

Markram takes South Africa to brink of WTC final glory against Australia

AFP, LONDON: Aiden Markram's superb century on Friday left South Africa on the brink of a dramatic victory in the World Test Championship final against Australia after decades of heartbreak in major tournaments.

South Africa reached the close on the third day at Lord's on 213-2 in their second innings, needing just 69 runs to win, with eight wickets still standing.

Opener Markram, dismissed for a duck in the first innings, was 102 not out and South Africa captain Temba Bavuma unbeaten on 65 despite spending most of his innings limping with a hamstring injury.

The pair have shared an unbroken stand of 143 as South Africa pursue what will be, if they achieve it, the second-highest suc-

cessful run chase in a Test at Lord's. The highest chase was the 344 made by the West Indies in 1984.

But South Africa, whose last International Cricket Council title came at the

1998 ICC Knockout, have such a long history of folding under pressure that their supporters will not be taking anything for granted against serial winners and WTC title-holders Austral-

ia. Australia's Mitchell Starc had starred earlier Friday with both bat and ball to put his team in charge.

The tailender made 58 not out in Australia's second-innings total of 207 and then, in his main role of left-arm fast bowler, dismissed Ryan Rickelton (six) and Wiaan Mulder (27) to leave the Proteas 70-2.

Starc almost had a third wicket when Bavuma got a thick edge only for Smith, in a helmet at an advanced slip position, to drop a fast-travelling catch and leave the field with a finger

injury.

But with any early moisture in the surface long gone, conditions for batting at a sun-drenched Lord's were now as good as at any time in the match.

Markram, aggressive from the outset, punched and pulled Australia captain Pat Cummins for well-struck fours.

With Australia appearing to miss absent former captain Smith's tactical input, Bavuma produced the occasional gem of a shot, including a glorious drive down the ground off Cummins.

SCOREBOARD

Australia 1st innings 212 (B Webster 72, S Smith 66; K Rabada 5-51, M Jansen 3-49)
South Africa 1st innings 138 (P Cummins 6-28)
Australia 2nd innings (overnight: 144-8) M Labuschagne c Verreynne b Jansen 22, U Khawaja c Verreynne b Rabada 6, C Green c Mulder b Rabada 0, S Smith lbw b Ngidi 13, T Head b Mulder 9, B Webster lbw b Ngidi 9, A Carey lbw b Rabada 43, P Cummins b Ngidi 6, M Starc not out 58, N Lyon lbw b Rabada 2, J Hazlewood c Maharaj b Markram 17.
Extras: 22. **Total:** 207 all out. **Fall of wickets:** 1-28, 2-28, 3-44, 4-48, 5-64, 6-66, 7-73, 8-134, 9-148, 10-207.
Bowling: Rabada 18-1-59-4; Jansen 18-3-58-1; Mulder 8-1-18-1; Ngidi 13-1-38-3; Maharaj 6-1-17-0; Markram 2-1-5-1.
South Africa 2nd Innings (target: 282) A Markram not out 102, R Rickelton c Carey b Starc 6, W Mulder c Labuschagne b Starc 27, T Bavuma not out 65. **Extras:** 13. **Total:** 213 for 2. **Fall of wickets:** 1-9, 2-70. **Bowling:** Starc 9-0-53-2; Hazlewood 13-0-43-0; Cummins 10-0-36-0; Lyon 18-3-51-0; Webster 4-0-11-0; Head 2-0-8-0.

Consistency will be crucial in England, says Morkel

PTI, BECKENHAM (Kent): Consistency will be key in English conditions, according to India bowling coach **Morne Morkel**, who admitted to being "a little bit nervous" about the squad's lack of red-ball time ahead of the Test series against England, starting June 20.

India kick off their new World Test Championship cycle with the five-match away series, under the leadership of newly-appointed captain Shubman Gill.

"I think consistency is crucial in England and there is consistency when we practice, there's consistency off the field, finding your process, what's going to work for you as an individual," Morkel said on the sidelines of India's training



session here.

"We've got a great variation, variety in our attack, guys with different skill sets so they can do that and still execute the basics well," he added.

"All in all, happy with the start so far. I was a little bit nervous in terms of the lack of red ball we've played but seeing how the guys are moving around and training in the last three days is

a pleasing sight."

"We have a fantastic group. There's some quality energy and that's what you need. You need to go into a Test series confident and have that team spirit."

Reflecting on the team's practice sessions, the former South African pace great noted that the conditions have largely favoured the fast bowlers so far.

"In the two-day practice so far, the conditions suited the fast bowlers. It was testing for the batters which also in a way helps them to prepare for what's to come," Morkel said.

The South African doesn't think that the Test pitches are going to be as spicy as the once they have experienced so far.

Stakeholders to decide on playing XI for ISL teams: AIFF

PTI, NEW DELHI: All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey on Friday admitted that the national team has been struggling to win matches of late after it faced backlash following the 0-1 shock loss to Hong Kong in the AFC Asian Cup qualifying round match.

The defeat left India in a precarious position in its bid to qualify for the continental showcase for the third time in a row.

Addressing a press conference here, Chaubey alluded to lack of goals from the Indian strikers, which he said could be one of the reasons for the poor show by the team under Manolo Marquez. He said the stakeholders will discuss on how to increase the number of Indians playing as strikers in domestic clubs.

"For any sport to grow in popularity, it is essential for the national team to perform well. It's true that our national team has struggled to secure wins against

teams such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand and Hong Kong. However, it's unrealistic to expect wins without scoring goals," Chaubey said.

"This clearly highlights the lack of goal-scoring abilities and shortage of effective Indian strikers. A practical, collective decision is urgently required to increase match-time for the Indian strikers."

"But how can this be achieved, this calls for a joint discussion among all the stakeholders, to develop a viable and collective roadmap. One possible measure could be the gradual reduction in the number of foreign players allowed in the domestic league thereby allowing more space for positive Indian strikers."

Asked if the restriction in the number of foreigners in the ISL teams can be implemented from the upcoming season, Chaubey, however, said the AIFF cannot force a decision on the stakeholders.

"All the stakeholders will

have to decided collectively. The AIFF alone cannot take the decision."

On whether Marquez will continue or not, Chaubey said, "We have an executive committee meeting on June 29. We will discuss this matter internally among the committee members and we will also take the opinion of the members of the AIFF Technical Committee also."

Chaubey also re-iterated India's bid to host the 2031 AFC Asian Cup. In April, the AIFF had announced that it has submitted the country's 'Expression of Interest (EoI)' to host the 2031 Asian Cup before the deadline of March 31.

Currently, only Indian

passport-holders can represent the country, but the sports ministry has recently indicated that it is willing to review a 2008 policy.

"We formed a task force on this matter in August 2023 and thereafter we had several meetings. We have contacted 33 OCI players across the world," Chaubey said.

Club WC marks 'new era' for football: Infantino

The 32-team competition, with clubs from all continents, gets under way with Inter Miami facing Egyptian club Al Ahly at Hard Rock Stadium

AFP, MIAMI: FIFA President Gianni Infantino says the Club World Cup, which kicks off on Saturday, marks a historic "new era" for the game, comparing it to the first World Cup held in 1930.

In an interview with AFP, Infantino also took aim at critics of FIFA's ticketing policy and said that skeptics who had questioned the need for the tournament would quickly change their minds.

The 32-team competition, with clubs from all continents, gets under way with Inter Miami facing Egyptian club Al Ahly at Hard Rock Stadium.

"It starts a new era of football, a new era of club football. A little bit like when, in 1930, the first World Cup, right, started," Infantino told AFP.

"Everyone today speaks

about the very first World Cup. That's why it's also, this World Cup here is historic."

The first World Cup was held in Uruguay in 1930 and Infantino noted that only European and South American teams took part, adding that the Club World Cup would give a chance to clubs from outside of football's traditional heartlands to play on the global stage.

"We want to be inclusive. We want to give opportunities to clubs from all over the world," he said.

"It's really to globalise football, to make it truly, truly global. Because when you scratch the surface, we say it's the number one sport in the world, and it is but then the elite is very concentrated in very few clubs, in very few countries," he said.

The Swiss official, who

was general secretary of European body UEFA before taking the helm at FIFA in 2016, said that the club tournament also offered chances to players from over 80 countries.

"Countries who would never have a chance to play in a World Cup are suddenly part of a World Cup and they feel to be part of it, the fans of these players and of these clubs," added Infantino, who noted several great players of the past who never played in a World Cup.

"A very good friend of mine is George Weah, former legend, great player, Ballon d'Or winner, only African player who ever won the Ballon d'Or, by the way. He never played in a World Cup. He would have been playing in a Club World Cup and made not only his club and also his country proud," he added.

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shorttakes

Sensational Suruchi nails another ISSF World Cup gold

MUNICH: The sensational Suruchi Singh dominated a quality field to win her third straight individual ISSF World Cup gold medal in a thrilling women's 10m air pistol final here on Friday, reaffirming her position as Indian shooting's latest golden girl. The 19-year-old shot 241.9 in the eight-woman final to leave France's Paris Olympic silver medalist Camille Jedrejewski (241.7) 0.2 behind in second place. China's Yao Qianxuan (221.7) bagged the bronze medal. National champion Suruchi had earlier won the event in the year's first two World Cup stages in Buenos Aires and Lima as well. Buenos Aires was in fact her tournament debut and she has now won gold in all three of her first ISSF World Cup stages.

Indian Jr women's hockey team secures third successive win over Belgium

ANTWERP: India defeated Belgium 3-2 to secure their third consecutive victory against the side in their ongoing tour of Europe here. Sonam opened India's account in the fourth minute, which was followed by goals from Lalthantluangi (32) and Kanika Siwach (51). Marie Goenns (37) and Marte Marie (40) were the scorers for Belgium. Following Sonam's early goal, India maintained their dominance in the first half and extended their lead in the third quarter with a penalty corner conversion by Lalthantluangi. Belgium replied strongly with back-to-back goals in the 37th and 40th minute to level the game. Marie Goenns scored the first goal through a penalty stroke followed by a field goal by Marte Marie. With nine minutes left on the clock in the fourth quarter, Kanika converted a penalty corner to help India maintain their winning streak on the tour. India will next play Australia on Saturday.

Gambhir rushes back home to see ill mother

BECKENHAM (UK): India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Friday returned to the country after mother Seema Gambhir had to be hospitalised due to health emergency, a BCCI source told PTI. The source said Gambhir had to fly back to attend to his mother, who suffered a heart attack and is currently in ICU in a New Delhi hospital. "Gautam's mother had a heart attack on Wednesday. He and his family left for India on Thursday and they have reached Delhi," the BCCI source informed. In Gambhir's absence, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate will assume the team's charge during the four-day intra-squad match between India and India A.

Yousuf steps down as batting coach from Pakistan's NCA

LAHORE: Pakistan's former Test captain Muhammad Yousuf has resigned as batting coach from the National Cricket Academy in Lahore. The Pakistan Cricket Board is yet to officially confirm the development but when contacted Yousuf said the PCB accepted his resignation which was sent last week. "It was a personal decision with nothing more to add," he said. Yousuf had been the NCA batting coach for a number of years now and was also in a similar role with the Pakistan senior team, besides coaching the U-19 team.

Liverpool agrees to pay record fee of \$157m for Florian Wirtz

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool has agreed to pay a transfer fee of 116 million pounds (\$157 million) for attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz from Bayer Leverkusen, British media reported Friday. The deal for the 22-year-old Germany international includes a guaranteed 100 million pounds plus 16 million pounds in add-ons, which if achieved would make it a British record. The Premier League record for an initial fee was set when Chelsea signed Enzo Fernandez from Benfica for 106.7 million pounds (\$131.4 million at the time) in 2023. Later that summer, Chelsea then agreed to pay up to 115 million pounds (\$146 million at the time) — with 100 million pounds up front — for midfielder Moises Caicedo from Brighton. British media including the BBC reported the Wirtz fee — which would be a Liverpool record — without citing a source.

Saudi, Qatar to host Asian play-offs for World Cup: AFC

KUALA LUMPUR: Saudi Arabia and Qatar will host the Asian qualifying play-offs for the 2026 World Cup, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said Friday. Six teams, the third and fourth-placed sides from the recent Asian qualifiers, namely Indonesia, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, will be divided into two groups of three teams. They will battle each other in a centralised format from October 8 to 14, 2025, the AFC said in a statement. The group winners will secure the two remaining automatic berths at the World Cup. The draw for the next round is scheduled for July 17.

Real Madrid to sign teenager Mastantuono from River Plate after Club World Cup

MADRID: Real Madrid has struck a deal to sign River Plate midfielder Franco Mastantuono for the next six seasons. The Spanish club said that the 17-year-old Mastantuono will join in August, meaning he will play for River at the Club World Cup. Madrid is also set to play the tournament in the United States. Mastantuono is Madrid's third signing of the off-season after incorporating defenders Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dean Huijsen.

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NCPSL-SCHEMES

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NOTE: (i) If the book is selected by the council under the bulk purchase scheme, in that condition, applicant must submit soft copy (Computer Ready Copy) of the selected book with NOC for uploading on Council website through email ncpsl.bulk2023@gmail.com or in pen drive.

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(iii) Maximum of 02 titles of any individual should be purchased whether it is submitted by writer/ editor/translator/publisher

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- Any other kind of publication as may be individually accepted as conducive to the promotion of Sindhi Language..

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B) Articles are invited in hard copy by post and soft copy(computer Ready Copy) on our email:- ncpsl.articles2023@gmail.com

- Articles for publication in both scripts of Sindhi language for children's magazine-"Popatra"
- Articles for publication in both scripts of Sindhi language for literary magazine 'Mahak'.
- Articles based on Sindhi art, culture, language and literature, Education etc. in Hindi language for publication in Magazine "Sahitya Sindhu".
- Research papers in Hindi and English Language on subject related to Sindhi language, literature and Sindhiyat for publication in **Research Journal**.
- Video lecture series :-** The e-content under Bulk Purchase Scheme has been replaced to "video lecture series" under Financial Assistance for publication of Manuscript Scheme from Financial year 2023-24. Those Applicants interested having experience of teaching of Sindhi language from primary school and above may send "video lecture of one hour" on Sindhi language, art, culture, Education and literature etc, restricted to five lectures only on our email:- ncpsl.videolecture2023@gmail.com or in pen drive. (Medium of Lecture will be Sindhi Language only)
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