

# Abid Ali, Shan Masood flay Sri Lanka in second Test

**KARACHI:** Abid Ali and Shan Masood became only the third opening pair for Pakistan to hit centuries in the same innings as the hosts dominated Sri Lanka in the second and final Test in Karachi on Saturday.

The right-left duo put on 278 for the opening wicket before Masood was dismissed by paceman Lahiru Kumara, five minutes before tea on day three.

At the break, Pakistan had reached 282-1 with Abid on 137 and skipper Azhar Ali four not out. Masood battered for nearly five hours for his 135, which included three sixes and seven fours. Abid struck 18 fours and a six. The two punished a hapless Sri Lankan attack on a dry National Stadium pitch, but fell 20 short of equalling the highest opening stand for Pakistan of 298, set by Amir Sohail and Ijaz Ahmed against the West Indies at the same venue in 1997.

The openers helped Pakistan overturn a first-innings deficit after Sri Lanka scored 271 in reply to the home side's 191. Abid has been in sublime form recently, becoming the first Pakistani to join eight other

players in an elite club of batsmen who have hit hundreds in their first two Tests. The 32-year-old completed his century with a sweep off-spinner Lasith Embuldeniya for two to follow his 109 in the drawn first Test in Rawalpindi — his debut. The Rawalpindi century made Abid the first batsman ever to score hundreds in both Test and one-day debuts. He had scored 112 in his first ODI, against Australia in Dubai earlier this year.

Abid and Masood were unperturbed in the first session after the hosts resumed the day at 57-0, with Sri Lanka needing early wickets. There was only one chance for Sri Lanka when Abid survived a confident leg-before shout off paceman Kumara on 61 but the tourists lost the referral with the replays showing the ball would have missed the stumps. Masood, playing his 19th Test, completed 1,000 Test runs when he reached 46. The current series — part of the ongoing World Test championship — is the first in Pakistan since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in 2009 which suspended international cricket in the country. —AFP

## Abid becomes first Pakistani to score centuries in first two Tests of career

**KARACHI:** Opening batsman Abid Ali on Saturday became the first Pakistani to score centuries in each of his first two Tests. The right-hander achieved the feat in the second innings of the second Test against Sri Lanka at the National Stadium in Karachi. It took him just 137 deliveries to reach the landmark, by which time he had smashed 14 fours and a six. The 32-year-old had also scored an unbeaten 109 in the rain-marred drawn Test in Rawalpindi earlier this week. Abid becomes just the ninth batsman to score centuries in each of their first two Test matches — a list that includes names such as Mohammad Azharuddin, Saurav Ganguly, Rohit Sharma and Alvin Kallichararan. If he scored a ton in his next Test match as well, he would equal the world record currently held by Azharuddin, who is the only batsman in the world to score tons in three consecutive Test matches to start his career. It is pertinent to mention here that Abid had also scored a century on ODI debut against Australia in UAE earlier this year. —Online



## Sydney Thunder vs Adelaide Strikers BBL match abandoned

JAMIL SIRAJ

**CANBERRA:** Sydney Thunder versus Adelaide Strikers BBL/09 match abandoned. The KFC Big Bash League advises that tonight's match between the Sydney Thunder and Adelaide Strikers at Manuka Oval has been abandoned due to dangerous and unreasonable playing conditions. The decision was taken by match officials after conducting a thorough assessment of conditions at the ground, with participant safety the number one priority. Play was suspended 4.2 hours into the Thunder's run chase due to poor visibility created by smoke. After a delay, officials deemed conditions were unsuitable for play to resume and the match was officially abandoned at 9:14pm AEDT. Under the Big Bash League Playing Conditions, the match has been declared as a No Result and both teams awarded one point each on the BBL/09 Ladder. The League and all Clubs wish to reiterate that our thoughts and best wishes are with the people and communities affected by the current bushfire emergency.



## Golf: Scott surges into lead at Australian PGA Championship

**MELBOURNE:** Home hero Adam Scott shot a patient three-under 69 to take a one-shot lead at the Australian PGA Championship after the third round on Saturday and raise his hopes of a second title at the AU\$1.5 million (US\$1.03 million) event on the Gold Coast. The former world number one overcame a slow start and a bogey on the fifth hole to roll in four birdies from the ninth and reach a 10-under total of 206, one ahead of compatriot Wade Ormsby at the Royal Pines Resort. Australian Nick Flanagan soared into contention with a course record 63 to stand a stroke adrift of Ormsby, in a group of four tied for third. Flanagan had flirted with the cut-line after opening rounds of 72 and 73 but got off to a flying start on Saturday with four of his nine birdies coming in his first four holes. "Yeah, it was kind of out of the blue," the 35-year-old told reporters. "Puts me in a good spot for tomorrow and hopefully go out there and just kind of play similar golf." Double defending champion Cameron Smith's hopes of completing a hat-trick of titles at the European Tour co-sanctioned event dimmed with a scratchy even-par 72. Smith will start Sunday five strokes adrift of Scott. —Reuters



## Rodgers bemoans Leicester's festive fixture pile-up

**LONDON:** In-form striker Jamie Vardy and some of his Leicester City team mates will have to be rested during a potentially crucial run of Premier League matches because of a "nonsense" festive programme, manager Brendan Rodgers said. Vardy has not missed a single league game so far this season and is the competition's top scorer with 16 goals in 17 matches. Second-placed Leicester host leaders Liverpool on Dec. 26, face a trip to West Ham United two days later before travelling to Newcastle United on New Year's Day. When asked whether Vardy could cope with the physical demands of the festive schedule, Rodgers replied: "No chance. "You play on the 26th, a high-intensity game against Liverpool, fighting for the result. In football, it's the second day where the players suffer. "You get that first day of recovery but it's the second day where it's really tough for a player. If we go along that route then the second day, instead of recovering, we're kicking off at 5.30pm at West Ham. It's just nonsense really. "It's unfair on players and on supporters, they are paying hard-earned money and they want to see the best level of games." Rodgers also bemoaned the English winter break, with each team getting a weekend off in early February. "It's a 'Let's pretend to have a break,' he told a news conference. "When I was in Scotland (with Celtic)... you play a game on New Year's Eve, and then you have a three-week break. "I don't think this is that at all. This year they've wanted to do it, and they've had a little play at it." Leicester, who are currently on a nine-game unbeaten run in the league, visit defending champions Manchester City later —Reuters



## Stephen Curry's privacy violated

**NEW YORK:** Golden State Warriors star Stephen Curry and his wife Ayesha Curry have become target of a smear campaign. Internet users started circulating objectionable photos purporting to show the couple. Not much was known about the pictures but it sure seemed to be a case of privacy breach. US media reports said the photos also purport to show Ayesha Curry, the wife of former NBA MVP. It was not immediately whether the photos were hacked and uploaded without the couple's consent. The pictures were shared widely across social media, especially Twitter where a large number of users were found circulating them with funny captions. US Today reported that the couple live in California where spreading such content is illegal. —AFP



KARACHI: Azhar Ali shapes to sweep during second Test against Sri Lanka.

## Sharapova still has 'fire and motivation' despite 2019 misery



**ABU DHABI:** Maria Sharapova insisted that she still has the "internal fire and motivation" to compete professionally, despite the lingering shoulder problem that kept her out of action for long stretches this season. The former world number one was only able to play in eight events in 2019, contesting just 15 matches in total. The Russian five-time major champion made her first on-court appearance since her US Open first round exit in August in an exhibition in Abu Dhabi on Thursday, where she fought back from a break down in each set to defeat Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic 6-4, 7-5. "Any chance that I get to come out and play competitively is a really good day because I just haven't played a lot," Sharapova told reporters at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship.

"Definitely I'm coming out of this match happy that I was out there again and it can only get better from here." While she wouldn't reveal too many details about the state of her shoulder injury, she did say she "felt fine" after her clash with Tomljanovic, while keeping her expectations in check having been sidelined for nearly four months. Sharapova plans on travelling Down Under for next month's Australian Open but confirmed she will not be playing the Olympic Games in Tokyo. With many question marks still surrounding her form and her shoulder, she's unsure what her 2020 calendar will look like. —Reuters

# Nadal eyes to continue Davis Cup-winning form into 2020

**ABU DHABI:** Rafael Nadal has a shorter than usual offseason this year but he believes he can work it to his advantage as he looks to carry his Davis Cup-winning form into 2020.

The world No.1 led Spain to the Davis Cup title just over three weeks ago then went on a short break before beginning his preparations for the new season.

Nadal picked up right where he left off as he surprised himself by putting together a devastating 6-1, 6-3 performance against Russian world No.17 Karen Khachanov in an exhibition match in Abu Dhabi. "That was a good masterclass. Rafa needs to tell me how much I need to pay him," Khachanov joked after the match. Nadal feels it was a victory that proved he can keep up his momentum from his strong finish to the 2019 season well into the new year.

"I was a little bit surprised the way that I played. I have been playing well at the end of the season. And it was just 15 days ago, a little bit more that I was winning the Davis Cup with Spain with the rest of the guys, so things went quick," Nadal told reporters in the UAE capital. "And at some point it's negative that we didn't have a lot of time (between seasons) but on the other hand I finished playing well

and that helps to keep going playing well." Nadal's reward is a Saturday showdown with ATP Finals champion Stefanos Tsitsipas, who defeated Novak Djokovic 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 ranked in the day. The 21-year-old Tsitsipas, earlier No.6 in the world, told the press ahead of the action in Abu Dhabi that one his main



goals for 2020 is to end the year among the top three, which means he would need to squeeze out one of the current 'Big Three' of Nadal, Djokovic and Roger Federer.

- Tsitsipas 'has got the game' - "It's good that he has a good ambition," Nadal said of the young Greek. "It's important to have clear goals, and then you have to do it, and it's something difficult because being in the top three is not easy.

There are a lot of players that will fight to be in the higher positions of the ranking, but of course he had a great season and he will fight for important things." Djokovic also sees great potential in Tsitsipas, who has already claimed two wins over the Serbian world No.2 in four career meetings. "Definitely he's got the game, he's got a really good approach, I think, to tennis, he's very professional, very determined, he's got all the elements he needs in order to reach that," said Djokovic. "So now of course it's a big task for anybody really to be top three in the year. It means you have to be playing consistently well throughout the entire season, really not having any too many fallbacks, or God forbid injuries. "But he's definitely matured a lot and results are proving that." —AFP

# New Zealand's Watling sees more 'bumpers' in Melbourne

**MELBOURNE:** New Zealand wicketkeeper BJ Watling expects his team to continue their short-pitched barrage at the Melbourne Cricket Ground against Australia if the wicket proves conducive during the Boxing Day test.

New Zealand lost the series-opener in Perth by 296 runs but rattled Australia's batsmen with short and angled bowling in their second innings, prompting the home side's batting coach Graeme Hick to query the legality of the tactics. Trailing 1-0 in the three-match series, the Black Caps are likely to regain injury-hit Trent Boult for the second test at the MCG starting Dec. 26, adding another weapon to their pace arsenal. Watling noted seamer Neil Wagner had proved particularly tricky for the Australian batsmen, taking five of his

seven wickets with the short ball and softening up Matthew Wade with a number of bouncers that hit the body. "(Wagner) has done it for a very long period of time, he's very skilled at it, he's very accurate at it. And he used it well in Perth and put them under some pressure," he told reporters on Saturday.

"But again, we're going to have see actually what that wicket does. It might not be conducive to that type of bowling so we have to be adjustable." Wagner was able to remove Steve Smith twice with the short ball and well-placed fields, limiting Australia's master batsman to 59 runs in the pink ball test in Perth. Watling dismissed the idea his team had Smith worked out.

"He's that type of guy that really works hard and looks to improve

every time. He'll have a different game plan, so we'll have to fight that out on the field." Watling also said his team would face the same challenges.

"I know fast bowlers like bowling bumpers. We're going to face it and we've got to work on it," he said. New Zealand's main concern is their top order batting, with opener Jeet Raval down on runs and expected to be dropped for the MCG test. Watling, who started his test career as an opener, is seen as an option to replace Raval. But the 34-year-old has not batted at the top of the order since 2012. "I've done it in the past, I don't think it's a comfortable position in general, to be honest," Watling, who has played 66 tests, said with a wry tone. "But we'll discuss things over the next few days and see what even-

