

Kiwis regret first Aus Test mistakes

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said Monday he had misjudged the first Test wicket and regretted leaving out spinner Mitchell Santner after his side's heavy defeat to Australia.

New Zealand were thumped by 172 runs at Basin Reserve in Wellington after winning the toss and asking Australia to bat on a green wicket that produced bounce and spin.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon took 10 wickets in the match while New Zealand had to rely on part-time slow bowlers Rachin Ravindra and Glenn Phillips, who took six between them.

"If we knew it was going to bounce, then Santner would have played, so yeah we got that wrong," Stead told reporters in Wellington.

"It was a tricky wicket. It spun and bounced a lot more than what we were expecting," he said of New Zealand's decision to go in with four seamers.

"I put our hand up to that. It's not what we have seen from the Basin Reserve in the past either. That played into Nathan Lyon's hands."

Stead said Santner could be recalled for the second and final Test depending on the wicket in Christchurch.

"He's the guy we have trust in. He is certainly an option," Stead added.

Uncapped pace bowler Ben Sears has been called up to replace Will O'Rourke, who has been ruled out with a hamstring injury.

New Zealand are chasing a first Test win over Australia since 2011.



Mahmudullah Riyad was cut a dejected figure after scoring 54 off 31 balls, but fellow middle-order batter Jaker Ali Anik (R) took the major burden of responsibility on his young shoulders to pull off an improbable chase, a 207-run target, during Bangladesh's first T20I against Sri Lanka in Sylhet yesterday. However, Jaker's spectacular 34-ball 68, featuring four boundaries and six maximums, was insufficient as the Tigers lost by three runs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Italy's Berardi to miss Euro 2024

REUTERS

Italy and Sassuolo winger Domenico Berardi will undergo surgery after a complete tear of the Achilles tendon in his right leg, the Serie A club said on Monday, and he could now miss the rest of the season and Euro 2024.

Berardi was injured in Sassuolo's 1-0 defeat at Hellas Verona on Sunday, where the 29-year-old was returning from a meniscus operation which saw him miss the previous six games.

"The instrumental examinations carried out on Domenico Berardi showed a complete tear of the Achilles tendon in his right leg," Sassuolo said in a statement, adding that he will have surgery on Tuesday.

Berardi has scored eight goals in 28 appearances for Italy, and came on as a substitute in the Euro 2020 final against England and converted the first spot kick in their penalty shootout win as they lifted the trophy.

Italy coach Luciano Spalletti may now need to plan without the winger for this year's Euros in Germany, while the injury is also bad news for a Sassuolo side battling relegation.

They are second bottom after collecting one point in their last eight games.



U-16 girls up for India challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will square off against India in a round robin fixture of the SAFF U-16 Women's Championship at ANFA Complex ground in Kathmandu today, with the match scheduled to kick off at 3:15pm.

The women in red and green took a step towards the final with a 2-0 win over the hosts in their opening match after India thrashed Bhutan 7-0 on the opening day. Top two teams will advance to the final.

The charges of Saiful Bari Titu had a final training session at the venue on Monday morning ahead of the tie against India.

"It is an important tie from which we will understand where we truly stand in the sub-continent," Titu said in a video message.

"Besides, we will also be able to find out the strong and weak points of India and how we can implement our plan as both teams have a possibility of reaching the final."

Termining the match as a dress-rehearsal for the final, the head coach said, "Indian frontline played really well against Bhutan, but we are not an opponent like Bhutan and I think the match is going to be an interesting one."

Forward Sauravi Akanda Prity, who scored both goals against Nepal, has been nursing a minor injury but Titu wants to try the forward today to retain her confidence for the rest of the tournament.

Jaker storm exposes team's lack of foresight

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Jaker Ali Anik almost scripted one of the most memorable victories in Twenty20s for Bangladesh with an lionhearted 68 off 34 balls in the first Twenty20 against Sri Lanka yesterday, an innings that displayed his immense potential as a finisher and the poor planning of the Bangladesh team management.

Jaker was not part of the original 15-man squad for the three T20s against Sri Lanka and came in as replacement for the injured spinner Aliss Al Islam.

The wicketkeeper-batter came into bat at number six yesterday when the team was stuttering at 68 for 4 chasing 207 and the match was already slipping away from Bangladesh's grasps.

His defiant batting display, which featured four fours and six sixes entertained the thousands present at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium and reduced the margin of defeat significantly.

Jaker's presence in the squad and yesterday's match was justified given his performance for Comilla Victorians in the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League, where he scored 199 runs in 10 innings at an average of 99.5, but it also raised questions about what the team management's original plans were for the series.

Out of the 15-man squad for the series, the only two batters left out from the first T20 were Mohamad Naim and Anamul Haque—both opening batsmen.

If Jaker, who came to bat at number six, was not a part of the squad, either of the two would have to take his place.

Comilla coach Mohammad Salahuddin had pointed out the glaring error in the squad selection for the T20

series against Sri Lanka during the BPL.

"You look for players to bat at number six and seven and this guy [Jaker] has been doing well for the last two years. He scores runs at the crucial moments for us and is sensible. I feel that this boy should be given opportunity," said the Comilla head coach.

"I saw the Bangladesh team and there are five openers and just two middle-order batters. Maybe there is an advantage that Bangladesh will always open even in the 16th or 17th over," he added.

Perhaps his criticism helped Jaker, as the current selection panel tried to correct the error made by the previous selection committee led by Minhajul Abedin and coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who is also part of the selection process, by including him in place of Aliss.

"In addition to Aliss, we have three other frontline spinners in Rishad [Hossain], Taijul [Islam], and Shak Mahedi [Hasan] in the T20 squad. We believe that instead of adding another spinner to replace Aliss, the team's balance would be better served by including someone like Jaker Ali, who can bolster the middle or lower

middle order and serve as a finisher," current chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain said, explaining Jaker's addition.

The 26-year-old made use of the opportunity with a spectacular knock that almost took Bangladesh to a memorable come from behind victory.

Jaker's brilliant innings ended in the final over, when he got caught at long off but this innings would surely cement his spot in the T20 setup and give a reminder on the importance of picking specialist finishers and not makeshift ones.



SHORT CORNER

Girona and Barcelona fail to exploit Real's Liga slip

Presented with a chance to gain ground on Liga leaders Real



Madrid, both Girona and then Barcelona tamely surrendered points on Sunday. After Real Madrid drew in Valencia the night before, Girona lost 1-0 at Mallorca. That gave giant Catalan rivals Barcelona a chance to take second, but they drew 0-0 in Bilbao in the late game.

The gap between United and City is not that big: Ten Hag

Manchester United fell 18 points behind Manchester City following their 3-1 defeat at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday but United manager Erik ten Hag said there was no gulf in class between the cross-town rivals. Marcus Rashford's eighth-minute strike gave United the lead but two goals from Phil Foden and a late effort from Erling Haaland sealed the win for Pep Guardiola's side.

Cummins to lead Sunrisers Hyderabad in IPL 2024

Australia's World Cup-winning captain Pat Cummins will lead the Sunrisers Hyderabad in the upcoming Indian Premier League, the franchise confirmed on Monday. Cummins, who has never captained an IPL side before, will replace South African batter Aiden Markram as the Hyderabad skipper.

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Kylian Mbappe was all smiles during Paris Saint-Germain's training on Sunday as the French champions prepare to host Real Sociedad in the second leg of the Champions League Round of 16 on Tuesday. With a 2-0 advantage from first leg, PSG are in a comfortable position and would fancy making it into the quarterfinals but their talisman Mbappe has lately felt anything but comfortable in the club. Mbappe has reportedly expressed his frustration over being subbed during their goalless draw against Monaco in a Ligue 1 clash on Friday, marking the fourth successive game that the forward was either subbed or left out of the starting line-up since he announced his intentions to leave the club at the end of this season. PHOTO: PSG

Bayern's Lazio clash offers outgoing Tuchel lifeline

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's home clash with Lazio in the Champions League on Tuesday offers coach Thomas Tuchel a chance to help salvage his reputation as he makes his way out of the club.

Mired in mid-table in Serie A, Lazio -- who had three players sent off in Friday's loss to Milan -- are also under pressure, but take a 1-0 first-leg lead in the last 16 tie to the Allianz Arena.

Hired two-thirds of the way through last season after Bayern surprisingly fired Julian Nagelsmann, Tuchel is on his way out, having struggled to keep Bayern on track for the Bundesliga title with Leverkusen comfortably in pole position.

Two early German Cup exits, and elimination at the hands of eventual champions Manchester City in Europe last season, means that Tuchel's only trophy was last year's Bundesliga, somewhat gifted on goal difference by Borussia Dortmund's final day collapse.

Nagelsmann lost just 10 of 84 games in charge of Bayern. With largely the same squad, plus England captain Harry Kane and South Korea defender Kim Min-jae, Tuchel has already lost 11

Bayern have been eliminated from each of their last seven Champions League ties when they lost the first leg, and from 11 of 14 such ties overall.

Harry Kane has been involved in 19 goals in 19 home Champions League appearances overall, but he has no goals in three home



of his 45 matches.

Friday's 2-2 draw with Freiburg and Leverkusen's 2-0 win at Cologne on Sunday mean Bayern are 10 points behind with 10 league games remaining in the Bundesliga title chase.

Despite Tuchel's side winning just one of their past five games, the Bayern hierarchy promised the coach will see out the season.

German media however have claimed the only thing keeping Tuchel in a job is the lack of a reasonable interim alternative. The club is reluctant to appoint a permanent coach, with sights firmly set on a move for Leverkusen's Xabi Alonso in the summer.

Inconsistency is not a new theme at Bayern, with the club leaning heavily on Kane's 27 league goals to bail them out. After the decision to part ways was

knockout games in the competition.

Lazio's 1-0 win in the first leg was their first over Bayern in the Champions League.

Bayern have won just one of their last five games across all competitions, though they have won their last three at the Allianz Arena.

made in late February, Tuchel said both he and the club could move forward with "clarity". The coach also said he could be more "ruthless" in his decision-making, perhaps best exemplified by moving Joshua Kimmich to his unfavourable right-back position.

Another problem for Tuchel is depth. Dayot Upamecano, who saw red when giving away the decisive penalty in the first leg against Lazio, will miss the match. Kingsley Coman, Serge Gnabry, Sacha Boey, and Noussair Mazraoui also look set to miss out, while Leroy Sane is under an injury cloud having not played against Freiburg.

Tuchel conceded the situation was "weird" but denied he was under pressure to prove something to the club in his final months.

"The pressure comes from within, within myself," he said.