

STOKED: England all-rounder Ben Stokes is over the moon after single-handedly pulling off a thrilling one-wicket victory over Australia on the fourth day of the third Ashes Test in Headingley yesterday. Stokes scored an unbeaten 135, including 74 of England's last 76 runs.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Stokes scripts an all-time classic

AGENCIES, Undated

Ben Stokes said his remarkable century was "unbelievable" as England secured an astounding one-wicket win over Australia in the third Test at Headingley on Sunday to square the Ashes series at 1-1.

England, dismissed for just 67 in their first innings -- their lowest Ashes total in 71 years -- were seemingly dead and buried at 286-9, still 73 shy of a victory target of 359.

But 28-year-old left-handed batsman Stokes, whose five-and-a-half hour innings was a brilliantly paced mix of defence and aggression, saw England home with a superb 135 not out.

"Unbelievable," Stokes told Sky Sports. "It's one I'll never forget. I've got to try and take it all in," added Stokes, whose batting heroics helped England win the World Cup in July.

"I'm not sure it'll ever happen again. It's one of the two best feelings I've ever felt on a cricket pitch."

Stokes, involved in a run out of Jos Buttler which looked to have scuppered England's chances, added: "Just never give up. It's not over until it's over. When Leach came in it was pretty clear what had to be done. It was five and one. I'll take five (deliveries), you take one."

Besppectated Leach scored just one run but

he played his part as Stokes acknowledged.

"He's a super nightwatchman, knowing what he had to do. I couldn't watch in the end. I was just waiting to see what happened."

Stokes, two not out off 50 balls at Friday's close, faced 219 deliveries in total, hitting 11 fours and eight sixes.

"I think when it got down to the 30s I was thinking, 'rein it in a little', but when it was in the 60s, 70s, 50s I had to really try and I sort of got in the zone," explained Stokes. "We had to win this game to stay in the Ashes and we managed to do it."

England captain Joe Root labelled his longtime friend's display "outrageous".

"We said at the start of the day, 'we just have to believe' and while two people are alive and breathing, we have a chance," said Root.

"We've seen some freakish things already this summer in the World Cup but I didn't think we'd see something similar in this series."

"It was an incredible game of cricket, an incredible atmosphere and Test cricket is alive and kicking. This Ashes is alive and kicking."

Asked about Stokes's innings, he added: "To try and sum that up in words is pretty much impossible. Outrageous batting."

Meanwhile, Australia captain Tim Paine said: "It's hard to take, losing from that position but you tip your hat sometimes."

"Ben Stokes played an unbelievable innings and in the end he was too good for us. It was probably the best Test innings I've seen and the rest of the team thought the same thing."

Among those at the ground watching the match was David Gower, who played in the celebrated 1981 Ashes Test at Headingley when England beat Australia after following-on in a match where Ian Botham hit 149 not out and fast bowler Bob Willis took 8-43.

"That was the most extraordinary performance I have seen from anyone ever, both as a player and as a broadcaster over the last 40 years," Sky Sports commentator Gower said.

"To dominate proceedings like that, to control proceedings, to take all the risks that could easily have failed, to come out on top, to be there at that moment, that takes unbelievable skill, unbelievable courage."

SCORES IN BRIEF
AUSTRALIA: First innings 179 and second innings 246
ENGLAND: First innings 67 and second innings 362 for 9 (Root 77, Denly 50, Stokes 135 not out, Bairstow 36, Archer 15; Hazlewood 4-85, Lyon 2-114)
Result: England won by 1 wicket and 5-match series level 1-1.
Player-of-the-match: Ben Stokes.

Al Amin powers U-15s to 7-1 win

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Bangladesh gave further proof of their title credentials with a 7-1 thumping of Sri Lanka in their second match of the SAFF U-15 Championship at the Kalyani Stadium in Nadia, West Bengal yesterday.

Striker Al Amin Rahman scored five goals while his strike partner Al Mirad and skipper Rakibul Islam scored a goal apiece as the boys in red and green built on their dominant start. They had handed Bhutan a 5-2 defeat on Friday.

Despite two wins from two matches, Bangladesh are second in the five-team table on goal difference, with India regaining pole position with a 7-0 thrashing of Bhutan in the day's second match.

Although Bangladesh had it all their way, scoring three goals in the first half and four after the break, they had to wait till the 32nd minute for the first goal. Al Amin opened the scoring with a clever placing shot.

Rakibul made it 2-0 10 minutes later with an exquisite solo effort, dribbling past two defenders before finding the corner of the net with a curling finish before Al Amin

increased the lead with another placed shot a minute before the interval.

Al Mirad, who scored two goals on Friday, made it 4-0 with a header from in front of goal three minutes after the restart before a defensive error two minutes later helped Sri Lanka pull one back.

However, Al Amin restored Bangladesh's four-goal lead from the spot right before the hour-mark, bringing up his hat-trick. The Bangladesh No. 10 was in no mood to let off, though, as he stabbed home the sixth goal in the 66th minute before wrapping up the goal-glut with a simple tap-in five minutes later.

"I'm very happy with having scored five goals. The fact that I have contributed to taking the team forward also makes me very happy," Al Amin, the striker based in BKSP, told reporters after the game.

Coach Mostafa Anwar Parvez was satisfied with the scoreline even though he felt they could have scored more goals.

"I am happy that the boys played better than in the last match. We created many chances, so I would have been happier had we won by a much bigger margin."

Bangladesh will play their next match against Nepal on Tuesday before taking on title-rivals India two days later. The top two teams will meet in the final on August 31.

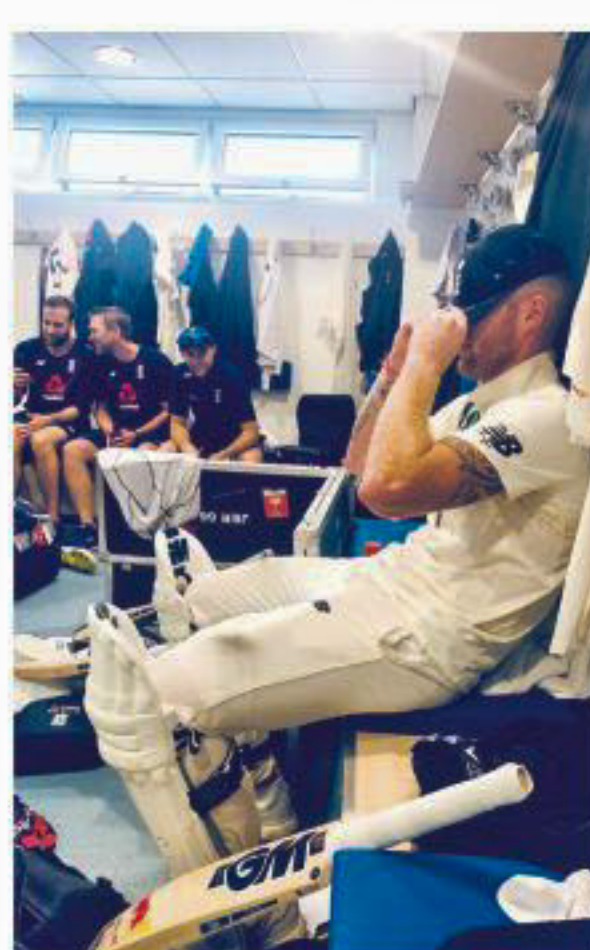


Bangladesh striker Al Amin Rahman (No. 10) celebrates with teammates after one of his five goals against Sri Lanka in their SAFF U-15 Championship fixture at the Kalyani Stadium in West Bengal yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

WHAT THEY SAID

- I've seen some remarkable cricket moments in my life but that is the best I've seen in over 50 years. @benstokes38 saved the Ashes and gave a magical inspirational innings. Even better than his World Cup performance.
-- Former England batsman Geoffrey Boycott.
- I have no sister but if I did I'd want her to marry Ben Stokes.
-- Former England spinner Graeme Swann.
- That has just bettered the World Cup final. Never thought I would be saying that. This is the summer that is going to inspire a whole new generation.
-- Former England Michael Vaughan
- One of the best innings of test match cricket you will see, well played @benstokes38. What a game, what a test match. #ashesaliveandkicking. Both teams so close together. Go the Aussies for the next Test.
-- Ex-Australian player and coach Darren Lehmann.
- The greatest ever innings by an Englishman.
-- Former England skipper Alastair Cook.
- You cannot do that Ben Stokes
-- Ex-England captain Nasser Hussain restates his famous phrase Arise Sir @benstokes38. You absolute hero. Best test match ever.
-- Former England footballer Gary Lineker



Not sure he can quite believe what he's just done?
-- Stuart Broad's caption for a picture which he posted after the match.

Sk Kamal Club Cup from Oct 19-30 Bangabandhu Gold Cup likely in November

SPORTS REPORTER



A day after taking a preliminary decision of hosting the Bangabandhu Gold Cup from October 22 to November 2 during a meeting of the Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) executive committee, the local game's governing body apparently retreated from the decision, allowing the same window for the third edition of the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup.

Since the BFF had initially allowed Chittagong Abahani's bid of hosting the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in Chittagong in the latter stages of October, with three of the country's top teams taking part, the decision on Saturday, albeit a draft one, came as a surprise as it would mean a clash between the Bangabandhu Gold Cup

and the Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup.

However, a meeting among the BFF high-ups and representatives of Chittagong Abahani -- involving the club's chairman MA Latif, MP, the club's general secretary Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, MP, and BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, among others -- prompted the game's local governing body to shift the Bangabandhu Gold Cup to a later date.

"The decision regarding the Bangabandhu Gold Cup that was relayed after the executive committee meeting on Saturday was a draft one, not a final one. The Chittagong Abahani officials came to meet us today and after today's meeting, the BFF has allocated October 19 to 30 as the slot for Sheikh Kamal International Gold Cup," BFF general

secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Since the BFF is for football, we have tried to make sure these two events do not clash. So we can expect the Bangabandhu Gold Cup to be held at a suitable time in November," added Shohag.

Shamsul Haque Chowdhury told reporters that apart from Bashundhara Kings, Abahani and Chittagong Abahani, there will be five foreign teams taking part in the club event, with East Bengal and Mohun Bagan from India and defending champions TC Sports of Maldives already confirmed. The other two teams, still not confirmed, will be two top teams from Thailand and Malaysia.

The hosts also named a 17-member organising committee for the club event, with finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, MP, as its chairman.

India just one wicket away

AFP, North Sound

Jasprit Bumrah and Ishant Sharma sent West Indies crashing to 74 for nine on the final session of the fourth day after Indian captain Virat Kohli declared his team's second innings to set the home side an improbable victory target of 419 in the first Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Sunday.

The West Indies had crashed to 82 for nine at the time this report was filed.

After Ajinkya Rahane completed his tenth Test hundred and Hanuma Vihari fell seven runs short of his maiden Test century in a total of 343 for seven, Bumrah and Sharma were utterly devastating against batsmen who appeared ill-equipped to cope with quality fast bowling.

Bumrah got a scintillating five-for, which came at the expense of a paltry seven runs. He was first to strike, extending Kraigg Brathwaite's run of low scores before scattering the stumps of opening partner John Campbell and senior batsman Darren Bravo.

He came back with later, removing Shai Hope and captain Jason Holder.

Sharma, who led the India attack with five wickets in the first innings, and Mohammad Shami got two wickets each.

SCORES IN BRIEF
INDIA: First innings 297 and second innings 343 for 7 decl
WEST INDIES: First innings 222 and 82 for nine (Chase 12; Sharma 2-25, Bumrah 5-7, Shami 2-1)

Kiwis in command

REUTERS, Colombo



Fifties from Colin de Grandhomme and BJ Watling gave New Zealand a first-innings lead of 138 against Sri Lanka on the fourth day of the second and final Test in Colombo on Sunday.

The touring side, who need a series-levelling win after Sri Lanka won the opener in Galle, reached 382 for five wickets on another rain-interrupted day.

Watling was unbeaten on 81 while de Grandhomme was 83 not out after a blistering knock with his side needing quick runs to set Sri Lanka a target on the final day.

After rain allowed just 66 overs of play on the first two days, the start of the fourth day was delayed due to wet weather and only 48 overs could be bowled on Sunday.

Overnight centurion Tom Latham and Watling continued accumulating runs

with ease and took their side past Sri Lanka's first-innings total of 244.

The pair added 143 for the fifth wicket for the Black Caps before Latham was finally out leg before for 154, giving off-spinner Dilruwan Perera his third wicket.

There was, however, no respite for the hosts' bowlers as De Grandhomme went on the attack, hitting five sixes and as many fours in his 75-ball knock.

De Grandhomme and Watling added 113 for the unbroken sixth wicket, giving their side hopes of victory.

Sri Lanka did not have regular captain Dimuth Karunaratne on the field after he suffered a small tear in his quadriceps while fielding on Saturday.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: First innings 244
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 382 for 5 (Latham 154, Williamson 20, Taylor 23, Watling 81 not out, De Grandhomme 83 not out; Perera 3-114)

Smith set for tour match return

AFP, Leeds

Steve Smith is set to make his return to action in a tour match against Derbyshire after the Australia star batted against bowlers for the first time on Sunday since being concussed.

Smith, one of the world's leading batsmen, was ruled out of the ongoing third Ashes Test at Headingley with concussion after being hit by a 92 mph bouncer from England fast bowler Jofra Archer in the drawn second match at Lord's.



SHAKIB CATCHES HEAT: The sweltering afternoon heat got the better of none other than Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who resorted to applying an ice bag on top of his head during a practice session at Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED