Rohit and Rahane put India in familiar control zone

The pair adds 185 runs for the unbroken fourth-wicket partnership to help the home team finish on 224 for three on a truncated first day



Getting on top: Rohit Sharma survived early challenges to notch up another strokeful century, his third of the series. • RAJEEV BHATT

SA IN INDIA

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

By the time the gloom fell over the ISCA Stadium, as if a blanket had suddenly been draped over the city, and brought play to a close, India could look back with satisfaction on another good day of Test cricket.

Rohit Sharma remained unbeaten on 117, his third hundred this series, with Ajinkya Rahane, on 83, for company. The pair had added 185 runs for the fourth wicket when the teams walked off for bad light around 3 p.m. After having won the toss, India ended the opening day of the third and final Test of the Freedom Series against South Africa on 224 for three.

Top order rattled What that score does not re-

veal, though, was that Saturday's work was anything but straightforward for India. For the first time this series, the top order was rattled by South Africa's pace attack, with the home side three down for 39 at one stage. It took a partnership of great assurance and attacking intent between Rohit and Rahane to first steer the team

Congratulations Rohit Sharma IndianOil star shines for Team India!

out of trouble and then lead it to a position of strength.

South Africa tested Rohit with the short ball early on. He was not always in control, gloving Kagiso Rabada down the leg-side, and later topedging another bouncer from Anrich Nortje that sailed into the stands. But he survived.

Shortly before lunch, he was dropped at short-leg by Zubayr Hamza on 28, off the left-arm spin of debutant George Linde. India gratefully went into the interval on 71

Rigorous examination

On the other side, Rabada conducted a rigorous examination of Rohit's defence. On paper, the fast bowler's postlunch spell will read 4-030-0; but that will convey little of his menace and bristling intent. Rohit played and missed, edged one that burst through a gap in the slips cordon, and was squared up by another that held its line. But, crucially, he survived.

And then he opened fire. A stunning back-foot punch off Nortje was followed by a fierce cover-drive off Ngidi. Dane Piedt copped a real hammering. Rohit clubbed the off-spinner for three huge sixes down the ground, the last of those taking him to his sixth Test hundred (off 130

Brilliant counter-attack At the other end, Rahane had

launched a brilliant counterattack, in his own unfussy. non-violent way. Rabada strayed down the leg-side twice, and Rahane clipped him to the boundary both times. Another full delivery from the same bowler was flicked, right off the toes, to the fence. Linde bowled short and wide, and was cut

Rahane galloped to his fifty off 70 balls, as India scored at 4.6 runs an over in the second session. Only six overs of play were possible after tea, as dark clouds gathered overhead and the light faded.

Then the rain came down and India was not complain-

Real force

In the morning, Rabada reminded the world of his qualities again. He had hitherto averaged 50 this series, but here the young fast bowler was a real force, his pace and attacking lines worrying India. He greatly troubled Mayank Agarwal, who was eventually caught at third slip for 10.

Cheteshwar Pujara was out leg-before for nought, consumed by a ball that darted back in. Up to this point in the series, the earliest Virat Kohli had walked out to bat was in the 52nd over. This time, his presence was necessitated as early as the

Rabada welcomed him with a superb bouncer, before completing a first spell

Who's in, who's out

In- Shahbaz Nadeem (debut): Out: Ishant Sharma

SOUTH AFRICA In: Zubayr Hamza, Heinrich Klaasen (wicketkeeper, debut), George Linde (debut), Dane Piedt, and Lungi Ngidi. Out: Aiden Markram, Keshav Maharaj, Vernon Philander, Senuran Muthusamy, and Theunis de

of 7-4-15-2. It was Anrich Nortje who dismissed the India captain, sending down two away-swingers before trapping him lbw with a ball that jagged back in. Kohli's review failed; replays showed the ball would have clipped the top of leg-stump 'umpire's call'.

Kohli was not amused, but his disappointment did not last much longer.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

Mayank Agarwal c Elgar b Rabada 10 (19b, 2x4), Rohit Sharma (batting) 117 *(164b,* 14x4, 4x6), Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Rabada O (9b). Virat Kohli lbw b Nortje 12 (22b, 2x4), Ajinkya Rahane (batting) 83 (135b, 11x4, 1x6); Extras (b-1, nb-1): 2; Total (for three wkts. in

58 overs): 224.

FALL OF WICKETS 1-12 (Mayank, 4.6 overs), 2-16 (Pujara, 8.3), 3-39 (Kohli,

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING Rabada 14-5-54-2, Ngidi 11-4-36-0, Nortje 16-3-50-1, Linde 11-1-40-0, Piedt 6-0-43-0.

The door opens for Shahbaz Nadeem

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

Three days ago, Shahbaz Nadeem was at the Alur grounds just outside Bengaluru, turning out for Jharkhand in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. On Saturday, he became India's 296th Test cricketer, incredibly handed a debut on his home ground.

Nadeem was added to the squad late on Friday, after Kuldeep Yadav complained of pain in the left shoulder. In the morning, India duly went with a third spinner, dropping Ishant Sharma, and Nadeem got his chance.

Fortune may have played a part but it is no less, it might be argued, than Nadeem has deserved.

The 30-year-old left-arm oinner has toiled away on the domestic circuit, racking up 424 wickets over 110 First Class games. He claimed more than 50 wickets in successive Ranji Trophy seasons (51 in 2015-16 and 56 in 2016-17), but there was no India cap.

It is not easy for a spinner, of course, to find a place in a side with R. Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja in it. Kuldeep Yadav's emer-

gence in 2017 must have further dented Nadeem's hopes of ever playing for the country.

But on Saturday, it was Kuldeep's turn to watch from the sidelines as Kohli handed Nadeem his cap. The two spinners later embraced warmly.

"If the door doesn't open, I will break it open," Nadeem had told The Hindu three years ago. "I am right now knocking. Next time I will break it." The door has finally opened; this is his oppor-



Moment to cherish: Shahbaz Nadeem receives the India cap from skipper Virat Kohli. • COURTESY TWITTER

'Rohit too good to not be playing in any format'

With the amount of runs he has scored, he has settled the issue: Rathour

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

Rohit Sharma's first three Test hundreds were spread over four years. His next three have come in the space of 18 days. On Saturday, the 32-year-old hurt South Africa again, vindicating India's decision to deploy him as an opener in the longest for-

"I always believed that he was too good a player to not be playing in any format," India's batting coach, Vikram Rathour, said after the first day of the third Test here.

Good call

"It was a good call to make him open. And with the amount of runs he has scored, he has settled the issue for the time being. With the kind of experience he has, if he starts coming good at the top of the order, that changes everything for the team, even when we are touring."

Rathour was pleased with how Rohit had handled a Kagiso Rabada. hostile "That's what Test cricket is all about. Rabada showed why he is rated so highly. There was movement for him. Good batsmen should survive those spells and stay in the middle and Rohit did that well. And once you start bowling to his strength, he will punish you," he said.



2Rohit becomes the second Indian batsman to register three hundreds in a series, after Gavaskar who has

achieved the feat thrice 4 Nortje is the fourth bowler to have dismissed Kohli for a maiden Test wicket, the others being Rabada, Joseph

and Muthusamy 6 Rohit's sixth Test century, all coming at home. Only Mominul Haque of Bangladesh has scored more home hundreds (8) without one away

9Number of international centuries for Rohit in 2019 (three in Tests and six in ODIs) Number of sixes smashed by Rohit, the most in a series, surpassing

Hetmyer's 15 in two Tests (vs Bangladesh, 2018-19)

2 Gambhir & Rohit

Had Rohit worked on his don't think he needed to technique ahead of the se- change his technique," he ries, Rathour was asked. "I said. "He just had to make

He just had to make that mental adjustment. Once he is set, he is a phenomenal player

VIKRAM RATHOUR Batting coach on whether Rohit had to

that mental adjustment. Once he is set, he is a phenomenal player."

Rathour heaped praise on the counter-attacking partnership between Rohit and Ajinkya Rahane. "When the game began, there was something in the wicket for the pacers. They bowled in better areas today. But the recovery was phenomenal. Ajinkya showed great intent. Whenever he bats with this intent, he looks a really good player. Rohit needed to survive that early period and if he looked uncomfortable doing that, it's because anybody will. Those were tough conditions. But once the wicket settled down, he batted really well," he said.

Better display

South Africa's Anrich Nortje, meanwhile, rued letting India get away. "We were definitely better than in the previous Test," he said.

"We just tried to control the game a little better. Unfortunately, we couldn't get another wicket. It would have been nice to have them



Worth a try: Temba Bavuma, second right, was on hand to make the call for Faf du Plessis, who has had rotten luck with the toss. • courtesy BCCI

The other side of the coin

Leading into the match, Faf du Plessis suggested that given his rotten record at the toss - he had lost 13 of his previous 19, and South Africa had lost nine tosses in a row in Asia – he might send someone else instead. It turned out he was not joking. On Saturday morning, Temba Bavuma walked out alongside du Plessis for the toss, and it was the vice-captain who called. It did not help, though, as South Africa lost yet again.

Not everyone was impressed with the move. "I thought it was pathetic, to be brutally honest," former South Africa captain Graeme Smith fumed on air. "It just shows the mindset of the team. I didn't enjoy

in the wrong places. If you play well enough you can still compete.'

seeing that. They're looking

Pitch invasion

In what appears to have become a trend this series. there were two instances of tans entering the field of play on the opening day of the third Test. One man ran towards Quinton de Kock, embraced

the player and then touched his feet. He was mobbed and struck by security personnel, before being led His footwear, though, had

come loose and lay on the turf next to de Kock. The South African picked the slipper up, wondering what to do with it before handing it over to ground-staff. The crowd cheered, but the JSCA did not presumably see

Anand leaps to tied fourth

SPORTS BUREAU DOUGLAS (ISLE OF MAN)

Viswanathan Anand crafted a fine win over Russia's Vladimir Fedoseev to come within half-a-point of the leaders after eight rounds of FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss here on Friday.

Important eighth-round results (involving Indians): Viswanathan Anand (5.5) bt Vladimir Fedoseev (Rus, 4.5); B. Adhiban (5) drew with Ray Robson (USA, 5); Rauf Mamedov (Aze, 4.5) drew with Vidit Gujrathi (4.5); Markus Ragger (Aut, 5) bt Raunak Sadhwani (4); S.P. Sethuraman (4.5) drew with Anton Korobov (Ukr, 4.5); S.L. Narayanan (4.5) drew with Ivan Cheparinov (Geo, 4.5).

Abhimanyu Puranik (4) lost to Rustam Kasimdzhanov (Kaz, 5); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 4) drew with K. Sasikiran (4); S.S. Ganguly (4) drew with Nihal Sarin (4); D. Gukesh (4.5) bt Vadim Zvjaginsev (Rus, 3.5); D. Harika (3.5) lost to Alexander Moiseenko (Ukr. 4.5): Soumva Swaminathan (4) bt Zahar Efimenko (Ukr, 3); Vlastimil Jansa (Cze, 2) lost to Prithu Gupta (3).

City waltzes past Palace; Tottenham survives

'MSG' strike force gets going for Barcelona; Atletico's woes continue

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES

Quickfire goals from Gabriel Jesus and David Silva set up a comfortable 2-0 win for Manchester City over Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park as the Premier League champion closed the gap on leader Liverpool to five points.

Bernardo Silva and Jesus, combined beautifully for the first which the Brazilian headed in off the post from close range on 39 minutes his 50th goal for the club.

City doubled its lead within 30 seconds of the restart when David Silva got on the end of a delightfully dinked pass from Raheem Sterling.

Earlier, Tottenham narrowly avoided an embarrassing home defeat to bottom club Watford even as Chelsea and Leicester posted

Chelsea's Marcus Alonso broke the deadlock for Frank Lampard's side at Stamford Bridge against Newcastle for



Raheem Sterling dink to score City's second. ■ GETTY IMAGES

a 1-0 win while Youri Tielemans sealed a 2-1 victory for Leicester over Burnley. But Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino saw his side labour to a 1-1 draw at home to Watford.

Atletico Madrid's frustrating La Liga run continued as Dani Parejo's stunning late free kick earned Valencia a

ly up and running as Lionel

Messi, Luis Suarez and An-

deserved 1-1 draw. Barcelona's 'MSG' is finaltoine Griezmann all scored in a ruthless 3-0 victory over The results: Premier League:

Everton 2 (Bernard 17, Sigurdsson 90+2) bt West Ham 0; Aston Villa 2 (Grealish 45+2, Targett 90+4) bt Brighton 1 (Webster 21); Bournemouth O drew with Norwich O; Chelsea 1 (Alonso 73) bt Newcastle O; Leicester 2 (Vardy 45, Tielemans 74) bt Burnley 1 (Wood 26); Tottenham 1 (Alli 86) drew with Watford 1 (Doucoure 6);

Crystal Palace O lost to Manchester City 2 (Jesus 39, D. Silva 41); Wolves 1 (Jimenez 61-pen) drew with Southampton 1 (Ings La Liga: Eibar O lost to Barcelo-

na 3 (Griezmann 13, Messi 58,

Suarez 66); Atletico Madrid 1

(Costa 36-pen) drew with Valencia 1 (Parejo 82). Serie A: Lazio 3 (Immobile 69pen, 90+2-pen, Correa 70) drew with Atalanta 3 (Muriel 23, 28, Gomez 37); Napoli 2

(Milik 37, 67) bt Hellas Verona

Bundesliga: RB Leipzig 1 (Werner 54) drew with VfL Wolfsburg 1 (Weghorst 82); Werder Bremen 1 (Sagent 7) drew with Hertha Berlin 1 (Lukebakio 70); Fortuna Dusseldorf 1 (Hennings 82) bt Mainz O; Augsburg 2 (Richter 1. Finnbogason 90+1) drew with Bayern Munich 2 (Lewandowski 14, Gnabry 49); Union Berlin 2 (Buelter 1, Ingvartsen 84) bt Freiburg O; Borussia Dortmund 1 (Reus 58) bt Borussia M'gladbach O.

Friday: La Liga: Granada 1 (Duarte 38) bt Osasuna O. Bundesliga: Eintracht Frankfurt

3 (Paciencia 4, 17-pen, Dost 80) bt Bayer Leverkusen O.

Warriors have the last roar

PKL FINAL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR

Bengal Warriors, playing without star raider and captain Maninder Singh, overcame early jitters to defeat Dabang Delhi 39-34 in the title clash of the seventh season of the ProKabaddi League on Saturday. Warriors skipper Mohammad Nabibakhsh, the Iranian debutant in the league, came up with sharp raids as the decider saw four allouts, three in favour of the Bengal side.

Nabibakhsh topped the scoring charts with 10 points (nine raid points and one tackle) while Sukesh Hegde, another experienced hand,

chipped in with eight points. Jeeva Kumar (four tackle points) rose to the occasion at the back, showing the value of experience in the fourth final of his career. Naveen Kumar's game-high 18 raid points, including seven bonus points in 24 raids, earned him the coveted MVP honour. However, the final result proved that individual brilliance cannot make up for inspired teamwork.

Warriors' combative qualities were to the fore in the second half as the defenders shuffled along the backline and caught the raiders offguard. Warriors moved in for the kill, forcing two allouts (25-21 and 34-24) to rattle Dabang. Naveen's 22nd Super 10 was reduced to a mere stat.

Warriors won ₹3 crore and Dabang ₹1.80 crore.

The result: Bengal Warriors 39 (Mohammad Nabibaksh 10, Sukesh Heade 8. Jeeva Kumar 4) bt Dabang Delhi 34 (Naveen Kumar 18, Anil 3, Vijay 3); MVP: Naveen (Dabang).



What a finish! Bengal Warriors clinched its maiden PKL title in style. •VIJAY SONEJI