



INVINCIBLE: England vice-captain Alastair Cook flicks one off his legs during his unbeaten 136 on the second day of the second Test against Australia at Adelaide yesterday.

The marathon man

Cricket

Alastair Cook is proving to be the marathon man for England in the Ashes series with his herculean batting performances and he puts it down to being able to concentrate for long periods.

he admitted the criticism was justified.

"I think I scored 100 runs in seven knocks so you guys (the media) wouldn't be doing your job in not criticising me. That's part and parcel of playing professional sport," he said.

A knock of 110 against Pakistan at the Oval helped him hold onto his spot in the side and he said the innings had given him belief he could bat well in tough situations.

"How I dealt with it, by responding at The Oval has given me a lot of confidence that when I really needed it most, I could deliver it," he said.

"Coming to Australia when the side needed it most I've managed to deliver so far."

All of Cook's centuries have come before the age of 26, a record only bettered by Sachin Tendulkar of India, who reached three figures 19 times before his 26th birthday.

"It's just rewards some times. You put in all the hard yards and then you get your little rewards which I've had this week," Cook said.

"It's important to enjoy them when you get them but remember there's a lot of hard work ahead in this game and other games."

Cook said batting was hard work in Saturday's 37 Celsius (98 Fahrenheit) temperatures, but he was in no mood to be charitable to the Australian bowlers as they toiled away with little reward in the stifling heat.

BD League this month

The first phase of the fourth Bangladesh League football competition will be held over December 27 to March 5 at the Bishreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

A sprint cut short

FROM PAGE 17
The accident took place as they were returning to Dhaka in the wee hours. Mahub's left arm was thrashed and part of his rib was damaged, succumbing to severe injuries. Yahya and the driver both received minor injuries and were treated at the hospital.

Lord's for memory, guts in Manchester

FROM PAGE 17
DSS: How did you manage to take it from 15 to 29?
TI: In the early days, I had only two shots -- dancing down the track and the cover drive. I was totally blocked on the leg-side.

The most important thing is that, he gives the player a lot of time. I hardly ever hear the word 'no' from him.
DSS: You live near the Mirpur stadium, was that part of your plan?
TI: Look, a lot of the national cricketers can afford to live in Gulshan and Banani but I chose this area (moved here in December 2008) so that practice for me is just a 5-minute drive. If I had lived in Gulshan, for example, I would always think of the traffic when I wanted to have a hit during my off day.

me bat. I never scored much then, though.
I also thank my brother and uncle (former Bangladesh captain Akram Khan) wholeheartedly because of two things. My brother told me to play Premier League rather than First Division as my first season, and my uncle helped me a lot when Sonargaon Cricketers betrayed with me (in the 2006-07 season).

time, I bought a dog called Zaro. Funny thing is I was so scared of my own dog that I never got close to it (laughs). Whenever they left it in the open, I was the first one to run from it.
DSS: Did you ever try to imitate a player?
TI: I loved Sanath Jayasuriya a lot. He had these big forearms and I wanted to be like him, hit big sixes. I used to practice at home and imagine hitting those big ones.
DSS: Any thoughts on the World Cup?
TI: I want to play match-winning knocks for Bangladesh. Of course the target will be to reach the second phase and anything can happen from there.

Commander Cook

Cricket

AFP, Adelaide

Alastair Cook again proved to be an immovable force, blunting Australia's bowlers to put England in a commanding position in the second Test at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday.

The frazzled Australians endured a long hot day of toil in the field for scant reward as Cook continued to be the marathon man of the Ashes series, scoring his second century.

England cruised past Australia's below-par first innings total of 245 some 23 overs before stumps and finished the sweltering second day at 317 for two, a lead of 72.

Cook followed up his unbeaten 235 in Brisbane to end the day on 136 with Kevin Pietersen, not out on 85, threatening to unleash a big score on Sunday's third day.

The pair have so far put on 141 runs together for the third wicket.

Vice-captain Cook, displaying immense powers of concentration, has amassed 438 runs in three innings in this series for one dismissal and has spent all but 11 overs on the field in the first seven days of the series.

"It was excellent conditions to bat in today, 37 degrees (Celsius) and a good wicket to bat on," Cook said.

"It was important to make the most of what our bowlers did yesterday. It was fantastic effort to dismiss them for 245."

"We are in a really good position now but it's only Day Two so there's a lot of cricket left as we showed last week you can fight back."

The Essex left-hander helped himself to four with a cut off ineffectual spinner Xavier Doherty to reach his ton, his third against Australia.

Cook has now scored 15 Test centuries before the age of 26, equalling the achievement of Australian legend Don Bradman. Only India's Sachin Tendulkar, the leading Test run-scorer of all time, managed more, reaching three figures 19 times before his 26th birthday.

The only time Cook looked in trouble came when he needed a review on 64 to survive after he was given out caught behind attempting to hook Peter Siddle in the 43rd over.

Replays showed that the ball hit Cook's arm rather than his bat and umpire Marais Erasmus reversed his decision.

"England are in a very good position, but the important thing for us is to make sure we stay in the fight," Australian wicketkeeper Brad Haddin said.

"Test cricket is never easy and we have our backs to wall and we're in for a real fight."

Australia had early joy with the wicket of skipper Andrew Strauss in the day's opening over, but apart from Jonathan Trott's dismissal for 78 before tea it was unquestionably England's day.

Cook and Trott put on 173 runs for the second wicket to kill off Australia's hopes of containing England's innings lead.

Trott had three lives before his luck finally ran out in the 49th over when he flicked a Ryan Harris lifter to a diving Michael Clarke at midwicket.

The number three batsman had looked on course for his third century in

as many Ashes Tests after his 119 at the fifth Test at The Oval last year and 135 in Brisbane last week.

Trott and Cook so far in this series have shared in partnerships totalling 502 runs after their record stand of 329 runs at the Gabba.

Doherty had a chance to run Trott out on six but his throw was well wide and the batsman enjoyed more luck four runs later when Mike Hussey dropped him in the gully off Doug Bollinger.

Trott got his third life on 76 when wicketkeeper Brad Haddin fumbled a high two-handed chance down the leg-side off a Harris bouncer to continue the home side's wretched fielding in the series.

The normally reliable Australians put down five catches in the drawn Test in Brisbane.

The day started well for Australia when Bollinger removed Strauss with the third ball of the day as the England skipper inexplicably offered no shot to the left-arm and was bowled for one.

Australia were rattled out for 245 after winning the toss on Friday's opening day, their worst performance in the first innings at Adelaide since being skittled by the West Indies for 213 in 1993.

England have now amassed 834 runs in the last two innings of the series for the loss of just three wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 245 (Hussey 93, Haddin 56, Watson 51; Anderson 4-51, Swann 2-70, Broad 1-39)
ENGLAND: First innings 317 for 2 (Cook 136 not out, Pietersen 85 not out, Trott 78; Harris 1-51, Bollinger 1-76)

Gautam confirms series

Cricket

AFP, Vadodara

Gautam Gambhir hit a second successive century as India crushed New Zealand by nine wickets in the third one-day international on Saturday to take an unassailable 3-0 lead in the series.

The stand-in skipper hammered 16 fours in his unbeaten 126 off 117 balls to help his side overhaul New Zealand's 224-9 with 10.3 overs to spare in the one-sided encounter at the Reliance Stadium.

Gambhir, leading the side in place of rested regular captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, had also starred in India's eight-wicket win in the second one-day international in Jaipur, making an unbeaten 138 off 116 balls.

The fourth game of the five-match series will be played in Bangalore on Tuesday.

Gambhir carried his form in to the third game in Vadodara, adding 115 runs for the opening wicket with Murali Vijay (30) and another 114 for the next with Virat Kohli (63 not out).

Kohli also continued to torment the rival bowlers with a breezy 70-ball knock containing six fours and two sixes, as New Zealand slumped to their eighth one-day defeat in a row.

"We knew 224 was never going to be enough," New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori said.

"It was really tough early on. The track got better, and India played exceptionally well, with Gambhir leading the way."

"We have to keep fighting. Our top order needs to stand up, and hopefully that will happen in the next couple of games."

Gambhir's stroke-filled innings overshadowed a career-best 72 not out by

James Franklin who helped the visitors recover from a shaky 106-7 after they were sent in to bat.

Franklin hit five fours and a six in his 108-ball innings and shared 94 runs for the eighth wicket with Nathan McCullum



India captain Gautam Gambhir raises his bat after completing a second successive hundred against New Zealand, as his unbeaten 126 in the third ODI steered India to an unassailable 3-0 lead against New Zealand at the Reliance stadium in Vadodara yesterday.

(43) to lend respectability to New Zealand's total.

Left-arm paceman Zaheer Khan (2-31) had given India a flying start by striking twice inside the first 11 overs before spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Yusuf Pathan claimed two wickets each.

Zaheer, playing his first game of the series, dismissed Brendon McCullum off the second ball of the innings when the opener edged tamely to Vijay at second slip.

"It was an important game because we did not want to give New Zealand any scope for a comeback in this series," said Gambhir, named man of the match.

"Zaheer is a quality bowler and he got Brendon McCullum in the first over, and that set up the game for us."

The in-form Martin Guptill (12) was run out following a direct hit from Gambhir before Zaheer returned to have Ross Taylor caught behind the stumps.

Yuvraj Singh snapped up a sharp, low catch to dismiss Scott Styris (22) while Pathan claimed the wickets of Vettori and Gareth Hopkins in successive overs.

Franklin, who came in to bat with New Zealand struggling at 49-4, worked with Nathan McCullum to add 68 valuable runs in the last 10 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 224 for 9 (Franklin 72 not out, N McCullum 43, Styris 22; Pathan 2-27, Zaheer 2-31, Ashwin 2-49)
INDIA: 229 for 1 (Gambhir 126 not out, Kohli 63 not out, Vijay 30)
Result: India won by 9 wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Gautam Gambhir.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid and clues. Clues include: 1 Destiny, 5 Boar's mate, 8 Flat-bottomed boat, 12 Composer Novello, 13 Beta Kappa, 14 Corduroy ridge, 15 Sad, 17 Largest of the seven, 18 Title-holder, 19 Dr. Seuss' elephant, 21 Harmonization, 24 Chartres chum, 25 Send forth, 28 Actor Estrada, 30 Spinning meas., 33 Tavern, 34 Nourishes, 35 Raw rock, 36 Kinsman, briefly, 37 Hurler Hershisier.

Cryptogram puzzle grid and clues. Clues include: 1 H A J A F C O J S P C J H P U J C A P G, 2 O F E T S A H F G F Z P H J Z K, N, 3 I T J O O K F T E N I A H O P K A J, 4 M P O O P G G Z J G M N H A M F C U.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE HE THINKS ABOUT USING ONLY A SINGLE PUSHPIN AT A TIME, I'D SAY HE HAS A ONE-TACK MIND.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals S