



PHOTO: TWITTER

India tear down Gabba fortress to win EPIC TEST SERIES

'One of the biggest moments of my life'

AGENCIES

A freewheeling Rishabh Pant has stormed Australia's Gabba fortress in record-breaking fashion, helping India snatch a three-wicket win to cap one of the greatest Test series of the modern era.

India wicket-keeper batsman Pant played a crucial innings as he scored an unbeaten 89 and played the role of an anchor as the wickets at the other end continued to fall, and coach Ravi Shastri praised the youngster and said that Team India play him overseas because he is a match-winner.

"What do I say about Rishabh Pant. We play him overseas because he is a match winner. He has once again shown in this series what kind of a player he is. Sometimes when he does not keep behind the wickets very well then people get after him.

"But when he plays like this and wins the match for us, if in Sydney there was one more hour to play for, then we could have won that game as well. I think he has played extremely well in this series," Shastri told Sony Network.

The 23-year-old produced two fearless fourth-innings knocks that were crucial to India's 2-1 series victory in Australia. Pant's blistering 97 helped the tourists draw the third Test in Sydney and his whirlwind 89 not out fashioned their three-wicket victory at the Gabba.

"It's been a dream series," the Delhi player, who did a victory lap of the stadium carrying an Indian flag, said after collecting the man-of-the-match award. "After not playing the first test, I practised hard and everything paid off as we won the series."

"The team management always backs me and tells me 'you are a match winner and you always have to go and win the match for the team'. That's the only thing I keep on thinking every day - that I want to win matches for India, and I'm happy that I did it today. This is one of the biggest moments of my life now."



PHOTO: TWITTER

WHAT THEY SAID

"You don't just play & love test cricket for nothing. Brilliant game. Congratulations India on the win, & Australia for a great series!"

Viv Richards, captain of the West Indies team who had been the last to win at the Gabba in 1988

"India's most famous series victory ever. Despite the win two years ago, in their heart of hearts they would have known without David Warner and Steve Smith it would have been just that little bit easy. Now that David Warner and Smith are there, this is the one."

Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar

"Every session we discovered a new hero. Every time we got hit, we stayed put & stood taller. We pushed boundaries of belief to play fearless but not careless cricket. Injuries & uncertainties were countered with poise & confidence."

India legend Sachin Tendulkar

"To go to Australia and win a Test series in this way... will be remembered in the history of Indian cricket forever."

Former India captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly

"You can't speak highly enough of India; it is as simple as that."

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting

"That's as good a Test match win as I can remember. I can't remember a better Test match win in recent times."

Aussie legend Shane Warne

"WHAT A WIN!!! Yessssss. To everyone who doubted us after Adelaide, stand up and take notice. Exemplary performance but the grit and determination was the standout for us the whole way. Well done to all the boys and the management. Enjoy this historic feat lads."

India captain Virat Kohli

"Wow... That has to go down as one of the greatest if not the greatest Test victory of all time!! Eggs on my face over here in the UK... but I love to see character & skill... India have it in abundance"

Former England captain Michael Vaughan

"Test cricket's heart is beating strongly! That was an extraordinary win @BCCI & a fantastic series to watch. Aussies not lost at The Gabba since 1988. Wow"

England fast bowler Stuart Broad

"One of the greatest Test series wins ever. Congrats India and well played Australia, what a series."

Google's Indian-born chief executive Sundar Pichai

AGENCIES



Cheteshwar Pujara absorbed 11 blows to the helmet, hands and body in a stonewalling innings of 56. Rishabh Pant was more aggressive, mixing scoops, sweeps and slogs on his way to an unbeaten 89.

Together, they ushered India to a famous victory — retaining the Border-Gavaskar trophy with a stunning win in the fourth and final Test against Australia on Tuesday.

Pujara needed medical treatment and a new helmet in the middle session of day five but battled for 211 balls while Pant had stayed at the crease for 138 balls for his knock and hit the winning runs with a four down the ground off Josh Hazlewood.

India's most gruelling overseas Test tour was crowned with perhaps their most famous Test win as they overcame unimaginable odds and a more-fancied opponent in a win for the ages at the Gabba, what was flagged as Australia's 'fortress' since 1988.

Set 328 to win on a day-five pitch against one of the best all-round attacks Australia has fielded in modern times, India stormed to a three-wicket win with three overs to spare amid lengthening shadows and emotional celebrations as

"It really means a lot to us. I don't know how to describe this victory. I'm just proud of all the boys, each and every individual. Credit to Pujara, the way he handled the pressure was magnificent, and Rishabh was brilliant in the end. After Adelaide we didn't discuss about what happened, we just wanted to play our game, show good attitude, show good character on the field."

AJINKYA RAHANE
INDIA'S STAND-IN CAPTAIN

"Absolutely disappointed. We came here to win the Test and win the series, it's been a bit of a trend that we were found wanting in the key moments and completely outplayed by a tough Indian side that fully deserves the win. I think there's lots of things we'll look back at, but what's done is done. We need to look forward now, there's a big series in South Africa coming up."

TIM PAINE
AUSTRALIA CAPTAIN

a socially distanced crowd of 5,624 fans danced and sang in triumph.

With the four-Test series tied with the trophy, but they accomplished so much more, handing the Australians their first defeat at the Gabba since 1988. It had been a stunning Indian effort to turn what were once slim prospects of victory into a realistic opportunity.

Australia had not been beaten at the Gabba since falling to Viv Richards' all-conquering West Indies side by nine wickets in November 1988. India's 329 for seven also smashed the 69-year-

old record for the biggest run-chase at the ground, set by Australia who scored 236 for seven to beat the West Indies in 1951.

The Border-Gavaskar series win was a stunning turnaround. India were bundled down for a record low of 36 in Adelaide and regular skipper Virat Kohli left a demoralised team behind him as he returned home to attend the birth of his daughter.

Under Ajinkya Rahane, who inspired India's comeback with a captain's century in Melbourne, India levelled the series in Melbourne and drew in Sydney but had lost their entire

frontline bowling attack to injuries by the time they arrived in Brisbane.

Washington Sundar and T Natarajan, retained as net bowlers, made their Test debut, helping India pull off a series victory for the ages after prevailing by three wickets in the decider.

India coach Ravi Shastri said an injury-ravaged India's 2-1 triumph in Australia under a stand-in captain will go down as one of the greatest series ever played.

"I'm not someone who really has tears in my eyes but I had real tears because this is unreal," Shastri told a video conference. "The penny has still not dropped, and it will take a long time to drop. Unreal."

Playing his first series, opener Shubman Gill laid the foundation for India's chase with a classy 91 and number three batsman Cheteshwar Pujara took several blows on his body and helmet during his obdurate 56. Rishabh Pant then smashed an unbeaten 89 to complete an epic series victory.

"What these guys have pulled off will go down in history as one of the greatest series ever played," Shastri said. "When you take the COVID situation and the spate of injuries into account, showing stomach for a fight after being bowled out for 36 is unimaginable."

Australian media called the win a "miracle."

Kings, Abahani keep winning

SPORTS REPORTER



Title contenders Bashundhara Kings and Abahani continued their winning run in the Bangladesh Premier League with victories in second round of matches at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. Defending champions Kings handed a 2-1 defeat to Bangladesh Police FC before runners-up Abahani blanked Brothers Union 2-0.

Despite the absence of key players like striker Nabib Newaj Jibon and Brazilian playmaker Raphael Augusto, six-time champions Abahani, who had struggled to a 1-0 win against Bangladesh Police in their first match, eased past Brothers Union. The Sky Blues have not lost against Brothers since their 1-0 defeat in 2014.

Brazilian forward Francisco Rodrigues gave Abahani a 34th-minute lead converting a spot-kick after Brothers defender Monday Osagie brought down Rubel Mia inside the box. Kervens Belfort doubled Abahani's lead in the 40th minute with a powerful shot on a square-pass from Rubel Mia.

In the day's first match, Bashundhara Kings ensured they did not repeat last season's performance when they were held to a 1-1 draw by Bangladesh Police. Yesterday, the defending champions took early control of the game and pressed hard for the lead which came in the 16th minute. Brazilian Robson da Silva found the back of the net with a powerful diagonal shot from inside the box after Police goalkeeper Mohammad Nehal brilliantly stopped a drive from Raul Becerra.

After conceding the lead, Police woke up from their slumber and got the equaliser when defender Lancine Toure rose high to nod home a free-kick from Murolimzhon Akhmedov in the 42nd minute. Goalkeeper Nehal kept Police in the game by denying Mohammad Ibrahim in the stoppage time but he could not stop Robson from scoring in the next minute.

A new beginning for captain and team

MAZHAR UDDIN



When he was appointed Bangladesh's long-term ODI skipper

last year, Tamim Iqbal would have realised the importance of his new responsibility immediately, but he has not been able to walk the walk because the coronavirus pandemic forced a suspension of the Tigers' cricket soon afterwards.

Off the field, Tamim did manage to communicate his captaincy thoughts on various platforms, including his live talk shows on social media.

Bangladesh will resume international cricket after a long gap of over 10 months today with the first of three ODIs against the West Indies, and it is set to be a new beginning for both Tamim and the Tigers.

"Long-term plan" are the buzz words of the think tank keeping the 2023 ICC World Cup in mind and Tamim is keen for Bangladesh to play their own brand of cricket to create the DNA of the side.

"What I always give priority to is that we want to develop our own Bangladeshi brand of cricket. As I have always said, every team has their own style. So, I don't think we need to follow others as we are not as strong as the West Indians or not as built-up as the Aussies.

"ODI series now are not like those before, when it would not matter if we lost. Every game is important for us to qualify for the World Cup and we want to focus on things that we can control," Tamim told the media during the pre-match virtual press conference yesterday.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Although Tamim may have the upper hand in his very first assignment against a rather inexperienced West Indies side, it will not be a walk in the park for the left-handed opener who has generally opted to stay away from the captaincy and focused more on his batting throughout his career.

At the same time, the 31-year-old is the successor of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza — the most successful and inspirational captain for Bangladesh.

"Obviously, they are big shoes to fill. Mashrafe bhai did exceptionally well for Bangladesh," said Tamim and went on to

HIGHLIGHTS

Shakib AL Hasan will mark his return to international cricket after serving his one-year ban from ICC

The three-match ODI series will be Tamim Iqbal's first assignment as the long-term Tigers ODI skipper.

There will be no Decision Review System (DRS) for the first ODI. The DRS engineer who is a UK citizen can join the production from the second ODI after completing his mandatory quarantine period.

Spectators are not allowed to watch the games in the stadium for the entire series for health safety reasons.

describe his style of captaincy. "Style of captaincy will develop with time. With time, it will be clear to myself and other people which direction I am going... There will be pressure in international cricket, but the important thing is how you cope with the pressure." Although Tamim had captained

Bangladesh on a couple of occasions previously, it was as an interim skipper. The experienced cricketer had also tasted the heat of captaincy during the BCB President's Cup and the Bangabandhu T20 Cup last year.

With regard to Bangladesh's new beginning, Tamim along with head coach Russell Domingo and the team management had chalked out a few areas for their long-term planning.

The upcoming three-match ODI series will also mark Shakib AL Hasan's return to international cricket after serving his one-year ban imposed by the ICC, and the star cricketer will also play a big part in implementing the changes.

Domingo said the team management had decided to bat Shakib at number four despite the cricketer doing tremendously well during the 2019 ICC World Cup at number three, scoring 606 runs.

The reason behind the change was to give Shakib the breathing space after coming from a long gap in international cricket and according to Tamim, they had a discussion where they all agreed to the tactical changes in the team, part of which will see young Nazmul Hossain Shanto batting at number three.

There was also talk about providing Soumya Sarkar, who is mainly an opening batsman, with a new role to bat at number seven and score some quick runs.



We had some good sessions and our batters spent some time during the practice game. Obviously spin plays a big role here in Bangladesh and it's going to be a different challenge and we are up to take the challenge. The average score was 260-270 and if we bat first, we will be looking to post something around that score and if we bat second, we would like to restrict them to a low total. But we have to bat well whatever we are up against whether it's the pacers or the spinners. I must say there is a little bit of both (nerves and excitement); just looking forward to enjoying the challenge as a captain.

JASON MOHAMMED
WEST INDIES CAPTAIN

HIGHLIGHTS

Only twice before had India chased bigger targets than 328 in Tests and it was also the fifth-highest successful chase in Australia.

It has been 32 years since Australia lost at the Gabba. The last time they lost was against West Indies in 1988. They went unbeaten for 31 Tests in the venue before they were stunned by India.

India are only the fourth team who came back from a Test down or worse to win a series against Australia on their home soil.

India now have won two series against the Aussies in Australia. No other team from the sub-continent has won a single Test series there.

Ajinka Rahane has captained India in five tests so far and he is yet to taste a defeat. Only nine players have led in five or more Tests and not lost a single one. Rahane is the only Indian on this list.

The result means India move to the top of the World Test Championship rankings. The Black Caps are at number two, and Australia are third.