



Australia captain Pat Cummins celebrates with Nathan Lyon after taking the wicket of Zak Crawley on the opening day of the third Ashes Test in Melbourne yesterday. Cummins, back after missing the Adelaide Test because he was in Covid isolation, and spin king Nathan Lyon both took three wickets each.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Just the start for the Indigenous community'

AFP, MELBOURNE

Scott Boland said he was living the dream Sunday after becoming only the second Indigenous man to play Test cricket for Australia.

The experienced 32-year-old was called up as injury cover after the second Ashes Test and unexpectedly got the nod for the third match with Jhye Richardson, Michael Neser and Josh Hazlewood either not fit or being rested.



He made the most of the opportunity on home turf at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, overcoming early nerves to take 1-48.

"It means a lot to join a pretty small club and hopefully it's just the start for the Indigenous community. I just want to be a role model to encourage Indigenous kids to want to play cricket," he said.

AGENCIES



Upon returning from temporary exile caused by COVID protocols that have since undergone even heavier revision than England's Test line-up, Pat Cummins noted he had felt "really angry" though he wasn't entirely sure what the target of that irritation should be.

He found it first thing on the opening day of the third Test in Melbourne when, having won his first coin toss as Test captain, he chose to exercise his privilege as a fast-bowling skipper by fielding first and promptly skittling his Ashes rivals' faint hopes of a mid-series revival.

Cummins inspired his men by snaring the first three wickets to fall in the third Test at a personal cost of 27 runs in the opening session, and then orchestrated the demise of the final seven by cannily deploying his bowlers, all of whom captured key wickets at regular intervals.

England's hopes of keeping the Ashes alive plunged as their batsmen again capitulated on a dismal opening day. England were skittled for 185 to the delight of a festive Boxing Day crowd, leaving the tourists' bowlers with an improbable rescue mission.

By stumps, that mission appeared

doomed, with Australia having pushed to 61 for one on the strength of a quickfire 38 by David Warner.

Marcus Harris was 20 not out and nightwatchman Nathan Lyon yet to score. Leading 2-0 after thumping wins in Brisbane and Adelaide, holders Australia need only a draw in Melbourne to retain the urn.

But Cummins' men will be hell-bent on taking the series outright before the New Year Test in Sydney. Joe Root's England, meanwhile, need a miracle.

Only one team has ever turned around a 2-0 deficit to win the Ashes. That was Don Bradman's Australia, winning the 1936-37 series 3-2 on home soil.

England could do little to repel Cummins, whose pace bowling accounted for three wickets in the morning.

But several soft dismissals after lunch crushed England's hopes of salvaging a respectable total while highlighting the team's batting fragility this series.

Though Root chalked up his ninth half-century in Australia, he was culpable in his dismissal for 50, caught behind with a loose drive at a Mitchell Starc delivery.

The England captain now shares with former Australia opener Bruce Laird the unenviable record of the most Test fifties in Australia without making a century (9).

Ben Stokes (25) and wicketkeeper Jos Buttler (3) also paid the price for poor shot selection, the former caught trying to heave Cameron Green over point and the latter slogging Nathan Lyon straight to debutant pacesman Scott Boland at deep midwicket.

"We've got to get a bit stronger and tougher with our dismissals," batsman Jonny Bairstow told reporters. "That's just being honest with ourselves."

"Obviously the toss didn't go our way, we'd also have loved to bowl in that first session," said Bairstow.

"But we've seen that the pitch offered plenty (for the bowlers) today and hopefully we turn up in the morning and put pressure on to get some early inroads."

England's rejigged opening partnership of Zak Crawley and Haseeb Hameed lasted 12 balls before Cummins had Hameed caught behind for a duck. Crawley, who replaced Rory Burns, managed 12 before edging Cummins straight to Green at gully.

The Australia skipper bagged his third wicket in the last over before lunch, with Dawid Malan (14) edging to the slips to break a budding 48-run partnership with Root.

Spinner Lyon cleaned up the tail to finish with 3-36.

Cummins returns WITH A BANG

Saif, Police get Federation Cup rolling

SPORTS REPORTER



Saif Sporting Club and Bangladesh Police FC played out a 1-1 draw at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday as the Bashundhara Group Federation Cup finally rolled on the pitch after a no-show on the opening day.

Both goals were scored in the second half and both came from spot-kicks as Emery Bayisenge, the Saif centre-back, gave his side a 54th-minute lead, only to be cancelled out by Amiruddin Sharifi's effort in stoppage time.

This was the only game to take place on Sunday, though, as Muktiyoddha Sangsad did not turn up for the second scheduled match against Sheikh Jamal DC.

The draw between Saif and Police turned the so-called Group of Death all the more exciting, with Chattogram Abahani the other team in Group C, not withdrawing from the tournament like Bashundhara Kings, Uttar Baridhara and Muktiyoddha Sangsad, turning the three other groups into two-team affairs.

With nine teams remaining in the tournament, the BFF is expected to release a fresh schedule, confirmed the federation's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag, who also added that the fixtures will be prepared after its disciplinary committee determines the fate of the matches which have seen walkovers.

Away from the action on the pitch, the controversy did not die down as BFF on Saturday sent a show-cause notice to Bashundhara Kings chairman Imrul Hasan, asking for explanation on the comments he made on media where he had said that he felt the tweaking of the fixtures was done to give advantage to a specific team. According to BFF's general secretary, the comments violated the code of



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Saif SC defender Emery Bayisenge celebrates his goal against Police FC wearing a Santa hat.

conduct applicable to BFF executive committee members and high-ups and was also in breach of the Federation Cup regulations.

Kings' officials declined to make any comment on this issue as BFF was awaiting a reply before seeking further course of action against one of its vice-presidents.

Meanwhile, the matches were not telecast on TV, despite T Sports, the co-sponsors of the event and a subsidiary of title sponsors Bashundhara Group, previously promoting live telecast of matches.

A source inside the channel, on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star that the broadcast team had asked the federation for a proper guideline on fixtures after having everything set up to telecast the first day's matches, only to return without any broadcast as no matches rolled on the ground. The source also claimed once the fresh fixtures are revealed, the matches would be telecast live on TV.

Soumya, Shafiqul steal the show

SPORTS REPORTER



Shafiqul Islam bagged his maiden fiver in the first-class competition to help BCB North Zone bundle out Islami Bank East Zone for a small total of 166 on the first day of the Bangladesh Cricket League's third round at the Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday. In reply, North Zone ended the day on 71 for no loss with openers Tanzid Hasan and Junaid Siddique unbeaten on 35 and 30, respectively.

Earlier in the day, Shafiqul dismissed opener Imrul Kayes (5) and Shamsur Rahman in consecutive deliveries to wreak havoc on East Zone, who were sent in to bat. Although Shafiqul missed out on a hat trick, the left-arm seamer picked his third wicket two balls later to trap Shahadat Hossain in front as East Zone was wobbling at 10 for three. Mohammad Ashraf top scored with 70 while Afif Hossain added 37 but East Zone lost their last four wickets in the span of four runs.

Shafiqul ended up with the figures of five for 35 while left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam also scalped three wickets for North Zone.

Meanwhile, at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, Soumya Sarkar struck his second hundred in the ongoing BCL as South Zone ended the first day's play on 293 for 4 against Walton Central Zone.

The left-hander showed commendable patience to register his fifth first-class ton off 205 deliveries and stood unbeaten on 128 off 247 balls, comprising ten fours and three sixes.

However, South Zone were in early spot of bother after electing to bat and were struggling at 23 for 2 after left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed removed both openers Mizanur Rahman and Mohammad Mithun cheaply on seven and 12, respectively.

But Soumya alongside Salman Hossain steadied the ship for their side and strung 144 runs for the third-wicket stand before the latter became leg-spinner Rishad Hossain's first victim after yielding 70 off 152 deliveries.



Out-of-favour Bangladesh batsman Soumya Sarkar struck his second hundred in the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League on the opening day of the third round match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

BPL players' draft today

SPORTS REPORTER

The players' draft of the eighth edition of the Bangabandhu Premier League will take place at a city hotel today.

Interestingly, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is yet to reveal the names of the six teams that will feature in the franchise-based T20 competition as uncertainty loomed over the ownership of the teams even on the day before the players' draft event.

A total of 212 local players were announced in six categories and over 400 international cricketers registered for the players' draft.

Six cricketers -- Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Mustafizur Rahman -- were classified in category A to receive a salary worth BDT 70 lakhs.

14 players were named in category B while 40 cricketers were listed in category C.

BPL is scheduled to kick off on January 20.