

Aussies fallible, says Dyson

REUTERS, Kingston

Australia beat West Indies in the opening Test of their three-match series on Monday but West Indies coach John Dyson said his side had learnt the visitors were fallible.

Top in Tests and world championships in the one-day game, Australia have dominated international cricket for the last decade but Dyson, an Australian himself, said his team's batting display showed there were chinks in their opponents' armour.

"It has made us realise that they are human, they are not superhuman. They are just human and they can falter."

"If we can apply enough pressure at the right times and continue doing the good things that we can do, they might falter just enough to give us that opening," said Dyson whose team had the tourists shaking at 18 for five in the second innings.

West Indies, who have suffered a decade of decline, showed, particularly with their bowling and fielding that they were an improving side, albeit one whose batting was not yet sturdy enough.

"I think we will take away from the game a lot of positive things. That's what we've tried to do since the South Africa tour last year. You can't expect a team to turn around, overnight and consistently win every game," Dyson said.

"We recognise that and that this series is against the strongest unit in the world. I think we have put on a pretty good show in this match. If we can just improve in a couple of areas, we will put on another good show in the second Test in Antigua."

Dyson picked out the pace bowling of Fidel Edwards and Daren Powell as particularly pleasing along with the batting of Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who made a century on the third day.

But he demanded that other batsmen, such as Devon Smith and Runako Morton showed the ability to go on from good starts to make big scores and he was disappointed with the failure to make more of the final day's opportunity.

"Obviously I was hoping, hoping for a much stronger start to the day. But they bowled very well. There were only a couple of sessions throughout the Test match that cost us very dearly. That is the thing about Test match cricket, you can't afford to have bad sessions."

New face

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senior side. Nazmul was our first choice but he was declared unfit due to a groin injury and Rasel has yet to recover from his ankle injury. Dollar was the best available replacement for us because of his impressive showing with the Under-19s and in the domestic tournaments," explained Rafiq.

On the other hand, the axe fell on left-handed opener Zunaed, whose paltry collection of 41 runs in six one-day internationals, but Rafiq admitted that Dhiman was unfortunate not to be in the team.

"It was bad luck for Dhiman because Mushfiqur did exactly what he needed after being left out of the side. We had no choice but to pick Mushfiqur considering the team combination after Shabbir left a huge vacuum in the top-order," said Rafiq while recalling Mushfiqur's run-spree in the domestic competitions.

But while Zunaed's exclusion could be justified, questions were raised regarding Aftab Ahmed's place. "Aftab was reasonable in his performance against New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland. Most importantly, we don't want to break the unity and confidence in the team as the whole team's performance was not satisfactory," said Rafiq.

The former national player also explained the reason behind the inclusion of Mehraj, who returned home two days back from United States after cutting short his holiday. "He was brilliant with the Academy team and in domestic cricket with (Old DOHS and Dhaka)," he said.

Rafiq again reiterated his claim that they are totally against making frequent changes in the team and in that case, the players should have realised their professional duties.

"I want to be patient on the players but the first thing is that the players have to be professional and they have to do their duty in the right way," said Rafiq adding that his only expectation is that the Tigers will be competitive in the tri-series and the Asia Cup.

Selector Naimur Rahman informed the reporters that Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraf, who is preparing for the HSC examination along with Aftab Ahmed, is ready to sacrifice his examination if it hampered his international commitments.

"His (Ashraf) entire concentration is on cricket and he assured us that he will sacrifice his examination if it clashes with practice or matches," said Naimur.



VICTORY FOR YOUTH: Rajasthan's young batsman Niraj Patel runs off to celebrate their victory while Mumbai pace-man Ashish Nehra cannot comprehend the loss at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Monday.

Youth over experience

CRICINFO, undated



Those who doubted that cricket could be a demanding and capricious mistress needed only to watch the last ball of this incredible game between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals on Monday.

A current Indian under-19 star and one from the not-too-distant past ranged against a side with a wealth of international experience. Two runs for the win, one for the tie. Who would you money have been on?

What unfolded was almost beyond belief. The experienced bowler, after a couple of nervous false starts, summoned up a delivery that couldn't quite be slogged, but when the ball streaked back towards him, he dived over it. Another international scampered in from long-off, gathered, and let fly with a throw that was a few feet wide of the stumps. International number three couldn't collect the ball. In between all this mayhem, with the stadium noise amplified to ear-splitting levels, the two lesser lights ran. Game over.

So much for experience. Shane Warne couldn't stop gushing about Niraj Patel and Ravindra Jadeja later, and who could blame him? "I thought they'd left it one over too late," he said with typical candour. "Jadeja hit one shot over cover for six that showed unbelievable talent

and skill, and then for Patel to hit him (Fernando) back over his head for six. I'm just very proud of those boys."

No matter what the situation, and it was dire on Monday night with 32 needed from the final 12 balls, the Rajasthan Royals seem to unearth a hero. It was Warne himself on an unforgettable night in Hyderabad early on in the competition, and Yusuf Pathan and Mohammad Kaif the other evening in Kolkata. Shane Watson and Graeme Smith have done their bit, as has Kamran Akmal.

"In our dressing room, the motto is Find a Way," said Warne. "Whether it's for one ball or three balls, be the man, be the hero. Go out there and express yourself."

Mumbai's fielding disintegrated in the final stages, with overthrows conceded, poor efforts at the stumps and an air of panic all round. Sachin Tendulkar ventured across to the bowler after practically every ball, and Fernando, who had bowled three magnificent overs for 12 and two wickets, seemed to wilt like a wallflower under the spotlight.

With Tendulkar again staying away from the post-match press conference, it was left to Lalchand Rajput to survey the wreckage of a campaign that had appeared to revive with six straight victories. "Our fielding let us down today (Monday)," he said, before launching into an unconvincing explanation about luck that revolved

around the toss of coins.

Warne understandably was dismissive of those remarks. "It all comes down to belief," he said. "These situations tell you about the differences between the teams. Fernando bowled a wide down the leg side. That has nothing to do with luck. Now, I'm not having a go at him, but it comes down to poor execution of skills when the pressure is on."

Tendulkar's diving catch to dismiss Watson epitomised the Mumbai Indians' desperation, but from the moment the Powerplay fetched them only 29 runs, they were always playing catch-up.

Tanvir again bowled with the skill and accuracy of Wasim Akram in his prime ("absolutely outstanding again" was the Warne-speak), and controlled spells from Siddharth Trivedi and Yusuf Pathan denied Mumbai any sort of momentum. But for that sensational little cameo from Yogesh Takawale, who struck four fours and a six in Watson's final over, this would have been another demolition job in keeping with Rajasthan's absolute dominance on home turf.

The Sawai Man Singh Stadium, which has become the IPL equivalent of Fortress Stamford Bridge, boasts of an obstacle course on the premises. For the moment though, the team that calls it home appears capable of brushing aside anything that blocks its path to glory. This fledgling league couldn't have more worthy winners.

Clark sinks Windies

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Clark's dismissal of Smith was far more straightforward. The left-handed opener was adjudged lbw for 28 in the seventh over of the morning, when he offered no shot to a ball that pitched and straightened.

Lee came close to removing Morton, when the batsman was nearly bowled on one, after he inside-edged a delivery and almost played it into the stumps before he had the presence of mind to kick it away.

But there was no saving Morton, when he drove at a full-length delivery from Lee, missed, and was adjudged lbw to Lee for four.

Lee was in the middle of an inspired spell, and had Chanderpaul dropped on five, when the left-hander edged a well-pitched delivery straight into the lap of first slip fielder Simon Katich, and next ball, he had an appeal for an lbw verdict turned down.

But Lee was on the receiving end, when Chanderpaul -- who had scored a century in the first innings -- responded with a crunching pull through mid-wicket for four.

The Australia strike weapon however, had the last laugh, when he held a return catch to remove Chanderpaul for 11.

Clark piled on the pressure, when he removed Bravo for a duck caught by the short mid-on fielder deliberately positioned for the batsman's penchant to play uppishly through the leg-side.

But Australia could not complete the demolition job before lunch, since Sammy joined Ramdin at the crease, and they batted through the last hour before the interval to stem the fall of wickets.

Wicketkeeper Brad Haddin dropped Ramdin on one off Lee,

and short leg fielder Phil Jaques dropped Sammy on four off MacGill, but the Aussies remained on track for victory.

The first half-hour after lunch proved to be one of the less impressive efforts for Australia, as Ramdin and Sammy batted with enterprise, and gathered runs freely off MacGill, in particular, and Mitchell Johnson.

But the breakthrough came once Lee was brought back into the attack, and Ramdin was run out for 26, when he failed to beat MacGill's direct hit at the bowler's end from mid-on going for a single off the Aussie fast bowler.

Jaques on the deep square leg boundary dropped Sammy on 31, when the batsman pulled a short, rising ball from Lee, but Clarke completed his five wicket haul when he had Sammy lbw.

The tailenders -- led by Powell -- entertained the crowd with some imaginative stroke-play towards the end, but their effort was meaningless.

SCOREBOARD Final scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the opening Test between West Indies and Australia at Sabina Park on Monday.

Table with columns for team, batsman, runs, and other statistics. Includes Australia's first and second innings and West Indies' first and second innings.

Table with columns for batsman, runs, and other statistics. Includes Sammy lbw b Clark, Powell c Haddin b MacGill, Edwards not out, Jaggernauth c Jaques b MacGill, Extras (b-4, lb-2, nb-3), Total (All out in 67 overs), Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-55, 3-60, 4-74, 5-80, 6-82, 7-149, 8-172, 9-191.

Table with columns for batsman, runs, and other statistics. Includes Bowler O M R W, Lee 22 6 81 2, Clark 20 8 32 5, Johnson 11 3 29 0, MacGill 14 2 43 2. Result: Australia won by 95 runs and lead three-match series 1-0. Man-of-the-match: Stuart Clark. Toss: Australia. Umpires: Aleem Dar and Russell Tiffin.

Tigers crowd FROM PAGE 17 423 runs in the National Cricket League while Imran led mediocre City Club into the Super League and also performed considerably in the first-class competition. Farhad has been kept as a standby for the Ireland-bound squad while there was no mention of Imran, the right-handed batsman.

TEAMS Tour to Ireland: Zunaed Siddiqui, Imrul Kayes, Shamsur Rahman, Alok Kapali, Jahurul Islam, Nadif Chowdhury, Nayeem Islam, Dhiman Ghosh, Rubel Hossain, Syed Rasel, Suharwardi Shuvo, Mahbubul Alam, Arafat Sunny, Nazmul Hossain.

Tour to England: Zunaed Siddiqui, Tamim Iqbal, Nazimuddin, Rokibul Hasan, Nayeem Islam, Mushfiqur Rahim, Alok Kapali, Rajin Saleh, Musharraf Hossain, Sajidul Islam, Dollar Mahmud, Nazmul Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Syed Rasel, Shakib Al Hasan.

Man-of-the-match: Suresh Raina Umpires: Je Jurling (South Africa) and AM Saheba

Vettori hails scheduling

AFP, Manchester

New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori believes the fixture schedule can help his side level their Test series with England after a deflating six-wicket defeat here at Old Trafford.

This clash followed on just days after the drawn first Test at Lord's. But the final match of this three-Test series doesn't get underway until June 5 at Trent Bridge.

Between now and then New Zealand have a three-day tour match against Northamptonshire, starting on Friday.

Vettori hopes this will give his side a chance to lick their wounds whilst allowing the likes of middle-order batsman Daniel Flynn, who played no further part at Old Trafford after being hit on the head by a James Anderson bouncer on the first day, an opportunity for time in the middle.

"We are lucky we do have that warm-up game," Vettori told reporters after England had won a match which New Zealand dominated early on with more than a day to spare.

"If we rolled straight round into a Test match three days later than there would be some guys who were still reeling from this loss. Hopefully, that warm-up game is a chance to get a few things out of the system."

"Then we can come to Trent Bridge thinking we can square the series. That will still be a good result for us," said Vettori, whose side were beaten 2-1 in a Test campaign by England in New Zealand in March.

The Black Caps had initially been hopeful that Flynn would be able to bat again. But bouts of nausea and illness kept the 23-year-old Northern Districts left-hander out of the firing line.

"He hasn't been in a great space the last couple of days. He wants to bat but it just wasn't a good idea," said Vettori.

"He's got some cosmetic surgery to have and, depending on how he recovers from that, it's a great idea for him to get straight back into it."

For much of this match New Zealand, who saw Ross Taylor score a career-best 154 not out in the first innings, looked well-placed to record what would have been only their fifth win in 49 Tests in England.

But a second innings slump, when they were bowled out for just 114 with Vettori's rival left-arm spinner Monty Panesar taking a Test-best six for 37, allowed England back into the game.

Although the hosts' target was an Old Trafford Test record 294 it should have been much greater and England, with opener Andrew Strauss scoring 106, completed their run-chase off the last ball before tea on the fourth day.

Andrew Strauss's hundred was the centrepiece of England's run chase as they reached their victory target of 294 for the loss of four wickets just before tea on the fourth day at Old Trafford here Monday.

But for much of this match England, now 1-0 up in the three-Test series after a draw at Lord's, were outplayed.

It needed left-arm spinner Monty Panesar's career-best haul of six for 37, which saw New Zealand dismissed for just 114 in their second innings, to give England's batsmen a chance of winning the game.

Vaughan, praising a first-wicket stand of 60 in the second innings between Strauss and fellow left-hander Alastair Cook, told reporters: "Chasing 294, the key was the start."

"If we lost early wickets we were going to be dead and buried."

Vaughan, who shared a second-wicket stand of 90 with Strauss as England completed their second highest victory chase on home soil after their 315 for four against Australia at Headingley in 2001, added: "We knew we were chasing the game."

"Monty Panesar's first three or four overs, he was nervous and didn't get his pace right. But then he got on a roll. It's amazing how a game can change."

Strauss, whose Test career had looked like coming to a close during March's tour of New Zealand, was at loss to explain his return to form.

"It's hard to explain, that mysterious thing form. The only way to get it is by scoring runs," Strauss said after his second century in three Tests.

This was Strauss's 12th Test hundred and the Middlesex left-hander said: "It is certainly one of the more satisfying."

"It's not very often you get the chance to get a hundred in the fourth innings. It's special for me, even more special for the team. We were under the pump for two days."

Strauss was dropped for England's pre-Christmas tour of Sri Lanka after a run of low scores.

Although recalled in New Zealand, the 31-year-old was still under pressure for his place come the final Test in Napier.

But, after a first innings nought, he scored a Test-best 177 and England went on to win by 121 runs as they clinched the series 2-1.

Sidebottom's year

CRICINFO, undated

When Ryan Sidebottom was slicing through New Zealand's raw top order back in March, Jeremy Coney, the former Kiwi captain, bemoaned that the batsmen were "making him look like Wasim Akram". He followed up with something along the lines of "and he's no Wasim Akram".

Coney's point was that New Zealand were batting ineptly, that Sidebottom was unworthy to be taking 24 wickets at 17, but his comment already seems dated. Sidebottom is the first pace bowler on England's team sheet and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Sidebottom isn't Wasim Akram and he never will be, but who is? Only two left-arm pace bowlers have ever taken more than 200 Test wickets: Wasim and Chaminda Vaas, who have taken 757 between them. That's more than the next five left-armers (Alan Davidson, Zaheer Khan, Trevor Goddard, Richard Collinge and Bruce Reid) put together. Garry Sobers, who bowled allsorts, is discounted from this list.

No England left-arms have ever taken 100 Test wickets. Bill Voce leads the way with 98, John Lever is next with 73, and Sidebottom is third with 63. So over the course of the next 12 months he ought to become England's greatest ever left-handed quick. Not bad for a bloke who, as a 14-year-old, was told he wasn't good enough by Yorkshire, and as a 23-year-old, by Duncan Fletcher.

But how good is he? Sidebottom has quickly become a cult figure in England because of his Roger Daltrey hair and, let's be honest, because of a drought of potential heroes. But he is also England's "main strike bowler", according to England's bowling coach Otis Gibson in a forthcoming issue of the Wisden Cricketer. He is not just Mr Dependable (though he's that as well), not just the new Matthew Hoggard. He is Michael Vaughan's go-to bowler. It is some burden, though one he appears to relish.

Over the last 12 months, of pace bowlers, only South Africa's Dale Steyn has taken more wickets (78) than Sidebottom, whose entire career total of 63 has come in that time. (His debut Test back in 2001 was fruitless.) Steyn and Sidebottom will, fitness permitting, come head to head in six weeks' time or so, when South Africa play a four-Test series in England. It is a contest to decide global pace bowling's pre-eminent exponent. Brett Lee might just consider himself in the mix as well.



RYAN SIDEBOTTOM

Even to think of Sidebottom as worthy of consideration is to undergo some severe head-shaking and skin-pitching. This is a man who, as previously mentioned, has been told on more than one occasion that he's not up to it. His selection in 2001 scarred his image to a point where he became something of a joke figure, an emblem of a failed domestic system that produced only trundlers ill-equipped to deal with the rigours of international cricket.

It's not that Duncan Fletcher was wrong to discard Sidebottom in 2001 but that it took until 2007 to recognise Sidebottom's transformation. There was a disconnect between Fletcher and the county game, a lack of trust and respect on both sides. That schism has been mended now and a player with Sidebottom's abilities, one hopes, will not be ignored again.

But Sidebottom did transform himself, make no mistake. His

'Back from dead'

CRICINFO, undated

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes crossword clues and a grid for solving.

CRYPTOQUIP. Includes a grid of letters and a clue: DM O YLQKUC ILLJY KU OJVDK.