Indian batsmen toy with South Africa attack

Rohit makes a double hundred while Rahane scores his first century at home in three years; Proteas lose openers cheaply

SA IN INDIA

RANCHI

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

India's decision to turn Rohit Sharma into a Test opener hasn't worked out so badly after all. He now has three hundreds from four innings, and has inflicted so much pain on South Africa that India will wonder why this could not have been tried sooner.

On Sunday, Rohit completed his maiden Test double hundred, off 249 balls, taking his tally of runs for the series past 500. He was toying with the bowling when he was dismissed, for 212, and it would have surprised



nobody if he had gone on to raise a triple century.

Team India! Indianoil

India declared its first innings on 497 for nine, with Ajinkya Rahane registering his first Test hundred on home soil in three years.

By the close of play on the second day of the third Test, the good Sunday crowd had been treated to what has become a familiar trope of the Freedom Series: a mountainous Indian total, a declaration late in the afternoon, and a clatter of South African wickets in the evening ses-

Mohammed Shami snared Dean Elgar with the second ball of the innings, the batsman unable to get out of the way of a well-directed short delivery, before Umesh Yadav got rid of Quinton de Kock with a brutal lifter.

South Africa was nine for two, and in an ocean of bother, before bad light forced an early end to proceedings again. There have only been 121.3 overs of play over the two days, but India will believe it has plenty of time to push for a win.

The home side resumed on 224 for three in the morn-curtains down on a fourth-



Creaming the bowlers: Rohit Sharma's role as an opener in Tests is doing him a world of good as he continued his phenomenal run-scoring against South Africa. • RAJEEV ВНАТТ

SCOREBOARD

ing, with Rohit and Rahane

at the crease. South Africa

may have hoped to make ear-

ly inroads, but its bowlers of-

fered no threat, and India

Lungi Ngidi apart, whipping

him through the leg-side off

his hips, punching him

through the covers off the

back-foot, and steering him

through third man. Dane

Piedt beat him one ball and

Rohit casually reverse-swept

Rahane was a delight to

watch. He is batting as well as

he perhaps ever has, every

single stroke appearing to

come right off the middle of

remarkably neat, inch-per-

fect cover-drives off Anrich

Nortje and Kagiso Rabada.

He got to his 11th Test

hundred off 169 balls, with

India scoring at over four an

over in the first hour of play.

Rahane fell for 115, edging

George Linde behind to hand

the left-arm spinner his first

Test wicket. It brought the

Nervous times

The highlight was a pair of

the next for four.

Rohit effortlessly took

raced away.

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

Mayank Agarwal c Elgar b Rabada 10 (19b, 2x4), Rohit Sharma c Ngidi b Rabada 212 (255b, 28x4, 6x6), Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Rabada O (9b), Virat Kohli lbw b Nortje 12 (22b, 2x4), Ajinkya Rahane c Klaasen b Linde 115 (192b, 17x4, 1x6), Ravindra Jadeja c Klaasen b Linde 51 (119b, 4x4), Wriddhiman Saha b Linde 24 (42b, 3x4), R. Ashwin st Klaasen b Piedt 14 (16b, 1x4), Umesh Yadav c Klaasen b Linde 31 (10b, 5x6), Shahbaz Nadeem (not out) 1 (5b), Mohammed Shami (not out) 10 (11b, 1x6); Extras (b-10, lb-6. nb-1): 17: Total (for nine wickets in 116.3 overs, declared): 497.

FALL OF WICKETS 1-12 (Agarwal, 4.6), 2-16 (Pujara, 8.3), 3-39 (Kohli, 15.3), 4-306 (Rahane, 75.3), 5-370 (Ro-

wicket stand of 267.

Rohit marched towards his double-ton in Ravindra Jadeja's company, tucking into some generous bowling from Piedt. But when South Africa took the new ball, he suddenly appeared less certain. With the milestone 13 runs away, Nortje drew a thickish outside-edge that hands.

hit, 88.1), 6-417 (Saha, 103.3), 7-450 (Jadeja, 111.4), 8-464 (Ashwin, 112.5), 9-482 (Umesh,

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING Rabada 23-7-85-3, Ngidi 20-5-83-0, Nortje 24.3-5-79-1, Linde 31-2-133-4, Piedt 18-3-

SOUTH AFRICA – 1ST INNINGS Dean Elgar c Saha b Shami O (2b), Quinton de Kock c Saha b Umesh 4 (6b, 1x4), Zubayr

(b-4): 4; Total (for 2 wickets in 5 **FALL OF WICKETS**

Hamza (batting) O (14b), Faf du

Plessis (batting) 1 (8b); Extras

1-4 (Elgar, 0.2), 2-8 (de

INDIA BOWLING Shami 1-1-0-1, Umesh 1-0-4-1, Nadeem 2-2-0-0, Jadeja

squirted away to the boundary. On 196, Rohit drove away from his body, inside-

edging Rabada onto the

pads. Then on 199, in the final over before lunch, he nearly chopped Rabada on. Back in the dressing room, Rahane covered his mouth with his fine-leg off Rabada.

Rohit hails Rahane

Rohit Sharma has Rhailed Ajinkya Rahane for his ability to steer the team out of tight spots repeatedly.

STAT SPHERE

3 Umesh is the third player to smash two sixes off

(1948) and Tendulkar (2013)

register a double hundred in both Tests and ODIs, after

Rohit is the fifth

Eng. 2013-1

37 Pak vs Ind

36 Eng vs

three and went on to add

"We've played together

267 runs for the fourth

quite a bit, so we have a

which runs we shouldn't

go for, we had quite a bit

of communication going

was something in the

spell. [Later] Ajinkya

came out and started

playing his shots, and

from there he never

looked back."

pitch for the bowler, we

just wanted to respect that

"When we knew there

on," said Rohit.

good understanding,

which singles to steal,

wicket.

the first two balls of a Test

innings, Foffie Williams

being the other two

4 Rohit becomes the fourth batsman to

Tendulkar, Sehwag and

Rohit's 212 took his average

helping him surpass Bradman's

in home Tests to 99.84,

Rohit is the only Indian to have reached his 100 and

200 with a six in the same Test

innings. Sehwag did so while

1 Umesh Yadav, with his 10-

strike rate (310) in an innings

history. He eclipsed Fleming's

balls vs SA, 2003-04). Umesh is also the first cricketer to

(minimum: 10 balls) in Test

strike rate of 282 (31* off 11

smash five sixes in an innings without hitting a four

For the first time, India has

second Test; 212, Rohit, third

Test). In the 1955-56 series

against New Zealand, there

but by two batsmen (Vinoo

This is the second instance of India scoring double

hundreds in three consecutive

Tests. The earlier occasion was

Karun Nair: 303* vs Eng; 204,

2016-17 (Kohli: 235 vs Eng;

Kohli: 204 vs Ban)

Mankad-2 and Umrigar-1)

were three double tons,

three double century-

makers in a series (215, Mayank, first Test; 254*, Kohli,

ball 31, containing five sixes. set the record for the highest

reaching his 100 and 300

record (98.22)

"We've seen Ajinkya for so many years. Whenever the team has been in a difficult situation, he's rescued us. And this isn't something he's done just once or twice. We've seen it outside India and in India.

"This shows how strong he is mentally, and how much hunger he has," he said.

Rohit remained on 199 at

the interval. But he got there

in style after the break, pull-

ing Ngidi over the leg-side

boundary for six. Two balls

later, he hit him into the

stands again, making his

plans clear. Rohit fell in the

next over, though, caught at

For a man making his de-

Rohit and Rahane joined hands at 39 for

> but, Linde impressed. He finished with four wickets, and looked like the best of the South African spinners this

series. Umesh Yadav tarnished his figures somewhat towards the end, bludgeoning five sixes in the space of seven balls. By that stage, India was simply having fun.

Probably the most challenging knock: Rohit

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA

Rohit Sharma is only three

matches into his role as a Test opener, so it is perhaps too early to draw sweeping conclusions. But what is also clear is that he is not a total misfit for the job. Over the last three weeks, Rohit has accumulated 529 runs in four innings, more than any Indian opener in a threematch home series except Virender Sehwag, who managed 544 against Pakistan in 2005, but over six innings. In the third and final Test against South Africa at the JSCA Stadium here, Rohit had to battle for his runs, against some hostile pace bowling. But he survived the tough bits, and then cashed "It's not like only after

opening I wanted to do well," he said here on Sunday. "Wherever I used to play even before, I always tried to do well. Right now, I've played only three Test matches as an opener, so there's a long way to go. I'm not reading too much into it but, of course, I'll take a lot of positives from it." Rohit had hitherto batted

mostly at No. 5 and 6 in Tests, so he needed to make adjustments to open, he felt. "Opening the batting is a different challenge compared to batting at 6 or 5 or 7. Because playing the first ball of a match, compared to playing after 30-40 overs, it's a different ball-game. You have to be mindful of which ball you have to play at, and

which ball you have to leave. I was allowing myself to take time, rather than going after the bowlers straightaway. You also have to play with a low backlift and things like that, in these conditions," he

Rohit was stuck on 199 going into the lunch break but he was not bothered, he stated. "I wouldn't say it's frustrating. It's just the laws of the game. The time it has to finish, it has to finish. I was not thinking about it (the 200) at all. I knew that whenever it's supposed to happen, it will happen. In terms of what was thrown at me in this particular Test match, I would definitely say that this was probably the most challenging knock," he said.

Rohit was determined to bat well as an opener for other reasons too. "I had to use this opportunity fully, otherwise I knew you guys would write a lot about me," he told reporters. "But now you can write something good."

> A few lessons learned... but if you'd told me I'd take four wickets on my debut, I would have taken it any time of the year. Rohit played well. He just gave us that one chance. It was a tough chance, and after that he didn't give us a single chance

GEORGE LINDE, LEFT-ARM SPINNER



In fine fettle: Ajinkya Rahane played the perfect foil to Rohit Sharma during their massive stand. • RAJEEV BHATT

Sadhwani, India's 65th GM

At just 13 years, nine months & 28 days

RAKESH RAO

Last October, in the opening round of Chess.com Isle of Man International at Douglas, Viswanathan Anand escaped with a 74-move win over a 12-year-old Raunak Sadhwani, an International Master rated 2438. "I was very, very lucky to

win," admitted Anand as he reflected on the game where the youngster temporarily gained a winning position. In fact, a couple of weeks

before this game, Anand in an interview had named Sadhwani as one among the country's incredibly talented youngsters. "My words almost came to haunt me during my game against him," joked Anand.

Almost one year later, the Nagpur-lad lived up to Anand's words of praise and played way over his rating to India's become Grandmaster.

Returning to the same venue for the now-rechristened FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss, Sadhwani gained his third and final Grandmaster norm in style. In Saturday's ninth round, he stunned Russian GM Alexander Motylev to reach five points – one more than needed - to become a Grandmaster at 13 years, nine months and 28 days!

Sadhwani, part of the recent training camp for chosen Indian teenagers under former World champion Vladimir Kramnik, entered the world's strongest Swiss league tournament with a rating of 2479, his starting rank a distant 129th out of



Sadhwani...teen prodigy. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

154 participants. In nine rounds, Sadhwani faced all Grandmasters rated over 2650, won two, drew six games on the trot and lost one for a performance-rating of 2721 to be placed 43rd. So far, Sadhwani has gained 28 rating points, taking him past the stipulated rating of 2500 needed to become a GM.

Sadhwani's first GMnorm came in the 2019 Aeroflot Open and the second in the 2019 Porticcio Open.

For this final norm, Sadhwani started his campaign by upsetting Sanan Sjugirov (Russia, 2662) and drew with sixth seed Sergey Karjakin (Russia, 2760), Surya Shekhar Ganguly (2658), Ivan Sarin (Croatia, 2667), Pavel Eljanov (Ukraine, 2663), Peter Leko (Hungary, 2670) and Gabriel Sargissian (Armenia, 2690) in succes-

Sadhwani's lone defeat came in round eight against Markus Ragger (Austria, 2684) but he quickly made amends by nailing Alexander Motylev (Russia, 2651).

Liverpool escapes with a draw

Real Madrid stumbles yet again; Inter survives Sassuolo

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES

Liverpool failed to record a record-equalling 18th straight Premier League win, but Adam Lallana's late equaliser saved the European champion from a shock defeat at Manchester United in a 1-1 draw on Marcus Rashford's contro-

versial goal handed Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's struggling Red Devils a 1-0 half-time lead, but they could not hold out for a much-needed victory as they left substitute Lallana unmarked at the back post to level with five minutes to play.

Liverpool moves six points clear of Manchester City at the top of the table, but will still feel this was a missed opportunity to inflict more pain on a United side sitting 13th in the Premier League, just two points off the relegation zone.

Late fightback

Earlier, Romelu Lukaku and Lautaro Martinez scored two goals each as Inter Milan survived a late fightback to beat Sassuolo 4-3 in the Serie A at the Mapei Stadium on Sunday.

Martinez struck inside two minutes before Domenico Berardi equalised, but Lukaku gave Inter breathing space with a powerful strike and a penalty before half

Martinez stretched his sides lead to 4-1 from the penalty spot after the break,



but Sassuolo hit back through Filip Djuricic and Jeremie Boga strikes.

Trouble returned to Real Madrid after it endured its first La Liga defeat of the season at newly-promoted Real Mallorca.

Zinedine Zidane, David Beckham and Robinho were in the last Madrid team to lose a league game at San Moix in 2006 and 13 years later, Mallorca repeated the trick thanks to a scintillating strike by Junior Lago in the first half on Saturday.

Alvaro Odriozola allowed Lago too much room to cut inside and was then sent off

The results: Premier League: Manchester United 1 (Rashford 36) drew with Liverpool 1 (Lallana 85).

Serie A: Sassuolo 3 (Berardi 16, Djuricic 74, Boga 81) lost to Inter Milan 4 (Martinez 2, 71pen, Lukaku 38, 45-pen); Sampdoria O drew with Roma 0; Udinese 1 (Okaka 42) bt Torino O; Cagliari 2 (Nainggolan 9, Farago 67) bt SPAL O.

La Liga: Alaves 2 (Magallan 50, Lucas 82) bt Celta Vigo O; Real Sociedad 3 (Javi Garcia 22-o.g., Willian Jose 36, Portu 58) bt Real Betis 1 (Moron 12); Espanyol O lost to Villarreal 1 (Toko Ekambi 17). Bundesliga: Cologne 3 (Te-

rodde 9, Schaub 59, Bornauw 85) bt Paderborn O.

Saturday: La Liga: Getafe 2 (Rodriguez Diaz 64, 84) bt Leganes O; Real Mallorca 1 (Lago 7) bt Real Madrid O.

Serie A: Juventus 2 (Ronaldo 19, Pjanic 54) bt Bologna 1 (Danilo 26).

Ogbeche makes it Blasters' night

His double strike powers the Kerala side past ATK in opener

ISL

STAN RAYAN

It was a full house and a sea of yellow at the Nehru Stadium here on Sunday. Though Kerala Blasters FC did not appear a settled combination for a major part of the first session, it pulled off a muchneeded 2-1 victory over former champion ATK in the sixth Hero Indian Super League opener. Skipper Bartholomew Ogbeche, the Nigeriaborn Frenchman, led from the front with two strikes.

That did not look likely when the contest began. While ATK looked confident and dominated the proceedings, the home team looked unsure. Even as Blasters was in a dilemma came the ATK goal off a set-piece. Two players, one with anxiety for the home side and the other with hope for the visitor, jumped to receive Spaniard Francisco Gonzalez's free kick. It was the Kolkata team's Augustin Garcia who eventually won it and deflected the ball to the edge of the box from where Carl Gerard McHugh volleyed home.

It was all over in a flash. Blasters earned a contro versial penalty at the halfhour mark, with Jairo Rodrigues claiming that someone had pulled his shirt in a goalmouth melee though replays did not suggest so. Ogbeche converted it with a wily shot that went out of the reach of a diving ATK goal-Arindam

Bhattacharya. Just before half-time, Og-

beche put Blasters ahead. Spaniard Sergio Cidoncha sent a long cross from the right and Pronay Halder failed to intercept it and the Frenchman, lurking nearby,

ATK forward Roy Krishna easily evaded the defenders and went on a solo run once, but appeared confused once inside the box and sent the ball wide. He troubled Blas-

was quick to score with a

stunning shot.

ters' defence frequently and, in the 70th minute, he almost equalised. However, defender Jairo Rodrigues saved Blasters.

The result: Kerala Blasters 2 (Ogbeche 30-pen & 45) bt ATK 1 (McHugh 6).

Today's match

■ BFC vs NEUFC, Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.



Roar of delight: Ogbeche gives vent to his emotions. • н. vівни