

# Pakistan show some spine (tailbone)

Tailender Yasir Shah hits a memorable hundred after Babar Azam falls 3 short as the visiting team recover from 89/6 to post 302

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
ADELAIDE, DECEMBER 1

PAKISTAN WAS battling to stave off defeat in the day-night second Test against Australia on Sunday after being forced to follow on, with Tim Paine's men needing seven wickets to clinch the series 2-0.

The visitors, who have lost 13 consecutive Tests in Australia, were in big trouble at 39 for three when rain forced an early end, 248 runs behind with two days left and their top order decimated.

They had resumed on an overcast and cold afternoon teetering at 96 for six in their first innings, in reply to Australia's 589 for three declared, built on the back of David Warner's monumental 335 not out.

Yasir Shah smacked a dogged maiden Test century and Babar Azam hit 97 but they were all out for 302 and still 287 runs adrift, with Mitchell Starc the hero, taking 6 for 66.

Australian skipper Tim Paine enforced the follow on and it started badly for Pakistan, whose first task was to survive intact for 15 minutes before the dinner break.

They failed with opener Imam-ul-Haq - recalled after being overlooked for the first Test in Brisbane, which they lost by an innings and five runs -- out lbw for a duck to Josh Hazlewood.

It was quickly 11 for two with Starc tempting skipper Azhar Ali into a thick outside edge and Steve Smith taking a quality catch just seconds before a shower forced them off.

The rain had been threatening all day and when they returned after 30 minutes Hazlewood bagged the key wicket of dangerous Azam for two, caught behind by captain Paine.

But more rain soon blew in, to Australia's frustration, and the umpires called it a day.

Earlier, Yasir and Azam had kept Pakistan's slim hopes alive with disciplined first innings batting.

Better known as a spin bowler, Yasir had never gone better than 42 in his previous 36 Tests, making his 113 against one of the world's most fearsome pace attacks even more remarkable.

### Gloomy conditions

In a scintillating spell under lights on Sunday night, left-armed Starc snapped up four quick wickets and the omens for Pakistan did not look good.

But the gloomy conditions at Adelaide Oval offered little for the bowlers during daylight hours on Sunday and Azam and Yasir took advantage.

They put on a 105-run stand and Azam looked destined for a third Test century until Starc pounced again, with the 25-year-old edging an attempted drive to Paine behind the stumps on 97.

Azam -- who scored a century in the first Test at Brisbane and is rapidly emerging as his country's top batsman -- left the field dejected but to a standing ovation.

The very next ball Starc grabbed his sixth, with Shaheen Afridi plumb lbw before Mohammad Abbas fended off the hat-trick ball.

Abbas made a gutsy 29 before he was undone by a Pat Cummins bouncer, caught at gully by Warner.

At the other end, Yasir showed composure to compile his first-ever ton, bringing up the milestone off 192 balls, clattering 12 fours and kissing the turf in celebration.

He had a near-miss off the bowling of Marnus Labuschagne on 33. Steve Smith believed he caught him at slip and made a big appeal, but replays showed the ball fell just short of his fingertips.

Yasir was then dropped by Labuschagne off his own bowling on 43. He was finally out hooking a Cummins delivery to Nathan Lyon.

**BRIEF SCORES (DAY 3):** Pakistan 302 all out (Shah 113, Azam 93; STarc 6/66) and 39 for three (Hazlewood 2/15) trail Australia 589/3d by 248 runs.



Yasir Shah celebrates after reaching the three-figure mark on Day Three of the second Test in Adelaide on Sunday. PTI

# Root stems the rot with century before NZ strike back

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
HAMILTON, DECEMBER 1

DESPITE CENTURIES to Joe Root and Rory Burns England expressed disappointment at stumps on day three of the second Test against New Zealand after losing late wickets in Hamilton on Sunday. England captain Root ended his run drought with an unbeaten 114 while Burns rode his luck to post 101. But after they took England to 201 for two, the tourists were 269 for five at stumps and still trailing New Zealand by 106.

"I enjoyed the fact I got it (hundred) but at the same time disappointed me and Rooty couldn't stretch our partnership and get us deeper into the game," Burn said. "We're disappointed to lose a couple of wickets at the back end as well."

With only five wickets remaining and 16 overs washed out by rain in the final session, England's vision of building a healthy lead was rapidly fading. The tempo swung away from England when Burns was run out and New Zealand followed up with the quick wickets of Ben Stokes and Zak Crawley.

"The run out got us going," said Tim Southee who accounted for Stokes, adding that New Zealand never gave up hope despite the 63 overs it took to break the Root-Burns partnership.

"We hung in there for long enough and we were able to get those rewards late in the day for all the toil we put in. If things aren't happening you keep on trying."

With Root and Burns putting on 177 for the third wicket, England found the "bat-long" partnership they had been searching for in their attempt to follow the same recipe New Zealand used to win the first Test. But following the dismissal of Burns, Ben Stokes was gone for 26 while Zak Crawley made one on debut.



Joe Root (114\*) and Rory Burns (101) added 177 runs for the third wicket.

Root was under added pressure to not only guide England to a position of strength but also to end his own run dearth amid suggestions the pressure of captaincy was affecting his form. To that end, he was in no mood to take risks as he faced 258 deliveries in six hours to reach 99, before his century came on a surprise mistiming that saw an inside edge fly past the wicketkeeper to the boundary.

His 17th Test hundred was his first in 15 innings since the West Indies in February. Burns lead a charmed life on the way to his second century when he was dropped on 10 and 19 and on 87 survived a run-out opportunity when New Zealand botched the return throw.

But two balls after reaching three fig-

ures he ambled through the first single when Root called for two and although he accelerated on the return leg he was a centimetre short when BJ Watling broke the stumps. Stokes strayed from the "bat-long" script when he replaced Burns and compiled a brisk 26 before Southee extracted slight movement off the wicket and found an edge for Ross Taylor to hold.

Crawley's maiden Test innings only lasted six balls when he was caught behind to give Neil Wagner his first wicket. For New Zealand, Southee has taken two for 63 while Wagner and Matt Henry have a wicket each.

**BRIEF SCORES (DAY 3):** England 269 for five (Root 114 batting, Burns 101; Southee 2/63) trail New Zealand 375 by 106 runs.

## How Joe constructed the captaincy-saving knock

### SANDIP G

RESISTING SHOTS through his favourite area, the covers, and shelving his pet stroke, the cover drive, Joe Root snapped his 14-innings century drought with a patient and potentially match and captaincy-saving hundred against New Zealand. It was the slowest and the least sparkling of his 17 centuries, but one where his fortitude shone the most.

**OFF-SIDE DISCIPLINE:** Root likes to punch the ball through cover as well point. But of late, it's been his nemesis, especially whenever he has looked to drive on the up. In general, his once compact off-side game and outside-the-off-stump judgment had tapered off. Where once he met the ball with resoluteness, he started nibbling and stabbing tenuously. So, in this innings, he changed tack. Instead of trying to force the drives on the back foot in front of square or through the covers, he began steering it through the gully and third man. Risk still entailed, but he seldom looked to manufacture the stroke but waited for the bowlers to err with their lengths. His first cover-driven boundary arrived off his 174th delivery.

**LEG-SIDE MASTERY:** Root's off-side game is often raved about. But on Sunday, he calmly waited for bowlers to err down the leg side. The Kiwis seamers frequently dangled off-side baits, even full, drivable

## Sehwag foretold David Warner's Test exploits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ADELAIDE, DECEMBER 1

AUSTRALIA OPENER David Warner believes India's Rohit Sharma has the firepower to surpass West Indies great Brian Lara's record 400 not out in a Test match. Warner, who scored his maiden triple ton (335) during the ongoing second Test against Pakistan, was just 65 runs shy of breaking Lara's record when skipper Tim Paine decided to declare the innings at 589/3.

"Yeah, look, I think it's about the person himself. We've got long boundaries, it is quite difficult at times. When fatigue sets in, it's very hard to try hard and throw your hands at it," Warner told 'Fox Sports'. "At the end, I tried to run twos to lift the ante because I couldn't actually think like I could clear the ropes. I think, one day, if I've to name a player, I reckon it could be Rohit Sharma. Definitely."

Warner also revealed that he had doubts about his Test career and a conversation with former India opener Virender Sehwag helped. "When I met Virender Sehwag while playing for Delhi in the IPL, he sat down to me and said I will be a better Test player than a Twenty 20 player. I said 'you're out of your mind, I've not played many first-class games'," Warner told reporters.

"He always said 'they will have slips and gully, covers open, mid-wicket stay there. mid-off and mid-on will be up, you can get off to a flier and sit there all day and you'll be picking them all off'. That's always stuck in my mind, it sounded very easy when we were discussing then," Warner said.

ones, only to be dead-batted with a straight bat and striding front-foot or left alone. Even the middle-stump-bound deliveries were stoically defended. But anything on the leg-stump, full or short, he would ruthlessly consigned to the fence, garnering as many as 72 runs on the on-side. The flick—his most productive boundary-stroke (4)—stood out, and he did so with the expertise of subcontinental batsmen.

**BACK-FOOT BIAS:** Root is a predominantly front-foot batsman, unless he's batting on a bouncy surface. The Hamilton strip was on the slower side, but Root was intent on hanging back, giving himself more time to judge the length of the ball. It was one of the reasons he could place the ball finely behind square leg (26 runs through this space). As a consequence, nine of his 14 fours were off the back-foot.

**FOCAL LENGTH:** The England skipper has not exactly been struggling for runs, but for big, defining scores. Apart from a pair during the Ashes, he looked fairly untroubled, though contriving to get out when he was well set. In fact, four times in his last 14 innings has he absorbed more than 115 deliveries, but seemed cursed to get out softly. So it was more of a lapse in concentration than a serious flaw sneaking into his game. At Seddon Park, he rigorously kept his focus over 278 deliveries — the one loose stroke, an edge that flew over the keeper, ironically, ushered in his most awaited moment of the match.

## SYED MUSHTAQ ALI T20 FINAL

# Karnataka champions after Gowtham defends five runs off four balls



Krishnappa Gowtham kept his nerves in the tense final over. Screengrab

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
SURAT, DECEMBER 1

BACK IN Bangalore, they call Krishnappa Gowtham 'the finisher', but more for his documented knack of finishing close matches with big shots, the signature slog sweeps and heaves that often nestle outside the stadium. His bowling, though, is more functional than spectacular. He's more of a tie-one-end-up trundler than an offie with a ripping off-break and cryptic variations, one cast purely in the T20 mould, either sharing the new ball or rifling through his deliveries in the middle overs.

But on a nervy Sunday night, Gowtham enhanced his death-over bowling reputation, holding his nerve to fashion a one-run win for Karnataka over Tamil Nadu to clinch the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, making a terrific comeback after being struck for consecutive boundaries off his first two

deliveries. As debates swirled over whether skipper Manish Pandey should have set aside the last over for a spinner or not, Ashwin creamed him for two boundaries, whittling down the ask to an achievable five off four balls. Gowtham seemed the perfect fall guy for an impending defeat. Only that, the 31-year-old hardly flinched.

He took a leaf out of the man he was bowling to, R Ashwin, and slipped in a seam-up delivery that slid away with the angle, squarely beating a perplexed Ashwin. Gowtham let out a wry smile, Ashwin stared quizzically at the spot where the ball had pitched, as if he had spotted some dervish on it. In hindsight, it was the moment the match turned away psychologically from Tamil Nadu, the one moment hope rushed out of their window.

Everything that happened thereafter seemed like a chain reaction. The follow-up was a low full toss, an intentional one, which Ashwin could only hammer to long-

on. He was aghast that he didn't put the ball to the fence and the match to bed while Gowtham sensed that something special was unravelling in front of him.

### Panic sets in

But then, Vijay Shankar was back on strike and he was batting as lyrically as he ever had in recent times. But the flawlessly-constructed 47 off 27 balls went unfulfilled — ended by a pinpoint throw from the deep by Pandey, whose 45-ball 60 had been the foundation of Karnataka's 180. More panic set in, and even before the match was completed, it seemed that Tamil Nadu would return teary-eyed from yet another match against their fierce rivals.

It has become passe these days, Tamil Nadu tend to shrink at the mere utterance of Karnataka. Last month, they were soundly beaten in the Vijay Hazare Trophy final. But in passages during Sunday's chase, it seemed Tamil Nadu would reverse

the trend, never more than when Washington Sundar and Dinesh Karthik were busy laying the foundation for a successful chase.

But in the space of six balls, both were back in the dugout. First, Jagadeesha Suchith, the under-rated left-arm spinner, deceived a rampaging Dinesh Karthik with a clever change of pace and flight.

Till then, Karnataka's bowlers seemed listless, to put it mildly, feeding Karthik with a flurry of freebies, which he duly punished. At one stage, the Karnataka skipper had his hands on his head, and eyes frantically scanning his bowling options. But whoever he brought in conceded cheap boundaries. Karthik and Sundar needn't have resorted to anything fanciful to keep up with the required run rate.

But a rush-of-blood moment scripted Karthik's end. He had just laced a cut shot through point, but couldn't resist stepping out to the same bowler two balls later.

Suchith cleverly took the pace off the ball and floated it up, fooling him in the air to be stumped. Then Gowtham — who else — delivered the big wicket by casting the classy-looking Washington Sundar. Hope flickered again for Tamil Nadu when Shankar joined hands with Baba Aparajith. Together, they not only kept the team in the hunt but also gave a fine exhibition of cover-driving. But yet again, Aparajith departed when victory seemed in their grasp. Shankar flared up hope again, but it was snuffed out by Gowtham, the man they call the finisher. And a man whose stock keeps on rising.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Karnataka 180 for 5 in 20 overs (Manish Pandey 60 not out off 45 balls, Rohan Kadam 35 off 28 balls, Murugan Ashwin 2-33, Ravi Ashwin 2-34) beat Tamil Nadu 179 for 6 (Vijay Shankar 44 off 27 balls, Baba Aparajith 40 off 25 balls, Ronit More 2-32) by one run. **Toss:** TN chose to bowl.

