

Brilliant Bresnan

AFP, Melbourne

England's Tim Bresnan said he revelled in the pressure of a big occasion as he swung the fourth Test and the Ashes towards England with a brilliant spell of bowling on Tuesday.

The Yorkshire seamer effectively snuffed out Australia's fragile hopes of saving the Test with the crucial wickets of Shane Watson (54), Ricky Ponting (20) and Mike Hussey (0) to leave the home side in tatters on the third day.

Australia are staring at their second defeat of the series some time on the fourth day, chasing down a massive 415 runs to make England bat again, yet reaching stumps on the third day at 169 for six.

Bresnan captured three wickets in 18 balls to have Australia facing a forlorn task on Wednesday.

"I do like being under the pump," he said. "I do like the big occasion and I do like being under pressure.

"I think it brings the best out in me so why wouldn't it be on Boxing Day in Australia?"

Bresnan, playing in only his sixth Test, came to Australia as the fifth-choice paceman, but an injury to Stuart Broad and a fatigued Steven Finn presented him with the opportunity to play in the showpiece Boxing Day Test in Melbourne with the Ashes on the line.

"[Coach] Andy Flower sat us all down and said he would be very surprised if we went with the same team through the five Tests, obviously being so hard-fought and close together," he said.

"We knew that there would be a chance for at least two of us three playing, so we had to prepare as if we were going to play. I'm ecstatic, over the Moon, there's a lot of words that could describe it."

Bresnan claimed 2-25 off 13 overs as Australia were routed for a ground record 98 in the first innings on a lively pitch and chipped in with 3-26 off 15 overs on Tuesday's third day.

"You use the conditions that you are given, obviously on the first morning it was a lot more favourable for the bowlers but you are still under pressure to put the ball in the right areas to take the wickets," he said.

"Today the pitch wasn't doing a great deal, we had to rely on our skill and with the abrasiveness of it as well so the reverse swing came into play."



Kiwi man-of-the-match Nathan McCullum (R) shares a joke with Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal during New Zealand's series clinching Twenty20 victory at Hamilton yesterday.

Pressure grows further

AFP, Melbourne

The pressure on Ricky Ponting's captaincy intensified when he was again out cheaply as Australia lurched towards looming defeat against England in the fourth Ashes Test on Tuesday.

The beleaguered skipper went for 20 as the tourists closed in on expected victory, which would see them retain the Ashes, with two days left in the Melbourne match.

Andrew Strauss's team remorselessly pushed on for the triumph, dominating Ponting's Australians over three days of the lopsided Test and setting them a herculean task of overcoming a 415-run innings deficit.

Much of Australia's hopes of resisting England's victory drive hinged on Ponting's past ability to occupy the crease for a long innings, but he lasted only 101 minutes and 73 balls.

Ponting played from the crease to impressive Yorkshire seamer Tim Bresnan and got an inside edge onto his stumps to the sheer delight of the English team.

It continued a wretched series for the hounded Ponting, who has now scored just 113 runs at 16.14, placing his distinguished 152-Test career in peril ahead of next week's final Test in Sydney.

It has been a fraught match for Ponting. He lost a crucial toss on a lively pitch, his side was routed for a first-day 98, he was fined and censured by the match referee for his prolonged argument with the umpires over a disputed referral and the runs have dried up.

Selectors now have the onerous decision whether to dump Ponting as captain for the final Test, if the possibility of winning the Ashes back has gone, and move him aside for his deputy Michael Clarke.

"Ricky is a very tough man mentally as he has shown throughout his whole career," open-

ing batsman Shane Watson said.

"Everyone is and always will be right behind Ricky, he's been a brilliant leader for us.

"Unfortunately, it hasn't been the perfect time for him with the runs, but it's definitely not far away, he's such an amazing player, and with a few things going his way he'll be able to turn it around.

"No one will ever question his ability to lead the group because of how good he has been during his career."

Ponting, 36, is in the twilight of an illustrious career and is the second all-time leading Test runscorer with 12,363 runs, behind India's Sachin Tendulkar.

Ponting is also the most successful Australian captain with 48 wins from 76 Tests heading into the Boxing Day Test.

There will be calls for Ponting to receive a fitting farewell in the Sydney Test, starting next Monday, if selectors consider it is time to bite the bullet and start rebuilding the team under a new leader.

Ponting pointed to the pressure he and his team were under heading into the third day of the Melbourne Test when he told national radio: "Probably the next couple of days for us are (our most challenging).

"We know there's a series on the line here and we know we've probably been a bit deficient in the way we've played in this Test match so far.

"We have to stand up as a group, I have to stand up as a player and lead well from the front."

Ponting said he prided himself on leading from the front and setting an example, both with the bat and as captain.

"That's why I'm disappointed with yesterday (when he received an ICC fine).

"I felt like I've not only let myself down, let my team-mates down and all those younger people who look up to what we do as players -- I've probably let them down as well yesterday."

Now that Ponting has failed again, the pressure will only increase on him to resolve his playing future.

Kiwis take T20 series

AFP, Hamilton

New Zealand wrapped up their Twenty20 cricket series against Pakistan with a match to spare when they blasted their way to a 39-run win in the second match here Tuesday.

Scott Styris and Peter McGlashan were the principal contributors to a 79-run onslaught in five overs which swung the match New Zealand's way in the second half of their innings of 185 for seven.

Pakistan made a valiant start to the run chase and were 58 for one after six overs before their batting was robbed of its impetus by the twin-spin attack in the middle eight overs.

Man-of-the-match Nathan McCullum took four for 16 off his four overs while debutant Luke Woodcock took none for 20 and at the close of their innings Pakistan were 146 for nine.

It was a good recovery for New Zealand who lost the toss, were sent in to bat on an unfavourable wicket and immediately lost opener Jesse Ryder on the first ball of the match.

But from then, the New Zealand were in control with Martin Guptill and James Franklin starring in a 90-run stand for the second wicket.

"It was a good performance right from

Guptill and Franklin's opening stand," said New Zealand captain Ross Taylor, adding his side has wants to keep the winning streak going after recent series losses against India and Bangladesh.

"We've had a few go against us in the recent past so we would like to go for the whitewash. We want to improve with every game."

Guptill, who blazed 54 from 29 balls in the first match, compiled a brisk 44, including three sixes and three fours, from 28 deliveries while Franklin, newly promoted from six to three, made 44.

Both wickets fell in the space of five balls leaving Styris and then McGlashan to continue the initiative while skipper Ross Taylor anchored the other end.

Styris, who came in at the fall of Franklin's wicket, clouted 34 off 14 balls and with his departure McGlashan combined a mixture of orthodox shots and reverse sweeps to belt 26 from 10 deliveries.

"With the way we bowled, I'm very disappointed," Pakistan captain Afridi said. "We didn't bowl well. We have very experienced bowlers and they didn't bowl on the spot."

Taylor was unbeaten on 30 at the end of the innings while Saeed Ajmal returned the best figures for Pakistan with three for 35 off his four overs.

Mohammed Hafeez and Shahid Afridi made a fiery start to Pakistan's reply and

paced to 24 off 11 balls before Kyle Mills was fortuitously rewarded for a rank full toss which Afridi missed and was bowled for seven.

Pakistan remained ahead of the required run rate through the first six overs before slowing in the face of the spin attack.

Woodcock, making his international debut was unlucky not to claim the wicket of Hafeez with his fourth ball when Ross Taylor dropped a sitter from the Pakistan opener.

It was a short-lived life for Hafeez who added two more runs before he was run out for 46 on the first ball of Woodcock's second over and Pakistan's mainstay batsman was gone.

Only Umar Akmal (26) and Ahmed Shehzad (15) offered resistance while for New Zealand fast bowler Tim Southee backed up the spinners with two for 26 off his four overs.

The final Twenty20 match is in Christchurch on Thursday to be followed by two Tests and six one-dayers.

SCORES IN BRIEF
NEW ZEALAND: 185 for 7 (Guptill 44, Franklin 40, Taylor 30 not out, Styris 34, McGlashan 26; Ajmal 3-35)
PAKISTAN: 146 for 9 (Hafeez 46, Shehzad 15, Akmal 26, Razzaq 14, Riaz 18, Southee 2-26, McCullum 4-16)
Result: New Zealand won by 39 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Nathan McCullum.

V-DAY TENNIS Double for Ishita

SPORTS REPORTER

Ishita Afroze of BKSP claimed a double as she won both the women's and the girls' singles titles in the Runner Group Victory Day Tennis Championship at the Naogaon Tennis Club yesterday.

Ishita beat Sathi Sarker of National Tennis Complex 2-6, 7-5, 6-1 to take the women's title and later triumphed in another three-setter over Ayesha Sultana of BKSP to claim the trophy in the U-16 girls' group. The scoreline in that final was 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Meanwhile, Alamgir Hossain of Nordic Club was declared champion in the men's group after his opponent Amol Roy failed to appear for the final.

But Amol Roy did show up to take the men's doubles crown along with Ranjan Ram as they outplayed Anwar Hossain and Delwar Hossain 6-2, 7-6. The women's doubles trophy went to Sathi Sarker and Nadia Afrin.

Rustom Ali won the U-16 boys' event while Mahin Reza Khan won the boys' U-12 event.

Member of Parliament Abdul Jalil distributed prizes among the winners on completion of the matches. Chairman of Runner Group Hafizur Rahman Khan, Deputy Commissioner Nazmunara Khanum and Superintendent of Police Mofazzal Hossain were present as special guests.

Nazir & Hall's

FROM PAGE 16

Much like the Super Six stage, qualifying teams carried forward their points from wins against fellow qualifiers, and played each of the six qualifiers from other groups.

The eventual champions Australia extended their World Cup undefeated streak to 29 matches dating back to the group stages of the 1999 event.

Though India crashed out during the first round, they did register the highest ever total in World Cup when they smashed first-timers Bermuda for 413-5 at the Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain on March 19, a match that held nothing of note for the most popular team of the group who lost to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in their previous group games.

Pakistan's swashbuckling opener Imran Nazir recorded the highest individual score of the 2007 tournament when he hit 160 against Zimbabwe at Kingston on March 21.

Australia's Matthew Hayden was the highest run-scorer with 659 runs at the end of the tournament. Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene was in second place with 548 runs.

The great Australia fast bowler Glenn McGrath bowled out of international cricket as the highest wicket-taker in the 2007 edition, with 26 scalps. McGrath was also the highest wicket-taker in World Cup, with 71 scalps to his name. In 2007, he was trailed by Sri Lankan spin wizard Muttiah Muralidaran, who bamboozled 23 batsmen over the course of the tournament.

South African fast-medium bowler Andrew Hall had the best bowling analysis of the tournament when he snared five English victims for 18 runs at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown on April 17.

Adam Gilchrist, the Australian govmen, lead the wicketkeeper's table with 17 dismissals, while his Sri Lankan counterpart Kumar Sangakkara was at second spot with 15.

Harris out of Ashes

AFP, Melbourne

Australian paceman Ryan Harris suffered a stress ankle fracture while bowling in the fourth Ashes Test and will require surgery forcing him to miss the rest of the series, Cricket Australia said on Tuesday.

Harris pulled up while bowling the fifth ball of his 29th over and immediately pulled off his left boot and sock.

He limped from the ground with the team physio and a decision is to be taken whether he will bat in the second innings as Australia battle to avoid defeat to England in the fourth Test.

"Ryan Harris developed ankle pain during England's first innings and scans have revealed that he has a stress fracture of his left ankle," team doctor Trevor James said in a statement.

"Ryan is likely to require surgery and will consult a specialist in the next 24 hours."

Rajin helps

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Doleshwar innings together as they failed to gain momentum.

ORIENT-VICTORIA
A four-wicket haul from left-arm spinner Monir Hossain left Orient reeling at 5-58, the job completed by paceman Kamrul Islam Rabbi who took three wickets.

Apart from the Barisal duo, Pakistani all-rounder Arsalan Meer took two for 14 as Orient were knocked out for just 92 runs in 29.4 overs.

Victoria reached the target in 30.2 overs, losing six wickets with Mohammad Sami hitting 25 off 32 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF
CCS: 274-7 in 50 overs (Saikat 77, Tapash 51; Shahadat 3-49)
KALABAGAN: 241 all out in 49.1 overs (Mahmudul 80, Rokibul 41; Bishwanath 4-53)
Result: Kalabagan won by 33 runs.
DOLESHWAR: 198-9 in 50 overs (Nadif 45, Imran 38; Rezwana 4-44)
SURJO TARUN: 199-3 in 44.2 overs (Rajin 85 not out, Junaed 59; Nizamuddin 2-36)
Result: Surjo Tarun won by seven wickets.
ORIENT: 92 all out in 29.4 overs (Ahnoor 21; Monir 4-27, Rabbi 3-48)
VICTORIA: 94-6 in 30.2 overs (Sami 25, Myshukur 18; Zakaria 3-23)
Result: Victoria won by four wickets.

Captain, coach doubt suspended Pak trio?

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi, coach Waqar Younus and security manager Khawaja Najam raised serious doubts about three suspended players to the game's governing body, a report said Tuesday.

Dawn newspaper published excerpts of statements given to the International Cricket Council (ICC) over Pakistan's spot-fixing controversy during its recent England tour that saw Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer suspended.

The statements appear to confirm the three players were in contact with alleged fixer Mazhar Majeed and are likely to impact their case as scheduled to be heard by an ICC tribunal in Doha from January 6-11.

No Pakistan Cricket Board official was reachable for comment Tuesday.

The ICC suspended Butt, Asif and Aamer after British newspaper News of the World claimed several Pakistani players took money to obey orders from Majeed during the team's Lord's Test against England in August.

Scotland Yard raided the Pakistan team's hotel in London and questioned the trio as well as a fourth player Wahab Riaz, who was not suspended.

"During the Scotland Yard search of the players' rooms at the team hotel, two police officers found cash in a bag and a small suitcase which they seized. Most of the cash was in the

suitcase," Dawn quoted Najam as saying.

"I asked the police officers to put on record the amount of money they had confiscated and they did so immediately.

"I have retained that note and attached a copy of it which reads as follows: Room No. 714 -- 24,300 UAE Dirhams, 29,787 pound sterling, 12,617 US dollars, 10 Australian dollars, 26,015 Pakistani rupees, 350 Canadian dollars and 440 South African rand," said Najam.

But, who led Pakistan in the Tests on the England tour after Afridi suddenly retired following the first match, was reportedly staying in room 714.

"While we were there, the police officers asked Salman why he had so much cash in his room and Salman stated: 'It's for my two sisters, they are getting married, it's for their dowry.'"

Najam further added: "I offered them support and told them to cooperate with the police. From Mohammad Aamer's room, a Tag Heuer mobile phone and possibly other mobile phones, 5,000 pounds in cash, a few hundred US dollars and a white envelope with 2,500 pounds was recovered."

The security manager, who resigned earlier this month, further claims that he had watched Majeed mingle with Pakistani players since the World Twenty20 in the West Indies.

Dawn quoted Afridi as saying that he "thought" that the three suspended players looked guilty during the police raid on the hotel.

"They told me that they had done nothing wrong, to which I replied: 'If you have done nothing wrong, there is no need to feel guilty,'"

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 34 Big sandwich, for 1 Request 4 Existed 8 Caffeine-rich nut 12 Muumuu accessory 13 Make over 14 Grand tale 15 Coffee vessel 16 Greek 17 Crooked 18 Time 21 "Golly!" 22 Brother of George W. 23 Summer-time episode, often 26 Crafty one 27 Once around 30 Reed instrument 31 Poke 32 Unuttered "Ah, me" 33 English channel

DOWN 26 The — Four 27 Claiborne of fashion 28 Census stat 29 Third degree? 31 Show to be reasonable 32 Ganges garment 33 Seek damages 35 Makes lean 36 Deform by twisting 37 Vast expanse 38 Guy 39 One side of the Urals 40 Paraphernalia 41 Between jobs 42 Advantage 43 Hibernation location 44 Force measure

Solution time: 27 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

SOYXMWOBQXB TMS IVGN
 XYYOTBOZ IVO-ZIGGXU SKGGW
 XW TXNJOVB, NIM JKHB
 YXGG KB X WKVHGOW SXU.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I ONLY WANT A FEW STREAKS OF DYE TO TINGE MY HAIR, SO PERHAPS I MIGHT LIKE A LITTLE RED HENNA.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: N equals Y

Dhaka school

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chairman Mahfuzur Rahman, vice-chairman Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Ashiyani City deputy managing director Saiful Islam Bhuiyan, Pran Group's country manager Farhan Rashid and BFF vice-president Badal Roy were present.

Saiful Islam Bhuiyan promised to stay with school football and award the man-of-the-tournament with Tk one lakh.

The BFF has a plan to pick talented players from the tournament and give them proper training in the future.



Prize-winners of the Runner Group Victory Day Tennis Championship pose for a group photo at the Naogaon Tennis Club yesterday.