

Sports

Sharma, Rahane help India hit back after early wobble

Spinner Shahbaz Nadeem made his international debut for India

RANCHI: Opener Rohit Sharma hit his third century of the series to lead India's charge after they lost early wickets against South Africa on day one of the third Test yesterday.

Sharma, on 117, combined with Ajinkya Rahane, on 83, to put on an unbeaten 185-run stand after the hosts were wobbling at 39-3 following their decision to bat first in Ranchi. India reached 224 for three when bad light stopped play in the final session. It began to rain as well and no further action was possible.

Sharma and Rahane ensured that India, who have already taken an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series, denied the opposition bowlers any wickets after lunch. "The duo batted really well. There was a bit of moisture early on. Wicket was doing something," said India's batting coach Vikram Rathour.

"They also bowled in better areas but recovery was phenomenal. Both of them batted really well and post-lunch the wicket eased a bit. We should catch this." Kagiso Rabada got two early scalps in a fiery morning spell and fellow paceman Anrich Nortje claimed his maiden Test wicket after he trapped India skipper Virat Kohli lbw for 12.

Sharma, who hit twin centuries in his debut game as an opening batsman at the start of the series, then steadied the innings along with Rahane, who completed his 21st Test fifty. Sharma played it cool to fifty then soon launched an attack with a barrage of sixes, reaching his sixth Test hundred with his fourth hit over the fence amid loud applause from the home crowd.

The duo from Mumbai have recorded India's best fourth-wicket stand against South Africa after sur-

passing the 178 between Kohli and Rahane in the second match.

PROXY SKIPPER FOR TOSS

In the morning session, India lost Mayank Agarwal, for 10, and Cheteshwar Pujara, for nought, to Rabada's lively spell of pace bowling and slipped to 16 for two.

Rabada nearly got his third when Sharma was judged lbw by the on-field umpire when the opener was on seven. But Sharma successfully reviewed the decision as replays clearly showed the batsman got an inside edge off the bat before the ball hit the pads.

"Rabada is one of the better bowlers in the world at the moment. Today he showed why he's rated so high," Rathour said in praise of the South African pace spearhead.

"As a batsman, you need to survive those spells, you need to get through those spells and Rohit did very well today again." Kohli made a review of his own — a leg-before call — but tracking technology showed the ball would have grazed the leg stump.

Nortje said getting Kohli's prized scalp was "unbelievable" and praised his entire bowling unit. After losing nine coin tosses in consecutive Asian Tests, Proteas captain Faf du Plessis brought on his deputy Temba Bavuma to end the poor run.

It was not enough and South Africa lost its 10th lip on the trot in Asian Tests — the third of the series. Spinner Shahbaz Nadeem made his international debut for India while wicketkeeper Heinrich Klaasen and left-arm orthodox George Linde earned their maiden Test caps for the Proteas. —AFP



RANCHI: India's Ajinkya Rahane (L) and teammate Rohit Sharma (R) run between the wickets during the first day of the third and final Test match between India and South Africa at the Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) stadium in Ranchi yesterday. —AFP

25th Asian bowling ten pin tournament



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Crowne Plaza Hotel will be the venue of the official opening ceremony of the 25th Asian Bowling Ten Pin Tournament to be held in Kuwait for the first time in Kuwait with 27 countries participating. The tournament will be held under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and will conclude on October 30.

Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri will represent HH the Prime Minister in the opening ceremony in the presence of the President of International and Asian Bowling Federations, President of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad in addition to heads of participating Asian federations.

Activities of the tournament started

with the 25th meeting of the Asian Bowling Federation Executive Committee, then bowls were registered as delegations were arriving into the country.

Twenty seven countries confirmed their participation so far, they are Afghanistan (7 players), Australia (12), Bahrain (6), China (12), Egypt (8), Hong Kong (9), Indonesia (11), Iran (6), Iraq (4), Japan (6), Jordan (6), Kazakhstan (5), S. Korea (12), Kuwait (12), Macao (6), Malaysia (12), Oman (6), Pakistan (6), Philippines (12), Qatar (6), Saudi Arabia (6), Singapore (12), Taipei (12), Thailand (12), UAE (6) and Uzbekistan (7). It is worth noting that Egypt is a member of the Asian federation because Africa does not have a federation yet.

The tournament will see 154 men and 74 women participating and competing for 12 gold medals in the individual, doubles, threes and teams and the masters.



Thomas blows three-stroke CJ Cup lead in 18th hole swing

JEJU: Justin Thomas saw a three-stroke advantage disappear in a crazy final-hole yesterday as Danny Lee grabbed a share of the lead at the US PGA Tour's CJ Cup on Jeju Island, South Korea.

The world number five stood on the tee at the long par-five 18th on 16-under par with a three-shot cushion over Lee after a wind-blown round. But the American, who won the inaugural CJ Cup two years ago, splashed his second shot into the water surrounding the island green for the second time in three rounds this week, leading to a bogey six and a round of 70.

Korean-born New Zealander Lee found the putting surface safely with his second shot, albeit around 60 feet from the flag. Lee struck his long putt up and over a large ridge and watched incredulously as it found the cup for a remarkable eagle to reach 15-under par and a share of the lead after a grinding, third-round 68.

"As for that putt, frankly I wasn't aiming for the hole," admitted Lee. "I was just trying to get the ball to roll down the slope as slowly as possible but it kept going." Thomas took the positives from his round despite the setback at the last.

"It's not too frustrating since I'm tied for the lead," said Thomas, who had shot 63 on Friday to grab the lead. "It would be one thing if I lost six or seven shots today, but I feel pretty comfortable when I have a chance to win the tournament."

"Obviously Danny's playing well, a lot of guys are playing well, so I need to go out and play well tomorrow."

Thomas, who led playing partners Lee and South Korea's An Byeong-hun at the start of the round by two shots, had looked to be running away with the tournament when Lee had a double bogey at the 10th and An followed with a disastrous triple-bogey seven at the next hole.

Lee recovered to play his last eight holes in four-under and reel in Thomas, who was sporting an ungolfing-like "hoodie" to protect against the chilly wind.

But An also found a watery grave at the last for a double-bogey to add to his earlier triple as he tumbled five shots back of the leading pair. "It was OK today apart from the two holes, I guess," said a despondent An.

"It was really disappointing to make the triple there, but I bounced back with a couple birdies. Overall, those two holes just destroyed my day."

In third on his own, three shots behind the leaders is Australia's Cameron Smith who had a 68 to reach 12-under for the tournament. A shot further back are former world number one Jordan Spieth who battled to a two-under 70 after bogeying his two opening holes, and young American Wyndham Clark who carded a fine 67.

Before the third round started world number one and defending champion Brooks Koepka withdrew with a recurrence of a long-standing knee injury. The American had struggled to a three over 75 Friday and was already out of contention.

The lowest score of the day was shared by young star Collin Morikawa and US Open champions Gary Woodland, who both carded fine seven-under par 65s. —AFP

Champion Marquez secures first pole at Japan MotoGP

MOTEGI: MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez will eye his tenth win of the season after snatching pole position yesterday in Japan. The Honda rider clocked 1min 45.763sec for his first pole start in the premier class at Twin Ring Motegi, where he won in 2016 and last year, while coming second in 2017, 2014 and 2013.

"Finally we did it. So happy," Marquez said, after securing his 90th career pole. He will be joined in the front row by Petronas Yamaha SRT riders Franco Morbidelli and Fabio Quartararo, who came in 0.132sec and 0.181sec later.

Marquez, who finished third in Friday practice, has already secured his sixth season win in seven years after triumphing in Thailand two weeks ago. He also finished second in five of the season's six other races, missing the podium only once in the United States after crashing out while leading the race.

Still, the season champion was keeping his guard high, with the Yamaha duo and Andrea Dovizioso on Ducati maintaining pressure. Marquez admitted that he and his team were yet to find the best setup for their machine, saying "tomorrow will be a tough race" as the weather has changed constantly on Friday and Saturday.

"We will see tomorrow because Yamaha riders

have good pace, Dovizioso has a good pace. We will try to do our 100 percent," the Spaniard said. "The main target is to finish in the podium. Then if I feel OK, try to fight for the victory," he said.

Quartararo is nipping at the Spaniard's heels after two narrow defeats to the world champion in recent races, with victory only decided on the closing laps. "I am ready to fight. I hope to make good first laps," the Frenchman said about the Sunday race.

Riders in Motegi had to navigate hostile conditions after heavy rain into the afternoon, leaving the track with damp spots and with thick cloud cover for the qualifying sessions.

Sunny weather is expected for today's race day on the Japanese circuit. Starting from the second row will be Maverick Vinales of Monster Energy Yamaha, Cal Crutchlow of LCR Honda and Jack Miller of Pramac Racing.

They are followed by Dovizioso, who could seal second place in this year's championship with Sunday's race, while Valentino Rossi starts from the fourth row.

Qualifying riders

1. Marc Marquez (ESP/Honda) 1min 45.763sec,
2. Franco Morbidelli (ITA/Yamaha-SRT) at 0.132sec,
3. Fabio Quartararo (FRA/Yamaha-SRT) 0.181,
4. Maverick Vinales (ESP/Yamaha) 0.327,
5. Cal Crutchlow (GBR/Honda-LCR) 0.426,
6. Jack Miller (AUS/Ducati-Pramac) 0.574,
7. Andrea Dovizioso (ITA/Ducati) 0.647,
8. Danilo Petrucci (ITA/Ducati) 0.664,
9. Aleix Espargaro (ESP/Aprilia) 0.795,
10. Valentino Rossi (ITA/Yamaha) 0.795. —AFP

Murray into first semi-final since 2017 Roland Garros

ANTWERP: Former world number one Andy Murray reached his first semi-final since the 2017 French Open with a battling three-set win over Romania's Marius Copil in Antwerp on Friday. The 32-year-old British star, steadily rebuilding his career after major hip surgery earlier this year, defeated qualifier Copil 6-3, 6-7 (7/9), 6-4.

"I feel OK, it's more how you pull up the following day," said Murray, who is two wins away from a first title since Dubai in March 2017. "The good thing about the indoor matches is that the points are fairly short so it doesn't take as much out of you as on some of the slower courts outside."

Murray, now ranked a lowly 243 in the world, had the chance to wrap up the quarter-final when he had a match point in the second set tiebreak. He eventually sealed victory after more than two and a half hours on court with an ace for his third win in three meetings against the 92nd-ranked Copil.

Murray goes on to face France's world number 70 Ugo Humbert who put out Argentine fifth seed Guido Pella 5-7, 6-4, 6-4. Italian teenager Jannik Sinner became the youngest ATP semi-finalist in five years when he defeated Frances Tiafoe of the United States 6-4, 3-6, 6-3. Sinner, 18, is the youngest to make the last four on tour since 17-year-old Borna Coric at Basel in 2014. "I think I played good today once more. It was not easy in the end. I was shaking a little bit," said Sinner, the world number 119. —AFP