



# Hopefuls disappoint in practice match

SPORTS REPORTER



The lone practice match between Bangladesh Red and Green at the Sher-e-Bangla National stadium in Mirpur yesterday, which the Reds won by 137 runs, was perhaps the final opportunity for some players to make an impression on national selectors.

The practice game kicked off at 12pm, the same time the upcoming tri-nation ODI series fixtures are supposed to start, in order to acclimatise with playing conditions and get an idea about the severity of the dew factor.

After electing to bat, Shakib Al Hasan's Red posted a huge 320 for six. In reply, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's Green failed to put up any sort of fight and were all-out on 183 in 43.2 overs.

The result is irrelevant for the selectors though as they will likely announce the squad for the tri-series, comprised of hosts Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, today. However, they did keep a close eye on a possible opener alongside Tamim Iqbal and some pace bowlers.

Interestingly almost all the contenders who needed to perform failed to deliver although Tamim smashed a blistering century during his 119-ball 104, featuring ten fours and two sixes, before retiring.

The best candidate, wicket-keeper batsman Anamul Haque, made a confident start but was undone by a Mustafizur Rahman cutter on 21.

Shakib came out to bat at number three but

lost his wicket, after scoring 24 off 36, to pacer Taskin Ahmed, who then bowled Mushfiquur Rahim off a quick yorker with the very next ball.

Mahmudullah then scored 87 off 75 balls, including five sixes and three fours, before being bowled by medium pacer Mohammad Saifuddin, who went on to scalp Sabbir Rahman (20).

Abul Hasan scored a quick-fire 19 ball 35 with five fours and a six to help post the huge total.

Mustafizur, Saifuddin and Taskin were the pick of the bowlers for Green team as they bagged two wickets each.

The selectors were enthusiastic when Green team openers Soumya Sarkar and Mohammad Mithun took the field as both batsmen had something to prove.

Soumya made a curious start, middling the ball well but the left-hander, true to nature, replicated his mistake of being sent off after being set at the crease when he handed a straight forward catch at deep mid-wicket off an Abul Hasan short delivery on 18.

Mithun played a similarly rash shot and top-edged Rubel Hossain on 32 off 43 balls.

Liton Das also flopped on 7 while Nasir Hossain was bowled by Abu Haider on 25.

Mushfiquur scored a golden duck but immediately went to the Academy ground for batting practice before returning to bat for the Green team and top scored with 44.

Haider bagged three wickets while Abu Jayed bowled in tight line to pick up a wicket giving away 31 runs from his eight overs.

## U-19s' first warm-up tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Under-19 team will play the first official warm-up match against their Afghanistan counterparts tomorrow at the Christ's College ground in Christchurch ahead of the ICC Under-19 World Cup, which begins on January 13.

Saif Hasan's troops will face Pakistan U-19 in another warm-up match on January 10 at Hagley Park before taking the field for the main event, their first group C fixture of the world cup, against Namibia on January 13. The remaining two group matches, against Canada and England, will be held on January 15 and 18 respectively.

Earlier the Bangladesh U-19s played three practice matches against local selections during their 10-day training camp in Dunedin, two of which they lost while the first game was washed out.

Unlike the Mehedi Hasan Miraz led side though, who finished third in the previous ICC U-19 World Cup, this bunch of cricketers were not afforded much match practice aside from the U-19 Asia Cup in Malaysia last year.

## Pietersen to retire end of the year

STAR SPORTS DESK



Kevin Pietersen has announced he will retire from all forms of cricket within a year, reports Sydney Morning Herald.

The right-hander, now playing in the Big Bash League, said that he would not be returning to the play for in the T20 competition in the next season.

Speaking after the Melbourne Stars lost their fourth straight game to start the Big Bash League season, the England Test great was asked whether he had given any thought to whether he would return to the club next summer, with his current contract expiring at the end of this season.

Pietersen, 37, was definitive. "I won't be playing next season," he said. "I'm done," the 37-year-old Pietersen told reporters.

"I think everybody knows that you come to the end of your time and stuff so for me you get to that time in your career where you just think, 'Do I want this?'"

"I want it desperately at the moment, but I don't think I'll want it in 10 months' time."

Pietersen said he would play the forthcoming Pakistan Super League and the Twenty20 tournament in South Africa next summer, but would be done by late 2018.

He also said an ankle injury suffered in the loss to the Renegades was not serious and he was hopeful of playing against Adelaide on Tuesday night.

The South African-born Pietersen was an Ashes hero for England, and arguably his country's finest batsman over an eventful decade in the national set up.

England's fifth highest Test run scorer (8181 runs), Pietersen played the last of his 104 Tests in the Ashes white-wash four years ago, after which he was cut loose by national selectors.



## No. 3 position for Shakib?

SPORTS REPORTER

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan batted at number three position in the intra-squad 50-over practice match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, dropping a big hint that the team management might be considering him for the crucial position in the upcoming tri-series.

Although Shakib scored only 24 in yesterday's game, he may be the man to bat at that position in that series against Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka starting from January 15 in Mirpur.

The No. 3 position has been a perennial problem for the Bangladesh batting order, and the new team management, under the leadership of former national captain Khaled Mahmud, wants to continue Shakib at that position if even he fails to deliver in the first few matches just to give him enough time to build an innings.

In October last year, Shakib had batted at that position in the first ODI against South Africa in Kimberly and scored 29 runs, but the Chandika Hathurusingha-led team management slotted him at number five position in the following two games.

# Pandya counterpunch salvages India

AFP, Cape Town



Hardik Pandya went on a thrilling counter-attack but could not prevent South Africa from finishing on top on the second day of the first Test at Newlands on Saturday.

Pandya scored a swashbuckling 93, then took two wickets, but South Africa built on a first innings lead of 77 and were 65 for two at the close, an overall lead of 142 on a pitch which has helped fast bowlers.

India had slumped to 92 for seven in reply to South Africa's first innings total of 286 when Pandya found a determined ally in Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

While 24-year-old Pandya went for his shots, Kumar took 34 balls to score his first run but then played some fine strokes of his own, scoring 25 in an eighth wicket partnership of 99 which more than doubled their team's total.

The partnership frustrated the South African bowlers and kept them in the field long enough for Dale Steyn to give South Africa another injury scare.

Steyn, in his first Test match since suffering a fractured shoulder in Australia in November 2014, had taken two for 51 when he pulled up with a bruised heel and left the field three balls into his 18th over.



Young Indian all-rounder Hardik Pandya scored a brave 93 against the hostile South Africa attack on the second day of the first Test at Newlands yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

After treatment in the dressing room he was sent for a scan.

Steyn would have hoped to end Pandya's innings -- and hasten the demise of the Indian batting effort -- long before he was called upon to bowl a fourth spell in what was his longest and most intensive bowling effort since his shoulder injury.

Pandya struggled against Steyn early in his innings. He survived on a review after being given out caught behind off the fast bowler on five and was

dropped by Dean Elgar at gully off Steyn when he had 15.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 286 (De Villiers 65, Du Plessis 62, De Kock 43, Maharaj 35; Kumar 4-87, Ashwin 2-21)

**INDIA:** First innings 209 (Pujara 26, Pandya 93, Kumar 25; Philander 3-33, Steyn 2-51, Morkel 2-57, Rabada 3-34)

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Second innings 65 for 2 (Markram 34, Elgar 25; Pandya 2-17)

# Khawaja fulfils Ashes dream

AGENCIES, Sydney



Usman Khawaja plundered a big century as Australia roasted England's bowlers on Saturday to open up a 133-run lead with two days to play in the final Ashes Test in Sydney.

Khawaja topscored with 171 while Shaun Marsh finished unbeaten on 98 after Steve Smith fell for 83 as Australia built a substantial lead with more runs to come and intense 40 Celsius (104 F) heat forecast for Sunday's fourth day.

The fans at the SCG came to see Steve Smith follow in the footsteps of Don Bradman, but instead it was Khawaja who turned the famous venue into his field of dreams.

England finds themselves in a familiar position after the third day but this time it's not the feats of the Australian captain that have them under the pump.

Smith missed out on what would have been a landmark century but they were instead put to the sword by Khawaja then the Marsh brothers. Shaun Marsh is just two runs shy of his sixth Test ton, and second of the series,

while Mitchell Marsh will also have designs on another big one.

Australia have already regained the Ashes with an unassailable 3-0 lead and are looking to close out the series 4-0 after last week's fourth test in Melbourne was drawn.

At the close of play on a dispiriting third day for the tourists, who took just two wickets, brothers Shaun and Mitchell Marsh were making merry in an unbroken 104-run partnership as Australia cruised to 479 for four.

Khawaja batted for 515 minutes off 381 balls with 18 fours and a six for his maiden Ashes Test hundred.

"You don't get to celebrate Test centuries too much unless you're Steve Smith. You've got to enjoy them when they come," Khawaja said.

It was the Pakistan-born Khawaja's sixth Test hundred and first in Sydney and came at a time when some former players were calling for his sacking despite scoring two half-centuries earlier in the series.

He fell three runs short of his highest Test score of 174 scored against New Zealand in Brisbane in 2015.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**ENGLAND:** First innings 346 (Root 83, Malan 62; Cummins 4-80)

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 479-4 (Warner 56, Khawaja 171, Smith 83 S Marsh not out 98, M Marsh not out 63; Ali 1-125, Crane 1-135)

# Williamson ton ends Pakistan run

AFP, Wellington



Kane Williamson may have been New Zealand's hero in their dominant win over Pakistan in the opening one-day international in Wellington on Saturday, but he said it was not a game for heroics.

"You're always thinking about the role you need to play and the situation of the game, and it certainly didn't require something silly," Williamson said after New Zealand beat the Champions Trophy holders by 61 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system.

New Zealand made 315 for seven in their 50 overs and had the tourists at 166 for six when rain stopped play in the 31st over.

Pakistan had arrived on a nine-match winning streak but fresh from playing in more accommodating conditions than the 120 kilometre an hour (75 mph) winds and rain that greeted them in Wellington.

After being sent in to bat, Colin Munro (58) and Martin Gupthill (48) gave New Zealand a flying start with 83 for the first wicket before Williamson went to the middle with the dismissal of Munro in the 13th over.

While the openers plundered the boundaries, Williamson's 115 off 117 deliveries came from a diet of ones and twos with only eight fours and one six.

Pakistan were in trouble in the very first over of their reply when Tim Southee took the wickets of Azhar Ali and Babar Azam, both lbw.



New Zealand captain Kane Williamson (R) celebrates his century at the Basin Reserve in Wellington on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fakhar Zaman battled bravely to try to restore the Pakistan innings and was unbeaten on 82, the only innings of note, when rain stopped play and Southee had the figures of three for 22.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**NEW ZEALAND:** 315-7 in 50 overs (Gupthill 48, Munro 58, Williamson 115, Nicholls 50; Hasan Ali 3-61)

**PAKISTAN:** 166-6 in 30.1 overs (Fakhar 82 not out, Shadab 28; Southee 3-22, Boult 2-35)

**Result:** New Zealand won by 61 runs (D-L method)

**Player-of-the-match:** Williamson

## Steyn return overshadowed by injury

AFP, Cape Town

South African fast bowler Dale Steyn left the field with a bruised left heel on Saturday, the second day of his first Test match in more than a year.

Steyn pulled up three balls into his 18th over after taking two for 51 in the first Test against India at Newlands.

A team spokesman said the injury was being assessed and treated.

Steyn, 34, had not played in a first-class match since suffering a fractured shoulder in a Test in Australia in November 2016.

He was included in a four-man pace attack for the India Test despite coach Ottis Gibson expressing concern about risking him because of a lack of match practice.

In the only cricket since his injury, Steyn bowled 18 overs in five Twenty20 matches for his franchise, the Titans, as well as 12 overs in a low-key appearance for an Invitation XI against the touring Zimbabweans in December.