

Eng on the verge of victory

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

Centuries from Alastair Cook and Ian Bell put England within sight of their first series victory in Australia for 24 years after a dominant third day at the final Sydney Ashes Test on Wednesday.

Cook again tormented Australia with 189 while Bell scored his elusive first Ashes century, breaking an 18-Test drought against Australia with 115 to leave England with a commanding 208-run lead and two days play to force a result.

When bad light ended play with five overs left, England were 488 for seven with Matt Prior on 54 and Tim Bresnan yet to score.

It puts the tourists in a strong position having already retained the Ashes after a convincing victory over Australia last week in the fourth Test in Melbourne.

"We obviously had a really good day," Cook said. "But we have to go out and win that first hour tomorrow and get as many runs as we can

to build our lead up then put Australia under some pressure with our bowling."

Cook was finally out driving at Shane Watson and edged to a diving Michael Hussey at gully after tea, while Bell was caught at slip by Michael Clarke off Mitchell Johnson.

The left-handed opener extended his series aggregate to 766 at 127.66, second only to Wally Hammond (905 in 1928-29) for most runs for England in a series in Australia.

Cook, who has batted for almost 36 hours in the series tilted the pendulum towards the tourists with a 154-run sixth-wicket partnership with Bell.

It was his 16th career Test century and he now has 5,130 runs at 47.50.

The Essex left-hander survived a fright on 99 when close-in fielder Phillip Hughes claimed a catch off spinner Michael Beer, only for a referral to show that the ball had bounced just before the fielder's hands.

Bell, who batted for 296 minutes, was also dropped on 84 by legspinner Steven Smith off his own bowling.

Beer finally claimed his maiden

Test wicket when he had the out-of-form Paul Collingwood caught in the deep for 13.

Despite the daunting task ahead of his team, acting captain Clarke has not given up on an against-the-odds Australian win.

"We're going to have to put up a really good fight and get a big total. If we can get somewhere between a 180-200 run lead, on the last day of the SCG Test match, I'm confident we can still win the game."

England, who lead the series 2-1, outplayed the hosts in Adelaide and Melbourne while Australia won the third Test in Perth. The first Brisbane Test was drawn.

England were the last team to beat Australia at the SCG, in 2003.

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 280 (Watson 45, Khawaja 37, Hughes 31, Hussey 33, Smith 18, Johnson 53, Hilfenhaus 34; Anderson 4-66, Bresnan 3-89)

ENGLAND: First innings 488 for 7 (Strauss 60, Cook 189, Pietersen 36, Collingwood 13, Bell 115, Prior 54 not out; Johnson 3-97)



MARATHON MAN: England batsman Alastair Cook unleashes a fierce square cut on the way to his third hundred of the series against Australia on the third day of the fifth Test at Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

School football

SPORTS REPORTER

Rabbi slammed a brilliant hat-trick to power BAF Shaheen Collage to a convincing 5-0 win over Govt. Science annex High School in the second round of the Ashyan City Dhaka Metropolitan School football tournament at the Abahani ground in Dhanmondi yesterday.

Apart from Rabbi's treble, Rony and Awal scored one goal apiece for the Shaheen College.

In the day's other game, Dolairpar High School also recorded a 5-0 win over Siddheswari (boys) High School with Monirul, Faisal, Sajib, Jibon and Tanvir scoring one goal each.

Pak trio's fate in Beloff's hands

AFP, London

Michael Beloff, the man who will oversee the anti-corruption tribunal in Doha that will determine the futures of Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Aamer, has a wealth of experience in the growing field of sport and the law.

Beloff, assisted by Justice Albie Sachs from South Africa and Kenyan Sharad Rao, will decide if the Pakistani trio conspired in the bowling of deliberate no-balls during last year's tour of England - claims they all deny.

The players were provisionally suspended by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in October, with the world governing body's code of conduct carrying a minimum five-year ban if corruption charges are proved.

Lucky to play

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you said you would retire and then there was the issue of your selection...

MR: There's no point in dwelling on these matters. By the grace of Allah, I have played three World Cups. I put my life on the line to play for the country.

DSS: What are your expectations of this World Cup?

MR: If you play a series at home, there is extra pressure. It will be the same during the World Cup. Nobody wants to lose, nobody expects the team to lose, so there will be expectations on the players.

The team management will have to come forward and have a big role. If they can handle the pressure properly, they can play good cricket.

Bell's first & sweetest

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

It took 18 Tests but Ian Bell finally banished a nagging personal Ashes failure on Wednesday by scoring his first century against Australia in the final Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The elegant right-hander, whose previous best against Australia was 87 in Perth over four years ago, reached the landmark with two runs off leg-spinner Steven Smith almost 30 minutes before third day stumps.

Bell's 115 and Alastair Cook's 189 lifted England into a winning position at 488 for seven at the close for a lead of 208 runs with two days left.

The tourists retained the Ashes last week by winning the Melbourne Test, but Wednesday's dominant batting performance has put them in a strong position to record their first series win in Australia for 24 years.

Bell's first Ashes hundred came after 11 half-centuries in 31 innings against Australia.

But he needed some luck along the way and benefited from a reviewed decision after he was given out caught behind on 67

off Shane Watson by umpire Aleem Dar.

Replays could not show any mark on the "hot spot" technology and Dar reversed his decision.

Channel Nine's "snicko" device, not available to the match officials, suggested a thin edge, and Bell's century was greeted with boos from the home faithful among a crowd of 40,300.

"Belly said he wasn't sure and that's why he referred it," his batting partner Cook said.

"He didn't feel it and hot spot didn't show it, he's not sure if he hit it. We don't know if snicko (technology) is entirely right.

Cook said Bell would have walked if he thought he had edged the ball as the technology at the umpires disposal will make a player look foolish to refer an obvious decision.

"I don't think any players are trying to bluff technology. I think you can end up with egg on your face if you try to do it," he said.

The Warwickshire right-hander, who batted for 296 minutes, was also dropped on 84 by Smith off his own bowling.

"It's a little tick on an already outstanding career. He's grown over the last 12 months into a fantastic batter, his runs and stats are phenomenal over the last year," Cook said.

Brothers in dull draw

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of the Bangladesh League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Stadium in Kamalapur today.

Both outfits had been busy during transfer season after roping in national players from two traditional giants Mohammedan and Abahani and both have emerged as new powerhouses to challenge their mighty opponents.

"Initially the players were shocked after the departure of the coach, but it is usual that coach will come and go and our duty is to concentrate on the game. We are now fully focused on the game against Muktiyoddha," said captain Aminul Haque adding that they were still following the schedule prepared by Krajlevic.

Manager Anwarul Karim Helal took 'the mouth-watering game' seriously as he believes that his boys would receive a boost to their morale if they overcome Muktiyoddha Sangsad. Helal informed that left-back Wali Faisal might miss the game and that area is a real concern for them.

On the other hand, Muktiyoddha had a dream start in the season curtain-raising tournament to blow up all opponents on way to the Federation Cup semifinal but they were finally eliminated by Shiekh Jamal through a last-gasp goal by national striker Towhidul Alam Sabuj.

Waugh bronzed at SCG

AFP, Sydney

Former Australian skipper Steve Waugh was immortalised in a bronze sculpture unveiled during the final Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday.

Waugh is shown holding aloft his bat and baggy cap in celebration of his 29th and perhaps most famous Test century, which he completed off the final ball of a day's play against England at the ground in 2003.

"That was probably the most pleasing moment of my career," Waugh said after the unveiling.

"There were about 30,000 people at the ground that day, but probably 100,000 people have told me they were there."

Nadal, Federer advance

AFP, Doha

Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal took very different first steps towards what could be the 23rd shoot-out of their famous rivalry on Saturday in the Qatar Open.

Nadal, the youngest player ever to win all four Grand Slams, won comfortably against Karol Beck, his 6-3, 6-0 success over the former top 40 Slovakian containing trademark heavyweight forehands struck from improbable positions.

But Federer, the holder of a record 16 Grand Slam titles, had to survive three successive set points against Thomas Schoorel and to save six break points in all in a 7-6 (7-3), 6-4 win.



PHOTO: AFP

Spain's world number one Rafael Nadal plays a forehand return against Slovakian Karol Beck during the Qatar Open in Doha on Tuesday.

V-Day hockey final today

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank and Mukto-bihanga moved into the final of the Dhaka Bank Victory Day Hockey tournament after defeating their respective rivals in the semifinals at Maulana Bhasani National Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Sonali Bank thrashed Bangladesh Army 5-1 in the second semi after Mukto-bihanga had registered a 13-11 win over Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protishtan (BKSP) in a tiebreaker as the regulation time ended in a 2-2 draw.

The final takes place today at 3pm at the same venue where state minister for youth and sports Ahad Ali Sarker will be present as chief guest.

BCB reduces

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but we have decided to increase it. The ticket selling date for the opening ceremony and the practice matches will be disclosed tomorrow," added Yunus.

He also informed that, so far, seventy five percent tickets were sold out from the different branches of City Bank and Agrani Bank across the country.

"All the details regarding ticket selling will be disclosed on January 11. The unsold tickets will be sold from the venue," he said.

Dale gives up on Sachin

Cricket

PTI, Cape Town

He bowled one of the most hostile spell of fast bowling one had witnessed this season but Dale Steyn feels that when Sachin Tendulkar is in his element, it is better to focus on trying to get other batsmen out.

"Sachin's a very good player. There's no point wasting energy bowling at him. You focus on the other guys. But if you bowl a good ball to him or a No. 11 it remains a good ball," the fearsome spearhead of the Proteas attack complimented the maestro for his masterful 146 which provided India a slender first innings lead.

Steyn, inarguably the best bowler among either sides in the current series is happy that he is able to generate swing at a good pace.

"It does shape nicely. It's always nice to get wickets. It was even more fulfilling because Kallis wasn't there to bowl for us. To bowl 30 overs in the heat was quite tough. The job's only halfway done," said the bowler who had figures of five for 75 to

show for his efforts.

Although South African bowlers were unlucky not to have got wickets even after bowling good deliveries, Steyn feels there is no point in wasting time thinking over it.

"You just have to pick yourself up. There's no point crying about not picking up wickets. That's Test cricket for you. Just the other day, I played in Abu Dhabi and Dubai and didn't pick up any wickets. If you play long enough, bowl in the right areas, wickets will come," he added.

Although South Africa are leading by 50 runs, Steyn refused to predict what will be a winning score on this track.

"We haven't really thought about it. We first want to bat and get into a position from where we can't lose the game. We just really want to bat well tomorrow," the bowler stated.

Steyn agreed that the second new ball is doing a fair bit but it's a struggle after that.

"It seems like the new ball seems to do a little bit. If batsmen can survive the new ball, then the ball gets a bit softer and the bowlers really have to struggle to get wickets."

Sohel lifts BPGA title

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overnight lead of two strokes. That gave me enough strength and confidence to win the title," said Sohel, holding the 2-lakh taka cheque.

Runner-up Siddikur had started the day two strokes behind Sohel and got further behind after playing two bogeys on the first and third hole. The 27-year-old was dissatisfied with his performance.

"After the first round, I did not get my rhythm. It happens to everyone and I

shall come back strongly in the next tournaments," said Siddikur.

However the first Asian tour event winner from the country welcomed the advent of a new star: "I'm happy to see Sohel's skill and performance. Hope I'll get a good partner to share my experience and earn more laurels for the country together."

The top 25 finishers of the tournament each earned a chunk of the ten-lakh-taka prize money with Sohel bagging two lakh and Siddikur one. The

four-day tournament was sponsored by BTI, one of the most prominent real estate developers in the country while The Daily Star, Radio Foorti and ATN Bangla were the media partners of the event.

India face

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SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 341 (Smith 29, Petersen 22, De Villiers 13, Prince 22, Kallis 109 not out, Boucher 55, Steyn 32, Morkel 28; Harbhajan 7-120)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	40 Still, in	DOWN	18 La-la lead-in
1 Collision	6 Got sore	42 Spanish hors d'oeuvre	43 Fool
11 Jenna Elfman TV role	12 Tiny	14 Eminem, for one	15 Finale
16 "Guinness Book" suffix	17 Irate	19 Judge Lance	20 On
22 Second person	23 War god	24 Showed over	26 "No more wire —!"
28 Snapshot	30 Appomattox also-ran	31 Friendly	35 Provide
39 "A — home is ..."	40 Still, in poetry	42 Spanish hors d'oeuvre	43 Fool
	44 Big parties	46 Gasoline stat	47 Electronic insecticide
	49 Sharply dressed	51 "Seinfeld" role	52 Belong naturally
	53 Rage	54 Horseman's handful	
	1 Pure	2 Bird of prey	3 Dadaist artist
	4 Eurasian duck	5 Dwight's predecessor	6 True
	7 Hexagonal state	8 Swab	9 Sovereign's domain
	10 Hopeful loser?	11 Gloomy	13 Intersect
	18 La-la lead-in	21 Half a 1960s quartet	23 Rep
	25 Penpoint	27 Originally named	29 Less confusing
	31 Stupefy	32 Spice mixture, in	33 Yoke
	34 Slithery one	36 Get wet	37 Amphetamines
	38 Tidal flood	41 Bottom point	44 DNA component
	45 Logical	48 Glutton	50 — Beta Kappa

Solution time: 27 mins.

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GONER MANATEE
UNITED NEAR
GEM FOR BASSO
EVIL NASAL
LATEST ISOMER
ADOBE GAME
FOLKS OVA NUB
ERIE SWEETS
MANDATE SUITE
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CRYPTOQUIP

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E U X S S A Z G Q Y W Z N T W X F L .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE I ACTUALLY VIEWED ALL THOSE DELEGATES VOTING "YES," I WOULD SAY I WAS AN AYE-WITNESS.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals F