

Sri Lanka dig in after Root double ton



England skipper Joe Root

AFP | London

Joe Root completed his fourth double century for England yesterday but insisted it will mean nothing if his side cannot overcome a defiant Sri Lanka in the first Test.

The England captain made 228 of his team's 421 all out -- 26 runs short of his brilliant 254 career best against Pakistan at Old Trafford in 2016.

But Lahiru Thirimanne led Sri Lanka's stubborn resistance, hitting an unbeaten 75 while Kusal Perera made 62 as the home team reached 156-2 in their second innings.

After their disappointing 135 in the first innings, they need another 130 to reach England's total.

Root's 321 ball innings with a six and 18 fours dominated the day. It took less than an hour in the opening session to add the 32 runs to his overnight total.

He reached 200 with a four off Lasith Emuldeniya.

While the empty Covid-19-stricken stadium meant that only his teammates in the pavilion and a lone England fan watching from a nearby fort could applaud, the performance confirmed Root's return as a batsman after a

barren 2020 saw him fall to number 11 in the ICC rankings.

He had not reached three figures in a Test since his 226 in New Zealand in November 2019. Root also scored an unbeaten 200 against Sri Lanka at Lord's in 2014.

But he indicated his disappointment after seeing six wickets fall to Sri Lanka's bowlers in the morning session and then the struggle by his own attack.

Running out of partners, Root was the last man out, caught by Emuldeniya on the boundary as he went for a six off Dilruwan Perera.

He saw fast bowler Asitha Fernando take Jos Buttler (30) and Sam Curran (0) with successive balls.

In the next over Root hit his landmark four then Dom Bess was run out as the tourists suffered a bout of nerves.

“I expect a lot from myself, I set high standards and it is nice to have started 2021 well”

JOE ROOT

Australia frustrated as rain dampens Gabba decider

With more rain forecast over the remaining days, Australia may have little time to bowl India out twice and seal the series

● **India only need to draw the test to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy**

Reuters | Brisbane

A heavy downpour frustrated Australia on day two of the fourth test decider in Brisbane yesterday, with play abandoned after tea and India spared from resuming on 62 for two in reply to the home side's first innings 369.

India number three Cheteshwar Pujara was eight not out, with stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane on two at the teabreak before a storm broke over the Gabba.

With more rain forecast over the remaining days, Australia may have little time to bowl India out twice and seal the series 2-1.

Home captain Tim Paine betrayed his displeasure in an animated discussion with the field umpires after they inspected the field and called off proceedings.

“No doubt disappointing to the spectators,” Australia assistant coach Andrew McDonald told reporters.

“It would have been nice to get some play there...but the decision was made by the officials and that's their role.”

India will have been more than happy to turn in early.

The tourists only need to



Thunderstorm covers the sky as rain stop the play

draw the test to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, two years after their breakthrough 2-1 series win in Australia in 2018/19.

To emerge with a tied series would be a massive achievement for Rahane's side, which has battled a mounting injury toll throughout and lacked a single first-choice bowler to call on in Brisbane.

They are already a man down in their pace attack, with Navdeep Saini having suffered a groin injury on day one.

Australia, thwarted by India's wounded batsmen in the drawn test in Sydney, are likely to ponder another lost opportunity on day two, having resumed in the morning on 274 for five.

Paine (50) and all-rounder Cameron Green (47) were in good shape to set a platform for

100th

Test match is being played by Nathan Lyon and is closing in on 400 wickets -- Sharma was his 397th

a much bigger total but surrendered in a collapse when three wickets fell in four runs.

Paine was caught in the slips by Rohit Sharma off paceman Shardul Thakur, with Green following after being bowled by all-rounder Washington Sundar, one of two test debutants in the Indian side.

Pat Cummins (2) became the third victim when trapped lbw

by Thakur.

Playing his 100th test, Nathan Lyon soaked up the acclaim of the home crowd, pushing Australia past 350 before he was bowled by Sundar for 24 off 22 balls.

Starc chipped in a valuable unbeaten 20 before paceman T. Natarajan (3-78), the second of India's test debutants but the pick of their bowlers, wrapped up the innings by bowling Josh Hazlewood for 11.

India's reply began shakily after lunch, with the relentless Pat Cummins having opener Shubman Gill caught in the slips for seven.

Rohit and Pujara built a 49-run partnership before the former threw away his wicket for 44 when he attacked Lyon and top-edged to Starc at long-on.

Ancayas itching to unify world titles

TDT | Manila

Filipino Jerwin “Pretty Boy” Ancayas has yet to face a genuinely elite fighter in his eight successful defences of his world title.

So now the International Boxing Federation (IBF) super flyweight champion is determined to unify the world titles this year.

But first the 28-year-old Panabo City pride has to beat Mexican Jonathan Javier Rodriguez in a mandatory defence of his IBF belt this summer before he could think of a potential unification world super flyweight title showdown.

MP Promotion President Sean Gibbons said that he will discuss with the handlers of Japanese World Boxing Organization (WBO) super flyweight champion Kazuto Ioka (26-2 win-loss record with 15 knockouts) to set up the dream duel.

“First, our mandatory obligation with Rodriguez. Then Ioka. It's 1,000 percent we will negotiate that fight to happen,” Gibbons said. “Rodriguez's fight contract has been done for one year.”

Ancayas' camp is also looking at unifying the World Boxing Association (WBA) super flyweight belt held by Joshua Franco.



Ancayas is ready for any challenge that may come his way

“That's what we've been waiting for,” said Ancayas (32-1-2 record with 22 knockouts), who is conditioning himself in Los Angeles, California, under the tutelage of his manager and trainer Joven Jimenez and sparring partner Jonas Sultan, while waiting for a fight from Top Rank.

Ancayas last fought in Puebla, Mexico in December 2019, a sixth-round TKO of Miguel Gonzalez, and has numerous options in the bag for a potential world title unification bout.

Ring rust, according to his

camp, should not be an issue, because he and his sparring partners have been helping the boxing champion to stay in shape.

The mandatory fight between Ancayas and Rodriguez (22-1 with 16 knockouts) was postponed twice — first in November 2, 2019, in Los Angeles because of visa issues and second, in April last year in Las Vegas because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Top Rank chief Bob Arum said that Ancayas may meet Rodriguez either in April or May and no longer February.

YOU KNOW WHAT

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“We have to wait until we all get back by April or May,” said Arum, 89, referring to the Ancayas-Rodriguez bout. “We need to get rid of this pandemic first.”

But Arum explained that the Ancayas-Ioka bout needs to wait for a few months before it becomes a possibility.

“It can't be done for now. You can't get in Japan now because of COVID-19 and the Japanese people do not want to go outside Japan because they will undergo a 14-day quarantine when they come back,” added Arum, who is a close associate of Ioka's Japanese promoter, Akihiro Honda.

Pirlo credits ‘mentor’ Conte with fuelling coaching ambitions

AFP | Milan

Juventus boss Andrea Pirlo yesterday credited Inter Milan counterpart Antonio Conte with fuelling his coaching ambitions as the pair prepare for their first clash in Serie A.

Ex-Juve boss Conte, 51, led the Turin giants to their first three off their current run of nine Serie A titles with then midfielder Pirlo, 41, on his team.

“I learnt a lot from Conte. I'm grateful to him. He taught me so many things and made me want to be a coach, but tomorrow we will be opponents,” said Pirlo ahead of Sunday's game in the San Siro.

“Conte and I are two different characters, maybe that's why we always got along well,” said Pirlo, who had never coached before taking over at Juventus, receiving his diploma just before the season kicked off.

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