



DURBAN: South African batsman and Captain Faf du Plessis plays a shot during the third ODI between South Africa and Australia at Kingsmead cricket stadium. — AFP

SOUTH AFRICA CHASES DOWN AUST'S 371 TO WIN ODI SERIES

DURBAN: David Miller thumped 118 not out from No 6 to take South Africa to the second-highest successful run chase in one-day international cricket and a series win over Australia on Wednesday. On his home ground, Miller blasted his 118 from just 79 balls, with 10 fours and six sixes, as South Africa made 372-6, overtaking Australia's 371-6 with four balls of the last over to spare. Miller's third ODI century - surely his best - gave South Africa an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-game series, and gave the Proteas their first ODI series win over Australia in seven years. He did it while hobbling with a groin injury for much of

the latter part of his innings. "It's a special one," Miller said of his match-winning knock. "You don't get those ones too often."

Miller and South Africa completely overshadowed an impressive batting effort from top-ranked Australia after the tourists, desperate to stay alive in the series, opted to bat first. Opener David Warner made 117, captain Steve Smith added 108, and Australia posted the highest ODI total at Kingsmead. That record lasted just a few hours. South Africa's victory revived memories of the game between the two countries in 2006, when Australia made 434 and

South Africa chased that down for what's still by some way the highest run chase to win an ODI.

On Wednesday, Australia slipped to a third straight loss on the tour, this time by four wickets but possibly the most painful considering the situation. "We posted 370, which is a pretty good score," Australia captain Smith said. "You don't lose too many games scoring 370. We've just got to keep learning and trying to find a way to win." Facing an imposing target, openers Quinton de Kock (70) and Hashim Amla (45) gave South Africa its early momentum, but the home team was teetering having lost six wickets when Miller took control.

The big-hitting left-hander had crucial support from Andile Phehlukwayo, the fast bowler playing just his fourth one-day international and who hit a career-best 42 not out to carry South Africa home alongside Miller. South Africa stayed with or near the required run rate for much of its chase, but when Miller and Phehlukwayo came together they still needed 107 runs off 74 balls. Phehlukwayo got away with one when he appeared to edge behind early in his knock. Umpire Adrian Holdstock said not out and Australia didn't have any decision referrals left.

Miller crunched a four to backward square leg to get to his century, and Phehlukwayo attacked anything he could, hitting four fours and two sixes. He hit a looping reverse sweep to win the game and the series, causing raucous celebrations in the South African dressing room. "I would rank that up there as the best win I've been involved in," South Africa captain Faf du Plessis said. — AP

WAR GAMES IN BANGLADESH AHEAD OF ENGLAND BATTLE

DHAKA: Bangladeshi army commandos abseiled into the national stadium yesterday in a show of strength designed to reassure England's cricketers over their security on the eve of the opening ODI of their controversial tour. More than a dozen commandos scaled down ropes from helicopters hovering over the nets at Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, which is hosting the first two games in a three-match series beginning on Friday night.

The side is being skippered by Jos Buttler after regular one-day captain Eoin Morgan decided not to go on the tour in the wake of an attack by jihadists earlier this year on a cafe full of foreigners. Twenty-two people were killed in July's assault on the

Holey Artisan Cafe in Dhaka's upmarket Gulshan district, casting doubt over whether Bangladesh's security forces could guarantee the England team's safety. But speaking to reporters yesterday, Buttler insisted there had been no sense of unease among the players since they had arrived last weekend.

"Everything has been in good order. Travel to and from the ground has been great for us although I'm sure it's been a bit frustrating for the locals," he said in reference to road closures ordered on security grounds. "Security has been great so far, I think the guys within the group haven't even mentioned it. That's fantastic for us as the guys in the group are very settled and focused on cricket." — AFP

INDIA EYE NZ WHITEWASH AS KOHLI SEARCHES RUNS

INDORE: India skipper Virat Kohli will look to lead Test cricket's new number one side to a whitewash in the series finale against New Zealand starting tomorrow-and halt a rare slump in his own form in the process. Since scoring his first Test double century against the West Indies in July, the normally prolific Kohli has failed to pass 50 in any of his subsequent seven innings and is averaging only 20 against the Black Caps.

India's comfortable wins in the first two matches of a three-Test series have allowed them to overtake Pakistan at the top of the rankings and also divert attention away from Kohli's downturn in form. New Zealand's Trent Boult dismissed the right-hander both times in the second Test in Kolkata after his strike partner Neil Wagner had softened him up the other end with a string of bouncers. Kohli, who has been widely praised for soaking up the additional pressure since taking over from MS Dhoni as Test captain last year, has been playing down the concerns about his own form.

"I don't think there is anything called form. It's how you feel on a particular day," the 27-year-old said in comments carried by Indian media this week ahead of the third Test at Indore's Holkar Stadium. "My own form? I don't really think about these things, because cricket is a game where you prepare well but the result cannot be in your hand all the time, especially batting where you have only one chance."

Kohli aside, India's batting has been sound in the first two Tests but Shikhar Dhawan's broken thumb has opened the door for a recall at the top of the order for veteran Gautam Gambhir. The aggressive left-hander, who enjoyed a successful opening partnership with the now retired Virender Sehwag, played the last of his 56 Tests on India's tour of England in the summer of 2014. But he has forced his way back into contention after a strong showing on the domestic circuit.

Kumar blow

There will also be a change to the bowling line-up after medium-pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who took six wickets in Kolkata, was ruled out on Wednesday with a back strain and the uncapped Shardul Thakur drafted in as a replacement. New Zealand are expected to welcome back skipper Kane Williamson, who missed the second Test due to a viral infection. The Black Caps will be aiming to avoid their second successive series whitewash in India after losing the 2012 rubber 2-0. The tourists have performed well in patches but have been guilty of failing to push home their advantage at key moments.

Senior batsman Ross Taylor, who led the team in Kolkata, said New Zealand were still keen to display their aggressive brand of cricket in the final Test. "We're still fizzing to go for Indore, hopefully we can play some fear-free cricket to put India under pressure," Taylor said after the 178-run loss in Kolkata. "We've tried to be aggressive, we always try and be aggressive. It didn't work this time but we will still be aggressive in the next Test and hopefully we can get a better result." There had been question marks over whether the Test would go ahead following a row between the Indian board and a Supreme Court-appointed panel which has order the organisation to institute reforms.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had privately threatened to cancel the series after their accounts were allegedly frozen by the panel but they later stepped back from the brink. The match marks the first time the Holkar Stadium, located in Indore in Madhya Pradesh state, has hosted a Test match and the pitch is expected to favour batsmen and seam bowlers.

Squads

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Murali Vijay, Gautam Gambhir, Cheteshwar Pujara, Karun Nair, Ajinkya Rahane, Rohit Sharma, Wriddhiman Saha (wicketkeeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Amit Mishra, Ravindra Jadeja, Jayant Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Shardul Thakur.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (captain), Trent Boult, Doug Bracewell, Jeetan Patel, Martin Guptill, Tom Latham, BJ Watling (wicketkeeper), Henry Nicholls, Luke Ronchi, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Matt Henry, Jimmy Neesham, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner. — AFP