

SPORT



Australia skipper Steve Smith, who reached 1,000 runs for the fourth consecutive year, converted his century into an unbeaten double-ton and formed a dominant, unbroken 301-run fifth-wicket partnership with Mitchell Marsh, who was unbeaten on 181 at the end of the third day of the third Ashes Test yesterday.

PHOTOS: REUTERS

Smith, Marsh put urn in sight

SMH



If there's daylight between Don Bradman and the rest in Australian cricket, it's fast becoming the same with Steve Smith and those behind him.

Australia moved within sight of regaining the Ashes in Perth after the

awe with an epic double century, his second, while Marsh silenced his critics with his maiden Test ton.

The world's top-ranked batsman set up the innings with his 22nd Test ton up but it was Marsh's breakthrough knock that opened the prospect of the urn exchanging hands out west.

The pair's game-changing 301-run partnership highlighted the costliness of England's first-innings collapse, which has been the turning point of this match.

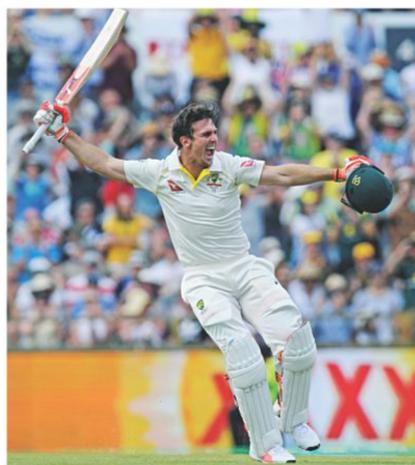
The home side added 346 for the loss of one wicket on the third day to reach stumps on 4-549, a lead of 146, with Smith unbeaten on 229 and Marsh on 181, after giving his partner a 116-run start. The plan will surely be to gain a big enough advantage to avoid having to bat again. The Marsh connection

"It was about not letting anyone else having a crack at it. We just wanted to be in the middle and keep batting and batting. We put on 300, it's a magnificent effort."

England are demoralised and if the forecast rain for Sunday and Monday does not arrive there is a strong chance this series will be over by Christmas.

Joe Root's men had the sort of day that can break teams. James Anderson and Stuart Broad drew blanks, the former asking photographers to fetch the ball from the rope for him, the latter posting an unwanted hundred.

Selectors have waited a long time for Marsh to come good, copping plenty of criticism along the way. More came when he was recalled at



captain and Mitchell Marsh put England to the sword, pushing the visitors to the edge of no return.

Smith, who has spent close to nine-and-a-half hours at the crease after batting through the third day, left some of the greats of the game in

The Marsh connection

In August, 1989, Australia openers Mark Taylor and Geoff Marsh walked off together at stumps on the first day of the fifth Test at Trent Bridge undefeated with the score reading 0-301.

Geoff has a picture of him and Taylor, along with the scorecard, that his sons Shaun and Mitchell grew up looking at, aspiring to be a Test cricketer just like dad.

On Day Three of the third Ashes Test in Perth, a Marsh started the day and there was a Marsh at the end with more than 300 runs scored to leave England desperate and demoralised.

Shaun started the day but was dismissed for 28, but as he walked

back the dressing room his younger brother by eight years passed him and would not return for good until the close of play that evening with 181 runs next to his name on the old manually operated WACA Ground scoreboard.

Mitchell added 301 with his skipper Steve Smith to evoke memories of the Marsh-Taylor partnership from 28 years ago.

On that day in Nottingham, England captain David Gower ordered 12th man Greg Thomas to run up to the press box and ask the reporters covering the match how to get a wicket. Joe Root might as well have done the same on Saturday.

SUBLIME SMITH

Steve Smith became the fifth Australia captain to score an Ashes double-hundred, joining Don Bradman, Allan Border, Bob Simpson and Billy Murdoch. He also became the fourth batsman to score more than one double-hundred in the Ashes.

Smith reached 1,000 runs for the fourth calendar year running, a feat only replicated by Matthew Hayden. He also has the most centuries in a four-year period with 20.

Smith became the third quickest to 22 career centuries, taking 108 innings. Bradman (58) and Sunil Gavaskar (101) are ahead of him.

the expense of Peter Handscomb but their faith has been rewarded. The four men they have drafted into the team this series -- Cameron Bancroft, Tim Paine and the Marsh brothers -- have all played key roles. But none have been as important as

Smith, who showed yet again he is in a league of his own.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 403
AUSTRALIA: First innings 594 for 4 (Smith 229 not out, Marsh 181 not out; Overton 2-102)

Lanka look for 'special' effort

AGENCIES, Visakhapatnam

Sri Lanka have won just five out of 27 completed ODIs this year. But if there's a way to turn around a disappointing year, it can't get better than ending it with their first-ever series win in India in the third and final ODI at Visakhapatnam today.

On the eve of the decider, India opener Shikhar Dhawan expressed confidence about the hosts' ability to demolish any side.

"The calibre we have got, once we settle, we can demolish any side," Dhawan said in the pre-match press conference on Saturday.

He added: "It is a final game for us but we are used to it. We have strong side and we believe in our ability and skills, so we are just going play it like any other game".

Dhawan, however, cautioned the hosts against any sort of complacency going into the series decider as he felt that the islanders will come prepared.

"We have learnt a lot of things when we played in Kolkata and Dharamasala. It was a seaming and damp wicket. We went with a positive intent though it did not go our way.

On the other hand Sri Lanka skipper Thisara Perera said the Islanders were well prepared for the series decider against India and would look to do "something special" in conditions similar to those back home.

"Definitely, Vizag is similar to Sri Lanka when it comes to weather and stuff. Mohali and Dharamasala were completely different. It was a total different story. We are well prepared. Here I hope we will be able to do something special as this is something similar to what we find at home," he said.

Perera said the team had a couple of training sessions and prepared well and they were taking it like just another game, before adding that the hosts would be under pressure.

V-DAY BASKETBALL Navy crowned

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Navy emerged unbeaten champions in the Victory Day Basketball Tournament after beating Bangladesh Army 88-62 in the final at the Dhanmondi Basketball Gymnasium yesterday.

Shoeb scored the highest with 40 points while Mithun netted 22 for the winning side, who led the first half by 43-31 points.

Jadeja hits six sixes in an over

AFP, New Delhi

Swashbuckling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja smashed six sixes in an over in a local cricket match, sending selectors a reminder of his short-form prowess after being omitted from India's recent Twenty20 squads.

Jadeja scored 154 off just 69 deliveries in his explosive innings during a district-level T20 game on Friday in India's western Gujarat state, including a total of 10 sixes.

Hosts have eyes on the prize

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh will have their eyes firmly on the title when the inaugural SAFF U-15 Women's Championship kicks off in Dhaka today. The hosts will take on Nepal in the second match of the day at 2:30pm after India play against Bhutan in the opening game at 11:30am.

The four-team competition will run on round-robin format and the top two teams from the league stage will compete in the final on December 24. All the matches will take place at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Although India are the regional powerhouse in women's football in South Asia and Nepal are not too far behind, Bangladesh have made tremendous strides in the age-level women's football, having clinched back-to-back AFC U14 Regional Girls' Championship titles in the last two years before playing in the final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship this year.

In fact, Bangladesh beat both India and Nepal by big margins twice each in those two under-14 campaigns, and the current squad features 11 players from the successful squad of 2016.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The four captains pose for a photograph at the BFF House yesterday ahead of the SAFF U-15 Women's Championship, which begins today.

The girls in red and green beat India 3-1 and thrashed Nepal 9-0 in the group stages of last year's competition before beating India again, this time 4-0, in the final to retain the title.

Hence the hosts will enter the competition as favourites and will eye a win against Nepal in today's fixture. Coach Golam Rabbani Choton tried to shift the focus from his charges, praising the opposition teams, during a pre-tournament

press conference at the Bangladesh Football Federation House yesterday.

"India and Nepal have rich heritage in women's football, but we are coming up too. The teams know each other quite well as we play against each other often. I have all the respect for the opposition teams, but our target against Nepal in victory," said the successful coach.

Since quite a few players of this side were involved in the AFC U-16

championship, they were in continuous training and have kept playing matches for quite a long time. However, this group had been in training exclusively for this competition for the last three months. The 23-member squad will be led by midfielder Maria Manda, who was confident about her team's chances in the competition.

"We will play at our home ground. We want to play well and entertain the crowd with victories. We will do anything it takes to play well and win. The first match is always very important. A win in this first match makes everything easier," said Manda.

The Nepal coach Ganga Gurung earmarked Bangladesh as the favourites for the title. However, she said they were looking forward to putting up a good show on the back of one-and-a-half month's practice.

"Bangladesh are very strong. They are physically tough and technically good. But we want to win," she said.

Bangladesh will, however, be more focused on India, thought to be the biggest challenge to their title chances. India's coach Maymol Rocky sounded confident about her team's chances. "Bangladesh are obviously one of the strongest teams in the competition, but we have come here to win the title," said the former national player.

Premier Div Chess Saif SC hold solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Saif Sporting Club maintained their sole lead at the end of the eighth round of the Premier Division Chess League yesterday. Saif SC took their tally to 14 points from seven matches after beating Bangladesh Navy by 4-0 game points on Saturday.

GM Martyn Kravtsov, GM Aleksey Goganov, GM Enamul Hossain Razib and GM Abdullah Al Rakib won their respective boards for Saif SC.

Bengal Chess Club were in second position with 13 points from seven matches after beating Sonali Bank Sports & Recreation Club by the same margin.

Sheikh Russel Chess Club were in third position with 11 points from eight matches, followed by Bangladesh Navy and Titas Club in fourth position with 10 points from seven matches.

Small plea for a supreme sacrifice

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh cricket has come a long way since independence in 1971. Nowadays, fans can recall or even compare historic wins through easily accessible statistics.

However there is one match in particular which surmounts all others in the record books and that is the Victory Day Exhibition Cricket game. The fixture took place yesterday, as it does every year, in remembrance of the two greatest sons of Bangladesh cricket, Shaheed Jewel and Shaheed Mushtaque, who sacrificed their lives for the nation during the liberation war.

The board annually organises the exhibition match where former stars of the county's cricket fraternity participate after being divided into two teams -- Shaheed Jewel XI and Shaheed Mushtaque XI.

Yesterday, former Bangladesh skipper Aminul Islam's Shaheed Jewel XI beat fellow former captain Akram Khan's Shaheed Mushtaque XI by 46 runs.

And as he does every year, Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who has termed freedom fighters the true heroes of the nation, was present and spent some time speaking to Shaheed



During the traditional Victory Day cricket match between the Shaheed Mushtaque XI and the Shaheed Jewel XI, Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was speaking to the sister of Shaheed Jewel.

PHOTO: MAZHAR UDDIN

Jewel's elder sister, Suraiya Khan, along with the martyr's other family members.

Suraiya may not be a regular face in the Mirpur stands during international or domestic matches but she can be seen at the ground during Victory Day every year.

Many spectators may overlook the fact that two of the stands at the Sher-e-

Bangla National stadium are named after Jewel and Mushtaque, but Suraiya always looks to where her brother's name is inscribed with tremendous pride.

However, Suraiya's only desire for Bangladesh cricket pales in comparison to her brother's contributions since all she wishes for is for the name on the

stand to be a bit larger so that it is more visible to spectators.

"He loved cricket since childhood. He played for Azad Boys and later for Mohammedan. During the liberation war he went to India where his country became the main thing. He framed a picture of himself and gave it to our mother and said: 'When I am not here just look at this picture.'"

"What should I say? I think these two young players (Shaheed Jewel and Mushtaque) gave their lives for the country so I think the board should have done something to pay some respect. There are two stands with their names in the stadium but I think it should be bigger. They could even put the information of their life. I always asked for that but they have not done anything yet," Suraiya said.

Jewel, a right handed opening batsman who made his first class debut for Dacca (now Dhaka), played seven first class matches before the liberation war. His dream was to lead an independent Bangladesh team in international cricket. On the other hand Shaheed Mushtaque dedicated his entire life to Azad Boys Club.

Tamim's Paktoon in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite Tamim Iqbal scoring just eight runs from 10 balls, Paktoon defeated Bengal Tigers in their T10 League play-off match with the last ball of the game at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The Bangladeshi had done well in his first match for the side, scoring an unbeaten 56 with five fours and four sixes Friday night.

And yesterday South Africa's David Miller had given the Bengal Tigers the initiative with a 26-ball 68, a knock that featured three fours and seven sixes. But after the exchange it was a team effort from Ahmed Shehzad (38 off 17), Shahid Afridi (23 off 10) and Fakhar Zaman (31 off 11), before Liam Dawson's 5-ball 19 took them over the line.

Both the semifinals and the final will be held at the same venue today.