

‘Shush’: Warner acquires immunity with statement ton

AGENCIES

Veteran opener David Warner hammered a gritty 164 to silence the critics and steer Australia to 346 for five against an inconsistent Pakistan attack in the first Test at Perth yesterday.

In a stellar kick-off to his farewell Test series, the 37-year-old batted for much of day one before finally departing to Aamer Jamal, two balls after smashing the debutant for six.

En route to a near-flawless knock off 211 balls, where he smashed 16 fours and four sixes, Warner entered the top five run-getters for Australia in Test cricket, leapfrogging Matthew Hayden and Michael Clarke.

In the all-time list, he surpassed fellow swashbucklers Sir Viv Richards and Virender Sehwag.

In the lead-up, former Australian paceman Mitchell Johnson questioned whether Warner deserved a hero's farewell given his recent poor red-ball form and involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

With his back against the wall in his 110th Test, Warner responded in typically swashbuckling fashion.

"People make comments, but you get one with it. You have to just go out there and score runs and today I did that," said Warner. "I don't feel any extra pressure, any other points I have to prove.

"If people are out to get you or make a headline out of your name, so be it. I can't worry about that, I've got to worry about what I do for the team."

Warner celebrated with his trademark leap and putting his finger to his mouth. "It was a nice, little quiet shush," Warner said of his celebration, referring to the criticism.



Australia opener David Warner put on a show on the first day of the opening Test against Pakistan in Perth with a swashbuckling hundred in his farewell Test series yesterday.

I know this is something really close to his heart. All we can do is support Uzzie and his views on that.

David Warner on his team backing Usman Khawaja's stance for the plight of Palestinians in Gaza.



PHOTO: AFP

Green's battle with kidney disease

REUTERS

Australia all-rounder Cameron Green has revealed he was born with chronic kidney disease and that his parents were told he might not live past 12 years old.

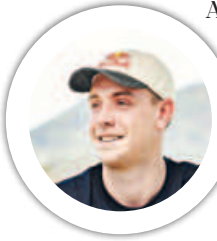
Green told Channel 7 that the condition was detected during his mother's 19-week scan and that he was still trying to learn as much as he could about the disease.

"Basically, my kidneys don't work as well as other people's and don't filter the blood very well," the 24-year-old said.

"So I have got to keep my salt and my protein quite low, which isn't ideal as a cricketer but around games I can pick that protein intake back up because I spend so much of it out on the ground," he added.

Green said he had 60% kidney function and that his disease was at stage two, five being the worst.

"The kidneys don't heal. I have always done everything right, eating and drinking in a professional way ... but it is a work in progress."



Nayeem stars to bring East first win in BCL

SPORTS REPORTER

East Zone off-spinner Nayeem Ahmed starred with eight wickets against Central Zone in the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday to help set up a seven-wicket victory for his side after the second round of matches.

Nayeem picked up four wickets in the first innings to help bundle out Central for 280, and then played a decisive role with as many scalps in the second innings to skittle Central out for 125, giving his East a favourable 149-run target in the fourth innings which they chased down with ease, courtesy of fifties from Amite Hasan (63) and Shamim Hossain (53).

The win, following a draw in their first match, guided East to the top of the table with three points.

In the other match between North Zone and South Zone at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, North off-spinner Nahidul Islam delivered an all-round effort to take his side to the brink of victory on the final day but a resilient fightback from South's tailenders denied such an outcome as the match ended in an enthralling draw.

Nahidul's 51-run knock helped North past 200 before being bundled out for 210 after being put into bat first.

South, in reply, took a 33-run lead, courtesy of opener Prantik Nawrose Nabil's 90-run knock which helped his side to 243. Nahidul helped in restricting the opposition with three scalps to his name.

North picked themselves up and delivered a reinforced effort with the bat on the back of an unbeaten 117-run knock from top-order batter Abdullah Al Mamun. They declared the innings at 345 for seven, giving South 321 to chase.

Nahidul was at it again, and this time he picked up a lifer to help reduce South to 134 for eight after 47 overs.

But South batters Sumon Khan and Moin Khan kept the inevitable at bay, staging a remarkable effort by playing 24 overs between them to rescue an unlikely draw.

No. 10 batter Sumon played 76 balls for his 29 runs, while Moin, who came in at nine, played three more for his 10-run knock.

Lack of courage complements wrist-spinners' scarcity

SPORTS REPORTER

The dearth of leg-spinners in the country's cricket structure has often been highlighted, especially whenever a big T20I or ODI event comes knocking. Despite the urge felt by national team coaches and team management, the overall cricket fraternity has rarely put faith on leg spin, wrist-spin in general, shunning a key game-deciding factor to a corner.

Two very recent performances, though, have again brought up the leg-spinners' plight to the limelight.

21-year-old Rishad Hossain shone with both bat and ball in Bangladesh's tour match against New Zealand XI in Christchurch yesterday. The leg-spinner had been around the periphery of the national side since his inclusion in the squad for the Ireland T20Is at home. Yet, chances had been slim; as was expected.

Rishad smashed a 54-ball 87 and also bagged three wickets but, given it is a warm-up match, the team management might still be averse to using him in key matches.

A day earlier, another young leg-spinner in the U-19 team also made his presence felt. 17-year-old Wasi Siddiquee picked three wickets, helping his team down their Sri Lanka counterparts in an ACC U-19s Asia Cup fixture in Dubai.

Cricket analyst Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, a mentor to many of the national team players, hailed Wasi as "promising" but reckons "the team doesn't yet have a lot of trust in him".

"He wasn't in the eleven in the first two games... Maybe he was played as the team had already ensured qualification to the next round," Fahim wrote in a social media post.

That leg-spinners do not make the playing eleven is well-known across the regional and divisional teams through to big tournaments such as Dhaka Premier



League (DPL) or the Bangladesh Premier League.

Rishad only played two games for his side Abahani Limited in the last DPL. Mohammedan Sporting's highest wicket-taker in that tournament was a leg-spinner in Somerset wrist-spinner Jake Lintott.

There may be a demand for wrist spinners in domestic cricket but not enough quality in domestic spinners to make such teams. The likes of Jubair Hossain Likhon or Aminul Islam Biplob often came through to the national side but could not keep their place.

Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha is a big believer in taking wrist spinners on board, and said in an interview with this newspaper that he had been trying to do so since his first stint.

Rishad had been carried so that he may be groomed; much like putting someone in an incubator and developing them separately. It remains to be seen how much Rishad can develop being around the periphery.

While talking to coaches from DPL teams, most identified that accuracy and giving away too many runs have been the biggest factors in leg-spinners not being trusted. However, that is the art of leg-spin. They go for runs but go after wickets.

On the other hand, finger spinners keep things tight and are helped by dull pitches that produce low bounce, further encouraging an affinity towards finger spinners.

"Maybe we create impediments for our leg-spinners to create their identity. In trying to force our ideas on them, we make them suffer. It's a wonder why a country of so many people doesn't have a leg-spinner?" Fahim had written in that post about Wasi.

The problem is that there are no developmental phases availed by the country's cricket structure to groom leg-spinners. The dearth is one created by lack of courage, one of culture, which puts more faith on containing runs; playing safe in general.



PSG teenager Warren Zaire-Emery celebrates after scoring the equaliser against Borussia Dortmund during their last group match of the Champions League on Wednesday. PSG reached the knockout phase for the 12th season in a row in their latest bid for a maiden Champions League title.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PSG 'still alive'

AGENCIES

Paris St Germain drew 1-1 at Group F winners Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday to secure second place and a spot in the Champions League knockout stage in their final group match.

In danger of a first group-stage exit since the Qatari takeover in 2011, PSG came from a goal down to earn the point that sent them through as Group F runners-up.

Karim Adeyemi gave Dortmund the lead early in the second half, but teenager Warren Zaire-Emery equalised as PSG reached the knockout phase for the 12th season in a row in their latest bid for a maiden Champions League title.

Zaire-Emery became the youngest ever French goalscorer in the Champions League at 17 years and 280 days.

"We're happy but we know we could have done better," Zaire-Emery told broadcaster Canal Plus. "We played well, but football is like that at times, sometimes the ball just doesn't want to go in."

Despite the result, PSG's timid showing means Luis Enrique's side have plenty to do if they wish to go much further on the European stage.

"We are still alive. No team will hope to play us in the next round," said PSG coach Luis Enrique.

Independence Cup semifinals today

SPORTS REPORTER

Defending champions Bashundhara Kings will look to leave their continental miseries behind by booking a final berth in the first tournament of the season when they square off against two-time champions Abahani in the first semifinal of the Independence Cup today.

Kings, the reigning Bangladesh Premier League champions, were eliminated from the group stages of the AFC Cup for the third consecutive season following a controversial defeat to Odisha FC in their last group match last week. The new powerhouse of Bangladesh football would want to forget that memory soon by winning against their biggest domestic rivals at their home venue – the Bashundhara Kings Arena – with the match kicking off at 4:00pm.

These two sides have produced some feisty encounters in recent years and Kings coach Oscar Bruzon was respectful of his opposition ahead of the key clash.

"All our focus and efforts are already on the domestic season where we have great enthusiasm on trying to retain the Independence Cup trophy and contest for all the trophies," Bruzon told reporters ahead of his team's training session yesterday.

"Abahani have reinforced pretty well at different positions and departments, and following their recent performances they are, as always, serious title contenders and a challenging rival in the semis," the Spaniard said of Abahani, who last won the trophy in 2021 before losing in the semifinal stage last season.

Meanwhile, three-time champions Mohammedan will be the favourites, at least on paper, when they face Rahmatganj MFS in the first semifinal, with the match kicking off at 1:45pm at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj.

Mohammedan coach Alfaz Ahmed, who last season led the side to a first Federation Cup title after 14 years, said Rahmatganj deserve to be in the semifinals.

"They have beaten a good team, so they deserve to be in this position. But we will try our level best to reach the final," Alfaz said, terming the semifinal as a do-or-die affair for both teams.

City look to 'finish circle' with Club World Cup win

AFP, JEDDAH

Pep Guardiola is hoping to complete his trophy haul as Manchester City manager at the Club World Cup in Saudi Arabia.

City travel to Jeddah, the host for all seven matches in the tournament, looking to add a first Club World Cup to the treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup they won last season.

"We miss just one trophy to finish the circle and win all the titles City can have," said Guardiola, who has already won the competition three times during his spells at Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

The winner of the second-round match between Mexico's Club Leon and Urava Red Diamonds will meet City when they enter the competition at the last four.

The major threat to City, however, could come from Al-Itihad, who have only qualified due to their status as champions of the host nation but boast a wealth of previous Club World Cup winners in Karim Benzema, N'Golo Kante and Fabinho.

No matter who emerges victorious from the final on December 23, there will be a new name on the trophy.