

A Test series etched in memory

"It was a well fought series, a lot of good learnings for us ... being in the game for longer, creating pressure and sometimes absorbing pressure when the wickets are difficult and sometimes playing to the situation."

Player-of-the-series Jasprit Bumrah

"Obviously in the context of this series, it's been a massive series," he said after his 20th win as captain. It is one that a few of us didn't have. The boys have had their eye on it and it has lived up to the hype."

Australia captain Pat Cummins

AGENCIES

Australia completed a six-wicket win in Sydney to clinch the fifth Test against India.

The home side rebounded from losing the opening Test against India to clinch the series 3-1 on Sunday and win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade.

The series was a real treat for cricket loving fans all over the world as there was no shortage of twist and turns in the five-match series.

Here there are some talking points from the series:

ALIVE AND KICKING

Bumper crowds turned up to watch the first ever five-Test series between the two teams, swelling as the showdown intensified.

Drawn in by fine weather, the holiday period and knife-edge action, attendance records were smashed to prove the red-ball game remains hugely popular.

The peak came in the fourth Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, where a staggering 373,691 spectators streamed through the turnstiles, beating the previous record of 350,534 at the same ground during the 1936-37 Ashes series against



England.

BRILLIANT BUMRAH

Prodigious seamer Jasprit Bumrah reinforced his reputation as not only India's most potent bowler, but one of the best the world has seen.

He put in a mammoth effort to help carry the team and keep them in the hunt for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with his 32 wickets at an average of

13.06 the most by an Indian in a series in Australia.

Bumrah sent down 53.2 overs in the Boxing Day Test alone -- more than he has bowled in any match of his career -- and the toil took its toll in Sydney when a back issue restricted his input.

His pivotal role was further highlighted by the decision to hand him the captaincy in Perth and

Sydney in place of Rohit Sharma.

EXUBERANCE OF YOUTH

The emergence of Sam Konstas for Australia and India all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy demonstrated that both teams continue to have a conveyor belt of exciting young talent.

Konstas, 19, and Reddy, 21, both made their debut and had explosive

impacts. A fearless Konstas slammed a whirlwind 60 in his first Test innings in Brisbane, taking on Bumrah with little respect, to position himself as a potential long-term opener for Australia.

Reddy was equally impressive, proving able support to the frontline attack while crunching a maiden century in the fourth Test.

END OF THE ROAD

Both sides face a transitional period and the series could have been the last for some of their ageing, and underperforming, veterans.

Australian opener Usman Khawaja, 38, hit 41 in the second innings at Sydney but never really got going. In his favour, Australia have no obvious successor.

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma is similarly under pressure, with a horror run of form seeing him dropped from the last Test in Sydney.

Rohit, 37, insisted he "rested" for the good of the team and would be back, but his days could be numbered.

Superstar Virat Kohli, 36, is also in the twilight of an incredible career.

He has almost certainly played his last tour of Australia and while he scored an unbeaten 100 at the first Test in Perth, he failed to make another big score.

'Not facing Rana in the nets, he is too quick for me'

Amid the handful of foreign stars featuring in this year's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), former England batter Alex Hales is definitely one to look at. The hard-hitting opening batter, who recently turned 36, has been roped in by Rangpur Riders for six matches and will be available until the Sylhet phase before heading to Dubai for ILT20. On Sunday, Hales talked to The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan, sharing his experience of playing in different T20 franchise-based tournaments, including this BPL, and the teams that he deems favourite in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:



Tigers [in the nets]. I'm now too old and in the nets, I usually just face throwers.

DS: Do you think you could have given England cricket more service as you decided to retire early?

AH: It was my time. My last game was the World Cup final that we won [in 2022 in Australia]. I wanted to go out on my terms and celebrate the World Cup win. Now I focus on franchise cricket. I've been away from cricket for some time as well to enjoy family time. So I'm happy with my decision.

DS: You must have played Nahid Rana in the nets. How good is he?

AH: No, no, no. I'm not facing him in the nets. He is too quick for me (laughs). I think I faced him last year when I played for Khulna

DS: You have played in almost all franchise-based leagues across the globe. How do you see BPL compared to other franchise leagues?

AH: It's just as good as all the other leagues. It's challenging as an overseas player. You often get challenged a lot by the spinners. There are a lot of skillful spinners here and that's a tough challenge as an overseas player. But the guys are bowling at good pace as well and the pitch is carrying.

DS: There are fewer foreign recruits in BPL this year. Why do you think BPL is not attracting as many foreign stars as other leagues?

AH: I think four tournaments are running at the same time. SA20, ILT20, and Big Bash along with the BPL. There's too much cricket during January-February. So, it's the same for almost all the leagues as they don't have as many overseas players as they wanted. Also, the Champions Trophy is in February, so, the tournaments are being cramped into the calendar during this period. Next year, hopefully, it will be different and there will be lots of foreign players [in BPL], and I want to be one of them.

DS: Regarding Champions Trophy, which teams do you see as favourites?

AH: India are always up there, especially in the sub-continent conditions. Probably India, Australia, and South Africa. No one talks about South Africa but they are always in the final.

DS: Coming back to BPL, you must want similar good wickets [as the Dhaka phase] in Sylhet as well.

DS: I played maybe two or three games in Sylhet and it's usually been good pitch to bat on. So hoping for more of the same.

Real hope Vinicius won't face suspension

REUTERS

Real Madrid are hopeful Vinicius Jr will avoid suspension after the club appealed his straight red card during their 2-1 comeback win over Valencia last week, manager Carlo Ancelotti said on Sunday.

The Italian coach confirmed Vinicius is travelling to Cartagena for Monday's Copa del Rey match against Deportiva Minera.

The Brazilian striker was sent off for slapping Valencia goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski during Friday's LaLiga match and Ancelotti is confident that the 24-year-old will escape even the minimum two-game suspension for his red card.

"It wasn't a red, it was a yellow, and that's why we hope he will not face any suspension," the 65-year-old manager told reporters.

Ancelotti also said that Vinicius is under immense mental stress due to previous incidents of racist abuse directed at him in Spain.

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
BPL
Sylhet vs Rangpur
Live from 1:30 pm
Rajshahi vs Barishal
Live from 6:30 pm
SPORTS 18-1 AND PTV

South Africa vs Pakistan
Second Test, Day 4
Live from 2:30 pm
SELECT HD1
Premier League
Wolves vs Nottingham Forest
Live from 2:00 am (Tuesday)



Fast bowler Kwena Maphaka, South Africa's youngest Test debutant at 18 years and 270 days, had a day to remember as he claimed his maiden Test wicket during Day 3 of the second Test against Pakistan in Cape Town yesterday. The left-arm pacer dismissed star batter Babar Azam for 58 and sent back Khurram Shahzad later in the day to bundle out Pakistan for 194 in response to the Proteas' 615. South Africa enforced the follow-on and the visitors were 152-0 after 35 overs in their second innings.

PHOTO: AFP



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