

Aussies take lead

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

India have still to win on their Australia tour after losing the first of two Twenty20 internationals by 31 runs to the home side at the Sydney Olympic Stadium on Wednesday.

Before the biggest crowd for a single day's cricket in Sydney of almost 60,000, Australia rattled up 171 for four off their 20 overs after being sent into bat and reduced India to 140 for six.

India were hoping to bounce back to form in the shorter version after being thrashed 4-0 in their Test series against Michael Clarke's Australians.

Matthew Wade, who is keeping wicketkeeper Brad Haddin out of Australia's T20 and one-day teams, justified his selection with a man-of-the-match performance with 72 off 43 balls and slick glove work behind the stumps.

Wade smashed three sixes and five fours opening the innings with David Warner, who made 25 off 14 balls before he was the first wicket down.

Warner, coming off Australia's Test series win over India, thrilled the large crowd with an audacious six as he switched from his normal left handed grip to right hand to send the ball careering over deep extra cover into the stands.

Warner hit two sixes and took 19 off Ravi Ashwin's second over before he was out when he skied Vinay Kumar to Suresh Raina at extra cover.

Wade raced to 70 before a rain delay affected his concentration and he was out

two runs later after the restart in play.

David Hussey cracked 42 off 30 balls with three sixes and a four before he was out attempting a big slog only to be bowled by Rahul Sharma on the penultimate delivery of the innings.

India again started disastrously, losing Virender Sehwag on the third ball of Brett Lee's opening over for four and he was followed by a steady procession of teammates back to the dressing room.

Opening partner Gautam Gambhir made 20 off 14 balls and Virat Kohli was splendidly caught near the boundary ropes by Warner for 22 giving 40-year-old leg-spinner Brad Hogg his first wicket for Australia in four years.

Rohit Sharma, who has waited all tour for a chance to bat for India in the Test series, was bowled for a first ball duck by David Hussey and Raina scored 14 off 15 balls before he was bowled by Dan Christian.

Only skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni showed any resistance with three sixes and a four in an unbeaten 48 off 43 balls, while Ashwin remained 15 not out.

Christian and Hussey finished with two wickets each for Australia.

The crowd of 59,659 broke the previous record of 58,446 set 83 years ago when Australia played England in a Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground on December 15, 1928.

The second T20 match takes place at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday.

SCOREBOARD
AUSTRALIA
Warner c Raina b Vinay 25
Wade b Raina 72
Birt c Raina b Ashwin 17
Hussey b Sharma 42
Bailey not out 12
Marsh not out 0
Extras: (lb-1, w-2) 3
Total: (For 4 wks in 20 overs) 171
Did not bat: Christian, Faulkner, Hogg, Lee, Doherty
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-79, 3-135, 4-170

bowler

Ashwin 4 0 34 1
Kumar 3 0 34 0
Vinay 4 0 28 1
Raina 3 0 22 1
Rahul 3.4 0 27 1
Rohit 0.2 0 2 0
Jadeja 2 0 23 0

INDIA
Gambhir c Marsh b Hussey 20
Sehwag c Hussey b Lee 4
Faulkner 22
Raina b Christian 14
Sharma b Hussey 0
Dhoni not out 48
Jadeja c Warner b Christian 7
Ashwin not out 15
Extras: (lb-3, w-6, nb-1) 10
Total: (For 6 wks in 20 overs) 140
Did not bat: Rahul, Vinay, Kumar
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-47, 3-53, 4-53, 5-72, 6-81

Result: Australia won by 31 runs.
Man-of-the-match: Matthew Wade.
Toss: India.



Matthew Wade of Australia hits out against India during their T20 International in Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Djokovic has two targets

AFP, Belgrade

Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic said Tuesday that his main focus this year would be on the Olympic Games and the French Open, a Grand Slam win that would see him hold all four major titles at once.

The French Open was the only Grand Slam that Djokovic failed to win last season as he went as far as the semifinals for the third time.

"The Grand Slam tournaments and the Olympic Games are my priority this year," Djokovic told the Politika daily in an interview published Tuesday.

"Honestly probably Roland Garros is my number one priority but my ambition is unchanged and I'd like to win all tournaments I play in," the world number one said.

The five-time Grand Slam winner was confident of his chances on clay in France.

Biggies bat for Dhoni

Cricket

REUTERS, New Delhi

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's offer to step aside as India captain if a "better" candidate can be found is a noble gesture given the team's woeful run of Test form, but several former skippers believe the wicketkeeper remains the best man for the job.

Under Dhoni, India won the Twenty20 (2007) and 50-over (2011) World Cups and also became the top-ranked Test team, prompting many observers to hail him as the country's greatest ever leader.

In less than a year since India hit those heady heights, that assessment has been revised after India's eight consecutive overseas Test defeats, seven under Dhoni, and some believe the side need a new captain in the longer format of the game.

Former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, however, is not among them.

"Captain-bashing is a favourite pastime of cricket pundits in the Indian subcontinent and the media just loves it," Akram wrote in his column for www.espstar.com.

Dhoni's announcement to pave way for a more suitable candidate after his team got blanked in Australia.

"Dhoni must have deeply felt it, the 4-0 loss. So what he wanted to say is that he is ready to play under a captain if the BCCI [Board of Control for Cricket in India] can get one, and that is exactly what you expect from a team man like him," Gavaskar added.

Former Australia captain Steve Waugh also saw no logic in the demand to replace Dhoni.

"...there is no point in changing captains for the sake of it," Waugh wrote in a column that appeared in Wednesday's Times of India newspaper.

Especially if it meant entrusting swash-buckling opener Virender Sehwag with the duty, as has been suggested in the Indian media.

"I don't think Sehwag has shown the inspiration, responsibility and form to assume the mantle right now, and truth be told, I'm disappointed with the way he has not shouldered his responsibility in the series," Waugh said.

Mash to lead Gladiators

SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has been named captain of Dhaka Gladiators in the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20.

Dhaka Gladiators has former national skipper Mohammad Ashraful as their icon player but Mashrafe has been made captain as the team management considered his experience and leadership quality.

"We think he is the best possible option for the job if he is fit. I was really impressed by his bowling in the last three league matches. Mashrafe proved himself a good leader and he has got the quality to lead the team from the front," said former national captain turned selector Habibul Bashar, who is chief consultant of the Dhaka Gladiators.

The "Narail Express" returned to competitive cricket after nine months' break due to knee injury.

Karate team win gold in India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh won one gold, two silver and two bronze medals in the 4th Asian Goju-Ryu Karate Championship which was held last week at the Jamshedpur Tata Nagar New Badminton Sports Complex in Jharkhand, India, said a press release from the Bangladesh Goju Ryu Karate Association yesterday.

Kamrun Nahar Shathe won gold in the women's 70kg category, Saiful Islam Sohag won silver in men's 60kg category, Motirul Rahaman won silver in men's 65kg category, Sayed Zakir Hossain won bronze in men's 70kg category and Sanjoy won bronze in men's 60kg category.

Bangladesh's representative and Asian Goju-Ryu Karate Federation treasurer Khaled Monsur Chowdhury received special prize for the development of the game in this region.

The three day meet was participated by Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and hosts India. The hosts won highest number of medals.

Div-II football

SPORTS REPORTER

PWD Sports Club beat BG Press Sports and Recreation Club by 3-2 goals in their Dhaka Mahanagori 2nd Division Football League match at the Brishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday. Dipon, Nayan and Kabir netted one goal each for PWD while Biplob, Azad scored for BG Press.

Whitewash eating Eng

Cricket

AFP, Dubai

Spin-weary England will be desperate to avoid the humiliation of a series whitewash against Pakistan in the third and final Test which starts at Dubai Stadium on Friday.

Andrew Strauss's men, pulverised by Pakistan spinners Saeed Ajmal and Abdul Rehman, are also in danger of losing their world number one spot after a dismal 10-wicket defeat in Dubai and the 72-run capitulation in Abu Dhabi.

Pakistan have never inflicted a Test series whitewash on England, who topped the Test rankings in August last year with an unbeaten nine series sequence, but have seen 34 of their 40 wickets tumble on tour to Pakistan's spinners.

Off-spinner Ajmal has led the destruction with 17 scalps while left-armer Rehman has claimed 12 wickets and Mohammad Hafeez five.

England need to win to guarantee their top spot on April 1 -- the cut-off date for a 175,000 dollars award to the side sitting at the top of the ICC Test championship table.

But their celebrated batting order has so far failed to answer the challenge laid down by Pakistan's wily spinners.

Jonathan Trott (141 in four innings) tops their batting chart, while Andrew Strauss (68) and Alastair Cook (109) have failed to provide strong starts.

Key batsmen Kevin Pietersen (17 in four innings), Ian Bell (36) and Eoin Morgan (41) have also struggled to cope with the slower ball as England lost the first Test in three days and the second in four.

The tourists will resist the temptation of replacing Morgan with Ravi Bopara whose last Test innings was a 44 not out, against India at The Oval.

"Pakistan have thoroughly deserved their victory in the series," he said. "We've been below where we want to be and we need to come back and bounce back strongly from this."

"As a batting unit we have to hold our hands up and say we haven't been good enough, it's been pretty apparent, we need to be better than that," said Strauss, whose last hundred came 30 months ago.

The defeats have left no doubt about England's vulnerability to the slow ball on subcontinental wickets, a weakness they will need to address before tours to Sri Lanka and India later in the year.

"If you take the point of view, which I think you've got to, that you learn as much from your defeats as you do from your victories then I think we've learned some valuable lessons going forward," Strauss said.

"It's not easy in these conditions, in these circumstances but we're good enough players to be able to adjust to the conditions we've encountered."

Under Strauss' stewardship England have won only twice on the subcontinent -- both times against minnows Bangladesh.

Pakistan are chasing the whitewash as they look to climb the Test rankings and captain Misbahul Haq has vowed his team will be going for the jugular in Dubai.

"We will try our level best to do the same we did in the first two Tests, we have the best team up against us so they can come back in the series, but what is in our control we will do," said Misbah, who has not lost a series since taking over in October 2010.

"We need to do our hundred per cent and be focused for good cricket."

The Dubai Stadium pitch, which provided help to spinners from the first day of the opening Test, is likely to continue its assistance to slow bowlers.

DOHS's spin formula exposes

FROM PAGE 16

Peter Trego of Abahani leading the way. The Englishman's 19 wickets is, at this stage, joint highest with Mohammedan left-arm spinner Yasim Mortuza, an anomaly especially given the poor performance of most of his brigade. The Somerset man has accuracy and variation (which is also accurate), using the slower ball more regularly than the others.

"I don't see any of the local guys bowling the slower ball as regularly or accurately as

Trego does. He is much disciplined," said Mahmud, who went on to point out a few flaws in the development of a fast bowler.

"For precision, you need to practice a lot. I think we need pace bowling camps and the bowlers themselves have to practice a lot more than they do these days."

"When I used to get hit, I would devise new ways so that I can keep the batsmen quiet. I developed cutters, but these days I don't see anyone trying anything different and being accurate with it," he said.



Winners and officials pose for a photo after the completion of the 8th Hosaf President Cup Golf Tournament at the Kurmitola Golf Club recently.

PHOTO: COURTESY

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Practice boxing
5 Has permission
8 Suspend
12 Mah-jongg piece
13 Yoko of music
14 By word of mouth
15 Surmounting
16 Kvetch
17 Shrek is one
18 Fancy French cake
20 Offer as an example
22 \$ dispenser
23 Comic
24 Light measure
27 Lengthwise and contiguous
32 Hearty quaff
33 "The Matrix" role

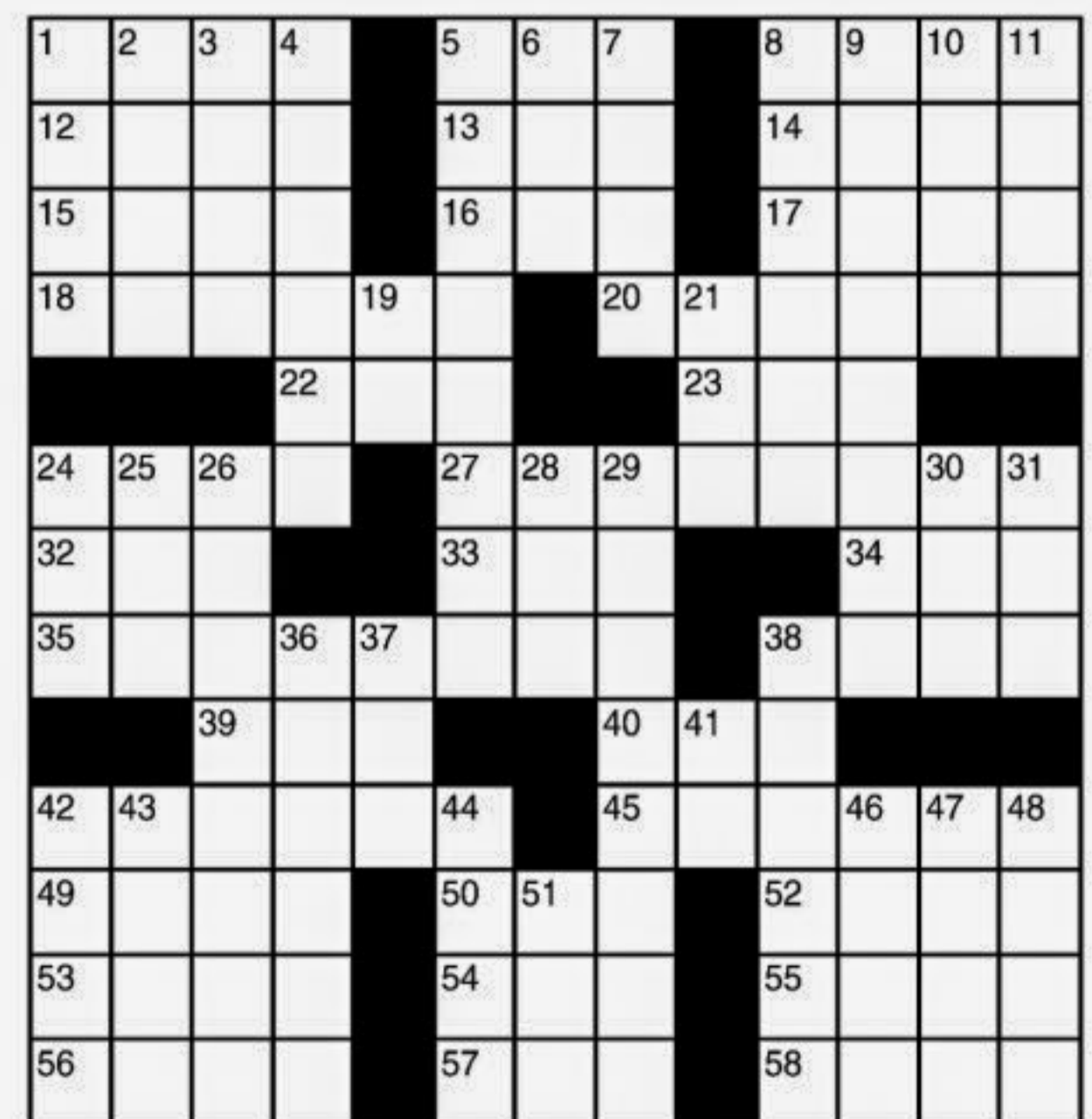
34 "There's — in team"
35 Huge
38 Norms (Abbr.)
39 Gls' entertainers
40 Work with
42 "The — of the Shrew"
45 Finicky cat in TV ads
49 Eye layer
50 Gorilla
52 Facility
53 German city
54 PC linking system
55 Cleo's river

56 Picnic invaders
57 "Guinness Book" suffix
58 Paradise

19 What @ means
21 Banned pesticide
24 Humorist
25 — Baba
26 Enveloping membrane
28 Verdi's "—"
31 Insult (Sl.)
36 Easterners
37 "Smoking or —?"
38 Tranquil
41 Therefore
42 Big brass
43 Shakespeare's river
44 Strong wind
46 Incursion
47 Wight or Man
48 Witnessed
51 — de deux

Solution time: 25 mins.

T M A M S O L G E A R
K A L E A D O E X P O
R E X P L O D E D O P E D
A I S L E E N D U R E
O R A L E E N
B R E W F L E W G A Y
E X C R A W L S E N E
A M P H O M E A D D S
E R A A S P S
M I L L O R D S H A R I
O S L O E X P I A T E D
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CRYPTOQUIP

LMSZU ASPQ XAD HMPMXEIQ
PUEJUILL EIU FIESXUJ USXIQ
MSXA XGML DPEZU, ML
XGEX FUSUIEP EJHMLLMAS?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NURSERY RHYME ABOUT A BEAST OF BURDEN THAT COULD BE QUITE QUICK ON ITS FEET: "YAK BE NIMBLE."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals S

ICC to have its security

FROM PAGE 16

Emirates. Pakistan have invited Bangladesh for a three-match one-day series in April this year in their bid to revive international cricket at home.

The Bangladesh government will send a delegation to Pakistan in mid-February to assess security in the country before clearing the tour.

BJMC's

FROM PAGE 16

for them and the victory would help them grow more confident in the upcoming matches.

BJMC coach Jakaria Babu said that his charges started from where they left in the Federation Cup and that they would put on consistent performances in the league to present a different flavour of play.

Kamal's future

FROM PAGE 16

the meeting of the Board of which I am a part.

"I can still be the president in the post 2014 period," said the 65-year-old Kamal, president of the Bangladesh Board since September 2009.