

Williamson hits record ton



Kane Williamson celebrates a record 18th Test century
(Pic courtesy: espnricinfo)

Auckland

Kane Williamson's New Zealand-record 18th Test century brightened an otherwise wet and gloomy day two as the hosts tightened their grip on the first Test against England yesterday.

Williamson's 102 provided a rare moment of cheer on a truncated day when play was restricted to 23.1 overs with only 54 runs scored.

The Black Caps skipper fell after guiding his side to a substantial first innings lead as New Zealand reached 229 for four, 171 runs ahead of England with six wickets in hand.

The milestone century,

reached with a deft single through the gully off James Anderson, took Williamson one clear of the previous record of 17 he shared with Ross Taylor and the late Martin Crowe.

He was still on 100 when the rain swept in for the first time but when play resumed an hour later, after a revised tea break, he added only two more before being trapped in front by Anderson.

Williamson's overnight partner Henry Nicholls progressed to 49 not out with BJ Watling on 17 when rain again sent the players indoors -- midway through the second session of the day-night Test.

It never stopped long

BRIEF SCORE

New Zealand 229 for 4 (Williamson 102, Nicholls 49*) lead **England** 58 by 171 runs

enough for the game to resume and play was called off four hours later.

Williamson had rebuilt the New Zealand innings from one for eight in their reply to England's 58, to 206 for four when he was eventually dismissed.

He faced 220 deliveries and shared in partnerships of 84 with Tom Latham, 31 with Ross Taylor and 83 with Nicholls.

Nicholls, who started

the New Zealand summer needing strong performances to cement his place as the number six batsman, stepped up from his pre-Christmas form when he had innings of 67, 13 and five against the West Indies.

After resuming the day on 24, he batted calmly with Williamson and then assumed the anchor role when the captain departed and he was joined by Watling.

Watling, back in the side after being sidelined by a hip injury for several months, wasted no time settling in as he raced to 17 off 20 deliveries, while Nicholls has faced 143 balls for his 49. (AFP)

Morkel joins 300 club as SA take leading edge



South Africa's Morne Morkel (Pic courtesy: espnricinfo)

Cape Town

Fast bowler Morne Morkel took his 300th Test wicket as South Africa bowled themselves into a strong position on the second day of the third Test against Australia at Newlands yesterday.

Australia were 245 for nine when bad light ended play, 66 runs behind South Africa's first innings total of 311.

But it could have been worse for Australia. They were in deep trouble at 175 for eight before Nathan Lyon hit a Test-best 47 in a ninth wicket partnership of 66 with Tim Paine, who was unbeaten on 33.

Morkel took three of the first four Australian wickets to fall and became the fifth South African to join the 300 club.

Morkel dismissed Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith in his first spell, then came back to break a 78-run fourth wicket stand between Cameron Bancroft and Shaun Marsh when Marsh flashed at a wide ball and was caught behind.

BRIEF SCORE

Australia 245 for 9 (Bancroft 77, Morkel 4-87, Rabada 3-81) trail **South Africa** 311 (Elgar 141*, De Villiers 64, Cummins 4-78) by 66 runs

Bancroft made 77 off 103 balls with 14 fours but was leg before wicket to Vernon Philander in the last over before tea to leave Australia in a precarious position.

Morkel, 33, playing in his 85th Test, took a fourth wicket when Lyon's adventurous 38-ball innings was ended by a catch by Dean Elgar running back from point.

Earlier, Kagiso Rabada was hit for five boundaries in a row by David Warner but won a duel with the Australian opening batsman when he sent Warner's off stump cartwheeling.

Warner was bowled for 30. He hit three fours off the last three balls of Rabada's second over. (AFP)

Stanikzai propels Afghan to the WC

Harare

Afghanistan qualified for next year's cricket World Cup as captain Asghar Stanikzai played through the pain barrier to produce a heroic innings and lead them to a five-wicket victory over Ireland yesterday.

Stanikzai returned to the team last week for the closing stages of the qualifying tournament.

He batted in obvious pain and with a heavy dressing under his shirt, to score an unbeaten 39 off 29 balls, as he and Najibullah Zadran saw their team home with five balls to spare.

Ireland scored a modest 209 for seven in their 50 overs in the winner-takes-all match to decide who would join the West Indies in securing a place



Asghar Stanikzai drives over the off side
(Pic courtesy: espnricinfo)

at the World Cup from the qualifying tournament.

The West Indies booked their spot in next year's tournament in England earlier in the week. (Reuters)