

Sports

Inspired Ben Stokes seals dramatic England victory

England's first victory at Newlands since 1957

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard after the fifth day of the second Test between South Africa and England at Newlands yesterday:

England, first innings: 269	
South Africa, first innings: 223	
England, second innings: 391-8 declared	
South Africa, second innings (overnight 126-2)	
P. Malan c Stokes b Curran	84
D. Elgar c Buttler b Denly	34
Z. Hamza c Buttler b Anderson	18
K. Maharaj lbw b Anderson	2
F. du Plessis c Denly b Bess	19
H. van der Dussen c Anderson b Broad	17
Q. de Kock c Crawley b Denly	50
V. Philander c Pope b Stokes	8
D. Pretorius c Root b Stokes	0
A. Nortje c Crawley b Stokes	0
K. Rabada not out	3
Extras (b4, lb2, nb5, w2)	13
Total (2 wks, 56 overs)	248
Fall of wicket: 1-71 (Elgar), 2-123 (Hamza), 3-129 (Maharaj), 4-164 (Du Plessis), 5-171 (Malan), 6-237 (De Kock), 7-237 (Van der Dussen), 8-241 (Pretorius), 9-241 (Nortje)	
Bowling: Anderson 18-9-23-2, Broad 23-8-37-1, Bess 33-14-57-1, Curran 16-4-37-1 (lb, lw), Denly 18-4-42-2, Root 6-0-11-0, Stokes 23.4-8-35-3 (4nb, lw)	
Result: England won by 189 runs	
Series: The four-match series is level at 1-1.	

CAPE TOWN: Ben Stokes took the last three wickets as England subdued a stubborn South Africa to win a thrilling second Test by 189 runs late on day five yesterday, their first victory at Newlands since 1957.

Quinton de Kock and Rassie van der Dussen had frustrated England for 44 overs before Stokes provided late drama to finish the match with 8.2 overs to spare and level the four-match series.

The win will be especially pleasing for England for the way they stuck to their task on a flat fifth-day wicket, with Stokes's superb burst earning the all-rounder figures of 3-35.

"A great day's play and a great test match," England seamer Stuart Broad told Sky Sports. "We had to work incredibly hard, we knew we were going to have to do that. "It was incredible discipline from South Africa throughout the day but we kept saying one bit of magic. "We set some funky fields. One breakthrough and we could apply some pressure. You need a lot of character and skill to chase 10 wickets. We are proud of taking our chances." Chasing a test record 438 to win, South Africa looked relatively comfortable as they reached 237 for five with 26 overs remaining in the match. For the second time in the innings, however, a key man gave his wicket away. De Kock (50) attempted to pull a dragged down delivery from part-time leg spinner Joe Denly and succeeded only in picking out Zak Crawley at mid-wicket.

It was an unnecessary stroke that opened the door for England and when Broad removed the obdurate Van der Dussen (17 from 140 balls), it was well and truly ajar. Stokes accounted for Dwaine Pretorius and Anrich Nortje in successive balls, both caught at slip, and sealed the victory in front of an ecstatic Barmy Army when Vernon Philander was caught fending a lifting delivery to Ollie Pope.



CAPE TOWN: South Africa's Pieter Malan (R) plays a shot as England's Dom Sibley (L) and England's Jos Buttler (C) look on during the fifth day of the second Test cricket match between South Africa and England at the Newlands stadium in Cape Town yesterday. — AFP

South Africa had given themselves a chance with some stern resistance, not least from debutant opener Pieter Malan who lasted 288 balls for his 84. But England looked on course for victory at lunch after grabbing the key wicket of South Africa captain Faf du Plessis (19), who will be disappointed with his shot selection as he tried to take on spinner Dom Bess with a powerful sweep and picked out Denly at square leg.

"The boys fought very hard. They bowled really well and congrats to them," De Kock said. "Obviously we tried to push them as far as we can. Unfortunately we fell just short. I was disappointed because we had a good partnership going and I smoked one straight to a fielder." South Africa won the first test in Pretoria by 107 runs. The third match in the four-test series starts in Port Elizabeth on Jan. 16. — Reuters

Confusion over S African position on four-day Tests

CAPE TOWN: Cricket South Africa issued a one-paragraph statement yesterday stating it was official policy to support four-day Test match cricket. But the statement appeared to surprise both the acting chief executive of Cricket South Africa and the chief executive of the South African Cricketers' Association.

The full statement by CSA read: "In view of an unsourced and misleading report in the media this morning please be advised that it is Cricket South Africa's official policy to support four-day Test match cricket. "We, in fact, hosted the first official four-day Test match between ourselves and Zimbabwe a couple of years ago." Asked to elaborate, a spokesman for CSA said he was not aware whether CSA had taken a formal decision to support a suggestion that the World Test championship should consist of four-day matches from 2023.

The proposal appears to have the support of England and Australia. The statement was made in response to an article in the London Daily Mail which claimed South Africa was opposed to four-day Tests.

Jacques Faul, the acting chief executive of CSA, said he believed all stake-holders needed to be consulted before an official position was taken. "I was not privy to any discussions which might have taken place on this issue before my appointment," he said.

Andrew Breetzke, chief executive of the S.A Cricketers' Association, said SACA aligned itself with the position of the Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA).

"We believe this is an issue which needs extensive research and discussion," he said. CSA has been hit by controversy in recent months, with SACA, at least two sponsors and two former chief executives all calling for the board to resign.—AFP

England opener Burns out of S Lanka tour

LONDON: England opening batsman Rory Burns will miss the tour of Sri Lanka in March after undergoing successful surgery on ruptured ligaments in his left ankle, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced yesterday.

The 29-year-old suffered the injury playing football — part of the squad's warm-up routine — last Thursday on the eve of the second Test against South Africa in Cape Town. There was a lot of criticism of England's practice of playing football following the injury to Burns and it has now been banned by head coach Chris Silverwood with the support of Ashley Giles, England's director of men's cricket.

Burns' injury was the second relatively serious injury to an England cricketer playing football prior to a game in just over a year. Jonny Bairstow was injured and missed several matches during a tour of Sri Lanka in October 2018. "England opening batsman Rory Burns has undergone successful surgery on ruptured ligaments in his left ankle," read the ECB statement. "Surgery took place in London on Monday afternoon.

"The Surrey captain is expected to be out of action for up to four months. "He will miss England's Test tour of Sri Lanka in March and is aiming to return to play with Surrey in the County Championship at the beginning of the 2020 season in April."—AFP

Starry rise of cricket's Labuschagne

SYDNEY: Australia's Marnus Labuschagne has joined the stars of world cricket in just five months, soaring to fourth in the batting rankings from a nondescript 110th after seizing a freak opportunity with both hands.

Labuschagne emerged from nowhere to become Test cricket's leading scorer last year with 1,104 runs, including 896 since November — bettering the great Neil Harvey (834) for most runs scored by an Australian in a five-Test summer.

The South African-born 25-year-old now shares rarefied air with cricket's elite, lagging only Virat Kohli, Steve Smith and Kane Williamson in the international rankings. "I haven't really had a chance to stop and reflect on the summer that I have had," Labuschagne said after his double century against New Zealand last week in Sydney.

"Looking at it, it has been a very special summer but the real privilege is playing in this team." None of this may have happened if Labuschagne had not grabbed his chance as a concussion substitute during Australia's Ashes campaign in England last August.

It was during the second Test at Lord's when master Australian batsman Smith was felled by a vicious bouncer off England paceman Jofra Archer in the second innings. Smith's departure opened the way for Labuschagne to become the first concussion substitute in a Test match after a change in the International Cricket Council's regulations.

He made the most of his opportunity, reeling off four consecutive half-centuries and finishing the Ashes series with 353 runs at 50.42 — even earning comparisons with the stellar Smith.

If Labuschagne's career took off during the Ashes, it has rocketed into the stratosphere this Australian summer. He peeled off two centuries against Pakistan, finishing the two-Test series with 347 runs at 173.50, and he was at another level against the Black Caps.

'Purist' Tendulkar against 4-day Tests

MUMBAI: Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar told Reuters he is firmly opposed to shortening test matches to four days from five and has warned against straying too far from the game's roots in the quest to attract a younger audience.

The International Cricket Council (ICC), the sport's world governing body, is set to discuss the idea of reducing all Test matches by a day to free up a crowded international calendar. The future of the longest format has been the subject of debate since the rise of Twenty20 leagues over the last decade coincided with dwindling crowds at Test matches outside cricket hotbeds Australia and England.

However, Tendulkar told Reuters there were other ways of making Test matches more attractive and halting the drift toward the shorter formats. "I feel a purist will always enjoy a five-day match, because that is where you find the challenges," he said.

"We should not be looking at Test cricket as a longer format of a limited-overs match." Tendulkar retired from international cricket in 2013 and remains the leading scorer in the format with 15,921 runs and a record 51 hundreds.

He said that while the game continues to evolve it would be a mistake to focus on the latest trends at the expense of Tests. "From Test cricket, one-day cricket started, which people enjoyed, and from there T20 came and next the 100-ball will come," he added.

"A number of new things are being produced for the



SYDNEY: Australia's Marnus Labuschagne signs autographs after winning the third cricket Test match between Australia and New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney on January 6, 2020. — AFP

The gum-chewing number three scored 143 in Perth before reaching his highest Test score of 215 in the third Test in Sydney.

"People like Marnus, you see someone with incredible work ethic, incredible hunger to get better, very coachable and incredible energy," said Australia coach Justin Langer, who plucked Labuschagne from relative obscurity to play for the national team.

"He brings so much to the team, not just batting and bowling." Such has been Labuschagne's growing profile that Australia batting great Ricky Ponting has tagged him as a potential future Test captain.

"Labuschagne is one that will come into the conversation in 12-18 months' time once he's properly established himself in the team," Ponting said. "He seems like the right sort of guy to maybe be a captain down the track at some point."

Another former Australia captain Greg Chappell says Labuschagne has the temperament and technique to become one of Australia's best number three bats-

men alongside Ponting, Don Bradman and himself.

"He has always had a solid technique and shots on both sides of the wicket," Chappell said. "He is looking to score runs. He is not looking to survive. "He is always looking to get a single, looking to get off strike, looking for the bad ball... they are the traits that I have seen in nearly 70 years of watching cricket that the good players have." Labuschagne has been an avid watcher of team-mate Steve Smith's quirky batting technique and has adopted his extravagant 'light sabre leave', mimicking Smith's flourish after leaving the ball outside off-stump. Labuschagne understands the rich history of batting greats Australia has had coming in at one wicket down, declaring the role had been a "pinnacle one for Australia and there is a lot that comes with that".

"The standard is so high. For me, it's about upholding that standard," he said. "That is making sure I am sticking to the process and trusting my game and not trying to be anyone else — making that position mine in my own way." — AFP

newer generation. But while you are learning new things you cannot forget your roots. "As a purist, it is important test cricket stays the way it is." Four-day matches were given the green light by the ICC in 2017 when South Africa hosted Zimbabwe, and England have since played one against Ireland.

With an increasing number of tests finishing before the fifth day, administrators are keen to free up space in the schedule for more lucrative shorter-form matches.

Tendulkar said they should instead focus on producing better playing surfaces to make tests more appealing. "What is the heart of test cricket? I think the heart of test cricket is to provide a good pitch where there is enough for the bowlers throughout the match," he said.

"The ICC should look to provide exciting wickets for spectators to come and watch. You need to provide surfaces where the bowlers are testing batters also. "There are two formats — ODIs and T20s — where the bowlers are being tested, so you've got to have one format where the batters are being tested.

"That's why it's called test cricket — it has to test everyone. "If you provide good pitches which have something for the bowlers, test cricket will find more eyeballs."

Tendulkar, the only cricketer to score 100 centuries across all formats, fears cutting Tests by a day would produce more draws and would be detrimental to spin-bowlers, who tend to thrive on deteriorating wickets towards the backend of Tests.

"I feel spinners look forward to day four and five when there is wear and tear on a scuffed-up surface," he said. "It's like taking day one out of a Test match for fast bowlers. On day five there are a number of things which happen in test cricket. You are completely taking them away. "Teams which have got spinners, for sure, will suffer. Subcontinental teams rely on spinners. "Like how you play



Sachin Tendulkar

on a green top on day one against seamers, you should be able to play spin bowling also on scuffed-up tracks," he said. "That is also part of cricket." Improving the competitiveness of teams outside the top five nations of India, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and England would also make Test cricket a more attractive product.

"Everyone is focusing on quantity, five days to four days ... we need to focus more on quality," he said. "With all due respect there are certain teams which are not challenging the leading five teams. The ICC should be concerned about more teams playing test cricket and being competitive.

"But that competitiveness is missing completely. So, one needs to focus on how could we lift that standard and how we could get them back in Test cricket at a level where they are competitive." — Reuters