

All-rounders Stokes and Holder to lead from the front

AFP | London

Two of the world's best all-rounders in Ben Stokes and Jason Holder will be captaining their respective sides when England face the West Indies in the first Test at Southampton starting today.

Holder tops the ICC's Test all-rounder rankings, with fellow paceman Stokes in second place as international cricket resumes for the first time since March 2 following the coronavirus lockdown.

They both average in the 30s with the bat, with Holder's bowling mark of 26.37 slightly more economical than Stokes' 32.68.

But while Holder, 28, is a seasoned skipper, Wednesday's match will be the first time the 29-year-old Stokes has captained a cricket team since he was a teenager.

England's talisman has been thrust into the role, with regular skipper Joe Root missing the series opener to attend the birth of his second child.

Pace-bowling all-rounders Ian Botham and Andrew Flintoff saw their individual games decline with the cares of the England captaincy.

The concern is that something similar will happen to Stokes, a key figure in England's World Cup triumph last year when his



Ben Stokes of England celebrates hitting the winning runs to win the Ashes Test (file photo)

spectacular century also saw the team to a remarkable win over Australia in an Ashes Test at Headingley.

It appeared any chance of Stokes becoming England captain disappeared when he was charged with affray following an incident outside a Bristol nightclub.

But after being found not

guilty at a 2018 trial, he regained a position of responsibility as Root's vice-captain.

"After that happened it was 'right, what am I going to do from this point forward?," Stokes said last week. "I'm quite proud to say I'm in this situation (of being England captain) through hard work and determination."

'Get on top of Ben'

Holder was made captain of the West Indies' one-day side aged just 23.

A year later he was put in charge of the Test side against a backdrop of administrative chaos that included bitter rows between senior players and administrators.



Jason Holder of West Indies celebrates after a match against England (file photo)

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PHIL SIMMONS

ble century against England in the first Test at his Barbados home ground during a 381-run win last year that sent the West Indies on the way to a series victory.

"Hopefully Jason can do what's necessary to get on top of Ben in this first Test," said West Indies coach Phil Simmons.

"Jason has played enough Test cricket now to know what he's working on and, mentally, he's where he wants to be.

"I think Ben is one of them who leads from the front. That's to be shown by all his exploits before in cricket and we will have to make sure that we get on to him very early, because he likes to do what is necessary for his team."

Sympathy for his plight has sometimes overshadowed recognition of his cricketing skill.

Holder, however, showed his class with an unbeaten dou-

'Beautiful' Lloris-Son row a sign Spurs are growing up: Mourinho



Tottenham Hotspur's Hugo Lloris (L), Lucas Moura (C) and Son Heung-Min react after the match

Reuters | London

The sight of Tottenham Hotspur team mates Hugo Lloris and Son Heung-min clashing at halftime during their 1-0 victory over Everton on Monday was "beautiful" and a sign that the team are growing up, manager Jose Mourinho has said.

Goalkeeper Lloris and forward Son had to be held apart by team mates shortly after Everton's Richarlison had gone close to an equaliser, with Lloris clearly angry at Son for not tracking back in the build-up to the chance.

Mourinho said his players were fired up by his criticism of their limp performance in Thursday's 3-1 defeat by Shef-

field United and said the incident showed they were demanding more of each other.

"It's beautiful," the Portuguese added. "If you want to blame somebody for that, it's me, because I was critical of my boys, because they are not critical enough with themselves, with each other.

"It's something very important for the team to grow and for that you need to demand from each other and be strong personalities.

"A team of nice boys, the only thing they can win is the Fair Play Cup, which is something that I never won and I am not interested in."

The victory was Mourinho's 200th in the Premier League and moved Spurs up to eighth.

Want Andy Murray as your private coach? Bid to win

Reuters | London

A dream private coaching session from Andy Murray will become a reality for one tennis fan after top players signed up to an initiative raising funds for professional coaches who are struggling financially during the COVID-19 shutdown.

The coronavirus shutdown of tennis has not only prevented players from earning a living since early March but also the vast majority of those who coach them.

That prompted Venezuelan Daniel Vallverdu, who has worked with Grand Slam winners like Murray, Stan Wawrinka and Juan Martin Del Potro, to reach out to other top coaches with a fundraising plan to help out their lesser-known peers.

The ATP Tour got on board and last month fans were able to bid for private sessions with celebrated tennis coaches on-site during tournaments in 2021.

"Nobody that I had called said no, so that was obviously quite uplifting in a way that everybody wanted to help," Vallverdu told Reuters from Geneva.

"I basically called them and said 'look let's start off with our coaches offering some of our time for next year and then I'll contact the tournaments and ATP to see how we can all work together to try and create some nice experiences as options'."



Andy Murray hits a return during a match (file photo)

Top names like Paul Annaccone, Boris Becker, Darren Cahill, Brad Gilbert, Goran Ivanišević, Ivan Lendl, Ivan Ljubicic and Patrick Mouratoglou got involved and more than \$90,000 was pledged.

The second round of auction, from July 6-27, will feature a private coaching session with Murray at Wimbledon, including two tickets to the 2020 men's singles final and lunch at the member's enclosure.

"It was really nice to see that everybody was pulling in the same direction and was extremely supportive of it," said

Vallverdu, who was signed up to coach women's world number three Karolina Pliskova this season.

"It's not normal in our sport to see everybody working together. So hopefully this would be a good platform so we can all in future have a little bit more connection when it comes down to the coaches at events or with the tour itself."

The second round of auction will also offer sessions with Wawrinka, Grigor Dimitrov and Feliciano Lopez as well as coaches like Carlos Moya and Toni Nadal, the uncle and for-

mer long-time coach of Rafa Nadal.

Fans can also bid for a frame featuring four signed rackets from Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, Nadal and Murray with additional details available on ATP's website <http://www.atp-tour.com>.

"I am personally very happy to be involved," said former number one Murray. "So many areas of our sport have been affected throughout the Tour suspension, including coaches. It's important we help each other where we can."