



## Bumrah keeps battle alive; Australia score 311/6 after impressive Konstas debut in Melbourne Test

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26:** Jasprit Bumrah's knack of coming up with magic deliveries in crunch situations kept India alive after Australia's top-order, headlined by teen debutant Sam Konstas' stroke-filled half-century, guided the hosts to 311 for 6 on the opening day of the fourth Test here on Thursday.

If Konstas' audacious 60 off 65 balls enthralled the near sell-out crowd of over 80,000 at the MCG during a humid morning session, Bumrah's (3/75 in 21 overs) deception of length to dismiss Travis Head (0) also had its takers as chants of 'Boom, Boom, Boooooom-aaaaaaah' reverberated through the stands.

Coming into the Test with back-to-back hundreds, Head couldn't judge the length of a Bumrah delivery that was pitched slightly fuller than what the batter expected. He shouldered his arms trusting the bounce but the 66.2-overs-old Kookaburra nipped back to clip the off-bail.

In the next over, he removed an out-of-form Mitchell Marsh (4), having got Usman Khawaja (57 off 121 balls) with the half-tracker in the post-lunch session.

The first two sessions, however, belonged to Australia with senior players



Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne (72 off 145 balls) and Steve Smith (68 batting, 111 balls) scoring half-centuries.

The final session was all about Bumrah magic. The Indian spearhead didn't let the hosts completely walk away with the game which they threatened to do at one stage.

He now has 24 wickets in the series. With Mohammed Siraj (0/69 in 15 overs) off-colour, Bumrah didn't have much support save off-spinner Washington Sundar (1/37 in 12 overs), who bowled a containing line.

Akash Deep (1/59 in 19 overs) though got Alex Carey with the second new ball at the fag end of the day. Even Ravindra Jadeja (1/54 in 14 overs) leaked runs despite getting Konstas out and Nishit Reddy, the batting all-rounder, was only used before the second new ball was taken.

The morning was owned by the precocious 19-year-old from New South

Wales.

Konstas didn't show any nerves during his scintillating knock, which comprised two sixes off Bumrah. He also didn't mind a good scrap with India's superstar Virat Kohli, whose shoulder brush with the 19-year-old led to a brief confrontation.

In fact, Bumrah was hit for a six for the first time in a Test since Cameron Green hit him for one back in 2021. The gap between Konstas' first six, which was a lap scoop, and the one that Green hit three years ago was 4,000 Test match deliveries.

After a conventional lap scoop for maximum, Konstas also hit a reverse lap scoop towards third man for another boundary. The second six was pumelled over mid-on.

The duo added 89 runs in such quick time that Labuschagne and last match's centurion Smith didn't need to show any urgency.

The fearlessness of youth stood out on the big

stage as Konstas pulled off the lap-scoop against Bumrah before smashing him over mid-on for another maximum. The fans and experts alike were forced to think the last time Bumrah (1/50 in 15 overs) was hit for two sixes in his first spell of a Test match. They couldn't because it never happened in a first spell.

Mohammed Siraj was welcomed into the attack with a loud round of boos as he sledged the youth duo to his unconventional hitting style.

In all, Konstas hit six fours apart from the two maximums. Only Akash bowled a good channel among the pacers as Siraj was guilty of going too full or too short.

As Australia scored at more than a fair clip, skipper Rohit Sharma had to introduce Ravindra Jadeja (1/33 in 11 overs) in the 16th over to at least stem the flow of runs before it went out of hand.

The decision did pay dividends as the seasoned spinner got an arm ball to skid through with the angle to trap Konstas in front.

Khawaja and Labuschagne then added 65 for the second wicket with the Pakistan-born opener hitting Akash for a couple of boundaries to complete his first fifty of the series.

## IND-W vs WI-W: With series already in the bag, India likely to experiment in final game

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26:** Hazy conditions persisted on Thursday morning as India trained at the Kotambi Stadium ahead of its final women's ODI against the West Indies.

With the series already in its pocket, it was an optional session for the Women in Blue, and indications were clear that the team management could be in a mood to experiment and gauge its bench strength for the inconsequential fixture.

With the Women's ODI World Cup scheduled at home for next year, the Indian team has already started planning for the marquee event, and as bowling coach Aavishkar Salvi indicated, working towards achieving the goal remains the side's only target.

Coming on the back of an embarrassing ODI series defeat against Australia, India bounced back smartly with convincing T20I and ODI series wins against the West Indies, and as it hopes to end the year on a high with a win on Friday, Salvi stated, "Since ours is a process-



driven team, a few losses or a few wins don't get into our heads. We just try to focus on the next challenge that is instilled in us and prepare accordingly. That's how we operate..."

It has been an incredible outing for Smriti Mandhana, with her sixth consecutive fifty across formats. Along with her, Harleen Deol and youngster Pratika Rawal have also stepped up with significant contributions. While Harleen scored her maiden century in international cricket in the previous game, Pratika showed grit and determination on debut.

The fast bowling bowling department, too, showed promise. Renuka Singh Thakur has led the pack, with Saima Thakor

and youngster Titas Sadhu backing her.

Salvi believes that bowling to the 'modern-day legends' like Smriti and Harmanpreet Kaur have helped the pacers.

"It always helps when you have players like Smriti and Harmanpreet, who are like modern-day legends. When our bowlers get an opportunity to bowl at them in the nets, it's always a learning experience for the bowlers - what kind of lengths we need to bowl, what kind of lines we need to bowl against attacking players," Salvi, a former India fast bowler, said.

Being a day game, the challenges will be different, but Salvi believes that having played enough day cricket, things shouldn't

be difficult for the Indian players.

West Indies, meanwhile, will be hoping to end the series on a high. As it struggled in every department and failed to put up a fight, captain Hayley Matthews' century and Deandra Dottin's disciplined bowling have been the only takeaways for the visiting team.

**TEAMS (FROM):**

**INDIA:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Pratika Rawal, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry, Tejal Hasabnis, Deepti Sharma, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Renuka Singh Thakur.

**WEST INDIES:** Hayley Matthews (Capt.), She-maine Campbell, Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajrani, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack, Rashada Williams.

## Zimbabwe's Andy Pycroft completes 100 Tests as match referee

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26:** Former Zimbabwe captain Andy Pycroft on Thursday became only the fourth official in the history of men's Test cricket to complete 100 games as a match referee with the Boxing Day contest between India and Australia that began here on Thursday.

The exclusive list is led by former Sri Lanka player Ranjan Madugalle as the most experienced match referee with 225 Tests, fol-



lowed by New Zealand's Jeff Crowe (125) and England's Chris Broad (123).

The 68-year-old Pycroft played three Tests and 20

ODIs for Zimbabwe from 1983-1992.

"Pycroft, who has also officiated in 238 men's ODIs, 174 men's T20Is and 21

women's T20Is since 2009, said he has enjoyed every minute of the journey to 100 matches as a match referee," the ICC said on its website.

Pycroft said touching the mark is a great honour and he is thankful to have been afforded the opportunity to officiate all over the world, "embracing different cultures."

"It has been a rewarding journey and I have treasured every moment of it," he added. PTI

## India captain Harmanpreet Singh believes Hockey India League will propel women's team to greater heights

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26:** Indian men's hockey team captain and drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh expressed his excitement ahead of Hockey India League (HIL) 2024 as he gears up to lead Soorma Hockey Club.

Harmanpreet became the most expensive player in HIL history after being acquired by Soorma Hockey Club for ₹78 lakh during the recent auction.

"I'm thrilled to begin this new chapter of Indian Hockey as a Soorma Hockey Club player and compete in the Hockey India League. The league provides a fantastic platform for players to showcase their skills, and I'm looking forward to contributing to the team's success this season," he commented.

The Hockey India League, returning after a hiatus, promises to deliver



high-octane action and showcase top-tier talent from around the world.

While the Hockey India League is restarting after a seven-year hiatus, the return of the league is accompanied by the commencement of a Women's League, the very first of its kind in India. Harmanpreet believes the India women's national side will benefit from the tournament like it benefitted his set of players, putting them on the path of regaining Olympic glory.

"The impact of the HIL

can be seen to this day in the Indian Men's Hockey Team. The Team's success in the Olympics is due to the exposure the League provided us at a young age. Rubbing shoulders with players you look up to and competing with and against them on a daily basis improved us more than we could imagine. With the Women's HIL also commencing this time, I am certain that it will propel the Indian Women's Hockey Team to greater heights as well in the future," he added.

The Soorma Hockey Club is coached by Jeroen Baart, with Indian hockey legend Sardar Singh serving as a mentor. Harmanpreet's impressive track record includes scoring 205 goals in 234 appearances for the national senior side, and he will aim to replicate the same in the HIL along with world-class teammates like Vivek Sagar Prasad, Gurjant Singh, Victor Wegnez, and Jeremy Hayward.

"The HIL is going to be a great experience for us all. It is poised to be an exciting competition that will pitch us against our international teammates and challenge us to bring our A-game. Playing in front of passionate fans and representing Soorma Hockey Club is a tremendous honour, and I am eager to give my best to achieve success for the team," Harmanpreet concluded.

## Veteran Cricket Association won first match by defeating Shaheed Bhagat Singh CC by 8 wickets

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, DEC 26**

Veteran Cricket Association J&K XI Led by Captain Vivek Suri won the first match in a style by defeating Shaheed Bhagat Singh CC by 8 wickets in KCSC Veteran Cup T20 Night Cricket Tournament being played at KC Sports Ground Jammu.

Nitin Sharma, Captain of SBSCC won the toss and elected to bat first. From the onset bowlers of Veteran Cricket Association J&K XI bowled on nagging line and length and wickets kept tumbling and SBSCC was all out on 150 runs in stipulated 20 overs. Bhanu Gupta scored 50 runs & Zeeshan 22 runs. For VCAJK, Shakoor took 3 wickets, Captain Vivek Suri took 2 wickets & Rahul



Khatri, Ratnesh Puri, Naseer Bandey & Nazar Hussain shated 1 wickets each. Chasing 151 runs to win, openers Amit Kumar & Jameel of VCAJK were all guns blazing from the word go. Jameel was on a

leather hunt & dispatched ball to all parts of the Ground. VCAJK chased the target in 14 overs losing 2 wickets. Jameel scored 70 runs in just 34 balls & Amit remained unbeaten on 50 runs in 37

runs. For SBSCC, Nitin & Zahid shared 1 wicket each. Jameel of Veteran Cricket Association J&K XI was declared Man of the Match for his brilliant performance.

## Carrom body retains Adil as president

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, DEC 26**

The Jammu and Kashmir Carrom Association retained Adil Rashid Shah as president in an Annual General Meeting (AGM) which took place at Sher e Kashmir Indoor Sports Complex, Srinagar today.

The election of office bearers was carried out under the supervision of Musbat Ismail Wani (Deputy Legal Remembrance), appointed as the Returning Officer by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council, and Dr. Altaf ur Rehman (retired Direc-



tor of Physical Education, Islamia College, Srinagar), who acted as the observer of the All India Carrom Federation, New Delhi.

**THE NEWLY ELECTED OFFICE BEARERS:**

Adil Rashid Shah

(president); Sameer Ahmad (senior vice president); Advocate Adfar Jan and Ahras Bhat (vice presidents); Amandeep Singh and Sheikh Mohammad Saqib (joint secretaries); Mudasir Khan (general secretary); Dawar Rashid Gadyari

(assistant secretary) and Arif Sultan Khan (treasurer).

**EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:** Jagpal Singh (Jammu), Peer Musadiq (Pulwama), Irfan Majeed (Bandipora), Faizan Mehraj (Srinagar), and Farhan Malik (Srinagar).

## Thapar, Shreya led J&K Fencing teams named

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, DEC 26**

The 22-member J&K teams for the 35th Senior National Fencing Championship cleared today by the J&K Sports Council (JKSC) at MA Stadium, here.

Now, the selected fencers shall represent J&K at the National championship to be held at Kannur, Kerala from December 31 to January three. Earlier, the JKSC conducted the screening



of the selected probable in the presence of senior players.

**THE TEAMS:**

**MEN:** Vishal Thapar, Sagar Sahi, Udhayveer Singh Chandel, Suryansh

Sharma, Sufyan Waheed

Sohil, Sohith Thakur, Ajay Kumar, Shivansh Kapoor, Pranay Singh, Chahat Singh, Shreshth Dogra and Ram Paul.

**WOMEN:** Shreya

Gupta, Rishika Khajuria,

Kritarthi Kotwal, Chhavi Sharma, Apsha Ghuzar,

Pihul Rajput, Shilpa Khajuria, Riya Bakshi, Vanya Gupta and Mansi Sharma.