

Ponting: actions speak louder than words

by Peter English

NEW DELHI, India (AP) - Australia captain Ricky Ponting has told his players it is time to stop talking and start performing as they attempt to claw back from a 0-1 deficit in Wednesday's third cricket test against an Indian lineup confident of clinching the series.

Australia, which lost the second match in Mohali by 320 runs, has spent the past week devising strategies to cope with the home side's powerful batting and success with reverse swing.

"We can't do any more than we've done," Ponting said. "Our training the past two days has been the best I've seen it for a long time."

Ponting said Steve Waugh, his predecessor as captain, had attended training in the Indian capital on Monday and "he said he'd never seen a team train as well as we did."

But, he warned, the strong build-up had to turn into on-field results.

"As I made clear to the guys, it's one thing to talk about these things, it's another thing to go out and do them under pressure in a test," he said. "If we get the chance to bat first we have to start the innings better than we have in the first two games. If we bowl first we have to start our bowling innings a lot better too."

India "got the momentum early last week (in Mohali) and put us under pressure right from the start, and we were unable to claw our way back. It's a lot about how you start here, and it's how we've practiced the last few days."

Since 1993 India has won seven tests in a row at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground and the home side expects the pitch to suit its slow bowlers.

"Going by the record we have at the Kotla and the kind of cricket we played in Mohali, it certainly gives us a lot of confidence going into the game," India captain Anil Kumble said. "We are fully confident that we will be able to win the series here."

It is unlikely the hosts will select three spinners - Kumble and injury doubt Harbhajan Singh are the preferred options - after coach Gary Kirsten said he wanted six batsmen in his lineup.

Amit Mishra, who took seven wickets on debut in Mohali after replacing the injured Kumble, will come in only if Harbhajan's sore toe or Kumble's right shoulder prevents them from playing.

Kumble, 38, has 55 wickets in six matches at the ground at an average of 15.41, with three man-of-the-match performances.



Australian cricket captain Ricky Ponting and all-rounder Shane Watson relax after a practice session in New Delhi, India, Monday, Oct. 26, 2008. The third cricket Test between Australia and India begins Wednesday. India is 1-0 up after two of four tests after completing a crushing win at Mohali. (AP)

Kumble returns for India, Harbhajan doubtful

NEW DELHI, India (AP) - India has regained one spinner with captain Anil Kumble's return but had a doubt over Harbhajan Singh on the eve of today's third cricket test against Australia.

Kumble said he was 100 per cent fit after missing the 320-run victory in Mohali with a right shoulder injury, but Harbhajan has been struggling with a toe injury sustained in the match.

Harbhajan bowled less than two overs in the nets at training Tuesday and India has named a 12-man squad for the match.

Leg spinner Amit Mishra has stayed with the squad as cover after capturing seven wickets in his first match last week.

"I'm 100 percent fit," Kumble said. "We've got the same XI as the last game, then I come in."

Fast bowler Stuart Clark remains Australia's only injury concern with a right elbow problem, but he has trained well since the weekend and should regain his spot from Peter Siddle, who took four wickets in his first match.

push on and bowl," Kumble said of Harbhajan. "The number of overs in the nets is not an indication of whether he is fit or not."

"He has taken eight wickets in the opening tests, including three crucial victims on the second-last day in Mohali."

"He still has a little bit of discomfort," Kumble said. "He's a key member for our success and we'd like to give him the maximum amount of time to decide if he's fit."

Both India and Australia will wait until shortly before the game to finalize the teams.

The tourists are considering bringing offspinner Jason Krejza into the side if the pitch looks like offering significant turn in the hope they can level the series.

Rookie offspinner Jason Krejza has been named in a 12-man squad, but Ponting will wait until the morning of the match to decide if he wants a more attacking option in Krejza, or the stronger defensive qualities of legspinner Cameron White who has played the first two matches.

Ponting also has a nagging right

wrist problem, which required an injection last week, but it does not affect his batting.

The skipper's form has been a concern since he broke through with his maiden hundred in India in the first test in Bangalore. He has scored 17, 5 and 2 since then and has been troubled by Ishant Sharma fast bowling.

"I've got to stand up as much as the next bloke," Ponting said. "It's been three innings since I had an impact on the game with the bat."

"I've tried to completely dismiss last week. It was one of those games where we were totally out-played and what you've got to do is look at reasons why. You learn your lessons and push on."

Kumble struggled in the opening match in Bangalore, failing to take a wicket, and his place has come under more scrutiny since Amit's performance at Mohali.

"I don't think Kumble is under pressure," Ponting said. "He might be putting a little bit of extra pressure on himself because he had a bad game. He's been around long enough to know how to handle those things."

Harbhajan, who delivered less than two overs at training Tuesday, is just one wicket away from becoming the third India bowler to take 300 wickets in tests.

"He still has a little bit of discomfort," Kumble said. "He's a key member for our success and we'd like to give him the maximum amount of time to decide if he's fit."

Ponting said the Australians might have been reading too much into the condition of the pitch.

"I had a look at it yesterday and there was a little bit of grass on it, but it was rock hard," Ponting said. "It might not break up and spin as much as we anticipated."

One unpredictable factor for both teams will be the potential for heavy smog around the ground following the festival of Diwali.

Lineups:

Australia (probable): Matthew Hayden, Simon Katich, Ricky Ponting (captain), Michael Clarke, Michael Hussey, Shane Watson, Brad Haddin, Cameron White, Brett Lee, Mitchell Johnson, Stuart Clark.

India (probable): Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, V.V.S Laxman, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Anil Kumble (captain), Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma.

Kalutara Vidyalaya felicitates Ranjan Paranavithana



Ranjan Paranavithana (L) with Sanath Jayasuriya and Susanthika Jayasinghe.

In appreciation for his support to sports in Kalutara, the Kalutara Vidyalaya Past Cricketers' Association held a felicitation ceremony for cricket coach and veteran sports journalist, Ranjan Paranavithana, at Holiday Resort, Wadduwa last Saturday.

A host of dignitaries were present at the ceremony. Among them were former Sri Lanka cricket captain Sanath Jayasuriya and Olympic Games silver medalist, Susanthika Jayasinghe.

Paranavithana was the cricket coach of several lead-

ing cricket players including Tillekeratne Dilshan, Malinga Bandara, Duleep Liyanage and Sujeeva Silva, who went on to play Test cricket.

He began his career in journalism at our sister paper 'Divaina' as a cricket reporter before taking over as the Sports Editor of the Sinhala daily 'Lakbima' in 2000.

Of the handful of journalists who covered the historic 1996 Cricket World Cup, Ranjan is one, having reported the tournament for our sister paper, 'Divaina'.

NZ push for result in rain-hit match

Three days of the second Test were lost to poor weather, but New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori decided to make it a contest. Vettori declared with less than an hour's play left on the fourth day and then struck thrice in his only over of the day to leave Bangladesh in spot of bother.

The New Zealanders pulled out at 262 for 6, knowing their only chance of victory was to dismiss the hosts twice before the end of the fifth day. Put in to bat, they had wriggled out of an uncomfortable 49 for 3 thanks to a 137-run stand between Jesse Ryder and Brendon McCullum.

The pitch had dried out into a batsman-friendly deck by the afternoon. The ball was no longer swinging in the air and Bangladesh's openers looked relatively comfortable, though Junaidd Siddique wasn't at ease against short-pitched deliveries from Iain O'Brien. However, at 13 without loss and after offspinner Jeetan Patel had already bowled two overs, Vettori began to stamp his mark on the game, just as he had in the first Test.

In the tenth over of Bangladesh's innings, Siddique seemed to lose all concentration, dancing down the pitch to the first ball bowled by Vettori. He was stumped by Brendon McCullum. Siddique was replaced by captain Mohammad Ashraful. He kept out the first ball he faced, but was adjudged lbw to his second delivery and the third ball of the over. Rajin Saleh replaced his captain but soon joined

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand, 1st Innings	
A Redmond lbw Murtaza	2
J How b Alam	8
J Ryder c Hossain b Razzak	91
R Taylor b Hossain	19
B McCullum c Aful b Hasan	66
D Flynn not out	35
D Vettori b Ashraful	22
G Elliott not out	8
Extras: (6b, 3lb, 2nb)	11
Total: (for 6 wickets, dec.)	262
Overs:	75.
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-49, 4-186, 5-201, 6-233.	
To bat: K Mills, I O'Brien, J Patel.	
Bowling: Murtaza 6-1-21-1 (2nb), Alam 8-0-37-1, Razzak 25-2-72-1, Hossain 8-0-39-1, Al Hasan 22-6-57-1, Hossain 3-0-20-0, Ashraful 3-0-7-1.	
Bangladesh, 1st Innings	
T Iqbal not out	8
J Siddique st McCullum b Vettori	4
M Ashraful lbw b Vettori	0
R Saleh lbw b Vettori	0
M Hossain jnr not out	0
Extras: (nb 1)	1
Total: (3 wickets)	13
Overs:	10.4.
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-13, 3-13.	
To bat: M Rahim, M Alam, S Al Hasan, M Mortaza, A Razzak, S Hossain	
Bowling: Mills 3-1-7-0 (1nb), O'Brien 4-0-6-0, Patel 2.4-2-0-0, Vettori 1-1-0-3.	
Umpires: D Harper, (Aus), and A de Silva, (SL).	
TV umpire: Akhtaruddin, (Ban).	
Match referee: J Srinath, (Ind).	
Toss: Bangladesh.	
Series: New Zealand leads 1-0 in 2-match series.	

Ashraful back in the dressing room following his dismissal on the last ball of the over. He was also trapped in front.

West Indies in line to tour England in 2009

The West Indies Cricket Board has confirmed its interest in touring England in May and June next year, as a replacement for Sri Lanka, who last week announced that they were pulling out of their proposed trip and would be honouring their contracts to play in the Indian Premier League.

A press release from the WICB stated that the board "has received an invitation from the England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to tour England in

2009 and the matter is under discussion," while Dr Donald Peters, the WICB chief executive, confirmed that the proposal is for two Test matches and three one-day internationals.

"We are examining all possibilities," Peters added. "At this stage it presents some challenges because West Indies will be hosting a series - including Tests and one-day internationals - against Bangladesh in early May next year."

"If we accept the invitation we would

have to determine how best we could work out the logistics and planning issues."

West Indies are the third team to be considered by England for the pre-Ashes series next summer. Zimbabwe were originally slated to make a visit but their tour was cancelled due to political pressure, while the likelihood of Sri Lanka touring had been in doubt ever since SLC gave its players the go-ahead to take part in the IPL's sec-

ond season, even though the dates clashed.

Rather than hosting a second-string Sri Lankan team - which would almost certainly have damaged ticket sales and jeopardised the status of Test cricket as the ultimate form of the game - West Indies have been earmarked as a more marketable alternative. They too have players in the IPL, but it is expected they will be part of the touring party.

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