

# ‘A very special feeling’

AGENCIES

Cameron Green might have trousered more than \$3 million from last week’s Indian Premier League auction, but there’s little doubt he will cherish the faux goldleaf used to paint names on the MCG honour board just as highly after today’s five-wicket bag.

Green’s 5-27 on day one of their second Test against South Africa not only represented his first such haul in Test company, it came on the day cricket remembered the late Shane Warne who was the most recent Australia men’s player to compete that feat on Boxing Day.

After the visitors were dismissed for 189, an aggressive David Warner, in his 100th Test, was unbeaten on 32 and Marnus Labuschagne was not out on five to steer the hosts to 45-1 at stumps on day one.

Usman Khawaja was out for one, caught behind by Kyle Verreynne off Kagiso Rabada.

“That’s cricket summed up,” Green told reporters. “You can have a really slow start to the summer and think cricket’s so tough and then you have a few days like this, and it brings you back.

“It’s a very special feeling (getting five wickets).”

No Australia bowler had claimed a Boxing Day five for since Warne until today, when Green announced himself as a bowler of rare quality and threat in much the same way Warne had done 30 years ago at the same venue, when he scythed through the then-mighty West Indies.

Green understands the symbolic significance of the Melbourne Test’s opening day, and its place in the nations sporting psyche.

“Everyone’s focus is on Boxing Day,” Green said at



Bangladesh players celebrate wildly following a close win in the final of the Bangabandhu Asian Central Zone U-23 Men’s International Volleyball Championship against Kyrgyzstan at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on Monday.

# Kane sparks Spurs fightback

REUTERS, LONDON

Harry Kane shook off any World Cup hangover to spark a Tottenham Hotspur revival in an entertaining 2-2 draw away at Brentford as the Premier League roared back to life on Monday.

An early goal by Vitaly Janelt and Ivan Toney’s close-range goal shortly after the interval put Brentford 2-0 up as Tottenham struggled to deal with their hosts.

But Antonio Conte’s side have made a habit of playing their best football when trailing and so it proved again.

Kane, whose missed penalty just over a fortnight ago condemned England to a quarter-final defeat by France, headed home in the 65th minute to throw his side a lifeline.

Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, one of five Tottenham starters who featured at the World Cup, then levelled with a calm finish and Kane almost won it with a header against the crossbar.

Tottenham are in fourth place with 30 points while Brentford are ninth ahead of the rest of the day’s fixtures.



day’s end, when asked whether producing his finest Test moment thus far on such a poignant date was the stuff of dreams.

“It’s a fixture that you point out at the start of the year, and you look forward to.”

Australia won the first of three Tests by six wickets inside two days on a hostile and green Gabba pitch in Brisbane last week.

The deck at the Melbourne Cricket Ground was less bowler friendly, but captain Pat Cummins surprisingly chose to field at a venue where toss-winning teams normally bat first.

It proved to be an inspired decision in front of 64,876 fans with the Proteas losing early wickets.

After slumping to 67-5, Verreynne and Marco Jansen launched a stirring fightback in a gutsy 112-run stand.

Green claimed 4-7 in a remarkable two-over spell and then raised the ball for the euphoric crowd to acknowledge his maiden Test five-for, in the same manner Warne had in his final Boxing Day outing 16 years earlier.

# Bangladesh survive nail-biter to lift volleyball title

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh lifted the title of the Bangabandhu Asian Central Zone U-23 Men’s International Volleyball Championship with a 3-2 sets win over Kyrgyzstan in a pulsating final at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The men in red and green, who had beaten Kyrgyzstan by three sets to one in their group encounter, needed a decisive fifth set this time around, but staged a strong comeback after trailing by two sets to one.

Coached by Iranian Alipour Aroji, the hosts started strong and won the first set 25-18 with some brilliant performances from Sadi Mohammad Shafin, Titas Ahmed, Ratul Halder and Redwanur Rahman.

But their momentum dwindled thereafter as Kyrgyzstan dominated the next two sets with perfect blocks and smashes to take them 15-25 and 22-25 respectively.

However, bolstered by the cheer of a home crowd from the gallery, Bangladesh bounced back to take the fourth set 25-19 thanks to fresh hands of Ismail Hossain Sajib, who was later adjudged the man of the final.

In a nail-biting fifth and final set, Bangladesh took a five-point lead, but Kyrgyzstan showed their character

and fought neck-and-neck to force two deuces before Bangladesh took the final set 18-16, winning the trophy for the first time at this level.

“We made some silly mistakes, like faulty receiving, erratic blocks and some others mistakes that we usually don’t make in matches. But confidence and proper plan kept us in the match,” Redwanur Rahman said, adding that they were also contending with the pressure of a final.



“We lacked communication after winning the first set because everyone thought that we were going to win easily like we did in the group-stage match. But we had to face many challenges,” Sadi Mohammad Shafin said, opining that the support from the gallery played a big role in the comeback.

Redwan, Titas Ahmed, Sadi Mohammad Shafin, Ismail Hossain Sabuj all were ecstatic to be part of the winning team.

“It is the biggest ever success for me. I can’t express my joy in words,” Redwan said. Titus added: “It is the first time that I have become a champion in an international tournament. I’m overjoyed.”

Aroji, who termed the final one of his best, concluded: “Due to some tactical reasons, we trailed in the second and third sets. But I made changes, sending Sabuj to the middle, and we dominated the last two sets,” he said.

# Babar shatters records in Karachi

AGENCIES

Babar Azam knocked a fighting hundred, breaking a number of records on the way, and the recalled Sarfaraz Ahmed hit a half century to guide Pakistan to a healthy 317-5 on the opening day of the first Test against New Zealand in Karachi on Monday.



The pair led Pakistan’s recovery from 110-4 during a 196-run fifth wicket stand, as the home team lost only Sarfaraz in the last two sessions.

New Zealand spinners had taken three early wickets on a spin-assisting National Stadium pitch and one before lunch but had to wait until the closing moments when Ajaz Patel got Sarfaraz caught in the slip for 86.

At close, Babar was unbeaten on 161 and Agha Salman three as the home team looked to lift from last week’s 3-0 loss at the hands of England, their first ever whitewash at home.

At 74 average, Babar now has 1,170 runs in nine Tests this year -- the highest run scorer in Tests in 2022.

He also beat Mohammad Yousuf’s 2006 aggregate of 2,435 in all three formats, taking 2,584 runs across the board this year.

The half-century also means he now holds the record for most scores of 50 or more in a calendar year. This was Babar’s 25th 50+ score, surpassing Ricky Ponting’s record of 24 in 2005.

The Pakistan skipper swept spinner Michael Bracewell for a six towards mid-wicket to reach his ninth Test century. He has also hit 16 boundaries.

# Zakir’s rise underlines impact of demanding domestic circuit

SPORTS REPORTER

Zakir Hasan’s performances in the two-Test series against India came at the right time, not only for the cricketer but also if one considers the team’s needs during a key series with opener Tamim Iqbal out with injury. Zakir’s form in the domestic circuit may have been the guiding light for the selectors but it still took some luck for him to be included in the national team. He then justified his potential, thanks in no part to his timely form, a luxury many are not afforded.

Zakir revealed that he was following the process that he had followed during that first Test at Chattogram, where he scored a ton on debut in the second innings. The immediate reflection on domestic cricket’s process by Zakir after the biggest game of his international career does lend some credence to what Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan said on Sunday at the press conference at Mirpur’s Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, when the southpaw opined that the Test team needed cricketers of Zakir’s temperament, which was honed through experience of first-class matches and enables him to better grasp match scenarios.

“Zakir has an advantage. He is not a new cricketer. He has a lot of experience. He played 70 matches [first-class] and it shows. There is a difference in temperament between a 19-20-year-old and someone who is 30 and has been on the periphery of the national side, having played 60 to 70 domestic games. What I want are players who can serve the national side for five to 10 years,” Shakib said. “If we have players getting 80 first-class games in five years,



we will have better Test cricketers.”

Mahmudul Hasan Joy had been dropped from the playing eleven after a run of poor scores but Shakib added that he was not ‘outside’ their system. “When he scores for the A team, his opportunity will arrive. I want him to take that opportunity and play for 10 to 15 years,” Shakib added.

The domestic circuit, especially the NCL, had not always been a breeding ground for players fit enough for national team. Zakir, who played in 69 first-class matches before his debut Test, cited that he was involved with the BCB’s High Performance sides while also working on his game with local coaches such as Mohammad Salahuddin.

The NCL was refurbished this year and Zakir was the highest run-getter on bouncy turf’s along with some which assisted spin. The gravity of that change in the NCL can be instrumental.

“There was some grass in the wickets so they faced some problems. After they have played under these conditions for two-three years, they will get used to them. We have tried to provide better payments and facilities, including food, so that they feel more inspired. Previously, the payment for playing a T20 and a four-day game was the same. So why should they play four-day matches, which are more difficult? Now the dynamic has changed,” a BCB tournament committee member told The Daily Star.

Such challenges helped Zakir prove his mettle, but opportunities are still important. Zakir was only included due to Tamim’s absence. But if the NCL can keep providing a solid testing ground, Shakib’s dream is not far off.



After wrapping up Bangladesh’s cricketing calendar with the series against India -- which saw the Tigers win the ODI series 2-1 before a close-run loss in the two-match Test series -- Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan took some time off to spend with his family in his hometown Magura before the year comes to a close. PHOTO:FACEBOOK

