

South Africa bowled out for 194

India edge ahead on 'dangerous, challenging' pitch

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 25, (AFP): India nudged ahead of South Africa on the second day of the third and final Test as the quality of the Wanderers Stadium pitch was described as "challenging" as well as "dangerous".

After conceding a seven-run lead after a low-scoring first innings, India reached 49 for one at the close, an overall lead of 42.

Wickets tumbled and batsmen were struck on the fingers and body as the teams battled for supremacy.

Former South African captain Shaun Pollock and ex-India skipper Sunil Gavaskar criticised the pitch during a teatime pitch report for SuperSport television. Pointing to cracks and indentations on a good length, with graphics showing extravagant movement and unpredictable bounce, Pollock said: "If you've got deliveries behaving like this on day two of a Test match it can't be judged a good surface."

Gavaskar said the pitch was "totally in favour of bowlers".

Players from both sides were more guarded in their opinions.

Indian fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah,

who took five for 54 as South Africa were bowled out for 194, said: "It's a little different. We have not played on such a wicket."

"We're not too critical of the wicket right now because the match is going on. Our basic plan is not to focus on the wicket but focus on the things we have to do." Bumrah, whose side are trying to avoid a 3-0 series whitewash, did however acknowledge: "Some

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balls are up and down so that could be dangerous for the batsmen."

Hashim Amla, who top-scored for South Africa with 61, said it was one of the most difficult pitches he had batted on. "This one has a lot of pace, a lot of bounce, it is quite challenging."

Asked whether the pitch provided a fair contest, Amla said: "It's quite a spicy wicket. No-one can hide from the fact that you can get out every ball. At the same time it's challenging for a batsman. Sometimes we get a wicket which is pretty flat and the batsmen



South Africa's batsman AB de Villiers (left), watches India's bowler Hardik Pandya, through his delivery on the second day of the third cricket Test match between South Africa and India at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg, South Africa on Jan 25. (AP)

enjoy it. (This) is difficult to bat on."

Amla then posed a question of his own and answered with a smile, "Is it too excessive or not? Ask a batsman and what do you think he will say?"

In an innings when the other five of the regular South African top six batsmen scored a combined 27 runs, Amla devised a strategy of moving across his stumps as the bowlers delivered.

South Africa vs India Scoreboard

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 25, (AFP): Scores at close of play on the second day of the third and final Test between South Africa and India at the Wanderers Stadium on Thursday:

INDIA, first innings, 187	
SOUTH AFRICA, first innings (over-	
D. Elgar c Patel b Kumar	4
A. Markram c Patel b Kumar	2
K. Rabada c Rahane b Sharma	30
H. Amla c Pandya b Bumrah	61
A. de Villiers b Kumar	5
F. du Plessis b Bumrah	8
Q. de Kock c Patel b Bumrah	8
V. Philander c Bumrah b Mohammed Shami	35
A. Phehlukwayo lbw b Bumrah	9
M. Morkel not out	9
L. Ngidi c Patel b Bumrah	0
Extras (lb4, w9)	23
Total (65.5 overs)	194
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Markram), 2-16 (Elgar), 3-80 (Rabada), 4-92 (De Vil-	

liers), 5-107 (Du Plessis), 6-125 (De Kock), 7-169 (Amla), 8-175 (Philander), 9-194 (Phehlukwayo)

Bowling: Kumar 19-9-44-3 (2w), Bumrah 18.5-2-54-5 (1w), Sharma 14-2-33-1, Mohammed Shami 12-0-46-1 (2w), Pandya 2-0-3-0

INDIA, second innings
M. Vijay not out 13
P. Patel c Markram b Philander 16
L. Rahul not out 16
Extras (lb4) 4
Total (1 wkt, 17 overs) 49

Fall of wicket: 1-17 (Patel)
Bowling: Philander 5-2-11-1, Rabada 6-1-19-0, Morkel 4-1-9-0, Ngidi 2-0-

6-0 Match situation: India lead by 42 runs with nine wickets remaining in the second innings
Toss: India
Umpires: Aleem Dar (PAK), Ian Gould (ENG) TV umpire: Michael Gough (ENG) Match referee: Andy Pycroft (ZIM)

"I just figured that the ball is doing so much so get into their channel. If it's outside (the line of the stumps) try

and leave it. You are going to take a few on the body and hands but it is part of the game."

Openers seal win for Islanders

Sri Lanka thrash B'desh to reach Tri-Nation final

DHAKA, Jan 25, (AFP): Suranga Lakmal led Sri Lankan bowlers on a confidence-boosting rampage to skittle out Bangladesh for 82 on Thursday and guide his side into the final of the Dhaka tri-nation tournament.

Openers Upul Tharanga (39) and Danushka Gunathilaka (35) sped to the target 83 in just 11.5 overs to seal the win for the islanders.

"This is what we're capable of," said Sri Lankan captain Dinesh Chandimal as he celebrated the emphatic 10-wicket win that left Zimbabwe in third place in the series and ensured Sri Lanka another match against Bangladesh in Saturday's final.

Sri Lanka had to win to remain in the competition and, coming out of their worst year in international cricket, completed the task in style.

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Mortaza won the toss and opted to bat but soon regretted his move. Mushfiqur Rahim made 26 but Sabbir Rahman was the only other batsman to reach double figures, with just 10 runs.

Lakmal picked up his three wickets



Sri Lanka's Danushka Gunathilaka plays a shot during the Tri-Nation One-Day International cricket series against Bangladesh in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Jan 25. (AP)

Scoreboard

DHAKA, Jan 25, (AFP): Scoreboard of Tri-Nation One-Day International between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka on Thursday:

BANGLADESH	
Tamim Iqbal c Gunathilaka b Lakmal	5
Anamul Haque b Lakmal	0
Shakib Al Hasan run out Gunathilaka	8
Mushfiqur Rahim c Mendis b Chameera	26
Mahmudullah c Chameera b Lakmal	7
Sabbir Rahman c Sub b Perera	10
Abul Hasan c Dickwella b Perera	7
Nasir Hossain c Dickwella b Chameera	3
Mashrafe Mortaza b Sandakan	1
Rubel Hossain c Tharanga b Sandakan	1
Mustafizur Rahman not out	0
Extras (lb4, w10)	14
Total (24 overs)	82
Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Anamul), 2-15 (Shakib), 3-16 (Tamim), 4-34 (Mahmudullah), 5-57 (Sabbir), 6-71 (Abul), 7-79 (Mushfiqur), 8-80 (Nasir), 9-81 (Mortaza), 10-82 (Rubel)	
Bowling: Lakmal 7-1-21-3 (w5), Chameera 5-1-6-2 (w2), T. Perera 6-0-27-2 (w1), Sandakan 6-0-24-2 (w2)	

SRI LANKA
D. Gunathilaka not out 35
U. Tharanga not out 39
Extras (w6, nb1) 9
Total (17.5 overs) 83

Did not bat: K. Mendis, D. Chandimal, A. Gunaratne, N. Dickwella, T. Perera, S. Lakmal, L. Sandakan, A. Dananjaya, D. Chameera

Bowling: Mortaza 2-0-15-0 (nb1, w1), Abul 4-0-25-0, Nasir 3-0-19-0, Mustafizur 1.5-0-14-0 (w2), Shakib 1-0-10-0 (w5)

Result: Sri Lanka win by 10 wickets
Toss: Bangladesh
Umpires: Anisur Rahman (BAN) and Bruce Oxenford (AUS)
TV Umpire: Chethithody Shamsuddin (IND)
Match Referee: David Boon (Aus)

Pakistan finally overcome Black Caps with T20 win

AUCKLAND, Jan 25, (AFP): Pakistan crushed New Zealand by 48 runs in the second T20 in Auckland on Thursday to notch their first victory of the tour over the Black Caps. The tourists finally found form with both bat and ball to level the three-match T20 series after a humiliating losing streak that included a 5-0 ODI series whitewash.

They set an imposing target of 202 after winning the toss and electing to bat, with half centuries for Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman.

In response, New Zealand's top order crumbled to 64 for six under a combination of tight bowling and commitment in the field from Pakistan.

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"Pakistan were excellent tonight in all departments and we weren't that good in any department," New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said.

"When you catch them on a great day, you get the result we got." Openers Fakhar and Ahmed Shehzad laid the platform with a partnership of 94.

Pakistan's previous best top-order partnership during the six limited-over matches played on tour so far was just 14.

The pair made the most of Eden Park's short boundaries to comfortably dispatch anything short or wide for four.

They punished pacemen Ben Wheeler and Seth Rance, who both conceded 13 runs in an over, prompting New Zealand to introduce spinners Ish Sodhi and Mitchell Santner.

Fakhar responded by belting three sixes off Santner's first over, bringing up his maiden T20 half century soon after off 26 balls.

Rance finally broke through in the ninth over, deceiving Ahmed with a slower ball that carried straight to Colin de Grandhomme on the boundary.

Fakhar fell in the next over but Sarfraz Ahmed and Babar kept the scoreboard ticking over, taking Pakistan to 137 for two with five overs remaining.

Sarfraz in particular displayed a confidence that had so far eluded



Pakistan's Ahmed Shehzad bats during the second Twenty20 International cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Eden Park in Auckland on Jan 25. (AFP)

him on tour to make 41 off 24 deliveries.

Babar brought up his 50 and took the team past 200 with a four off the final ball of the innings.

Pakistan's bowling attack capitalised on the good work from their batsmen by dislodging New Zealand's top order cheaply.

Faheem Ashraf ended with figures of three for 22 while Shadab Khan and Mohammad Amir each took two wickets.

Colin Munro was trapped lbw for one then, captain Kane Williamson made a rare golden duck before Tom Bruce was run out thanks to some sharp fielding from Haris Sohail.

The home team's hopes faded when Shadab Khan took the prized scalp of Martin Guptill for 26, leaving the Black Caps teetering at 52 for four and needing more than 11 runs an over.

Ben Wheeler and Mitchell Santner combined for a 54-run partnership but the early-innings damage meant the target was beyond them.

New Zealand vs Pakistan Scoreboard

AUCKLAND, Jan 25, (AFP): Final scoreboard after the second T20 between New Zealand and Pakistan at Auckland's Eden Park on Thursday:

PAKISTAN	
Fakhar Zaman c Sodhi b de Grandhomme	50
Ahmed Shehzad c de Grandhomme b Rance	44
Babar Azam not out	50
Sarfraz Ahmed c Munro b Wheeler	41
Faheem Ashraf c Santner b Wheeler	0
Extras (w9, lb1)	10
Total (4 wickets; 20 overs)	201
Fall of wickets: 1-94 (Ahmed), 2-96 (Fakhar), 3-187 (Sarfraz), 4-188 (Faheem)	
Bowling: Boult 4-0-37-0 (1w), Rance 4-0-47-1 (3w), Wheeler 4-0-36-2 (1w), Sodhi 4-0-32-0 (1w), Santner 2-0-30-0 (2w), de Grandhomme 2-0-18-1 (w)	

NEW ZEALAND
Martin Guptill c Umar b Shadab 26
Colin Munro lbw Amir 1
Kane Williamson c Haris b Rummam 0
Tom Bruce run out Haris 11
Glenn Phillips c Haris b Faheem 5

Colin de Grandhomme st Sarfraz b Shadab 10
Mitchell Santner c Sarfraz b Amir 37
Ben Wheeler b Hasan 30
Ish Sodhi c Babar b Faheem 15
Seth Rance c Fakhar b Faheem 1
Trent Boult not out 0
Extras: (b4, w4, nb1, lb8) 17
Total: (18.3 overs) all out 153
Fall of wickets: 1-25 (Munro), 2-28 (Williamson), 3-47 (Bruce), 4-52 (Guptill), 5-58 (Phillips), 6-64 (de Grandhomme), 7-118 (Wheeler), 8-152 (Santner), 9-153 (Rance), 10-153 (Sodhi)

Bowling: Mohammad Amir 4-0-28-2, Rummam Raees 3-0-27-1 (1w 1nb), Faheem Ashraf 3-3-0-22-3 (1w), Hasan Ali 4-0-27-1, Shadab Khan 4-0-37-2 (2w)

Toss: Pakistan
Result: Pakistan win by 48 runs
Series: Level at 1-1
Umpires: Shaun Haig (NZL), Chris Brown (NZL)
TV Umpire: Wayne Knights (NZL)
Match referee: Richie Richardson (WIS)

Root, Du Plessis subject for intense bidding

Bid Ben: Despite court case, Stokes in demand for IPL

NEW DELHI, Jan 25, (AFP): England's Ben Stokes could remain the Indian Premier League's most expensive foreign player despite court proceedings against him when he goes under the hammer at the competition's glitzy auction this weekend.

Stokes, who went for a record \$2.16m to Rising Pune Supergiant last year, is among the top 16 players and will carry a starting price of \$312,500 when bidding starts Saturday in Bangalore.

The strong, aggressive all-rounder totted up 316 runs in 12 matches for Pune last year, along with 12 wickets, justifying his hefty price tag — which was a record for a foreign player.

Stokes, 26, has been cleared by the England and Wales Cricket Board to play in the IPL despite facing charges of affray, following a nightclub incident which saw him suspended during the Ashes Test series.

Franchises have an option to release a player midway or give him leave during the tournament, which could give them flexibility if Stokes is absent because of the court case.

Delhi Daredevils CEO Hemant Dua also said he will be available for the April 4-May 31 tournament. His first court appearance is on Feb 13.

"He is an invaluable asset and a prize pick, there is no debate about that. On his day he can knock it out of the park," Dua said. "Yes, he has got a legal case announced against him, so he has to go through that. But his legal advisors have said he is available and there wouldn't be any problem for him."

"But again you are not just buying

him for this year you are looking at the next year or longer. So all those things put together the teams will weigh in to get him."

England Test skipper Joe Root, West Indies batsman Chris Gayle and South Africa captain Faf du Plessis will also be the subject of intense bidding for the world's most popular Twenty20 league.

India captain Virat Kohli has already pocketed a record \$2.7 million after Royal Challengers Bangalore opted to retain their star batsman.

Australian batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner were also retained by

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their teams for \$1.9 million each, making them the highest-paid foreigners so far this year.

But the numbers could skyrocket in the auction for the IPL's 11th edition, after the wage cap was increased by 20 percent to a total of \$12 million per team.

"The eight franchises have given us an indication of what their core would be with their player retentions," IPL chairman Rajeev Shukla said.

There is also a unique feature called right to match (RTM) on offer for teams that wish to get back their players from the previous season who they could not retain.

Gayle, who was not retained by Bangalore, could still return to the franchise with the new 'right to match' rule, which states that teams can retain players by equalling the final bid.

Du Plessis, who is leading South Africa in the third Test against India, said players had been told not to discuss the auction during play.

Sharp Azteca 2nd choice

Gun Runner the overwhelming favorite for \$16 mln Pegasus

HALLANDALE BEACH, Fla, Jan 25, (AP): Gun Runner's final race might be a bit of a challenge.

The 5-year-old is the overwhelming 4-5 favorite for Saturday's \$16 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational at Gulfstream Park. But the likely Horse of the Year — an honor that will be announced Thursday at the Eclipse Awards — will have to win his finale from a post near the outside after drawing the No. 10 spot in an expected 12-horse field.

Horses that start at least that far from the rail in distance events at Gulfstream are winning at only about an 8 percent clip this season. Then again, none of those starters was of Gun Runner's caliber.

"I've always said you don't know to complain about a post position until after a race is run," Gun Runner trainer Steve Asmussen said after Wednesday's draw. "So it might work out perfectly for him. The horse is doing extremely well, in the capable hands of (jockey) Florent Geroux, and hopefully we'll have a big day Saturday and send the 2017 Horse of the Year out on top."

Gun Runner will be racing for the last time before retirement. He has won four consecutive starts, all of

them Grade 1 events, and will have a chance to push his career earnings to nearly \$16 million. Saturday's winner earns a \$7 million share of the purse.

Sharp Azteca is the second choice in the morning line, at 6-1. Collected and West Coast — both trained by Bob Baffert, who got Arrogate the win in the inaugural Pegasus last year — will start at 8-1.

HORSE RACING

"If you drew it up on paper and tried to make the race as fair as you possibly could, I think you've got speed on the inside, speed in the middle and speed on the outside," said Ron Paolucci, who owns Sharp Azteca and fellow Pegasus entry War Story. "It's going to be a real rider's race going into that first turn. That's going to be the whole thing."

The field for the Pegasus, from the rail out with morning lines: Singing Bullet, 30-1; West Coast, 8-1; Stellar Wind, 30-1; Sharp Azteca, 6-1; Collected, 8-1; Gunnevera, 15-1; Fear the Cowboy, 30-1; War Story, 25-1; Toast of New York, 20-1; Gun Runner, 4-5; Seeking the Soul, 25-1; Giant Expectations, 30-1.