

# England's Root questions need for Ashes pink-ball Tests

AFP | Brisbane

England's Joe Root yesterday questioned whether the Ashes needed a pink-ball Test as he expressed confidence in his ability to get a big score in the day-night clash against Australia in Brisbane.

The former captain, Test cricket's second highest run-scorer after Sachin Tendulkar, has played in each of England's seven previous day-night Tests. They have won two and lost five.

But he is not sold on the idea of the matches being part of an Ashes series, with the first three days of the second Test at the Gabba sold out.

"I personally don't think so," he told reporters when asked if the Ashes needed the second Test, which begins on Thursday, to be a day-night match.

"It does add to things. It's obviously very successful and popular here and obviously Australia have got a very good record as well.

"I can see why we're playing one of those games. A series like this, does it need it? I don't think so, but it doesn't mean it shouldn't be here either."

Australia are masters of pink-ball Tests -- winning 13 of 14



England's Joe Root reacts during a match

matches under lights.

Their only defeat was against the West Indies at the Gabba last year, but England have not won in Brisbane since 1986.

The hosts take a 1-0 lead into the showdown after a stunning eight-wicket win in Perth, a frantic Test that was all over

inside two days.

Root, who is yet to score a century in Australia, lasted just 18 balls across two innings, out for a duck and eight with Mitchell Starc his tormentor.

But the 34-year-old is confident he can turn around his mediocre form on Australian

soil, where he averages 33.33 in 15 Tests compared to his career average of 50.94.

"I know if I get time out there and I make good decisions for long periods of time, I'm going to be successful," he said.

"I know that I'm a good player, it's just about putting that into



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England's top order had a net session at the Gabba yesterday as they acclimatise to the humid weather.

Root said he was comfortable with the decision not to go to Canberra and play a pink-ball tour match this weekend against a Prime Minister's XI.

"This is the best way to prepare personally," he said.

"Time in the middle is one thing, but as an experienced player, I feel like I know what I need to get the best out of myself."

## West Indies' Russell retires from IPL, named KKR 'power coach'



Andre Russell

AFP | Kolkata

Big-hitting West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell yesterday announced his retirement from the Indian Premier League, but will stay at Kolkata Knight Riders as a "power coach".

Russell a pace bowling all-rounder, was released as a player by Kolkata after a poor 2025 season and has decided not to enter the IPL auction on December 16

The 37-year-old will continue to play in other global T20 tournaments such as the Caribbean Premier League.

"It's best to retire when fans ask: 'Why? You still have some more in you,'" Russell said.

"I'll be back. I'm here to say I will be a part of the KKR support staff as the new 'power coach' in 2026.

# Isak scores first Premier League goal for Liverpool to sink West Ham

AFP | London

Alexander Isak finally scored his first Premier League goal for troubled Liverpool to inspire a much-needed 2-0 win against West Ham yesterday.

Isak had failed to score in his five top-flight appearances since making a British record £125 million (\$165 million) move from Newcastle in September.

The Sweden forward banished that drought at the London Stadium with only his second goal in 11 games in all competitions for the Reds, following his maiden strike in a League Cup win against second-tier Southampton.

Cody Gakpo bagged Liverpool's second goal in stoppage time to secure their first win in four games in all competitions.

Hampered by injuries and a lack of match fitness after missing pre-season due to his protracted transfer saga, Isak was on target in the league for the first time since netting for Newcastle against Brighton in May.

The end of the 26-year-old's 10-match goal drought for club and country was a ray of hope for Liverpool amid a dismal campaign.

A 4-1 humiliation against PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League in midweek was Liverpool's third successive defeat by three goals or more following 3-0 league losses against Manchester City and Nottingham Forest.

Liverpool had lost nine of their previous 12 games -- their



West Ham United's Greek defender #15 Konstantinos Mavropanos (L) vies with Liverpool's Swedish striker #09 Alexander Isak (R)

worst run since 1953-54 -- including six defeats from seven league matches.

With pressure beginning to mount on boss Arne Slot, this scrappy victory was a welcome tonic as Liverpool climbed to eighth place.

Slot is adamant he hasn't lost the backing of his players, but he has struggled to get the best out of Mohamed Salah since the closing months of last season.

Salah has scored just five times in all competitions this season and Slot responded by dropping the Egypt forward to the bench for the third time this

season.

Isak looked set for another frustrating afternoon when he blazed woefully over from the edge of the area in the opening minutes.

### Isak delivers

West Ham paid an emotional tribute to Billy Bonds with a minute's applause in memory of their legendary former captain and manager, who died yesterday aged 79.

The tough-tackling Bonds would have appreciated struggling West Ham's spirited start, but Liverpool eventually took

charge.

Isak was foiled by a superb save from Alphonse Areola, who kept out his close-range bicycle kick.

It was only Isak's second attempt on target in the league this season.

They went route one to create a chance when Alisson's long kick was flicked on by Isak to Florian Wirtz, but the German could only muster a tame shot straight at Areola from a good position 10 yards out.

But Isak finally delivered his long-awaited goal on the hour mark.

## Zirkzee ends goal drought to inspire Man Utd victory at Palace



Crystal Palace's English defender #06 Marc Guehi (R) headers the ball away from Manchester United's Dutch forward #11 Joshua Zirkzee (L)

AFP | London

Joshua Zirkzee scored his first Premier League goal for nearly a year before Mason Mount grabbed the winner as Manchester United came from behind to beat Crystal Palace 2-1 yesterday.

Ruben Amorim's side trailed to Jean-Philippe Mateta's first half penalty at Selhurst Park, but Zirkzee and Mount netted after the interval to secure United's first win in four games.

United recovered from their lacklustre start thanks to Zirkzee's first goal in the Premier League since he netted against Everton in December 2024.

The much-maligned Dutch striker had gone 24 league games without a goal, adding to perception that his £36 million (\$47.7million) move from Bologna in 2024 was a bad investment.

Zirkzee, 24, had failed to score in his eight previous appearances dating back to April.

Plagued by injuries, Mount has also struggled since joining United from Chelsea and this was just his second goal this season.

"I could see that Palace were getting tired at the end of the first half and knew they would suffer if we scored," Amorim said.

"The pace and intensity was better in the second half. We controlled the game. We took advantage of a tired opponent." Beaten by Everton's 10 men at Old Trafford on Monday, United's first victory since October was a much-needed boost for Amorim.

The fact that it was Palace's first defeat at Selhurst Park in the Premier League since February 15 underlined the challenge of United's gritty fightback in freezing south London.

Amorim had said this week that there were "no excuses" for United's sputtering start to the season after last term's troubles.