

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 opener is in rare form, having now amassed 438 runs in three innings against the old

The marathon man

Cricket

AFP, Adelaide

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.

enemy, while the Australians have dismissed him just once.

The opener batted throughout the second day of the second Adelaide Test in stifling heat on Saturday, scoring an unbeaten 136 to add to his record-breaking 235 in the second innings of the first Test in Brisbane.

The Essex left-hander has shown amazing powers of endurance, spending all but 11 overs of the first seven days of the series on the field as

he torments Australia's bowlers. The Australians must be tiring of the sight of Cook, who has now amassed 438 runs in three

innings in this series for only one dismissal. "The art of batting is concentrating for long periods of time and not making mistakes and you have to keep reminding yourself of that

when you are batting," Cook said. "When you get into this rhythm of batting it's trying to do everything similar and not try to break that rhythm. Focus on what's ahead and what's not gone."

Cook has now scored 15 Test centuries, three of them against Australia, but his place was under threat after the home series against Bangladesh and Pakistan earlier this year and

he admitted the criticism was justified.

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman produced a spectacular third round score of 5-under-par to move within five shots of the overall leader in the Hero Honda Indian Open golf tournament in New Delhi yesterday.

Siddkur's display at the Delhi Golf Club was the best of the round that put him 5 under-par (211), galloping him to eighth on the overall leaderboard from previous

South Korean youngster Baek Seuk-hyun was leading the 1.25-million-dollar event with 10-under-par (206) having a one-shot lead over Sweden's Rikard Karlberg, both of whom carded a four-under-par 68 in the third round.

Sachin, Lara

FROM PAGE 17

Other household names bowler Curtly Ambrose.

bowed out. Pakistan said farewell to Imran Khan, who retired after winning the Cup. One of the all-time best fast bowlers, West Indies powerhouse Malcolm Marshall also played his last World Cup. It was also the last for Desmond Haynes. For England, the great Ian Botham, David Gower and Graham Gooch bid the world stage adieu, and it was an end of an era for India as the colossal

Among the batsmen, New Zealand great Martin Crowe attained stratospheric heights with 456 runs. Pakistan opener Rameez Raja made the highest score of the tournament, scoring an unbeaten 119 against New Zealand in

Wasim Akram took 18 wickets during the Cup equalling the record set by Roger Binny and Craig McDermott

four-wicket haul. The best bowling figures of the Cup belonged to England pacer Meyrick Pringle when he took four wickets for 11 against

were Dave Richardson of South Africa with 15 dismissals, followed by David Williams of

West Indies with 14.

"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 ge 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.

"At tea I was quite tired," he said. "At 37 degrees it's up there with one of the hottest days I've played cricket in, but you have to cash in when you're in this kind of form and don't give it away.

SPORTS REPORTER

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 Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

The decision was taken at a joint meeting of the Professional League Committee with representatives from participating clubs present at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) House yesterday.

The meeting also decided to stage the second phase of the league after the Super Cup which will begin on April 5.

The meeting also fixed the date of the second registration window of the Bangladesh League from March 6.

Due to unavailability of Chittagong's MA Aziz Stadium during the League, Chittagong Mohammedan and Chittagong Abahani will use other venues as their

home ground. Mohammedan will use Bandarban Stadium while Abahani will use Cox's Bazar Stadium as their

A sprint cut short

FROM PAGE 17

The accident took place as they were returning to Dhaka in the wee hours. Mahbub'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.

The late athlete's namaz-e-janaza was held at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the evening where his family members, colleagues, coaches, journalists and well-wishers paid their last respect. His body was then taken to his native Batrish Harua neighbourhood in Kishoreganj where he was buried.

He left behind his mother, sisters, wife and a seven-year old daughter to mourn his sad and untimely departure.

Mahbub shot to fame when he won the 200m sprint gold in the 1995 SA Games in Chennai. He returned and became the fastest man of the country setting a record of 10.56 seconds in the 1996 national athletics, which remains unbroken till date. He also won the 200m sprint in that meet and repeated the feat two years later. In the 1999 Kathmandu SA Games, Mahbub added a silver in his favourite 200m sprint while also bagging a bronze in the 100m sprint.

A heart-rendering atmosphere ensued as the dead body was brought to the BNS for the namaz-e-janaza. Family members were inconsolable, while his former coaches managed, through tears, to reminisce memories of late Mahbub.

Mahbub's coach and current general secretary of BAF Shah Alam believed Mahbub is the best athlete Bangladesh has ever produced. He excelled in both 100m and 200m due to his lean yet sturdy physique, according to Alam. Coach Nazrul Islam Rumi remembered his long-time protege:

"It is very unfortunate for Mahbub to go like this. He was the best athlete of the country. He could have competed at the Asian level had he received proper training."

"He (Mahbub) was committed to performance. The sad thing is that he got recognition from the government but not from where he deserved most," reflected a sombre Rumi.

Those who knew Mahbub from close felt that the former national champion was frustrated for not getting proper recogni-

tion and reward from his close ones, the athletics federation. The 2003 national sports award-winning athlete was promised of Tk one lac soon after his gold winning feat in 1995, but it was never given.

Siddikur now 8th in Delhi

round's 32nd.

making their Cup debuts were New Zealand's talismanic allrounder Chris Cairns, Australia's future greats Mark Waugh, Mark Taylor and keeper Ian Healy, England's Alec Stewart and the great West Indian giant of a fast

As the new came in, the old Kapil Dev played his last Cup.

Christchurch.

in the previous two editions.

Both claimed a solitary South Africa in Christchurch.

The top two wicketkeepers

Lord's for memory, guts in Manchester The most important thing

FROM PAGE 17

home venues.

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. I worked a lot with Jamie (Siddons) and Salahuddin bhai and now, those weaknesses are turning into my strengths. I get runs now because I have more shots and I'm aware that I have to get better because in international cricket, they analyse

and find everything out. I practice very hard and I'm not worried if I don't perform. I am at peace with myself that I'm doing the right things in training.

Siddons helped you? TI: He has helped me quite a lot. He is the best batting coach I have ever come across.

There's a reason why he scored

so many runs, you know.

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. DSS: Who has been your

is that, he gives the player a lot

of time. I hardly ever hear the

DSS: You live near the Mirpur

stadium, was that part of your

TI: Look, a lot of the national

word 'no' from him.

plan?

biggest influence in life?

TI: My father (Iqbal Khan). I cannot tell you in words how DSS: How much has Jamie much he has supported me. It is sad that he never got to see my brother's (Nafis Iqbal) or my international career. But it was my father who, under 40 degrees heat, stood as umpire on a prosthetic leg, just to let

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).

I was almost crying when I was left stranded near Eastern Plaza and when I called my uncle, he told me sign for Old DOHS. I somehow made it in the first eleven there and after scoring a lot, I scored a hundred against Scotland a few months before the 2007 World

DSS: You were a very popular among the DOHS players...

TI: I really loved that place, especially the Thursday biriyani. I usually get kicks to buy things and during that ment.

time, I bought a dog called

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?

winning knocks for Bangladesh. Of course the target will be to reach the second phase and anything can happen from there. I have been working hard,

spending extra hours in the gym after the usual practice with the team and I want to be fit and strong for the tourna-

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 imi-

tate a player?

TI: I want to play match-

35 Raw rock 36 Kinsman, 37 Hurler

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

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 legside off a Harris bouncer to continue the home side's wretched fielding in the

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 leftarmer and was bowled for one. Australia were rattled out for 245 after

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

winning the toss on Friday's opening day,

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)

(43) to lend respectability to

New Zealand's total.

Gautam confirms series

Cricket

AFP, Vadodara

Gautam Gambhir hit a second successive century as India crushed New Zealand by nine

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

wickets in the third one-day

international on Saturday to

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

in Jaipur, making an unbeaten 138 off 116 balls. The fourth game of the fivematch series will be played in

second one-day international

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).

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

Kohli also continued to

going to be enough," New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori said. "It was really tough early on. The track got better, and India played exceptionally

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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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

"We have to keep fighting.

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

James Franklin who helped

shared 94 runs for the eighth wicket with Nathan McCullum

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

> 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."

for a comeback in this series,

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.

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

Yuvraj Singh snapped up a

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,

INDIA: 229 for 1 (Gambhir 126 not out, Kohli 63 not out, Vijay

Result: India won by 9 wickets. well, with Gambhir leading 126 in the third ODI steered India to an unassailable 3-0 lead against Man-of-the-match: Gautam New Zealand at the Reliance stadium in Vadodara yesterday. Gambhir.

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Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals S

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CRYPTOQUIP

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49 Wields a Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE HE THINKS