



## England hope for another gutsy display

REUTERS, MELBOURNE

England had already lost the series but at least rediscovered their stomach for a fight in Sydney and the battered tourists will look to produce a similar gutsy display in the final Ashes Test against Australia on Friday.

Australia retained the urn with comprehensive victories in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne and while England managed to halt the juggernaut in Sydney, it was not without a price.

Wicketkeeper Jos Buttler's tour was cut short by a finger injury, while all-rounder Ben Stokes (side) and middle order batsman Jonny Bairstow (finger) are doubtful for the pink ball Test in Hobart after getting bruised in Sydney.

England are ready to play Stokes and stumper-batsman Bairstow purely as batters with Sam Billings likely to don the keeping gloves in his Test debut.

## Pant ton ignites spark in Cape Town Test

REUTERS, CAPE TOWN

Rishabh Pant scored a brilliant unbeaten 100 from 139 balls as India were bowled out for 198 in their second innings on the stroke of tea, to set hosts South Africa a victory target of 212 on day three of the decisive third and final Test at Newlands.

Pant took the attack to the home bowlers after lunch and smashed four sixes in an innings of high quality on a difficult wicket for batting.

With the series on the line, South Africa will have to chase their target on a pitch with prodigious seam movement and against a high-quality Indian pace attack.

A fourth innings target of over 200 has been successfully chased only three times in 133 years at Newlands as India seek to claim a first ever series win in South Africa. One of those was when South Africa chased 211 against India in 2007 to win the Test.

South Africa scored 84 for one when the last report was filed.

# 'Could have learned more if Gibson stayed'

Ebadot Hossain's unbelievable spell led to something Bangladesh had never achieved in the past in New Zealand, bringing a historic milestone as the Tigers defeated the Black Caps in a Test match for the first time. It was also Bangladesh's first win in any format on Kiwi soil and the hero of that match, Ebadot Hossain, shared details of that journey with the Daily Star's Ekush Tapader while also expressing disappointment at the departure of bowling coach Ottis Gibson. The excerpts are below:

**The Daily Star (DS):** Two different realities before and after the New Zealand tour. Can you feel the difference?

**Ebadot Hossain (EH):** I've been trying to do something good for a long time. There was a willingness to do something in my mind. Everyone showed tremendous endeavour from start to finish. The biggest thing is that we are the team who started winning here. The teams who will come after can take inspiration from us and they will win too. [Khaled Mahmud] Sujon sir gave us a motivational speech that stuck in our hearts. He said 'we didn't come here only to play and go back home. Someone has to stand out.' Then we thought that we were capable and could win with collective effort.

**DS:** You were quite expensive early on but you had a good economy in the Pakistan series as well.

**EH:** I was unorganised. It is difficult to get

success in international cricket while being ill disciplined. I was trying to express myself. All of my matches were big. I debuted against New Zealand then played against India and Pakistan. I've worked with Ottis Gibson regarding this as well.

**DS:** Champaka Ramanayake said you used to get disappointed after not getting wickets.

**EH:** Test cricket is really about patience, for both bowlers and batters. Champaka used to tell me I would be successful when I found accuracy. He called me after we won the Test and said 'remember what I told you? You are successful today because of your accuracy and the world is clapping. You have to keep it going and take the graph higher from here'.

**DS:** You have heard that Ottis Gibson is not staying anymore? How much will you miss him? How much did you improve under him in two years?

**EH:** It's disappointing. He has coached great players. [James]Anderson, Stuart Broad, Mark Wood and [Kagiso] Rabada still call him and take advice from him. It would be good for us if he stayed because the graph of improvement is strong. I think all pace bowlers improved under him. You can ask Taskin or Shoriful or Rahi and they'll say the same thing. Everyone had great chemistry with him. We have the South Africa series ahead and Ottis has

good knowledge of their conditions. We could have learned a bit more if he stayed.

**DS:** You were bowling at consistent speeds for a longer time. What was Ottis's influence behind this?

**EH:** I've been working with him since the Pakistan tour [in 2020]. It's been a pleasure working with him because I benefitted a lot. I have made changes to my bowling action according to his suggestions in loading and gathering. My previous action was a lot like Brett Lee's and couldn't find consistency when I got tired. But now I can bowl for a longer period while maintaining speed.

**DS:** What did you discuss with the New Zealand pacers?

**EH:** I spoke with Tim Southee the other day about our upcoming South Africa tour. He suggested that I analyse the current conditions of their wicket with a computer analyst so that we can pick up the correct length to bowl there. [Neil] Wagner came to us after the first Test and told us that we deserved the victory. [Trent] Boult told us ahead of the warm-up for the second Test: 'Yesterday is gone, today is a new day, so enjoy your bowling'.

**DS:** How would you rate the New Zealand series?

**EH:** It's not wise to expect to be man-of-the-match in every match against the Test champions. There will be good days, and there will be bad. But I'll say I tried.

# Stage set for youngsters to flourish

**AGENCIES**

With a promise of providing glimpses of the future cricket stars, the ICC Under-19 World Cup gets underway today with two matches in Guyana, as hosts West Indies take on Australia at Providence Stadium, and Sri Lanka facing Scotland at Everest Cricket Club.

Split into four groups, 16 teams will be fighting for glory in a total of 48 matches over 22 days with the final set to take place at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on February 5.

Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, St Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago will be hosting the matches of the 14th edition of the tournament across 10 venues.

Will this edition see a new champion or will Rakibul Hasan's Bangladesh be able to defend their title after being crowned champions for the first time by beating India in Potchefstroom two years ago?

Rakibul, who was part of the champion side and ended as the highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh in that edition, was confident of getting off to a good start when he attended a virtual press conference on Wednesday ahead of the start of the World Cup.

The defending champions' campaign, however, will begin on Sunday when they meet England at the Warner Park in St Kitts.

The tournament will see the top two teams from each of the four groups go through to the

ICC U19 WORLD CUP GROUPS

Group A: Bangladesh, Canada, England, UAE

Group B: India, Ireland, South Africa, Uganda

Group C: Afghanistan, Pakistan, PNG, Zimbabwe

Group D: Australia, Scotland, Sri Lanka, West Indies

Super League stage while the remaining teams will battle it out in the Plate competition.

Ten teams – Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, West Indies and Zimbabwe – were automatic qualifiers for the tournament, by virtue of their finish at the 2020 edition of the tournament.

Trinidad and Tobago will host the Plate competition between 25 and 31 January while the Super League action will commence on 26 January in Antigua and Barbuda.

The two semi-finals will be played on February 1 and 2 at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Ground and Coolidge Cricket Ground respectively.

# Central and South reach BCL final

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan was there even though he really was not and ODI captain Tamim Iqbal and T20 skipper Mahmudullah Riyad wanted to be there but could not as the final group phase matches of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) one-day tournament yesterday took the shape of a virtual semifinal.

Shakib already decided about participating in two matches in Sylhet and his side Walton Central made the final before the final round of matches. So, Shakib left for Dhaka before the last round, leaving his national teammates Tamim and Mahmudullah to battle it out for East Zone and North Zone respectively.

Asked to bat, North Zone got off to a stuttering start before Mahmudullah and skipper Marshall Ayub put together a 120-run fourth-wicket rescue act. Mahmudullah departed to a run out after an 87 ball 66 and Marshall followed him back a couple of overs later before the innings crumbled, bowled out for 216.

Tamim got his side off to a smooth start and a six straight down the ground signaled his intent but Mahmudullah sent him back after a 38 ball 35. Imrul Kayes and Afif Hossain (26) held the innings together, with the former playing a match-winning 71 off 81 deliveries. Despite some wickets at the death, East Zone pulled through with a four-wicket victory.

Ultimately the victory did not bring them what they were looking for. A Walton Central Zone victory over South Zone in the other game would have seen East Zone make the final but South won by five wickets. South Zone and Central Zone will play the final on January 15.



A delighted Federico Valverde runs towards teammates in the sideline to celebrate the goal that sealed a 3-2 victory for Real Madrid over arch-rivals Barcelona in an exhilarating Spanish Super Cup semifinal on Wednesday. (Inset) Inter Milan players are jubilant after Alexis Sanchez's extra time winner helped them beat Juventus and clinch the Italian Super Cup for the first time in 11 years.

PHOTO:REUTERS