

# SPORT



Unlike his Australian counterpart, England skipper Joe Root failed to score big and rouse the lower-middle order. He contributed 51 to England's dismal 195 as Australia edged closer to a win in the first Ashes Test on the fourth day yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Aussies need 56 runs

AGENCIES, Brisbane



Steve Smith will be crowned the hero of an Australian first Test win, with special mentions for Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon, but David Warner and Cameron Bancroft have stepped up to apply the finishing touches at the Gabba.

Australia are on the brink of taking a 1-0 lead in the Ashes series after Australia's new opening combination raced to within 56 runs of the victory line late on Sunday.

The tourists were skittled out for 195 off 71.4 overs, losing their last six wickets for 82.

The Australians, unbeaten at their Gabba fortress since 1988, were chasing down 170 runs to win and made easy work of the 34 overs to the close.

At stumps, they were 114 without loss with Warner unbeaten on 60 and Bancroft not out 51.

Barring a collapse of monumental proportions or an all-day downpour in Brisbane - there is a small chance of rain forecast for the city, but nothing major - victory is surely inevitable for Australia.

It should be claimed in comfortable fashion but it wasn't always so straightforward as it seemed as Warner and Bancroft, with his maiden Test half-century, made light of the chase.

"It was a great day for our team," fast bowler Mitchell Starc said. "To finish the

way we did with the bat, none down, it's a great feeling. There was a bit of work to do on a wicket that we knew that was going to get a bit quicker.

"To scratch our way to a lead and then come out in the second innings and bowl the way we did ... it's been great for our change room. There's a lot of cricket to go but heading into Adelaide it puts us in a great spot."

England bemoaned the failure of any of their batsmen to make a big score in Brisbane.

Ultimately, Smith's unbeaten 141 in the Australian first innings will go down as the match-winner. He dug Australia out of a hole with the slowest of his 21 Test centuries, but also one of the greatest. Despite their best efforts, England have not been able to find a way to get him out and if they can't it will be difficult for them to get back into this series.

The Australian leader continued a brilliant all-round display with four catches on Sunday and fine captaincy in the field, with everything he touched seemingly turning to gold.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 302

AUSTRALIA: First innings 328

ENGLAND: Second 195 all out (Stoneman 27, Root 51, Moeen 40, Bairstow 42; Starc 3-51, Hazlewood 3-46, Lyon 3-67)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 114 for no loss (Warner 60 not out, Bancroft 51 not out)

## WHAT THEY SAID



### Local competition is good

It is good for me and also good for the country. I talked about this with



[Dhaka Dynamites' Abu Hider] Rony yesterday. He said: "Bhai, on one occasion you are going to the top and on another I am overtaking you by taking wickets." Maybe there is a bit of competition between us, which is good. I hope that by the end the competition heats up. -Khulna Titans pacer **Abu Jayed** on being the top wicket-taker and Abu Hider Rony being close behind

### My Test technique helps in T20s

I think the work I did on my technique for Test matches has helped me in T20s. You have seen that in the matches I have played in the BPL, my shots have not been wild slogs. I have tried to play normal, basic cricket. The technique employed in Test cricket really helps. Those who have good technique in Tests can play well in any format. -Bangladesh Test specialist **Mominul Haque** on his success so far for Rajshahi Kings



## Shanaka's error of judgement

AFP, Nagpur

Sri Lanka team manager said Sunday that a ball tampering incident involving Dasun Shanaka was due to an error of judgement and that the fast bowler was remorseful.

Shanaka, who admitted the offence, was docked 75 percent of his match fee after he was seen picking the area near the seam of the ball on TV on Saturday - day two of the second Test against India.

"It was actually error of judgement on Dasun's part and it was just one in over that happened," Asanka Gurusinha told.

"None of the team members knew anything about it. So it was not something that was planned. He takes full responsibility for that and he is remorseful on that."

## 'Ball, ball... watch!'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chittagong



The shortest format of cricket is not a serene avatar of the gentleman's game; that much was obvious, thankfully not painfully so, at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday. Once the venue for international matches in the heart of a bustling Chittagong, MA Aziz has been relegated to a practice venue after the emergence of the better-equipped Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in out-of-the-way Sagarika, but with the flavour of the month being T20 cricket, the older venue is seeing its fair share of action.

Yesterday, four teams -- Khulna Titans, Sylhet Sixers, Rajshahi Kings in the morning and early afternoon, and Dhaka Dynamites in the afternoon -- practised at the venue. In the morning especially, when two teams were practising at the same time, the scene was one of organised chaos, with chaos dominating. In Australia, in the Big Bash League T20 competition spectators are given hard hats to protect their noggins from the sixes that are the biggest attractions of the format. Those hard hats were in dire need at the MA Aziz yesterday.

Batting in the nets in one corner was Rajshahi skipper Darren Sammy, who had just the previous day taken 32 runs in an over from Comilla Victorians' Mohammad Saifuddin, and no corner of the ground was safe. Cries of 'Ball, ball... watch!' were all too regular for comfort, and if you did not keep an eye on the batsmen in the nets, well, good luck to you. That was what teammates Lendl Simmons and Kesrick Williams were doing as they did a few sprint drills down the middle of the ground.

But it was not just Sammy. At the centre wicket Rajshahi's star batsman and Bangladesh Test skipper Mushfiqur Rahim was practising his six-hitting, smashing pull shots into the fence. Not having the best of tournaments so far, the intense Mushfiqur was putting in a thorough practice session and peppering the ball into the fence.

At the far end of the ground, Nasir Hossain's Sylhet were doing much the same as their Rajshahi counterparts, before Nasir and a few others moved up to take the space vacated by Mushfiqur. With Sylhet currently placed just a spot above Rajshahi in fifth place in the seven-team table, the Kings' Zakir Hossain seemed to have tried to do something about it. No

sooner had Nasir and Co set up camp in the centre wicket, Zakir, batting in the nets smashed a ball that seemed to be homing in on Nasir's head. 'Watch!' went up the chorus and Nasir comically ducked, holding his bat above his head as the ball sailed harmlessly over. Rajshahi will have a chance to overtake Sylhet if they beat Mahmudullah Riyad's top-placed Khulna in the evening match today.

Holders Dhaka just made it to the port city yesterday and were eager to practise ahead of today's match against bottom-placed Chittagong Vikings. If Dhaka win, they will momentarily usurp Khulna at the top of the table, but the Titans can win pole position back if they beat the Kings in the evening. Dhaka had the ground to themselves in the afternoon, probably a good thing because with the likes of madcap Shahid Afridi and the explosive Kieron Pollard wielding their weaponised willows, casualties in a packed practice venue would have been likely.

With the Chittagong leg proving to be an exciting one so far, with big scores being recorded, all the six hitting seen yesterday should come into good use today as the team's try to one-up each other.



Dhaka Dynamites skipper Shakib Al Hasan (L) leads teammates in a friendly kickabout during their training session at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday ahead of today's BPL match against Chittagong Vikings.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bottas holds off Hamilton

AFP, Abu Dhabi



Valtteri Bottas survived several laps of high-speed pressure from his Mercedes team-mate and world champion Lewis Hamilton to claim a memorable victory in Sunday's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The 28-year-old Finn, who started from pole position, led from the lights to the flag apart from a spell following his first pit stop when the four-time champion Briton was in control.

It was his third career victory, all of them recorded since he joined Mercedes to partner the 32-year-old Briton in January following the unexpected exit of 2016 champion German Nico Rosberg.

Hamilton came home a comfortable

second, four seconds behind Bottas, having eased off in the closing laps after abandoning his bid to pass him in the turbulent air created when following close to another car.

Four-time champion Sebastian Vettel finished a lonely third for Ferrari, as the two Mercedes men delivered celebratory 'doughnuts' for the crowd. It was Vettel's 99th career podium and his 13th of the season.

"Such a good car today so thank you for that and the season - it's a very nice way to end it," said Bottas to his team.

Hamilton was unhappy with the tight track.

"It's impossible to pass here man!" he said in the pre-podium room. "I was like -- where are all the back-markers... They've got to change this track."

Hamilton ended his season having scored points in every race.

## Kohli puts India on top

AFP, Nagpur



Skipper Virat Kohli hit a blistering double century to hand India a massive first innings lead of 405 as the hosts tightened their grip on the second Test against Sri Lanka on day three on Sunday.

India declared on 610-6 after Rohit Sharma (102) had completed his hundred, as they seek to go one up in the three-match series.

The visitors were in early trouble on 21 for one at stumps in Nagpur, still trailing India by 384 runs.

Dimuth Karunaratne, on 11, and Lahiru Thirimanne, on 9, were at the crease after paceman Ishant Sharma bowled Sadeera Samarawickrama for 0 with the second ball of the innings.

The day belonged to Kohli, who hit a majestic 213 before falling to off-spinner Dilruwan Perera. He walked off to a standing ovation from a raucous crowd.

Kohli, who started the day on 54, smashed 17 fours and two sixes during his 267-ball knock.

"He is a kind of player who performs well in all formats of the game," Cheteshwar Pujara, who shared a 183-run third-wicket partnership with Kohli, said of his captain.

"I think it's his confidence. And the way he is batting in the last two-three years, it would have been difficult for any other batsman to score with such a strike rate," Pujara told reporters.

It was the star batsman's fifth 200-plus score in his 62nd Test. He has also achieved double centuries against the West Indies, New Zealand, England

and Bangladesh.

After the third-wicket marathon partnership, Kohli and Rohit Sharma put on 173 for the fifth wicket to pulverise a deflated Sri Lanka attack that sent down 176.1 overs in about six sessions of play.

Kohli received able support from Sharma, who reached his 50 before tea and then stepped up a gear to amass runs all around the ground and register his third Test hundred.

Kohli's earlier marathon stand with his overnight partner Pujara, who made a composed 143, had taken the steam out of the attack.

Pujara was bowled by paceman Dasun Shanaka in the first session, but Kohli kept scoring quickly as his team

chased an innings victory.

"I think it was difficult to score runs as this wicket was on the slower side. It wasn't easy to get boundaries and we had to rotate the strike," said Pujara.

"But I think, going forward in this game, the ball has started turning and we are hoping Day 4, spinners will come into play. And at the same time there is variable bounce for fast bowlers, Ishant and Umesh (Yadav) will also come into play."

Kohli's score was his 10th international century (four in Tests and six in one-day internationals) of the year -- the most by any captain in a calendar year.

Australia's Ricky Ponting had hit nine hundreds across two formats in 2005 and 2006, while South African Graeme Smith once had nine centuries to his credit.

Ajinkya Rahane, who was out to Perera for two, and opener Lokesh Rahul were the only two specialist batsmen to miss the Indian run fest of one double century and three centuries.

The first century had come from Murali Vijay (128), who along with Pujara had put India in the driving seat with a 209-run second-wicket partnership after Rahul's early departure on day one.

Sri Lanka's fast bowling coach Rumesh Ratnayake urged his players not be discouraged by the hammering, saying they can take a leaf out of the Indian batsmen's book.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: First innings 205

INDIA: First innings 610 for 6 decl (Vijay 128, Pujara 143, Kohli 213, Sharma 102 not out; Perera 3-202)

SRI LANKA: Second innings 21 for 1 (Karunaratne 11 not out, Thirimanne 9 not out; Sharma 1-15)



Rajshahi Kings' Mushfiqur Rahim bats in an optional practice session at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday ahead of today's BPL match against Khulna Titans.

PHOTO: STAR

### BANCROFT INCIDENT

## ECB quizzes

## Bairstow

AFP, Brisbane

The England and Wales Cricket Board has spoken to Jonny Bairstow over allegations the England wicketkeeper head-butted Australia opener Cameron Bancroft in a late night altercation.

Fox Sports said Bairstow was being investigated by the ECB over an incident that took place in Perth, Australia at the start of their Ashes tour.

The incident allegedly took place at a hotel while the England team was in town for its tour-opening match against a Western Australian XI.

While nobody was said to be hurt in the incident it sparked heated confrontations on the field between Australian players and Bairstow when he was batting in the second innings of the first Test in Brisbane on Sunday.

An ECB statement confirmed management have asked Bairstow about the alleged incident.



India skipper Virat Kohli put Sri Lanka to the sword with a sublime double-century on the third day of the first Test yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP