

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
South Africa vs India
1st Test, Day 4
Live from 02:00 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 1

EPL
Chelsea vs Brighton
Live from 01:30 am
(Thursday)
STAR SPORTS HD 2

EPL
Brentford vs
Manchester City
Live from 02:15 am
(Thursday)

DAY'S EVENT

BCL
South Zone vs Central Zone, Chattogram
North Zone vs East Zone, Rajshahi

Even more to come, Cummins warns

AFP, MELBOURNE



Skipper Pat Cummins said the way his team ripped England apart to retain the Ashes on Tuesday showed the strength of Australian cricket -- and warned they were only just getting started.

"A great sign of the strength of Australian cricket. We were really confident Scotty would do a great job. Maybe not six for seven!" said Cummins.

"Outside of the actual results, there have been so many other positives -- a couple of debutants, a strong squad.

"These three victories really feel like we're setting ourselves up for the next few years and on."

Along with Boland, wicketkeeper Alex Carey also made

England's defeat at the MCG was their ninth Test loss in 2021 -- a joint record for a calendar year along with Bangladesh in 2003. With the fourth Ashes Test starting on January 5, England will be glad to see the back of 2021.

his debut this series, in for Tim Paine, who stood down as captain and player in the weeks before the Ashes over a lewd text-message scandal.

Seamer Michael Neser also played his first match, in Adelaide, performing admirably when Cummins was ruled out at the last minute as a close contact of a Covid case.

Cummins said Australia's recent victory at the Twenty20 World Cup had given them the belief "that we are right up there with the best teams in the world".

"We went into the series really confident. Losing Paine obviously wasn't ideal, but as soon as we knew that was going to be the case, we knew we had our jobs to do and a lot of really confident players around that," said Cummins.

"I just feel like it's building, we have a great squad of 15 or 20 guys we're working from and I think we have got options for anywhere in the world."



Australia's Scott Boland celebrates the dismissal of England captain Joe Root on day three of the third Test in Melbourne yesterday. Boland had a dream debut on home turf as the pacer took five wickets in just 19 balls, the joint-fastest five-wicket haul in Test history, and finished with incredible figures of 6-7 off four overs to etch his name in the record books.

PHOTO: AFP

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Djokovic mystery deepens as stars begin to arrive



AFP, MELBOURNE

AO Novak Djokovic has not withdrawn from the ATP Cup despite claims he was almost sure to do so, Tennis Australia said

Tuesday, as other top players led by Naomi Osaka began arriving ahead of the Australian Open.

There has been serious doubt as to whether men's world number one Djokovic would travel to Australia, having refused to confirm if he has been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

An unnamed member of his team told Serbian newspaper Blic that they were "99 percent" sure that he would not play in the ATP Cup, which comes ahead of the Australian Open, adding to the intrigue over whether Djokovic would be at the first Grand Slam of the year. But Tennis Australia told AFP the Serbian had yet to pull out of the teams event, which is due to start on Saturday in Sydney with Djokovic drawn to play Norway's Casper Ruud on the opening day.

"We haven't heard of any withdrawals from Team Serbia for the ATP Cup," a spokesperson said.

Tennis Australia has organised charter flights to bring international stars into Melbourne and Sydney, with the first arriving Tuesday.

Defending women's Australian Open champion Osaka was among those to touch down, but Djokovic was not on board, TA said. Players can

also opt to fly commercial.

Nine-time Australian Open champion Djokovic could win a record 21st Grand Slam title if he plays at Melbourne Park, but to enter Australia he and members of his entourage have to be vaccinated.

The 34-year-old has previously expressed his opposition to the vaccine and his father Srđjan said in late November that Djokovic would probably not play the Australian Open, accusing the organisers of "blackmail".

The ATP Cup has already been hit by several players testing positive for Covid, including Russian world number five Andrey Rublev and Canada's Wimbledon semi-finalist Denis Shapovalov.

Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal, who was due to play a warm-up event in Melbourne next week, also contracted the virus. They all played in an Abu Dhabi exhibition tournament this month.

Three female players at the same event also tested positive -- Olympic gold medallist Belinda Bencic, US Open champion Emma Raducanu and Wimbledon quarter-finalist Ons Jabeur.

Tennis Australia has organised the charter flights to help minimise the risk of getting the virus on the trip over, with all passengers having to provide proof of a negative test in the 72 hours before flying.

The Australian Open is due to start on January 17.

ENGLAND'S HUMILIATION

Calls for 'red-ball reset'

REUTERS

England's humiliating surrender of the Ashes to Australia exposed not only a gulf in class between the two old rivals but also laid bare, in brutally emphatic fashion, the deep-seated problems in English Test cricket.

The faint hope of a turnaround in their fortunes in this series ended with them being scuttled out for 68 in their second innings and 14-run loss in Melbourne.

It has been an abysmal 12 months in red-ball cricket for England, who lost four series in a year for the first time -- the crushing in Australia following home losses to New Zealand and India, and a defeat at the start of the year in India. Never before have England lost nine Test matches in a calendar year.

For all the micro-debates that will rage about coach Chris Silverwood, selection decisions, tactical approaches, Joe Root's captaincy and the limitations of specific players, the big picture is the one that will surely be on the agenda for the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has no doubt that test match cricket has slipped down the priorities in English cricket.

"They've not been focused enough on the test



match team. The focus has been on the white-ball team and it delivered a World Cup. But we're not a good enough cricketing nation to take our eye off the ball of test match cricket. We can't just arrive and play," he told Australia's Fox Cricket.

Another former captain, Michael Atherton,

believes that the structure of English cricket is to blame for the shocking results.

"Beyond questions of individual responsibility which cannot be avoided, it may be that this latest hammering brings pressure to bear upon systemic change," Atherton wrote in The Times.

"The hollowing out of English first-class cricket, pushed to the margins of the season and sacrificed at the altar of one-day cricket, has resulted in a domestic standard that is routinely revealed to be sub-standard when players come to this part of the world. Over five tests, an Ashes series is partly a referendum on respective systems, and the result of this year's is clear," he added.

Former England captain Ian Botham said he was "embarrassed" by the performances of Joe Root's side.

"I'm a little embarrassed, to be honest," Botham said on Australia's Channel 7. To lose the Ashes in 12 days ... I just think that England have lost their way. The performance today summed it up.

"It's been a walk in the park for the Australians. It burns me to say that but they have completely outplayed England."



Edinson Cavani celebrates his second-half strike that helped Manchester United salvage a 1-1 draw against Newcastle United in the Premier League on Monday.

PHOTO: TWITTER

'A bunch of whingebags!'

REUTERS

Former Manchester United defender Gary Neville described the current side as "a bunch of whingebags" and singled out Cristiano Ronaldo and Bruno Fernandes for their attitude during Monday's 1-1 Premier League draw at Newcastle United.

Substitute Edinson Cavani's opportunistic 71st-minute goal cancelled out Allan Saint-Maximin's early strike as interim United boss Ralf Rangnick's unbeaten start stretched to four games in all competitions.

"They've not done one single thing right as a team, and not one single player can go in and say they've done their jobs, or even done themselves justice," Neville told Sky Sports. "They're whinging at each other... a bunch of whingebags!"

"They're the two senior players. It's devastating for younger players when the two best players are looking at every other player like they're not good enough," he said. United, who host Burnley on Thursday, are seventh on 28 points.