

Sports

Photo of the Day



Canoeist, Vavrinec Hradilek seen in Wanaka, New Zealand. - Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Gutsy India bounce back to skittle Australia in 2nd Test

'We're just looking to control the controllables'

MELBOURNE: A resilient India bounced back from their embarrassing first Test exploits to bundle out Australia for just 195 and take a grip on the second Test in Melbourne after a riveting opening day yesterday. After their horror show in Adelaide last week, where they lost by eight wickets and were skittled for 36 in their second innings, the tourists were desperate to start well.

And they delivered after Australian captain Tim Paine won the toss and chose to bat in front of 27,615 socially-distanced fans, just short of the maximum allowed under coronavirus restrictions at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. On a pitch offering turn and bounce, the hosts found it hard going against a high-quality attack led by Jasprit Bumrah (4-56), Ravi Ashwin (3-35) and the impressive Mohammed Siraj (2-40), making his debut for the injured Mohammed Shami. Marnus Labuschagne top-scored with 48 but that was as good as it got.

It left Indian openers Shubman Gill, also on debut, and Mayank Agarwal needing to negotiate 40 minutes at the end of the day. Agarwal was not up to the task, trapped lbw by a Mitchell Starc inswinger in the first over. Gill was dropped on five by Labuschagne but otherwise looked comfortable, smacking five boundaries to reach 28 and help steer India to 36 for one at close with the experienced Cheteshwar Pujara unbeaten on seven. "In the first session we were just trying to bowl in the rights areas," said Bumrah, who praised Siraj for "bowling his heart out".

He added that the plan Sunday was for the batsmen to be positive, rather than conservative. "We're just looking to control the controllables, not being reckless but being confident." With Ajinkya Rahane captaining the side in place of Virat Kohli, who has returned home for the birth of his first child, India got off to a perfect start, getting Burns (0), Matthew Wade (30) and Smith (0) before lunch. It left Australia in trouble but Labuschagne rode his luck, surviving two review decisions, to lead a recovery, putting on 86 with Travis Head (38).



MELBOURNE: Australia's Travis Head (right) plays a ball to leg on the first day of the second cricket Test match between Australia and India played at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Head had a nervous start but grew in confidence before Bumrah enticed an edge which carried to Rahane at gully, sparking a collapse. Labuschagne looked set for a ninth half-century but a brilliant catch by Gill ended his vigil and handed Siraj his first Test wicket. Allrounder Cameron Green ground out 12 before he too fell to Siraj, then an excellent catch by Hanuma Vihari off Ashwin accounted for Paine (13). Nathan Lyon hit a cameo 20 but Australia's tail otherwise failed to wag.

Still in game

"We had probably three innocuous dismissals that we probably didn't need to, frustrating dismissals and they were guys who were set and in," said Labuschagne. "Just need to be better there ... that whoever gets in on the day, whether myself or anyone

else in the top order, we make sure we get big scores." But he added: "I think we're (still) in the game." With David Warner still injured, the hosts went into the clash unchanged, with Burns opening alongside Wade. Burns hit an unbeaten 51 in Adelaide to relieve some pressure after a long lean spell, but his performance will once more raise questions over his place in the team.

He looked tentative against Bumrah and got a nick to a delivery he should have left. At the other end, Wade had an escape on four but started finding the gaps before attempting a big hit off Ashwin, which proved his downfall for 30. Ravindra Jadeja took the catch, but only just with Gill also underneath it. The pair collided but Jadeja managed to hang on. Ashwin then claimed the crucial scalp of Smith, who was undone by an off-break with Pujara holding a catch at slip after the world's top batsman faced just eight balls. — AFP

Gritty Williamson lifts NZ after early Pakistan strike

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: An unbeaten 94 by a gritty Kane Williamson had New Zealand (NZ) at 222 for three in the face of a concerted Pakistan attack at stumps on day one of the first Test in Mount Maunganui yesterday. Henry Nicholls was the other not out batsman on 42 as New Zealand recovered from being 13 for two after Pakistan's baby-faced destroyer Shaheen Afridi removed openers Tom Latham and Tom Blundell cheaply on a green, seaming wicket. In a 120-run stand, filled with determination and concentration in difficult conditions, Williamson and Ross Taylor pulled New Zealand back into the game.

Taylor hit 10 fours and a six as he attacked the bowling while Williamson took a more conservative approach. "Obviously we're happy with where we're at," Taylor said. "You had to try and take them on or just try and get through it. You expect that on a day one wicket. It definitely flattened out and it's probably a little bit two-paced at times and I'm sure it's only going to get more uneven over the next couple of days." After Afridi split the pair with a masterful piece of bowling to remove Taylor for 70, Williamson and Henry Nicholls added a further 89.

Taylor was set up to fall by Afridi who bowled full, short then a bouncer in successive deliveries and followed with a good-length, rising ball that Taylor could not resist slashing at. But he succeeded only in feathering the ball to Mohammad Rizwan behind the stumps. The 20-year-old Afridi, standing 1.99 meters (6ft 6in) tall, also removed Latham for four and Blundell for five to end the day with three for 55. Mohammad Abbas, while not taking a wicket, kept the batsmen pinned down and conced-



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand's Kane Williamson makes a run during the first day of the first cricket test match between New Zealand and Pakistan at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

ed only 25 runs off his 21 overs. Taylor, in his 104th Test, could not help but be impressed with Afridi playing his 12th. "When the ball was 50 overs old it was still swinging and he could pick and choose when he used it and he's got a slippery bumper. He's only going to get better and Pakistan are going to see a very good bowler in years to come," Taylor said. Afridi's opening onslaught had New Zealand at two for 13 before Williamson and Taylor combined in a century partnership, their 10th together. By stumps, Williamson had faced 243 deliveries after being in the middle for all but the first three balls before Latham was dismissed.

The closest Pakistan came to dismissing the New Zealand captain came before lunch with Williamson on 18 when Shan Masood spilled a difficult one-handed chance low to his left. Naseem Shah was the unfortunate bowler and the teenaged quick was to suffer again when he tempted Nicholls, on six, to hook a short ball only for Mohammad Abbas, waiting for the catch at long leg, to drop the regulation chance. — AFP

China star swimmer Sun Yang's doping ban overturned

GENEVA: Chinese swimmer and triple Olympic champion Sun Yang won a huge victory seven months before the Tokyo Olympics with Switzerland's top court overturning an eight-year doping ban. The 29-year-old—the first Chinese swimmer to win Olympic gold—will now have a chance to state his case again at a second hearing by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), based in the Swiss city of Lausanne. He is now free to compete until his case is heard again, meaning he could aim to defend his 200m title in the coronavirus-delayed 2020 Games.

Sun is accused of destroying a blood vial with a hammer when collectors visited his home in September 2018 during an out-of-competition doping test. The Swiss Federal Supreme Court said in a statement on Thursday that it had "approved the request by the Chinese swimmer Sun Yang for revision of the arbitral award of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne dated 28 February 2020... on the grounds of bias of one of the arbitrators of the CAS".

Sun's lawyers had previously accused CAS panel chairman Franco Frattini of bias and putting out anti-China tweets in which he protested against a dog festival held in Wuhan. "The award of the CAS is set aside. The CAS will have to render a new award in the case of Sun Yang in a different composition of the panel," the federal court said. CAS issued a statement saying "it very much regrets" the objections against Frattini were not raised by Sun's lawyers earlier. Sport's top court added: "The CAS will accept the ruling of the Swiss Federal Tribunal (SFT) and will immediately resume the procedure WADA v/ Sun Yang & FINA in accordance with the instructions given by the SFT." — AFP

News in brief

Jesus, Walker contract COVID

LONDON: Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus and defender Kyle Walker will miss the busy festive period after contracting coronavirus, the Premier League club said on Friday. Two members of staff have also tested positive for the virus with Brasil's Jesus and England's Walker set to be sidelined until January 6's League Cup semi-final with Manchester United due to a 10-day quarantine. "All four personnel will now observe a period of self-isolation in accordance with Premier League and UK Government protocol on quarantine," City said in a statement. The players will sit out for the match with Newcastle, Monday's trip to Newcastle and January 3's visit to Chelsea. — AFP

PSG sack coach Tuchel

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain have fired their coach Thomas Tuchel with former Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino lined up as his replacement, according to various media reports. The French champions declined to make any comment when contacted by AFP to confirm the reports carried by L'Equipe newspaper and RMC and German tabloid Bild. The 47-year-old German arrived at the Parc des Princes on a two-year contract in 2018, and guided PSG to their first ever Champions League final last season. But now, if the reports are confirmed, less than three months on from that final against Bayern Munich in Lisbon, Tuchel has become the first PSG coach to leave mid-season since Antoine Kombouare was replaced by Carlo Ancelotti in December 2011. Pochettino left Tottenham in November 2019, six months after leading them into their first Champions League final. — AFP

'Fearless' batsman Edrich dies

LONDON: England's former "fearless" opening batsman John Edrich has died at the age of 83, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Friday. Diagnosed with leukaemia in 2000 the left-hander who played for county side Surrey scored 103 first-class centuries. He played 77 Tests, scoring 5,138 runs at an average of 43.54. Former England great Ian Botham wrote on Twitter: "Very sad news today to wake up on Christmas Day and to be told that John Edrich has passed away!! A wonderful man who I was lucky enough to spend some quality time with...RIP" ECB CEO Tom Harrison said: "With John's passing, we've lost a prolific and fearless batsman - one of the select few who have scored more than 5,000 runs for England." His duels with some of the world's best fast bowlers were legendary, and it's a testament to his ability that his 310 not out against New Zealand in 1965 remains the fifth highest Test score by an English batsman. — AFP

COVID affects World Cups

PARIS: FIFA has postponed next year's U-20 World Cup in Indonesia and U-17 tournament in Peru until 2023 due to coronavirus. "The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges for the hosting of international sporting events and to have a restrictive effect on international travel, explained football's governing body in a statement on its website. "The global situation has failed to normalize to a sufficient level to address the challenges associated with hosting both tournaments, including the feasibility of the relevant qualification pathways." It added that FIFA looked forward to working with both host countries "to organize successful tournaments" in 2023. The two events follow other international football competitions to fall victim to the virus, with Euro 2020 held over until next June, the Copa America moved to the same date, and the Africa Cup of Nations, held over until January 2022. — AFP

Scotland women's coach quits

LONDON: Shelley Kerr, who guided the Scotland women's team to their first ever World Cup finals in 2019, is stepping down from the job, the Scottish Football Association said on Thursday. The 51-year-old leaves the role after three years having failed to secure qualification for the Euros in 2022 - a home defeat by Finland earlier this month ending their hopes. Kerr - who also coached Scotland at the Euro 2017 finals where they went out in the group stage - said it was time to confront new challenges. "I am privileged to have played a part in such an historical moment in Scottish football (reaching the World Cup finals)," she said in a statement. "That is something that will live with me forever. "I know the timing is right for me to look ahead to the next chapter, to face new challenges and to create and enjoy more amazing experiences on my journey," she said in a statement. — AFP

India to increase IPL to 10 teams

NEW DELHI: The Indian Premier League is to be increased from eight to 10 teams as the world's richest Twenty20 event seeks to cash in on its growing television audience. The Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI) in India announced the move after its annual meeting on Thursday but did not say when the two teams would start with media reports claiming it would be in 2022.

The 14th IPL is scheduled to start in March and the tournament would need one year to address tricky issues around logistics, media rights and planning for the new outfits, cricket officials were quoted as saying. A bigger tournament would almost certainly mean a longer stay in India for the top players from around the world who earn huge salaries. India captain Virat Kohli is said to have earned \$2.3 million playing 15 matches for Royal Challengers Bangalore. — AFP