

England ahead 2-nil

Cricket

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Alastair Cook hit a second successive hundred to guide England to a 20-run win over Pakistan in the second day-night international on Wednesday, giving his team a 2-0 lead in the four-match series.

England put up a challenging 250-4 powered by Cook's 102 before they bowled well to restrict Pakistan to 230 in 49 overs at Abu Dhabi Stadium.

Misbahul Haq failed to match his counterpart during his 59-ball 47 as Pakistan lost track after being well set at 179-4, needing 72 in the last 11.1 overs.

Steven Finn, who took four wickets in the first match, finished with the identical figures of 4-34 to anchor England's win.

Pakistan got off to a good start with Mohammad Hafeez (26) and Imran Farhat (47) notching 61 by the 16th over before Hafeez was caught at mid-wicket off James Anderson.

Farhat, who hit five boundaries, added 31 for the second wicket with Azhar Ali (31) before Samit Patel took two wickets in the space of 12 runs, removing Ali and

Younis Khan (five).

Farhat fell to a silly run out, leaving Misbah and Umar Akmal (21) to add 37 for the fifth wicket before Patel took a smart diving catch at cover to send Umar back with 72 still needed off 11.1 overs.

Shahid Afridi briefly threatened England with a run-a-ball 18 but his wicket and Craig Kieswetter's sky-high catch to dismiss Misbah settled the issue for England.

Cook said he was confident that 250 was a winning total.

"It was a slightly different pitch from Monday on which a 250-total was good enough and we bowled well upfront. Finn was again outstanding," said Cook, who won a second successive man-of-the-match award.

Misbah said fielding made the difference.

"I think the batsmen showed improvement, but the fielding was the main difference. We lost wickets in cluster," said Misbah, whose team lost their last five wickets for 23 runs.

Earlier Cook scored his fourth hundred -- the first England captain and ninth batsmen for his country to hit back-to-back hundreds in one-dayers -- to carry on the good work after his

career-best 137 in Monday's win in the series opener.

The 27-year-old left-hander put on 67 for the opening wicket with Kevin Pietersen (26) after England won their second successive toss and batted.

He also added 49 with Jonathan Trott (23) for the second and 78 for the third with Ravi Bopara who made an attractive 58.

Cook was again at his fluent best, hitting 10 boundaries off 121 balls before he gave a return catch to leg-spinner Shahid Afridi in the 42nd over.

He hit paceman Umar Gul for two boundaries to reach 99 and then took a single off Abdul Rehman to reach the three-figure mark as he carried the batting right from the off.

England, who remained unchanged from the first match, also owed their progress to a dropped catch by part-time wicket-keeper Umar Akmal who let Cook off on 28 off Afridi, a costly laspe for Pakistan.

Ajmal, who finished with 1-54, again provided the breakthrough when he trapped Pietersen leg-before in the 16th over.

Paceman Cheema had Trott caught behind before Cook and Bopara followed

their 131-run stand in the first match with another solid partnership.

Bopara, who hit four boundaries during his 66-ball knock, gave the finishing touch to the innings with a 56-run stand for the fourth wicket with Eoin Morgan whose 25 not out had onesix.

The third and fourth matches will be played in Dubai on Saturday and Tuesday.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND: 250 for 4 (Cook 102, Bopara 58, Pietersen 26, Morgan 25 not out, Trott 23; Cheema 2-49)

PAKISTAN

Hafeez c Trott b Anderson	26			
Farhat run out	47			
Azhar b Patel	31			
Younis lbw b Patel	5			
Misbah c Kieswetter b Broad	47			
Akmal c Patel b Finn	21			
Afridi b Anderson	18			
Rehman b Finn	1			
Gul lbw b Finn	5			
Ajmal not out	7			
Cheema b Finn	1			
Extras: (b-1, lb-11, nb-1, w-8)	21			
Total: (All out in 49 overs)	230			
Fall of wickets: 1-61, 2-92, 3-104, 4-142, 5-179, 6-207, 7-217, 8-217, 9-222				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Finn	10	1	34	4
Anderson	9	1	36	2
Broad	10	0	54	1
Swann	8	0	33	0
Bopara	2	0	10	0
Patel	10	0	51	2

Result: England won by 20 runs and lead

Cook-ing English wins

Cricket

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Captain Alastair Cook's simple recipe of playing hard has exposed cracks in the Pakistan team, leaving England with an invincible 2-0 lead after their 20-run win in the second day-night match.

Pakistan, who blanked England 3-0 in the preceding Test series, looked disjointed in the first two matches and now need to win the remaining two on Saturday and Tuesday, both in Dubai.

Pakistan failed to chase a target of 261 in the first match and 251 in the second -- defeats which saw captain Misbahul Haq and coach Mohsin Khan avoid the mandatory post-match news conferences.

Asked why the captain and coach did not attend, opener Mohammad Hafeez said: "When you do well and even when you don't do well, you have to face the media. It is not that nobody wants to face the media."

England rode on a second successive hundred by Cook -- the first England captain to hit back-to-back centuries in one-day cricket -- to post a challenging 250-4 on Wednesday before Steven Finn (4-34) restricted Pakistan to 230 in 49 overs.

Cook had scored his best one-day score of 137 while Finn had identical figures in England's big 130-run win in the first match in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

Hafeez gave credit to England.

"The ball was seaming more and was spinning a bit more later. England bowled really well. It became a bit difficult batting second under lights," said Hafeez, accepting Pakistan could not carry the Test win momentum.

"Definitely, we were thinking at coming harder in the one-dayers as well. Credit goes to the England team. They really played good cricket. And Cook played a solid knock in the last two ODIs.

"We can still come back very hard because we believe in our team. We have too many match winners in our side and anybody can come in and win the game for Pakistan," said Hafeez who scored only five and 26 in two defeats.

Cook said England were not going get complacent despite their wins.

"You train like it's still 0-0. Complacency has never been an issue with this England side, whether we win or lose games of cricket.

"It will never be easy, but it's a great situation to be in -- 2-0 up with two to go," said Cook, adding he had transformed after being written off as one-day player.

"When I'd played those first 20-odd games, I knew if I wanted to play one-day cricket for England I'd have to improve. I've changed the way I play one-day cricket," said Cook, who was made one-day captain in May last year.

Wednesday's hundred was his third as captain following a 119 against Sri Lanka at Lord's last year.

Cook was full of praised for Finn.

"He was our outstanding performer in India, and never really got the wickets he deserved," said Cook of England's 5-0 one-day defeat in India last year.

"He's got two 'four-fors' -- and that opening spell of five overs for six was quality, running in and bowling 90mph and landing it on a sixpence."

Both teams play three Twenty20 internationals in Dubai (February 23 and 25) and in Abu Dhabi (February 27).

Symonds quits cricket totally

CRICINFO, Melbourne

Andrew Symonds, the former Australia all-rounder, has announced his retirement from professional cricket, citing family reasons. He hasn't played for Australia since being sent home from the World Twenty20 in England three years ago but has turned out for several domestic sides in limited-overs cricket.

His only current contract was with the Mumbai Indians, but he will not be participating in this year's IPL. "Effective immediately, I am retiring from all forms of professional cricket," Symonds said. "It is with regret that I will not be able to fulfill my final year of the IPL with the Mumbai Indians. Mumbai Indians and the IPL have both been very supportive of me, but the impending arrival of my first child is a priority."

Renewing

FROM PAGE 16 way ahead of a depleted Mohammedan, who suffered elimination from the group stages of the Federation Cup and struggled to win their first league match.

On the other hand, Abahani, who reached the Federation Cup semifinals before being eliminated by eventual champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, are flying high after recording two comprehensive victories in a row and ready to go one better against their rivals.

"It is a great match in the opening stage of the league. When the opponents are Mohammedan, there is no way but to be serious and we will play a positive and attacking brand of football," said Abahani's Iranian coach Ali Akbar Parmoslemi yesterday.

Mohammedan coach Emeka is well aware of his weaker side and planning to play accordingly. "This team is never good enough to fight equally against a team like Abahani. Our only strength against Abahani could have been the team spirit but we do not even have that as we did not get any time to build up for that," a frustrated Emeka told reporters.

"Now I will try to make my young players feel excited, telling them about the long-time rivalry between the two clubs and use that excitement to put up a good fight," said the Nigerian striker.



PHOTO: AFP

Lucie Safarova of the Czech Republic celebrates after beating former world number one Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark at the Qatar Open in Doha on Wednesday.

Wozniacki gone too

Tennis

AFP, Doha

Caroline Wozniacki, playing her first match since losing her world number one ranking, crashed out of the Qatar Open on Wednesday, squandering three match points in a 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) defeat to Lucie Safarova.

There was also misery for defending champion Vera Zvonareva who quit with a hip injury midway through her second round match against Romania's Monica Niculescu.

Czech left-hander Safarova saved three match points in the third set and played a superb tiebreaker to set up a third round clash with Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova, who defeated compatriot Maria Kirilenko 6-4, 6-4. Wozniacki, seeded two but now ranked at four in the world, was deposed from the world top spot when she was knocked out of the Australian Open quarter-finals.

"I just want to get out of here [the press conference room]. You don't want to stay when you lose a match like that," Wozniacki.

"It's really disappointing but you have to move on," added the Dane, who was runner up twice in Doha -- in the 2010 season-ending championships and last year's Qatar Open.

There were no such problems, however, for newly-crowned world number one and Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka who cruised into the third round, beating Germany's Mona Barthel 6-1, 6-0.

The Belarussian top seed will now take on Romania's Simona Halep.

Safarova, who is now 2-1 in career clashes with Wozniacki, said: "Unless you win the final point, the match is not over."

"I just wanted to keep fighting. It feels absolutely amazing," added the 25-year-old,

who has won four titles on the WTA Tour.

Even the presence of golfer boyfriend Rory McIlroy couldn't inspire Wozniacki as she made several unforced errors on big points to allow Safarova back into the match in the second set.

The Dane also failed to take advantage of three match points in the 10th game of the third.

Buoyed by the let-off, Safarova really turned it on in the tiebreaker, pulling away after the scores were tied 3-3, a lucky net cord giving her a 4-3 lead.

A cracking double-handed backhand passing shot saw the Czech go up 5-3.

Earlier Zvonareva's hip problem came back to haunt her for the second consecutive week when she called it quits after trailing Niculescu.

Niculescu had taken the first set 7-5 and was leading 3-2 in the second when Zvonareva, the sixth seed, decided she couldn't take the pain anymore.

Last week in Pattaya, Zvonareva quit during her quarterfinal match with another Romanian, Sorana Cirstea, who was taking on Australia's Samantha Stosur in Doha later on Wednesday.

Earlier, fourth-seeded Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland thrashed Great Britain's Anne Keothavong 6-1, 6-2, while French fifth seed Marion Bartoli also had it easy, beating Spaniard Anabel Medina Garrigues 6-2, 6-0.

Serb eighth seed Jelena Jankovic fell to Israeli Shahar Peer 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 while compatriot Ana Ivanovic also bowed out, losing to 6-4, 6-4 to the Czech Republic's Petra Cetkovska.

US Open champion Samantha Stosur of Australia advanced beating Romania's Sorana Cirstea 6-4, 7-6 (7/4).

Yuvi tweets good news

AFP, New Delhi

India's World Cup cricket hero Yuvraj Singh issued an upbeat health report on Thursday after undergoing chemotherapy for a malignant cancer tumour between his lungs.

"Got very good news... The tumor is almost way out of the system... Second cycle has started," the 30-year-old all-rounder said via Twitter from the United States, where he is receiving treatment.

Left-handed Yuvraj, named man-of-the-tournament after India's World Cup triumph at home in April last year, was diagnosed with cancer soon after the event ended.

Thousands of well-wishers, including US cycling great Lance Armstrong, have sent messages of support to the player, who is known for his aggressive batting and disciplined spin bowling.

Yuvraj, who scored 362 runs and bagged 15 wickets in nine World Cup matches, has not played competitive cricket since taking part in two of the three home Tests against the West Indies in November.

He has scored 8,051 runs in 274 one-dayers and 1,775 in 37 Tests since making his international debut in 2000.

Local Snippets

FROM PAGE 16

Armanitola led the first half 2-0 with one each strike from Shihab and Sabbir. Later Shihab made it 3-0 in the 57th minute before Abdul Karim sealed the match in the 61st minute with a field goal.

Shihab of Armanitola, Sabuj Hossain of Fatullah Pilot School and Sohel Suwadya were adjudged the best player of their respective teams and they were awarded one-year tuition fees as well as Tk 6000 each.

School Football

Three more schools advanced to the next round of the National School Football Islami Bank Tournament after emerging their respective Upazila champions yesterday.

Krishnardanghi High School defeated Puradiya High School 1-0 in the tiebreaker to emerge Nagarkanda Upazila champions, Aftab Uddin Memorial High School defeated Manikganj Model High School to become Netrokona Sadar Upazila champions and Rajshahi Model School & College defeated Lokonath High School to emerge Rajshahi Sadar Upazila champions.

Pallima Badminton

Three players moved into the next round of men's singles in the Prime Bank Pallima Badminton Tournament beating their respective rivals at the club premises yesterday.

Gautam defeated Tareq 21-15, 21-16, Liton routed Sabbir 21-7, 21-10 and Pesta beat Tanmoy 21-19 and 21-24.

Siddikur finishes 33rd

Despite having played one-under-par, Bangladesh's sensational golfer Siddikur Rahman finished the first round of Avantha Masters in 33rd position along with 14 players yesterday in New Delhi.

Siddikur played a one-under-par 71 while countryman Jamal Hossain Mollah played a four-over-par 76 to stay in the 112th position along with 8 players.

Scotland's Peter Whiteford and Spain's Alejandro Canizares dominated the leader board after completing

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