



England batsman David Malan celebrates his unbroken maiden century on the first day of the third Ashes Test in Perth yesterday.

Malan's maiden ton lifts England

SMH
Australia's vaunted paceman came out breathing fire but it was England's David Malan who smothered the blaze with his maiden Test century giving the hosts a fight to take the urn in Perth on Thursday.
The bounce is back in the WACA's famous pitch for its last hurrah as England's embattled top order defied some at times hostile fast bowling to produce arguably their finest performance of the series.
Dropped on 92 by Bancroft, Malan reached the new-look Australian ship's rordon with Cameron Bancroft and comeback kid Mitchell Marsh both putting down chances.
Australia have invariably won the key moments in this series but it was the visitors who stood tall just in the nick of time.
After losing quick wickets early in the second session, including one to a controversial decision review system call, England were saved by Malan and the elevated Jonny Bairstow, who have added an unbroken 174 for the fifth wicket.
Dropped on 92 by Bancroft, Malan reached triple figures in the final 20 minutes of the day with his parents in the stands. He is the first Englishman to score a century this series.
"It was so emotional I almost started crying," Malan said. "To do it in front of them, the number of sacrifices my old man and mother have made along the way to get me here has been great.

It was nice to do it in front of them for all the time they've given me."
It's too early to determine if it will be a match-winning ton but, at 4-305 at stumps on the first day with Malan on 110 and Bairstow on 75, they are well placed to push the home side and potentially keep the series alive after Christmas.
They have forced the Australian attack to sweat for long periods, though Steve Smith has a fourth seamer in Mitchell Marsh up his sleeve here.

The manner in which Malan and Bairstow navigated the afternoon was in contrast to the firestorm which confronted England's top order.
No player felt the heat more than England opener Mark Stoneman, who lost his bat, his helmet and his wicket.
SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: First innings 305 for 4 (Stoneman 56, Vince 25, Root 20, Malan 110 not out, Bairstow 75 not out; Starc 2-79)

Fixing claims rock Ashes

APP, Perth
Cricketer chiefs voiced "grave concern" but said there was no evidence the third Ashes Test between Australia and England starting Thursday has been corrupted after a match-fixing bombshell rocked the series.
British newspaper The Sun alleged two bookmakers, including an Indian "Mr Big", had offered to sell it details of rigged periods of play in the Test in Perth which could be bet on to win huge sums.
One of them claimed to have worked on the scam with former and current internationals including a World Cup-winning all-rounder. They said they liaised with a fixer in Australian cricket known as "The Silent Man".

No Australia or England players were named as being involved.
The tabloid said their undercover reporters were asked for up to £140,000 (\$187,000, 158,000 euros) to "spot fix" markets such as the exact amount of runs scored in an over.
"Before match, I will tell you this over this runs and then you have to put all the bets on that over," one of the bookmakers was quoted as saying.
Asked if it was a good source, he said: "Absolutely correct information."
The International Cricket Council said the revelations were of "grave concern" and an investigation had been launched, but it did not believe the match, where England are battling to avoid going 3-0 down in the five-Test series, had been tainted.



Tigers back to business

SPORTS REPORTER
With the 'cricketainment' of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) concluded, national cricketers will now focus on more serious business as they are all set to play a tri-nation ODI series involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe next month, followed by a two-match Test series and a two-match T20 series against Sri Lanka.

To remove Mushfiqur Rahim as Test captain and appoint Shakib Al Hasan in his place has served to remind the players of that chastening series defeat.

The Tigers will begin their preparations on December 22 with the hope of bouncing back from that pathetic performance against the Proteas. Before that, though, some national players will feature in the sixth and final round of the National Cricket League (NCL).

"Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal will return from the UAE on December 18 after playing the T10 tournament and we are hopeful about their participation in the last round of the NCL but already a few players requested a break and we will only allow them if they have valid reasons like Imrul Kayes, who will go to Makkah to perform umrah," informed BCB cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan yesterday.

The Minhajul Abedin-led selection panel has already prepared a long list of players for the training camp which will be supervised by the national team's support staff as the board is yet to appoint a new head coach.

DATE	MATCH	VENUE
TRI-NATION ODI SERIES		
Jan 15	Bangladesh v Zimbabwe (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
Jan 17	Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
Jan 19	Bangladesh v Sri Lanka (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
Jan 21	Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
Jan 23	Bangladesh v Zimbabwe (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
Jan 25	Bangladesh v Sri Lanka (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
Jan 27	Final (D/N)	SBNS, Dhaka
TEST SERIES (BANGLADESH V SRI LANKA)		
Jan 31-Feb 4	First Test	ZKS, Chittagong
Feb 8-12	Second Test	SBNS, Dhaka
T20 SERIES (BANGLADESH V SRI LANKA)		
Feb 15	First T20	SBNS, Dhaka
Feb 18	Second T20	SKS, Sylhet

Sunday powers Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER
Nigerian marksman Sunday Chizoba struck a brace to guide holders Dhaka Abahani to an emphatic 3-1 win over Rahmatganj in the Bangladesh Premier League after Chittagong Abahani posted a laboured 1-0 win over Arambagh in the day's first match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The brace meant that Sunday, who was signed during the mid-season transfer window, has struck six goals in as many matches while helping Abahani record five straight wins.
The 28-year-old powered Abahani to the title last season with a league-high 19 goals, but was not signed for the first leg of the tournament due to injury. However, his return in the second leg has been significant in Abahani's recovery in the second phase of the professional football league.
With a 120 min from 17 games, Abahani are now second with 39 points, just three behind leaders Chittagong Abahani, who raised their tally to 42 points from 17 matches.

Although Abahani had to toil hard to beat Sheikh Russel in their previous match, the Dhamonodi-based outfit had a comparatively easy affair against Rahmatganj, breaking the deadlock in the 19th minute after putting huge pressure on their defence. Rahmatganj goalkeeper Mohammad Razib slipped a low cross from winger-turned-right-back Saad Uddin and the ball fell straight to an unmarked Sunday, who made no mistake prodding home from close range. He doubled the margin in the 33rd minute with a dazzling run, dribbling past two defenders and goalkeeper Razib before stroking into an empty goal.

ABAHANI (CHITTAGONG)	3	1	RAHMATGANJ (MIRPUR)
CTG ABAHANI (DHAKA)	1	0	ARAMBAGH

Rahmatganj pulled one back in the 55th minute through Afeez Oladipo's header, but Abahani wrapped up the victory in the 58th minute through a header from Nabib Newaj Jibon.
In the day's first match, leaders Chittagong Abahani were made to work hard for their win against a spirited Arambagh, who held their superior opponents for 74 minutes before defender Sushanta Tripatha headed a Zahid Hossain free-kick home to separate the both sides.



Abahani striker Sunday celebrates one of his two goals against Rahmatganj during the Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

I could have used a better word'

SPORTS REPORTER
Comilla Victorians captain Tamim Iqbal informed yesterday that he could have chosen his words better while criticising the Dhaka-leg pitch of the just concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).
"Maybe I did not communicate in the best possible way and that is what I said to them. They told me about their concerns and I feel like I could have used a better word to describe it [the wicket and outfield]," the national opener told reporters after appearing at a BCB disciplinary committee hearing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.
The BCB will send him a letter to convey their decision regarding the issue but the batsman was confident that the committee was satisfied with his explanation. BCB director Mahabbub Anam later informed reporters that Tamim apologised for his comments.
"I think they are satisfied with my explanation. Obviously I do not know what decision they are going to take but in the coming days we will know," said Tamim, who was scheduled to fly for the UAE last night to take part in the T10 Cricket League.
The Victorians skipper was issued a show-cause letter by the BCB due to a statement he made, during the post-match press conference of a BPL encounter against Rangpur Riders on December 2, that the pitch at Mirpur was "horrible" - a term that according to the BCB was in breach of the code of conduct.
Rangpur captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also criticised the pitches.

BPL's greater interest

SPORTS REPORTER
The governing council of the Bangladesh Premier League were eager to tie a frilly bow on what they insisted was a very successful fifth edition in a press conference in Mirpur yesterday, but some unease lingered about the way the match-fixing scandal had unfolded in the following day despite there being no provision for a reserve day in the bylaws. A 45-minute, at times surreal, press conference did nothing whatsoever to alleviate that unease.
It was hard to escape the feeling from the governing council members' verbal gymnastics that they were trying to have their cake (insisting that the continuation was not illegal according to the bylaws) and eat it too (admitting that the decision was ultimately left up to the respective owners).
"I think the deviation from the bylaws, they defended it by pointing to the 2007 World Cup final when the bylaws were apparently not followed and resorting to it being the 'nature of cricket' that captains can have a greater say in organisation because they can call batsmen back after a dismissal.
Another reason given for the deviation from the letter of the law was appeasing the sponsors.

followed, Comilla would be in the final.
The governing council took exception to that conclusion and BCB director Mahabbub Anam said yesterday that Comilla did not want to play the Super Over. In that case, the match should have been awarded to Rangpur Riders, according to the governing council's own clarification.
Long story short: there should not have been a continuation to the following day if the bylaws were adhered to.
"We clarified it, and if that was reflected in the media it would have been good," said Mahabbub Anam. "That rule [of the match being awarded to the opposition when one team did not want to play the Super Over] would have come into effect if the two teams did not agree upon playing the match the following day. The two owners sat down, Comilla said that they did not want to play the Super Over and they went to continue from this point [where the match was interrupted]."

"I think the broadcast became overenthusiastic. I don't know where the cameras were; I think it should have been shut down."
- BPL technical committee convenor Jalal Yunus

"There are sponsors here; everyone wants the game to go ahead for the greater interest of the tournament," said BPL governing council member secretary IH Mahmud.
The scores during the rainied off first day of the second qualifier were unconvincing, with BPL governing council members, owners of the two franchises, BCB directors and the two captains all taking part in fish-market-style negotiations on the pitch in full view of the spectators and television audience. While Mahabbub expressed regret at the chaos, BPL technical committee convenor and BCB media committee chairman said something quite extraordinary, while also indicative of the BPL's management attitude.
"I think the broadcast became overenthusiastic. I don't know where the cameras were; I think it should have been shut down."

On a day when Comilla captain and Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal was hauled up before a disciplinary committee for calling the Mirpur wicket horrible because he had violated a code of conduct as a nationally contracted player, the governing council itself was bringing up every excuse in the book to cover up contravening their own bylaws. It seems as far as interests are concerned, there is none greater than the BPL's.



Comilla Victorians captain and national opener Tamim Iqbal leaves after attending the BCB disciplinary committee hearing at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

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