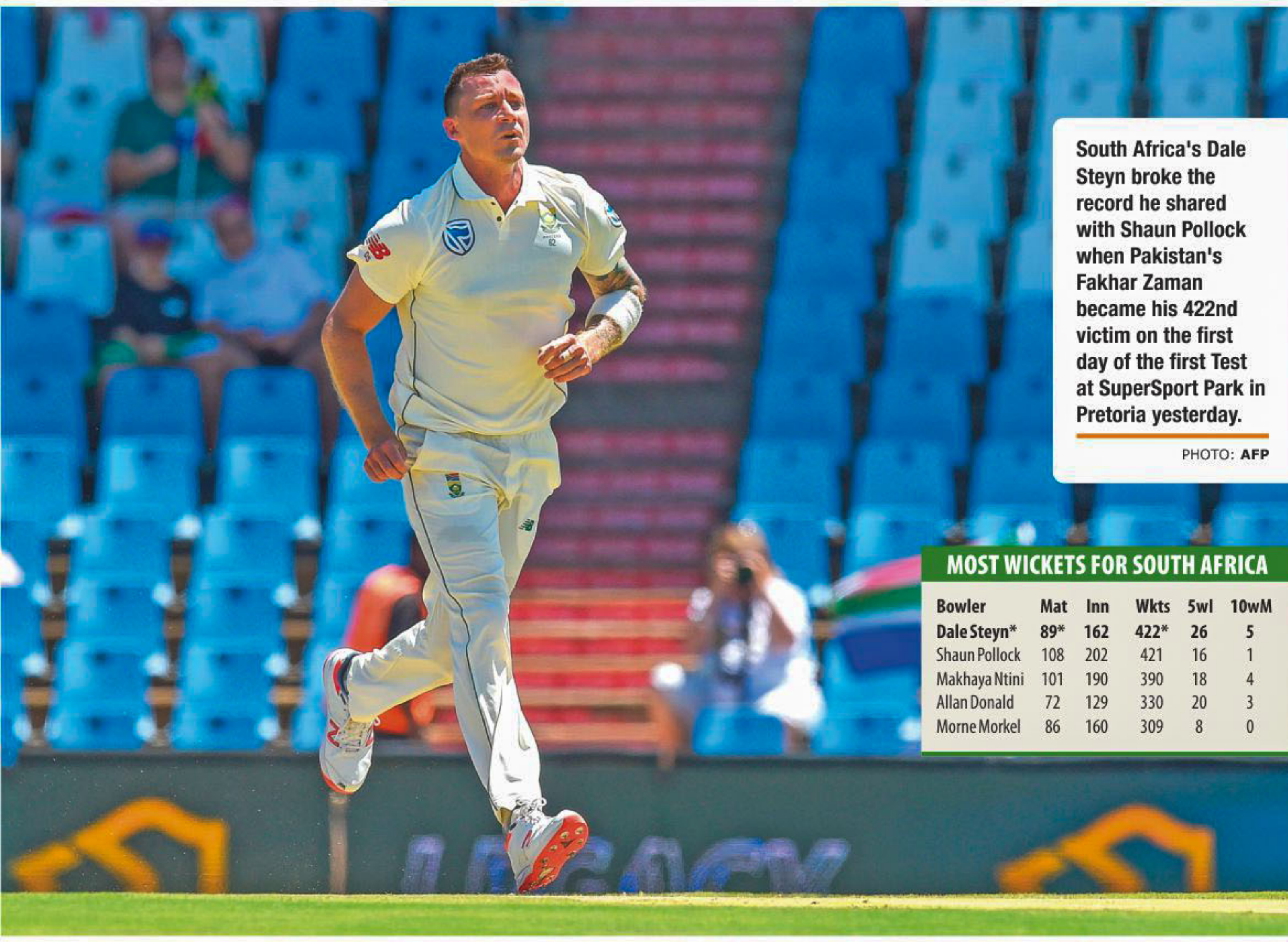


Kylian Mbappe's remarkable rise to the top of the global game has now seen the Paris Saint-Germain forward crowned French Player of the Year for the first time. The 20-year-old frontman has enjoyed a remarkable 2018. He had already enjoyed a stunning rise to prominence prior to entering the current calendar year. After bursting onto the scene as a precociously-gifted teenager at Monaco, a big-money transfer had taken him to Parc des Princes. Another Ligue 1 title triumph was enjoyed in 2017-18, as PSG swept the board in terms of domestic honours. Mbappe then headed to Russia with his country and a shot at World Cup glory. He helped Les Bleus to go all the way, with a fine individual effort netted in a 4-2 final triumph over Croatia. His efforts were recognised with the Young Player Award, and his game has continued to go from strength to strength. --GOAL.COM



South Africa's Dale Steyn broke the record he shared with Shaun Pollock when Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman became his 422nd victim on the first day of the first Test at SuperSport Park in Pretoria yesterday.

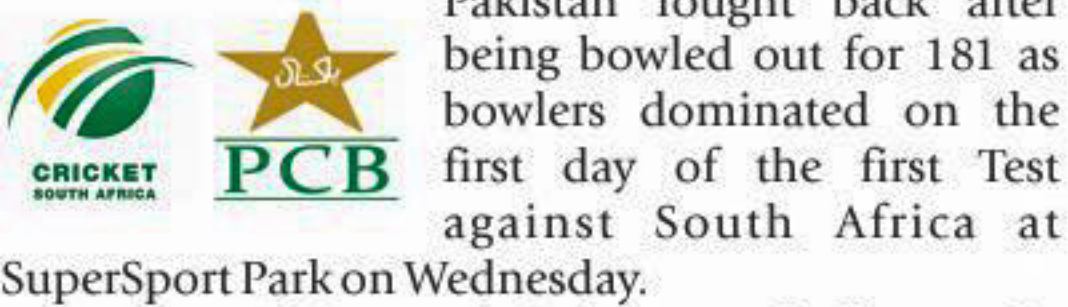
PHOTO: AFP

MOST WICKETS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Bowler	Mat	Inn	Wkts	5wI	10wM
Dale Steyn*	89*	162	422*	26	5
Shaun Pollock	108	202	421	16	1
Makhaya Ntini	101	190	390	18	4
Allan Donald	72	129	330	20	3
Morne Morkel	86	160	309	8	0

Pakistan fight back after Steyn record

AFP, Centurion



Pakistan fought back after being bowled out for 181 as bowlers dominated on the first day of the first Test against South Africa at SuperSport Park on Wednesday.

Duanne Olivier took six for 37 as the hosts subjected Pakistan to an onslaught of aggressive, short-pitched bowling.

South Africa struggled in reply, reaching 127 for five at the close, with left-armers Mohammad Amir and Shaheen Shah Afridi both taking two wickets.

Teenager Afridi struck with successive deliveries, dismissing Dean Elgar and captain Faf du Plessis as South Africa lost three wickets without scoring a run to leave the match evenly poised.

Olivier, effectively South Africa's fifth-choice fast bowler, gained his sixth Test cap following injuries to Vernon Philander and Lungi Ngidi.

Olivier stole the limelight for South Africa on a day when Dale Steyn became South Africa's leading all-time wicket-taker.

Steyn took the second wicket of the match, having Fakhar Zaman caught at second slip, to claim the South African record with 422 Test scalps but had no further success. He was punished for 40 runs in four overs in his third spell of the day as Babar Azam went on the attack while batting with the tail.

Azam hit 10 of his 15 fours off Steyn, who finished with one for 66.

Azam made a defiant 71 off 79 balls on a pitch already showing signs of uneven bounce. Hasan Ali (21) supported Azam in a ninth wicket stand of 67, easily the best of the innings.

Olivier's first victim was Shan Masood, who was playing in place of Haris Sohail, who suffered a knee injury during the pre-match warm-up. Masood looked competent as he and Azhar Ali put on 37 for the third wicket before a lifting delivery deflected off his thigh pad onto the stumps. Olivier followed up by trapping Asad Shafiq leg before wicket before he took the wickets of Azhar Ali, captain Sarfraz Ahmed and Mohammad Amir after the break.

South Africa lost Aiden Markram early, leg before to Hasan Ali, but Elgar and Hashim saw off some tight bowling by Hasan and Mohammad Amir. Amir returned to the attack after a short break and had Amla caught at gully for eight, the latest in a string of low scores by the veteran batsman.

Tall left-arter Afridi, 18, playing in his second Test, followed up in the next over when Elgar was caught at first slip, trying to withdraw his bat, and Du Plessis was greeted by a ball which reared off a good length and he was caught at gully.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 181 all out (Babar 71, Azhar 36; Olivier 6-37, Rabada 3-59, Steyn 1-66)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 127 for 5 (Elgar 22, de Bruyn 29, Bavuma 38 not out; Amir 2-26, Shaheen 2-36)

STEYN'S TEST MILESTONES

Milestones on Dale Steyn's progress to become South Africa's leading Test wicket-taker:

December 2004: Test debut against England in Port Elizabeth. A fast late-swinging delivery to bowl Michael Vaughan shows his potential but it takes him another two years to become an established member of the Test team.

April 2006: First five-wicket haul, 5-47 v New Zealand, Centurion.

November 2007: First ten-wicket match haul, 10-93 v New Zealand, Johannesburg.

January 2008: 100th wicket in 20th Test, Junaid Siddique (Bangladesh), Chittagong.

February 2010: Career-best innings figures, 7-51 v India, Nagpur.

June 2010: 200th wicket in 39th Test, Sulaiman Benn (West Indies), Port-of-Spain.

January 2013: 300th wicket in 61st Test, Doug Bracewell (New Zealand), Cape Town.

February 2013: Career-best match figures, 11-60 v Pakistan, Johannesburg.

July 2015: 400th wicket in 80th Test, Tamim Iqbal (Bangladesh), Mirpur.

December 2018: 422nd wicket in 89th Test, Fakhar Zaman (Pakistan), Centurion.

Batsmen bruised on Boxing Day

AFP, Christchurch



Suranga Lakmal and Tim Southee vied for early honours as 14 wickets fell to leave the deciding second Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka evenly poised on day one in Christchurch on Wednesday.

After Sri Lanka won the toss and opted to bowl, Lakmal produced a career-best five for 54 as New Zealand crumbled and were all out for 178 in 50 overs.

At stumps, Sri Lanka were 88 for four in reply with Angelo Mathews not out 27 and Roshen Silva on 15 while Southee had three for 29.

The 31-year-old right-arm quick rarely gets a chance to shine in the sub-continent where spinners dominate, but the green Hagley Oval wicket and heavy cloud cover were ripe to be exploited.

New Zealand knew they were in for a tough time when they lost the toss, with Southee feeling their fortunes improved after he took 14 off one Lakmal over to put the star Sri Lankan performer out of the attack.

In a marathon opening session, Lakmal bowled unchanged for 16 overs as he tore New Zealand apart with figures at one stage of four for 11.

He returned late in the innings to remove Neil Wagner to eclipse his previous best of five for 63

against South Africa two years ago.

Southee and BJ Watling (46) offered spirited resistance for New Zealand with a 108-run stand for the seventh wicket while Ross Taylor (27) was the only other home batsman to score more than 10.

Southee, batting at better than a run a ball, hit three sixes and six fours in his innings and brought up the New Zealand hundred with a thunderous stroke which Silva managed to get a hand to but both ball and fielder ended up over the rope.

Sri Lanka drew first blood by winning the toss and predictably bowled first, giving Lakmal the opportunity to put his full repertoire on display as he moved the ball both ways. He sent Jeet Raval (six), Tom Latham (10), Kane Williamson (two) and Henry Nicholls back to the pavilion in his opening spell.

With the ball, Southee removed Sri Lanka's top three to move to 235 career Test wickets and become the third most successful New Zealand bowler behind Richard Hadlee (431) and Daniel Vettori (361).

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 178 all out (Taylor 27, Watling 46, Southee 68; Lakmal 5-54, Kumara 3-49)

SRI LANKA: First innings 88 for 4 (Mathews 27 not out, Silva 15 not out; Southee 3-29)



Sri Lanka's Suranga Lakmal produced a career-best five for 54 as New Zealand were bowled out for 178 during the first day of the second Test at Hagley Park Oval in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba scores his side's second goal against Huddersfield Town at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Pogba powers United

Liverpool go six clear as Man City lose again

AFP, London



Liverpool moved six points clear at the top of the Premier League as the leaders eased past Newcastle 4-0 at Anfield and Manchester City were beaten for the second time in five days, 2-1 at Leicester.

Tottenham leapfrog City into second after thrashing Bournemouth 5-0, while Manchester United's perfect start under caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer continued with Paul Pogba scoring twice in a 3-1 win over Huddersfield.

After a slow start Liverpool went in front through an unlikely source when Dejan Lovren volleyed home after 12 minutes.

It was a far more familiar marksman who made the game safe when Mohamed Salah scored from the penalty spot two minutes into the second half to move into a three-way lead as the league's top scorer with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Harry Kane.

Xherdan Shaqiri and Fabinho's first Liverpool goal rounded off the scoring.

City boss Pep Guardiola made three changes from the side that lost 3-2 to Crystal Palace on Saturday with Sergio Aguero and Kevin De Bruyne returning, but even they couldn't prevent a third defeat in four Premier League games.

Aguero set up Bernardo Silva to give the champions a perfect start, but Marc

Albrighton levelled just five minutes later.

City dominated possession throughout, but after Andros Townsend's incredible volley for Palace on Saturday they were hit by another wonder strike when Ricardo Pereira fired home nine minutes from time.

A terrible afternoon for City was compounded by a red card for Fabian Delph late on.

As City flounder, Spurs are firing back into the title race as Mauricio Pochettino's men have now scored 11 goals in four days.

Fresh from a 6-2 hammering of Everton, Christian Eriksen, Son Heung-min and Lucas Moura put Tottenham 3-0 up before half-time at Wembley.

Kane then got his goal just after the hour mark before Son recorded his second double in as many games.

Pogba was again to the fore as Solskjaer's dream start continued unabated in his first outing in charge at Old Trafford.

Nemanja Matic tapped home from close range to give the hosts a half-time advantage.

Pogba provided three assists on his return to the starting line-up in a 5-1 win at Cardiff at the weekend after being benched towards the end of Jose Mourinho's reign.

And the French World Cup winner showed the goalscoring threat he also poses from midfield by striking twice in 14 minutes as United moved back to within five points of the top four.

CR7 rescues point for Juve

AFP, Milan

Cristiano Ronaldo came off the bench to score a late equaliser as 10-man Juventus salvaged a 2-2 draw at Atalanta on Wednesday to move nine points clear of Napoli at the top of Serie A.

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri decided to rest Ronaldo as the former Real Madrid man did not start a league game for the first time since moving to Italy, but the 33-year-old was needed to level in the 78th minute after Duvan Zapata's double had put the hosts in front following Berat Djimsiti's own goal.

Ronaldo's efforts keep Juventus unbeaten in Serie A, ahead of the final game before the winter break against Sampdoria on Saturday.

Earlier on Wednesday, AC Milan's push for a top-four finish in Serie A took a hit as Gennaro Gattuso's side were held to an uneventful 0-0 draw at struggling Frosinone.

The seven-time European champions have now failed to score in four consecutive league games for the first time since 1984, managing three goalless stalemates in the process.