

# Misbah adamant Pakistan can 'come back' in England series

Pakistan coach says Pakistan must move on from Old Trafford defeat and fight back in the second Test

● Misbah paid tribute to the way Buttler and Woakes took the game away from his team

AFP | London

Pakistan coach Misbah-ul-Haq has insisted his side can "fight back" from their agonising defeat by England in time for the second Test starting on Thursday.

The tourists, following six months on the sidelines because of the coronavirus, were on course to go 1-0 up in the three-match series after dominating the majority of the first Test at Old Trafford.

But Pakistan were undone by a stand of 139 between Jos Buttler (75) and player-of-the-match Chris Woakes, who guided the hosts to a three-wicket win with 84 not out on Saturday.

Having played so well in a losing cause, fears have been expressed over Pakistan's morale.

Misbah, however, in a column published on the Pakistan Cricket Board's website, wrote, "It's easy to curse yourself when you've lost."

"But, we should remember that we were right on top until pretty much the last session of the game."

"We will do our best to come back in this series, which I really



Babar Azam, Azhar Ali, Waqar Younis and Misbah-ul-Haq speak during a Pakistan Nets Session (file photo)

believe this team is capable of doing."

Pakistan opener Shan Masood made a Test-best 156 at Old Trafford, while leg-spinner Yasir Shah took eight wickets in the match.

Yet Pakistan failed to put the game completely beyond England's reach by being dismissed for just 169 in their second innings before, by Misbah's own admission, a degree of "panic" set in during Buttler and Woakes' match-changing partnership.

## 'Disappointment'

"Sure, we need to improve 10 to 15 per cent and deal with pressure situations a little better but we shouldn't be mentally down," said Misbah.

"There is disappointment, of course, but we must not keep that feeling in our minds otherwise it will be difficult to come back but the team believes we can fight back," added the former captain.

Playing the series without spectators because of the coronavirus pandemic means

Pakistan are denied the vocal support they usually enjoy in England.

Misbah paid tribute to the way Buttler and Woakes "took the game away from us," but accepted a Pakistan side led by skipper Azhar Ali might have done more to stop them in their tracks.

"They counter-attacked well and there was a bit of inexperience -- and even panic -- in the team that cost us," he said.

"We still need to improve, of course, but overall we fought really well against a top team in



England sealed an unlikely three-wicket victory on Saturday after slumping to 117-5 at one point in their pursuit of 277, as Chris Woakes and Jos Buttler shared a sixth-wicket partnership of 139 runs to turn the tide

our first international fixture for six months."

Pakistan quicks Mohammad Abbas, Shaheen Afridi and teenage rising star Naseem Shah all bowled well in Manchester.

There are concerns, though, the trio could be out on their feet if they feature throughout a series of three back-to-back Tests, as happened to some West Indies fast bowlers during their 2-1 defeat by England last month.

Misbah, however, said of Pakistan's pacemen: "They bowled a decent amount of overs but not too much so I don't think there are issues of fatigue at the moment."

"But let's see how everybody is feeling just before the match, how the conditions are and we will decide accordingly."

Dortmund's Sancho off to pre-season camp amid transfer speculation



Jadon Sancho

Reuters | Berlin

Borussia Dortmund winger Jadon Sancho left with his team for a pre-season training camp in Switzerland yesterday amid ongoing speculation of a possible transfer to the English Premier League.

The 20-year-old England international, who has a contract with the German club until 2022, had a stellar season with the Bundesliga runners-up and has been reportedly targeted by several top clubs, including Manchester United.

Sancho scored 17 league goals and set up another 16, with Dortmund saying they would only let him go if their price expectations were met fully.

United have been heavily linked with a move for Sancho but media reports say the club may have balked at Dortmund's valuation of around 120 million euros (\$141.24 million).

That would make him the Bundesliga's most expensive transfer ever and would see the German top division lose arguably its most exciting young player.

On yesterday, however, Sancho flew with his team to Switzerland for the start of their pre-season training.

## Ferro is the first champion in five months as WTA Tour returns



France's Fiona Ferro hits a return

Reuters | Palermo

France's Fiona Ferro became the first WTA champion in five months on Sunday as she overpowered Anett Kontaveit 6-2 7-5 to win the Palermo Ladies Open, the first Tour event to be staged since the COVID-19 epidemic shut down the sport.

Ferro went 10 matches unbeaten in regional exhibition events after the Tour was suspended in March, and continued to gather further momentum with five more wins in Palermo this week as major tennis returned in the Sicilian capital.

"I think it was my best match of the week," the 23-year-old Ferro said after landing the second title of her career with a dominant display. "I was feeling relaxed... I don't know why because it was a final! I wasn't

really feeling pressure."

Several exhibition events have taken place globally since the sport was halted in early March due to the pandemic but the women's claycourt tournament in Palermo was the first across both the elite WTA and ATP tours in five months.

There were strict health protocols, including limited number of fans and no handshakes between players after the match.

"I was feeling relaxed... I don't know why because it was a final! I wasn't really feeling pressure"

FIONA FERRO

## Solskjaer buoyed by Martial progress before Europa quarters

Reuters | London

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has praised Anthony Martial for working on his physique as the French forward enjoys a career-best campaign at Old Trafford.

Martial scored his 23rd goal for United in all competitions this season against LASK Linz in Wednesday's Europa League last-16 victory.

"Anthony has made huge strides this season in many aspects of his game," Solskjaer told an eve-of-match news conference ahead of yesterday's Europa League quarter-final clash with Copenhagen in Cologne.

"Physically, he is at the best level of his career. We know he can do worldies but I like him scoring the simple goals, when he is in between the posts. He's done that a few times."

"He's in the gym a lot working



Manchester United's striker Anthony Martial (L) gestures to manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (R) on the pitch after a match (file photo)

on his fitness and strength. I'm just looking forward to seeing him improve. There's more to come from him."

United arrived earlier on Sunday for the remainder of the Europa League tournament, which will feature one-match knockout ties at different Ger-

man venues, culminating in the final, also in Cologne, on Aug. 21.

Solskjaer, who has already guided United to Champions League qualification with a third-placed finish in the Premier League, said the end-of-season event will aid his side's

development. "We went into this season knowing that Europa League is a great chance for us to get a trophy, to get far in a tournament," he added.

"But also to groom a few of the youngsters and it was perfect for us."

OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER

## England's Stokes to miss rest of Pakistan Test series

AFP | London

England star Ben Stokes will miss the concluding two Tests against Pakistan for family reasons, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced Sunday.

Stokes's father Ged was admitted to hospital in Johannes-



England's Ben Stokes plays a shot

burg two days before Christmas last year with a serious illness while following his son's progress with the England cricket team during their tour of South Africa.

Ged Stokes, a former New Zealand rugby league international, underwent three operations and spent 37 days in hospi-

tal, with his conditions initially described as "critical" before it stabilised.

He has since continued his recovery in New Zealand.

Despite his father's health problems, Stokes was named player of the series in England's 3-1 Test series win over South Africa.