faced 54 balls and was given a life on three, when Matthew Hayden grassed an easy chance at first slip off Mitchell Johnson.

Tendulkar and VVS Laxman steadied the Indian innings after coming together at a shaky 156 for four on what appeared a perfect batting wicket, adding 126 runs.

Laxman enjoyed some extraordinary fortune on 37, with wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist inexplicably dropping a sitter from the bowling of Brett Lee.

It continued an indifferent series with the gloves for the Australian veteran, who dropped four catches in Sydney.

However, Lee (2-62) and Gilchrist got their man on 51, when Laxman botched an attempt to evade a short ball and the ball ballooned off his glove to the wicketkeeper.

It was Gilchrist's 412th dismissal in Test cricket, leaving him just one behind the record of South Africa's Mark Boucher.

Virender Sehwag continued to enjoy his recall to the side, making a breezy 63 at the top of the order before being caught behind off the bowling of Lee.

He initially found himself partnered by all-rounder Irfan Pathan, who was put up the order after India elected to play five specialist

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THIS ONE IS FOR THE DON: Master Indian batsman Sachin Tendulkar (R) looks up at the heavens after scoring his 39th century, his first at the Adelaide Oval which is also the home ground of his idol Don Bradman, on the opening day of the fourth and final Test against Australia yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Did U Know?

In 1996 George Weah paid for his teammates' uniforms and expenses so that Liberia could enter the African Nations Cup.



Ricky Ponting

(Australia cricket captain)
"I am surprised and shocked that he is not in the side because right through this Test series, he has certainly looked good with the bat." On Sourav Ganguly's exclusion from the one-day squad.



STAR Cricket
Australia v India
Fourth Test, Day Three
Live from 6:00am (Saturday)

TEN Sports
South Africa v West Indies
Second ODI
Live from 6:30pm

STAR Sports
Australian Open
Women's Doubles Final & Mixed Doubles Semifinal
Live from 10:00am

Men's Singles Semifinal
Live from 2:30pm

Tsunami Tsonga in final

Australian Open
The Grand Slam of Asia/Pacific

AFP, Melbourne

Unseeded Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga stunned second seed Rafael Nadal with an astonishing display of high-level tennis to storm into the final of the Australian Open on Thursday.

The 38th-ranked Tsonga could do nothing wrong hitting a flurry of winners to claim his fourth seed of the tournament, winning 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 in an hour and 57 minutes to reach the decider in only his fifth Grand Slam.

Tsonga now has the enticing prospect of facing either three-time Australian Open champion Roger Federer or Serbian third seed

Novak Djokovic for the title in Sunday's final.

Federer and Djokovic have a rematch of their 2007 US Open final in the other semifinal on Friday.

"Everything was in tonight, my backhand, my serve, my forehand, my volley, my dropshot, everything," Tsonga said.

"I was moving on the court like like never before, so everything was perfect."

"Today I played unbelievably, nothing could stop me and I'm just so happy. It's like a dream, I cannot believe it is true."

"It's the first time I've played at this level, and it was in semifinal of Australian Open. It just may be my best moment."

On a night Tsonga won't forget he fired 49 winners, 17 aces and broke Nadal's serve five times to

dominate the match points 89 to 58, while Nadal could not break the Frenchman once.

"He played unbelievable. He hit the ball hard every time, served unbelievably. I was playing fine, but he played better than me. I have to accept that," Nadal said.

"If he plays this level like he did tonight, he will be very difficult to stop."

It was the 22-year-old Frenchman's first win over a top-five player and followed his elimination of seeds, Andy Murray (9), Richard Gasquet (8) and Mikhail Youzhny (14).

He now has the opportunity to become the first French winner in Australia since Jean Borotra in 1928 and is the first French finalist since Arnaud Clement seven years ago.

"I will do my best on the court,

SEE PAGE 22 COL 8



PHOTO: AFP

Unseeded Frenchman Jo-Wilfried Tsonga jumps for joy after beating second seeded Spaniard Rafael Nadal in straight sets in the semifinals of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Thursday.

BFF at last reveals calendar

SPORTS REPORTER

Under pressure from footballers and clubs, Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) eventually finalised its calendar for 2008.

A total of 16 tournaments were approved by the executive committee in yesterday's meeting with the revival of the popular National Football League and the good old Pioneer League.

2008 CALENDAR

- January-April: Pioneer League
- February: JFA Cup
- March: Swadhinata Cup, National Women's Championship
- April-August: B. League (proposed)
- April: Danone U-12 qualifiers
- May-July: Second Division League
- June: Nat'l Youth (U-18) Championship
- July: Dhaka girls' school competition
- July-September: 3rd Division League
- September: Federation Cup, Dhaka School League
- Oct-Dec: National Football League
- Dec: National Football Championship

The BFF also gave a guideline to the B. League committee to complete the transfer of the professional league by February after discussion with the participating clubs.

Although the federation has chalked out plans for its tournaments, the B. League schedules have yet to be finalised.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

Nepal no match for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Mithun and Nadimuddin Mintu smashed swash-buckling hundreds during a 261-run stand as Bangladesh U-19s cricketers inflicted a massive 111-run defeat on visiting Nepal U-19s in the first one-day match at the Fatullah Stadium yesterday.

The inserted home side amassed 302 for four in the stipulated 50 overs with opener Mithun clubbing 14 fours and three sixes in his quickfire 142 off 137 balls.

After early losses, Mithun and Nadimuddin, who came together

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Inspired by the Don

Cricket

AFP, Adelaide

Indian maestro Sachin Tendulkar hailed his chanceless century on the opening day of the fourth Test against Australia here Thursday as one of the most significant of a stellar career.

Tendulkar was unbeaten at stumps on 124, having faced 172 balls and hit 10 fours and three sixes to emphatically snap his drought at the Adelaide Oval and notch his 39th Test century.

In what is almost certain to be his last Test on Australian soil, the 34-year-old scored his first hundred in four visits to the ground. He had only scored 122 runs at 20.33 in three previous Tests here.

From the moment he strode to the crease, Tendulkar was determined to make the innings count and always looked in command, playing glorious shots both square of the wicket and straight.

He later said several factors

motivated him at the crease -- the state of the game, with India wobbling at 156 for four before he took charge, the quality of the opposition and his modest record at the ground.

Tendulkar also revealed he had set himself for a big score at the home ground of his idol, the late Donald Bradman, who was knighted in 1949 for his services to cricket.

"I know that Adelaide hasn't been a great ground for me," he said.

"I was determined to get a big one here and it also happens to be Sir Don's home ground," he added.

"When I was batting I was just concentrating, but I am very glad to get a hundred here."

"It's challenging to score runs against them (Australia) and satisfying."

Tendulkar said he knew he was in good touch when he struck Australian fast bowler Brett Lee straight down the ground for four early in his innings.

The diminutive right-hander

took a heavy toll on recalled spinner Brad Hogg, twice lofting the left-armed for six.

As in the first two Tests, Tendulkar was always on the attack against Hogg, scoring 54 runs from the 53 balls he faced from the spinner.

However, he denied he had targeted Hogg.

"There were patches he bowled well and there were patches when I felt I could put the ball away," he said.

There were no problems in the nervous nineties for Tendulkar, who lofted part-time spinner Michael Clarke straight down the ground for six and then caressed a boundary through the covers from the next ball to reach his hundred.

As has been the case throughout this tour of Australia, the 20,000-strong crowd appreciated Tendulkar's genius, giving him a standing ovation when he came out to bat and again when he reached the milestone.

"It is truly special, very overwhelming," he said.

"The ovations have been truly fantastic and have made my trip very, very special."

Sohail, Nasir Pak stars

Cricket

AFP, Hyderabad

Sohail Tanveer took four wickets and Nasir Jamshed made a half-century as Pakistan subdued some spirited Zimbabwe resistance to take a firm grip on the one-day series on Thursday.

Left-arm paceman Tanveer grabbed a career-best 4-34 to restrict the tourists to 238-8 in their 50 overs before Jamshed struck a strokeful 64-ball 74 to guide Pakistan home with 3.4 overs to spare.

Earlier Zimbabwe's Hamilton Masakadza hit a career-best 87 and Tatenda Taibu 81 before the tourists spurned a good chance to post a big total by losing five wickets for nine runs in the final 10 overs.

They also dropped half-a-dozen chances to allow Pakistan to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series after their emphatic 104-run win in Karachi.

The 18-year-old Jamshed, who hit a 48-ball 61 in his debut on Monday, enthralled the packed 7,500 crowd who were witnessing the first international at Niaz Stadium since India played here in 1997.

The left-hander completed his second half-century off just 42 deliv-

eries with 11 boundaries before he ran himself out in the 21st over.

Jamshed, dropped on six and 74, hit 14 boundaries and added 95 runs for the second wicket with

Younis Khan (35).

Pakistan were teetering when they lost Jamshed, Younis Khan and captain Shoaib Malik (four) in the

SEE PAGE 22 COL 6



PHOTO: AFP

AFRIDI SPECIAL: Pakistan's hard-hitting batsman Shahid Afridi follows through after picking up the ball from well outside the off-stump and hitting it over the square-leg boundary during his entertaining 27-ball 43 in the second one-day international against Zimbabwe at the Niaz Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

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