

Smith eyes ton as Australia seizes control

Labuschagne and Warner rally after Boult dismisses Burns first ball

NZ IN AUSTRALIA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Master batsman Steve Smith ground out an unbeaten 77 on Thursday as he zeroed in on yet another century, putting Australia in the driving seat after the opening day of the second Test here against New Zealand.

In the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, skipper Kane Williamson opted to bowl, and it looked to be a good decision with Joe Burns out first ball and David Warner just before lunch.

Frustration for Kiwis

But first Marnus Labuschagne (63), the world's leading run-scorer for 2019, and then Smith smacked half-centuries to seize back control and leave Australia on 257 for four, frustrating the disciplined Kiwi bowlers.

Along with the fidgety Smith, Travis Head was not out on 25, desperate for runs after a lean spell.

The signs are ominous for New Zealand with Smith scoring centuries in his past four Tests in Melbourne, and a fifth looking likely.

It was a bold decision by Williamson to bowl on a pitch that has traditionally been docile and favoured the batsmen.

And it appeared to pay dividends in a sizzling opening



Thunderbolt: Trent Boult rearranges Joe Burns' stumps for a golden duck. ■ AP

over from Trent Boult, back after missing two Tests with a rib injury. After three testing balls to Warner, his fourth clattered into Burns' middle stump, with the opener out for a golden duck.

Boult and Tim Southee found early swing and zip with the ball.

Boos and cheers

After Burns fell, Labuschagne and Warner dug in to wrestle back the initiative before a Neil Wagner delivery saw Warner caught at slip for 41, with Southee taking an

outstanding one-handed catch. The in-form Labuschagne looked set for another big score after plundering his fifth consecutive 50, having converted three of his previous four into centuries.

But it wasn't to be and he was out in bizarre fashion, with a rising de Grandhomme ball ricocheting off his elbow and onto the stumps as he attempted to leave it. Smith was met with a mix of boos and cheers as he walked to the crease and after a poor summer, by his standards, appeared deter-

mined to build a decent score. It was slow going, but he brought up his 28th Test half-century off 103 balls – his first in four Tests.

Along the way he passed Greg Chappell (7,110 runs) to

become Australia's 10th highest run-scorer, with David Boon's 7,422 his next target.

As in Perth, Matthew Wade again came under a short-ball barrage from Neil Wagner.

SCOREBOARD

Australia — 1st innings: D. Warner c Southee b Wagner 41, J. Burns b Boult 0, M. Labuschagne b de Grandhomme 63, S. Smith (batting) 77, M. Wade c Watling b de Grandhomme 38, T. Head (batting) 25; Extras (lb-11, b-1, w-1): 13; Total (for four wkts. in 90 overs): 257.
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-61, 3-144, 4-216.
New Zealand bowling: Boult 20-2-60-1, Southee 21-5-63-0, de Grandhomme 21-5-48-2, Wagner 21-7-40-1, Santner 7-1-34-0.
Toss: New Zealand.

Kohli among Wisden's Cricketers-of-the-Decade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

India captain Virat Kohli has been named in the Cricketers-of-the-Decade list alongside four others by *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*.

South Africans Dale Steyn and A.B. de Villiers, Australia's Steve Smith and women's all-rounder Ellyse Perry also find a place in the list of five.

Kohli, who has scored 5,775 more international runs than anyone else in the last 10 years, has arguably been the best batsman over the last decade. The 31-year-old Indian was named captain of the *Wisden* Test team of the decade, while also

featuring in the ODI XI. "His genius has been to rise, time and again, to the challenge. Between the end of the England tour in 2014 and the second Test against Bangladesh at Kolkata in November, Kohli averaged 63, with 21 hundreds and 13 fifties," *Wisden* says.

"It left him with a unique set of statistics – the only batsman to average at least 50 in all three international formats. Even Steve Smith was moved to remark recently that there is no one quite like him.

"In many ways, there isn't. Since the retirement of Sachin Tendulkar and the gradual waning of M.S.

Dhoni, no cricketer in the world has operated under such daily pressure as Kohli."

In the past decade, Kohli has amassed 7,202 runs in Tests – including 27 hundreds – while in the shorter formats the Indian skipper has 11,125 runs in ODIs and 2,633 runs in T20s.

Kohli has already amassed 70 international hundreds and is only behind Ricky Ponting (71) and Sachin Tendulkar (100).

He is third in the list of leading run-scorers of all time with 21,444 runs, behind Ponting (27,483) and Tendulkar (34,357).



Imperious: Virat Kohli has scored 5,775 more international runs than anyone else in the last 10 years. ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Virender Sehwag to deliver Pataudi lecture

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

Virender Sehwag will deliver the seventh Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi Lecture in Mumbai on January 12. This was confirmed by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly to *Sportstar* on Thursday. The BCCI awards will also be given away on the same day.

Earlier, it was speculated that Sachin Tendulkar could deliver the memorial lecture, which is being organised since 2013. However, with Tendulkar travelling around that time, the Board has zeroed in on Sehwag – who has played 104 Tests, 251 ODIs and 19 T20Is for India.

Established to honour the former India captain, who passed away in 2011, the in-



Virender Sehwag. ■ FILE PHOTO

augural lecture was delivered by Sunil Gavaskar in February 2013 at Chennai.

Apart from Gavaskar, Anil Kumble, V.V.S. Laxman, Rahul Dravid and Farokh Engineer have done the honours. Former England player Kevin Pietersen had delivered the last lecture in Bengaluru.

de Kock to South Africa's rescue

ENGLAND IN SA

REUTERS
CENTURION

Quinton de Kock fell five runs short of his century after dragging South Africa out of early trouble to 277 for nine at the close on the opening day of the first Test against England at the SuperSport Park on Thursday.

England took a wicket with the opening delivery of the four-Test series and had the host teetering on 111 for five after lunch but de Kock's belligerent innings brought South Africa back into the match.

First-ball wicket

James Anderson marked his 150th cap and return to the England attack with the first-ball wicket of opener Dean El-



Taking responsibility: Sam Curran led the way for England by picking up four wickets. ■ AFP

gar, setting the tourists up for early domination of an inexperienced home side.

Sam Curran's skilful bowling earned him figures of four for 57 and Stuart Broad returned from illness to claim three for 52. Broad also be-

came the second bowler after Anderson to take 400 Test wickets this decade.

But de Kock wrested the initiative away from England with an innings that combined early aggression with later circumspection.

SCOREBOARD

South Africa — 1st innings: D. Elgar c Buttler b Anderson 0, A. Markram c Bairstow b Curran 20, Z. Hamza c Stokes b Broad 39, F. du Plessis c Root b Broad 29, H. van der Dussen c Root b Curran 6, Q. de Kock c Buttler b Curran 95, D. Pretorius c Root b Curran 33, V. Philander (batting) 28, K. Maharaj c Stokes b Archer 6, K. Rabada b Broad 12; Extras (lb-4, nb-2, w-3): 9; Total (for nine wkts. in 82.4 overs): 277.

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-32, 3-71, 4-97, 5-111, 6-198, 7-245, 8-252, 9-277.

England bowling: Anderson 20-4-69-1, Broad 17-4-4-52-3, Curran 19-5-57-4, Archer 19-4-65-1, Root 4-0-26-0, Denly 3-0-4-0.

Toss: England.

Ganguly, Dravid have a 'general meeting'

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly had a long meeting with National Cricket Academy (NCA) director Rahul Dravid at the Board's headquarters on Thursday.

It has been learned that the duo deliberated on the roadmap for the academy in a two-hour long meeting.

Dravid did not take questions from the media, and Ganguly termed it as a 'general meeting', without elaborating. "It was a general NCA-related meeting," Ganguly told *Sportstar*.

The meeting happened days after reports surfaced that the NCA allegedly re-

fused to conduct a fitness test for pace ace Jasprit Bumrah.

Though it could not be confirmed whether this matter was discussed in the meeting, it was learnt that there were conversations on how to make the academy more effective in terms of injury-management.

Ever since taking charge as the BCCI president in October, Ganguly has reiterated that he wants the NCA to be an academy of excellence.

Last week, Ganguly had told reporters in Kolkata that the Cricket Advisory Committee will be formed in the 'next couple of days'. But there hasn't been a decision on the CAC yet.

Goa comes out on top in a thriller

Chennaiyin's errors in the first half cost it dear

ISL

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

FC Goa took ample advantage of Chennaiyin FC's laxity in the first session to script a thrilling 4-3 win in the Indian Super League match here on Thursday.

The three goals conceded in the first 45 minutes put paid to the hopes of the host in the end analysis.

Trailing 3-0, Chennaiyin fought well to score two quick goals in the second session and one more towards the final moments of the match, but those weren't enough.

The contest saw 11 yellow and two red cards being flashed. Edwin Vanspaul (Chennaiyin) and Sergio Lobero (head coach of Goa) picked up red cards.

With this win, Goa took its tally to 21 points from 10 matches to remain at the top while Chennaiyin is in eighth position with nine points

from as many encounters. For the first 20-odd minutes, even though Goa had more ball possession, Chennaiyin clearly had the edge in attack.

However, Goa scored first. A Tondonba Singh back-pass found Ferran Corominas, who ran past from the right to pass it to Hugo Boumous. The Frenchman then neatly passed it to Ahmed Jahouh and the Moroccan's right-footer gave little chance to the 'keeper Vishal Kaith.

The next two goals were in large part due to error in judgement of the host captain Lucian Goian. First, a back-pass from Edwin Vanspaul saw the Italian central defender fail to collect the ball properly. As a result, Brandon Fernandes had enough time to put it across the 'keeper.

Later, Goian hardly made an effort to stop a ball from the right as it landed straight to Hugo Boumous who converted. A header from Andre Schembri off a corner from

Crivellaro and a fine left-footer by latter reduced the margin for Chennaiyin. But Corominas hit the final nail on the coffin with a clean strike.

Crivellaro's curving left-footer gave a faint glimmer of hope for the host, but all went down the drain, thanks to lethargic moments in the first half.

Displeasure over refereeing

Chennaiyin's co-owner Vita Dani has expressed his displeasure on the quality of refereeing. "It was a disappointing game, but the standard of refereeing is getting poorer and poorer. I am sure all teams are suffering from this. However, I think Chennaiyin is suffering the most from it," she said while speaking to Star Sports.

The result: Chennaiyin FC 3 (Andre Schembri 57, Rafael Crivellaro 59 & 90) lost to FC Goa 4 (Ahmed Jahouh 26, Brandon Fernandes 41, Hugo Boumous 45, Ferran Corominas 63).



Cool finish: Brandon Fernandes of FC Goa had enough time to put one past Chennaiyin FC goalkeeper Vishal Kaith. ■ R. RAGU

Aubameyang saves Arsenal's blushes

Kane and Alli give Spurs full points



Drawing level: Harry Kane fires in Spurs' equaliser. ■ AFP

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Mikel Arteta got off to an underwhelming start as Arsenal manager with a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth as Chelsea slumped to another shock home reverse, losing 2-0 to Southampton, on Boxing Day.

Carlo Ancelotti had a more positive impact on his Everton bow as Dominic Calvert-Lewin's brilliant diving header earned a 1-0 win over Burnley.

Chelsea's defeat allowed Tottenham to move back to within three points of the top four as it came from behind to beat Brighton 2-1 thanks to goals from Harry Kane and Dele Alli.

Arteta got an early lesson in the flaws that have blighted Arsenal's season as it was caught out trying to play

from the back to concede the opening goal from Dan Gosling. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang again rode to the Gunners' rescue to equalise just after the hour mark.

After the highs of victory at Spurs, Chelsea again struggled when faced with breaking down stubborn defensive opponents in Southampton.

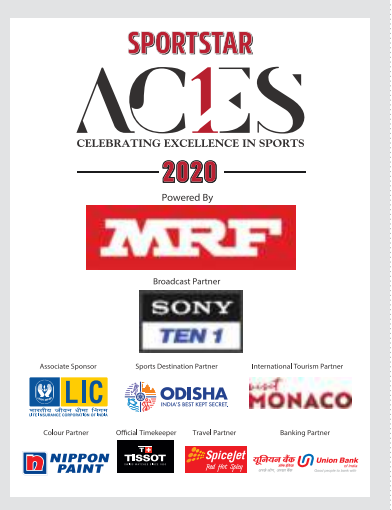
The Blues have now lost to West Ham, Bournemouth and the Saints in their last four home league games.

The result: Aston Villa 1 (Hourihane 64) bt Norwich 0; Bournemouth 1 (Gosling 35) drew with Arsenal 1 (Aubameyang 63); Chelsea 0 lost to Southampton 2 (Obafemi 31, Redmond 73); Crystal Palace 2 (Kouyate 68, Ayew 90) bt West Ham 1 (Snodgrass 57); Everton 1 (Calvert-Lewin 80) bt Burnley 0; Sheffield United 1 (Norwood 36-pen) drew with Watford 1 (Deulofeu 27); Tottenham 2 (Kane 53, Alli 72) bt Brighton 1 (Webster 37).

2020 Sportstar ACES Awards

Readers will have a chance to pick their favourites for the 10 Popular Choice Awards. The top two contenders from each category, based on popular vote, will be sent to a jury, which will decide the winner

THE NOMINEES
SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR (RACQUET SPORTS)



G. SATHIYAM (TABLE TENNIS)

Sathiyam clinched the bronze medal at the Oman Open Challenge Plus and finished sixth at the Asian Cup in Yokohama, thereby booking a ticket for the World Cup that was held in Chengdu, in November. His dream debut, saw him become only the second Indian to make it to the knockout stage of the competition. Additionally, he also reached the round of 32 at the Worlds in Budapest. Sathiyam dazzled at the Asian championships in Yogyakarta, as well, becoming the first Indian in 43 years to reach the singles quarterfinals.



G. PRAJNESH (TENNIS)

Prajnesh rose to a career-high world rank of 75 in 2019. He is the sixth-best ranked Indian tennis player in the Open era, behind Vijay Amritraj (18), Ramesh Krishnan (23), Somdev Devvarman (62), Leander Paes (73) and Anand Amritraj (74). He played all four Grand Slams this year. While he qualified for the Australian Open, Prajnesh had direct entry at the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open. Prajnesh also qualified and beat 69th ranked Benoit Paire and 18th ranked Nikoloz Basilashvili at the ATP Masters event in Indian Wells.



SAURAV GHOSAL (SQUASH)

Ghosal reached his career-best ranking of 10, in April this year, becoming the first Indian male player to do so. He entered the quarterfinals of the 2018-19 World Championships and also the Grasshoppers Cup (PSA World Tour Gold event) that catapulted his ranking. Not just that, he also bagged the Asian Individual title in Kuala Lumpur. His best achievement this year was reaching the semifinals of the JP Morgan China Squash Open (PSA World Tour Gold Event), in September.

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