



Did U Know?

In the first Test against West Indies at Dunedin on Thursday, New Zealand opens Jamie How and Tim McIntosh formed the 17th combination for their country in the past 36 Tests.



Talk Turkey



Glenn McGrath

Former Australia fast bowler
"South Africa are a good quality team. But I'll back our boys any day. My prediction is still 3-0."
Showing retirement has not changed his belief in Australia.



What to Watch

Neo Cricket

India v England
First Test, Day 2
Live from 10:00am

ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live from 8:00pm

Elin goes down to Indian IM

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladeshi players Mohammad Imran Ali Elin lost in the sixth round of the Asian Junior Chess Championships in Chennai, India to local International Master P Karthikeyan yesterday.

Elin was on three points, followed by his compatriots FIDE Master Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar (2.5 points) and Rezaul Islam Babu (2).

Babu defeated Padhya Saamil and Sagar lost to Ramnath Bhuvanesh in the sixth round.

Mohali cleared for 2nd Test

AFP, London

Mohali will stage the second Test between India and England, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement issued here Wednesday.

ECB security advisor Reg Dickason, together with England cricket managing director Hugh Morris and Professional Cricketers' Association chief executive Sean Morris, approved the venue following an inspection and the Test is set to get underway as scheduled on December 19.

Both Tests were put in jeopardy when England cut short the seven-match one-day series and returned home last month following the terror attacks in Mumbai that left 172 dead and almost 300 injured.

But following a change of Test venues -- Ahmedabad was due to host the first Test and Mumbai the second -- the ECB made it clear it wanted to continue with the series and England's players finally decided to return to India on Sunday.

However, at that time English officials had not been able to make a detailed inspection of the Mohali ground and there were concerns the venue's relative distance from a major airport imposed additional security problems.

But Hugh Morris, having observed the arrangements

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Mendis out of Test series

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka's mystery spinner Ajantha Mendis will miss the two-Test series against Bangladesh, which begins at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on December 26.

Mendis injured his ankle while bowling for Army SC in his first match of the domestic season against Tamil Union last weekend.

Ranjith Nanayakkaraswami, the Sri Lanka team physio, said Mendis had strained his right ankle and was undergoing treatment.

"The injury will take at least three to four weeks to heal," he said. Mendis is expected to be back for the ODI tri-series against Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, scheduled to start on January 10.

Rangana Herath, the left-arm spinner, will take Mendis' place in Sri Lanka's 15-man Test squad. Herath's last Test was in March this year, against West Indies in Guyana and the last time he played against Bangladesh was during the 2005-06 series in Sri Lanka. He had a four-wicket haul in the first Test at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo.

But he will have a lot to live up to as the man he replaces has had a successful run in 2008. Announcing his arrival with 26 wickets at 18.38 apiece in his debut Test series against India earlier this year, Mendis also had a superb run in ODIs as well taking 48 wickets in 18 matches.

He is set to become the fastest to 50 ODI scalps: Ajit Agarkar achieved the milestone in 23 games.

Mendis became the ICC Emerging Player of the Year

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England opener Andrew Strauss punches the air on reaching his century on the first day of the first Test against India at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

India hit back after Strauss century

Cricket

AFP, Chennai

England opener Andrew Strauss hit 123 in the first Test on Thursday as cricket returned to centre stage in India after the Mumbai terror attacks.

The left-hander's 13th century after a first-wicket stand of 118 with Alastair Cook (52) lifted England to 229-5 by stumps on the opening day at the heavily guarded Chidambaram Stadium.

Andrew Flintoff was unbeaten on 18 and night-watchman James Anderson was on two.

India fought back in the final session with four wickets to end the day with honours even on a barren wicket that is expected to turn later in the match.

The 45,000-seater stadium wore a deserted look as less than 1,000 fans watched the Test start just a fortnight after the Mumbai attacks that left 172 dead and injured more than 300.

England, who abandoned the one-day series and flew home after the attacks, agreed to return for the two-Test series after security checks and a shift in venues.

Kevin Pietersen's men joined the Indian players in wearing black armbands and observing a minute's silence for the victims before play began.

The crowd, which swelled to around 5,000 by afternoon, included International Cricket Council chief executive Haroon Lorgat and top officials of the England and Wales Cricket Board.

Strauss, a 31-year-old veteran of 54 Tests, said the

distraction of the terror attacks and the uncertainty about the series helped him focus better.

"I was probably as relaxed as I have felt going into a Test for a long time," he said.

"Maybe all the stuff that has been going on has taken our minds off the pressure of playing in Test cricket. I felt pretty comfortable from ball one.

"We could have done without me getting out at the end. Five wickets is a pretty good effort by them on a flat wicket.

"We've got 229 on the board and hopefully we can push on towards 400, which won't be a bad effort."

The left-handed pair of Strauss and Cook batted through the first three hours to give England a solid start after Pietersen won the toss and elected to take first strike.

Cook fell soon after reaching his 15th half-century when he miscued a pull off Harbhajan Singh high to mid-on where Zaheer Khan took a well-judged catch.

England, at a commanding 164-1 at tea, slumped to 221-5 soon after the break following a double strike by Zaheer.

The left-arm seamer trapped Ian Bell before for 17 with the second delivery after tea and then took a return catch as Pietersen (four) top-edged a hook high into the air.

India earned a lucky break soon after when Paul Collingwood (nine) was declared caught at short-leg off Harbhajan by umpire Billy Bowden. Television replays showed the ball go off the pad.

Strauss finally fell after a four six-hour vigil at the crease when he was beaten in the air by leg-spinner Amit

Mishra and spooned a low return catch to the bowler.

Harbhajan applauded England's decision to go ahead with the series after the Mumbai attacks, but taunted the tourists for their defensive approach on the first day.

"This is such a good wicket to bat on that we would probably have reached 300 by stumps," the off-spinner said.

"England were very defensive, they did not look to score runs. But we also bowled to a plan and hopefully we can end their first innings quickly.

"The first session will be very important."

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the first Test between India and England at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings
Strauss c and b Mishra 123
Cook c Zaheer b Harbhajan 52
Bell lbw b Zaheer 17
Pietersen c and b Zaheer 4
Collingwood c Gambhir b Harbhajan 9
Flintoff not out 18
Anderson not out 2
Extras: (lb-4) 4

Total: (For 5 wks in 90 overs) 229
Fall of wickets: 1-118, 2-164, 3-180, 4-195, 5-221

To bat: Prior, Swann, Harmison, Panesar

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Zaheer	17	7	36	2
Sharma	15	2	29	0
Harbhajan	26	2	67	2
Mishra	20	4	63	1
Yuvraj	11	2	22	0
Sehwag	1	0	8	0

INDIA: Sehwag, Gambhir, Dravid, Tendulkar, Laxman, Yuvraj, Dhoni, Harbhajan, Zaheer, Mishra, Sharma

Toss: England.
Umpires: Billy Bowden and Daryl Harper.

Flynn shores up NZ

Cricket

AFP, Dunedin

New Zealand batsman Daniel Flynn fell five runs short of his maiden century after the West Indies used a new rule to successfully challenge the umpire's decision in the first Test here Thursday.

The 23-year-old scored 95 as New Zealand made a solid 226 for four on the opening day of the first of two Tests before bad light stopped play about 70 minutes early.

Flynn's relief at being given not out by umpire Amiesh Saheba after being rapped on the front pad by a ball from West Indies captain Chris Gayle turned to consternation when Gayle appealed to the third umpire for a review.

Third umpire Rudi Koertzen used video replays to check the lbw appeal before telling Saheba they showed Flynn was out.

This Test series is being used to trial a new rule where both fielding sides and batsmen can ask for a review of an umpire's decision, although each team is limited to three

unsuccessful review requests in each innings.

The review rule has been trialled in Tests only once before when Sri Lanka hosted India in July and August.

The dismissal was not the kind of history Flynn wanted to make after he made the most of his promotion to the order to number three, scoring his maiden Test 50 before falling frustratingly short of a century.

But he took the decision to reverse the umpire's initial call on the chin.

"I thought I was hit outside the line but once I looked at it again I've seen it's hit me in line. You can't really argue with it can you?" he told reporters.

Gayle sympathised with Flynn but said the referral system had the potential to help the game.

"It's unfortunate he missed out on a hundred, he batted pretty well even though it was a good wicket to bat on," he said.

Playing just his eighth Test, Flynn survived the occasional bad shot to play the anchor role for New Zealand, hitting 12 fours in his 188-minute stay at the crease.

Jesse Ryder mixed careful defence and daring stroke play to remain undefeated on 54 at the end of the day, putting on 61 runs for the fourth wicket with Flynn.

Gayle's dismissal of Flynn was his third wicket for the day and the languid off-spinner finished with figures of three for 42 off 20 overs.

The placid University Oval wicket did no favours for the West Indian bowlers, but some of the New Zealand batsmen were guilty of not taking full advantage by throwing their wickets away with poor shots.

Debutant opener Tim McIntosh played the early supporting role, recovering from a nervous start to reach 34 before falling shortly after the lunch break and ending an 87 run partnership with Flynn.

New Zealand's opening partnership woes -- which have seen a stream of batsmen come and go in recent seasons -- continued with the early dismissal of How with the total on 10.

McIntosh took 34 balls to get off the mark, edging a streaky four over gully to end his frustration.

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'Pakistan tour impossible'

AFP, Chennai

Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar says it is "impossible" that India will tour Pakistan early next year due to strained political relations following the Mumbai attacks.

"It will be difficult in any case for the Indian players to play against Pakistan at the moment," the former India captain told the CNN-IBN news channel on Thursday.

"Diplomatically, there has been a fall out between the two nations and I don't see why cricket won't follow suit. So at the moment it is impossible to go ahead with the tour."

The Indian government has blamed elements in Pakistan for last month's attacks on the country's financial capital which left 172 dead, including nine militants, and injured more than 300.

India are scheduled to play three Tests, five one-day internationals and a Twenty20 match during the five-week tour from January 6 to February 19.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is

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London offers support to BOA

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) is considering proposals from English county Kent and London towns Tower Hamlets and Harrow to send athletes for pre-Olympics training.

The Harrow Council has proposed to be hosts of Bangladeshi athletes as part of London Olympic Committee's programme for the next Olympic Games to be held in the England capital in 2012, informed BOA's CEO Col (ret'd) Wali Ullah yesterday.

Wali, who visited London on way to Spain, said he has seen facilities in Harrow and hope that the local athletes would be benefited if they manage to take training there.

"The main reason for the training would be acclimatising to English conditions," especially the cold, "told Wali.

"Our athletes would find it difficult to cope with three to

four degrees (Celsius) temperature. So it would be a great opportunity for them as we lack the technical training facilities they have. Also, the havelatest equipment.

"The facilities at the Harrow needs a little improvement and once we are sure that have been done, we will go for an agreement.

"We also have offers from Kent and the UK group Canary Wharf, based in the Tower Hamlets of East London.

"The BOA is also interested about Canary Wharf's offer but we want to avail both. I have talked with Canary Wharf, which has already been working with Bangladeshi young footballers, about giving high performance training to athletes individually so that we can use both the offers.

"If we can send 30 or even less number of established and upcoming athletes, they

would be prepared for better results in regional events as we cannot dream of winning an Olympic medal in 2012."

A decision, however, will not be made until next year.

Wali, who visited Harrow Leisure Centre, Harrow School and the Bannister Sports Centre, added that the London Olympic Committee will provide Bangladesh 25,000 pounds sterling for preparation.

Councillor Chris Mote, responsible for community and cultural services at Harrow Council, said during Wali's visit that it would be a great honour for Harrow to become the official training camp for the Bangladesh team.

The CEO of BOA also had an informal meeting with secretary general of the NOC-Jamaica, who has taken into his account to send a track and field coach to help develop skill of Bangladeshi athletes.



West Indies captain Chris Gayle (3rd from L) is the toast of his teammates after he dismissed New Zealand's Daniel Flynn (L) for 95 on the first day of the first Test in Dunedin yesterday.

England to help Mumbai victims

Cricket

AFP, Chennai

England will donate half their match fees from the first Test against India to the families of victims of last month's attacks in Mumbai, batsman Alastair Cook said on Tuesday.

England flew into this southern city on Monday to resume the tour that was interrupted by the attacks on November 26 that left 172 dead and more than 300 wounded.

A team meeting on Tuesday decided to pledge fees of around 35,000 pounds (52,000 dollars) to the victims, Cook said after reading from a prepared statement at the Chidambaram stadium.

"Following a very difficult period for the last two weeks, the England cricket team

would like to recognise the following reasons for returning to India for the Test series," the statement began.

"As an open and public statement of support for the Indian people following the tragic events in Mumbai recently. To extend our sincerest sympathies to those families that have lost loved ones in the Mumbai attacks.

"As cricketers, first and foremost to win a Test match series against India.

"Finally, the England players will donate half their match fees from the first Test match to the families of those victims of the Mumbai attacks."

Cook, the team's opening batsman, added: "We have made a massive pact this morning at our meeting when we came up with the statement that this is it and nothing else can distract us from playing cricket.

"It was something that everyone wanted to get across because as a side we felt we wanted to do it," he said.

Cook took heart from the events two years ago when he scored a century on his Test debut in India after being rushed from the England 'A' tour of the West Indies in place of the injured Michael Vaughan.

"I came here two years ago, flying half way around the world and had one training session and then played, so it can be done.

"You don't just suddenly lose your technique overnight.

"I remember turning up for my first Test match and jet lag does not really affect you when you have got adrenaline kicking through your body. If you are mentally switched on you can achieve things and that's what we need to do as a side now."