

India set for big win

Cricket

PTI, Hyderabad

Cheteshwar Pujara struck his second Test double century to ensure a huge first-innings lead as India took a stranglehold of the second Test against a hapless Australia on Monday.

Pujara's masterly knock of 204 and his record 370-run partnership with Murali Vijay (167) helped India pile up a commanding 503, giving the hosts a lead of 266 runs on the third day at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

Such was the impact of the Pujara-Vijay effort that India managed to cross the 500-run mark despite losing their last nine wickets for only 116 runs.

With a huge cushion under their belt, off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin came out all guns blazing, dismissing David Warner (26) and Phillip Hughes (0) in quick succession as Australia finished the day at a shaky 74 for two in their second innings.

Both Warner and Hughes were guilty of trying to sweep Ashwin deliveries, which pitched on the leg-stump before disturbing their stumps.

At the close of play, Australia required another 192 runs to avoid an innings defeat, and Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Co going 2-0 up in the four-match series seemed inevitable.

With still two more days to go, the question now is not how but when will India wrap up the match.

While the second day totally belonged to Vijay and Pujara, the duo did its bit on the third day as they frustrated a lacklustre Australian attack which looked clueless and waiting for the batsmen to make mistakes.

While Vijay hit 23 boundaries and two sixes in his 361-ball knock, Team India's newest 'run-machine', Pujara's magnificent knock, spanning 341 balls, was laced with 30 boundaries and a six.

SCOREBOARD

AUSTRALIA: First innings 237 for 9 (Hughes 19, Watson 23, Clarke 91, Wade 62; Kumar 3-53, Harbhajan 2-52, Jadeja 3-33)

INDIA: First innings (overnight 311 for 1)

Vijay c Cowan b Maxwell 167

Sehwag c Wade b Siddle 6

Pujara c Doherty b Pattinson 204

Tendulkar c Wade b Pattinson 7

Kohli c Cowan b Maxwell 34

Dhoni c Doherty b Maxwell 44

Jadeja c & b Maxwell 10

Ashwin c Hughes b Doherty 1

Harbhajan c Maxwell b Doherty 0

Kumar not out 10

Sharma not out 2

Extras: (b-1, lb-13, w-4) 18

Total: (All out in 154.1 overs) 503

Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-387, 3-393, 4-

404, 5-460, 6-484, 7-485, 8-489, 9-

491.

Bowler O M R W

Pattinson 29 11 80 2

Siddle 31 6 92 1

Henriques 21 7 45 0

Doherty 46.1 15 131 3

Maxwell 26 2 127 4

Warner 1 0 14 0

AUSTRALIA: Second innings

Cowan not out 26

Warner b Ashwin 26

Hughes b Ashwin 0

Watson not out 9

Extras: (b-7, lb-6) 13

Total: (For 2 wkt in 32 overs) 74

To bat: Clarke, Wade, Maxwell, Henriques, Siddle, Pattinson, Doherty.

Fall of wickets: 1-56, 2-56.

Bowler O M R W

Kumar 6 4 7 0



PHOTO: INTERNET

Cheteshwar Pujara raises his bat after reaching his double hundred on the 3rd day of the 2nd Test against Australia in Hyderabad yesterday.

Weather keeps Tigers guessing

FROM PAGE 16

It is expected that tours of the island will see some weather interruption -- the recent tour by New Zealand in November saw many rain-marred days with an ODI match being washed out -- but Bangladesh desperately needed an uninterrupted warm-up match to take some vital decisions on team combination ahead of the first Test starting on Friday. Moreover, with this being the only practice game, a day lost to rain is a significant disadvantage.

Back to the little cricket played on the day, left-arm spinner Elias Sunny took the last wicket of the home side after the day's play started one and a half hours later than the scheduled start due to early-morning rain. He finished with figures of three for 74, the best in the innings after Shohag Gazi. Included in

the squad following Enamul Haque's injury, Sunny was not particularly impressive but has a good chance of playing in the first Test if the team management sticks to their traditional policy of playing with two pacers. While Abul Hasan's sickness after only six overs on the first day is a cause for concern, the team think tank would be more pressed to decide on the middle order composition in the absence of Shakib Al Hasan.

The Bangladesh team are expected to leave for Galle soon after the completion of the third day's play today to prepare themselves for the first Test starting from Friday. Before that however, they will be hoping that the sun shines today so that they can avail some valuable batting practice and provide some food for thought for the think tank.

SL crisis resolved

FROM PAGE 16

"Earlier players were allocated of 25 per cent of the fee paid to SLC. The players requested the fee to be paid to them where they would reallocate the funds received via the guarantee fee towards Cricket development activities in the country," stated the press release.

"However, SLC rejected the proposal put forward by the players as it was felt Cricket Development activities purview should be vested with the governing body rather than with the players in concern.

"The amounts allocated to the 23 National Players from the current contracts amounts to 67 per cent of the 2013 revenue generated by Sri Lanka Cricket. If SLC agreed to grant the players' request to include

the guarantee fee component to the contract value SLC will have to bear 81 per cent of its annual revenue towards the 23 Cricketers, leaving no provision for a successful all round year."

All players, with the exception of Mahela Jayawardene who is currently overseas, have signed the contracts. As a result of the solution, Sri Lanka have picked their best available squad for the first Test in Galle.

Jayasuriya, and his panel, has chosen four uncapped Test players in the squad of 16, in keeping with the panel's vision for building a young team. Among those included was Kithuruwan Vithanage,

who scored a blazing unbeaten 168 for Sri Lanka Development Emerging XI against the touring Bangladeshis in the practice match on Sunday.

Earlier, Kumar Sangakkara was dropped from the practice match against Bangladesh on Sunday because he failed to sign his employment contract before the Saturday deadline.

Both sides now turn their attention to the Test matches, the first of two beginning March 12 in Barbados.

Pollard crashed three sixes and three fours in an unbeaten 46 off just 24 deliveries to lift the West Indies to a competitive total, dominating a 56-run fifth-wicket partnership with Darren Sammy, the captain contributing 19.

SCORES IN BRIEF
WEST INDIES: 158 for 7 in 20 overs (Simmons 41, Dwayne 24, Pollard 45 not out, Samm 19; M'Shangwe 2-33, Mutombodzi 2-28)

ZIMBABWE: 117 for 6 in 20 overs (Chibhabha 13, Masakadza 53 not out, Ervine 15, Badree 3-17, Dwayne 2-15)

Result: West Indies won by 41 runs and clinched two-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Samuel Badree.
Player-of-the-series: Lendl Simmons.

Eng look to dominate

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

England go into their three-Test series against a new-look New Zealand line-up this week as firm favourites, despite slipping to a shock defeat in their final warm-up match.

The tourists, second in the Test rankings, are expected to prove too strong for the lowly Black Caps as they gear up for back-to-back Ashes series against Australia, buoyed by a recent series win away to India.

The likes of star batsman Kevin Pietersen failed to fire in the three-wicket defeat on Saturday at the hands of a New Zealand XI, England's first loss in a first-class tour game in nearly seven years.

But Alastair Cook's men are firm favourites with the bookmakers to come out on top against a Black Caps side destabilised by injury and a recent change of captain in the series starting in Dunedin on Wednesday.

New Zealand, ranked eighth in Test cricket, have not won a series against England since 1999, with their sole series victory on home soil back in 1984.

The home side come into the series after a drubbing in South Africa, where they lost both Tests by an innings, and they are still adjusting to the axing of Ross Taylor as captain in favour of Brendon McCullum late last year.

New Zealand were competitive in patches as they lost both the one-day and Twenty20 series against England 2-1 but coach Mike Hesson has acknowledged Test cricket remains his side's weakest form of the game.

"We're a long way off the pace in Test

cricket at the moment," he said before the touring England party arrived. We have to acknowledge that and we know we've got a lot of work to do.

"We don't have the depth that we have in other forms of the game so we have to make sure we select the right people and show faith in them to grow their game. That doesn't happen overnight."

Debutant Hamish Rutherford and Peter Fulton are expected to open the batting for New Zealand with Martin Guptill injured and Brendon McCullum moving down the order.

Taylor will return to the Test arena for the first time since his demotion while Daniel Vettori, Chris Martin and Mitchell McClenaghan join Guptill on the injured list.

Paceman Doug Bracewell is also reportedly under an injury cloud after cutting his foot in an off-field incident.

England are set to welcome James Anderson and Steven Finn back into the bowling attack after they were rested for the tour match in Queenstown.

Coach Andy Flower did not appear perturbed after the loss, describing England's performance as "rusty", and indicating Nick Compton would not be punished for his returns of 21 and one.

Asked if 22-year-old Joe Root could replace Compton as Cook's opening partner, Flower replied: "You've got to remember Joe Root has played one Test match."

"I think everyone should keep a little calm about his prospects. We look forward to him having a very successful career but he's got to take it one step at a time."

The second Test starts in Wellington on March 14, with the third and final match in Auckland from March 22.

'Don't judge Nadal yet'

Tennis

AFP, Hong Kong

Andy Murray's coach Ivan Lendl on Monday welcomed Rafael Nadal back from a long injury layoff, but said it was too early to judge whether the 11-time Grand Slam winner would be at his best.

The Spaniard swept to a straight sets victory over countryman David Ferrer at the Mexican Open on Saturday, his second title in three events since returning from a seven-month absence with a left-knee injury.

"He's a great champion and it's always sad when someone like that gets injured and cannot play. So it's great to have him back," Lendl said.

"As far as how it affects anyone's chances -- well he's a great competitor. It's a little bit early to judge. But there are many more tournaments to come before the French (Open) and before Wimbledon."

"You cannot underestimate Roger, Novak has been playing well, and Rafa -- we'll see how he's doing."

The Czech-American great said the immediate effect of Nadal's return would be to tournament seedings. The Spaniard's likely fifth seeding is in line with his post-

injury ranking meant he would meet a fellow top player in the quarter-finals.

Lendl said it would be tough for players outside the Big Four, such as sixth-ranked Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic, to win a major this year.

Argentine Juan Martin del Potro was the last player outside the Big Four to win a Grand Slam with his US Open win in 2009.

Lendl said US Open and Olympic singles champion Andy Murray would be looking to improve on his performance last year at Indian Wells, where he crashed out in the second round.

Lendl was speaking at a press conference ahead of the BNP Paribas Showdown in Hong Kong, where he will play his ex-rival and fellow great John McEnroe in an exhibition match later Monday.

The former Qantas chief executive passed away in Sydney on Sunday after complications following surgery, his family said on Monday.

The ICC World Cup organising committee said it was saddened.

"James possessed a passion and vision for the tournament that set the tone for the entire organisation," the committee said in a statement.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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51 Ouch
52 Every-
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54 Coloring
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Solution time: 24 mins.
Yesterday's answer: 1-28

