

Pak batsmen seemed to play for IPL contracts than saving Test

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The doomsayers about the future of Test cricket may have to wait a little longer for their pessimistic prediction to come true after the nail biting finish to the third Test match between England and South Africa and the second Test between Australia and Pakistan. Both the New Year Tests were gripping games with some wonderful batting, top class seam bowling and finally some crafty spin bowling.

In Australia, Pakistan made good use of a greenish pitch in Sydney to bowl the hosts out for 127 and then made a hash of it by some careless batting that gave them a lead of 204 when it could have been at least another 100 more runs. That would have put the game beyond Australia but as the pitch eased out they batted with greater resolve and with some unimaginative tactics from Pakistan on the fourth morning they survived and finally left Pakistan to chase 176 runs which frankly were 100 too many.

In the second innings too, the Pakistani batsmen looked as if they were playing for IPL contracts than trying to win a Test match for their country. They had a fifth day coming up too so there was plenty of time to get the runs. The bowlers would be entitled to chide the batsmen and ask them why their sterling efforts were nullified by such an approach.



Australia now have an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three Test series and don't be surprised if it is 3-0 next week. In the other Test match in the southern hemisphere, South Africa once again came close but was unable to deliver the killer blow that would have leveled the series for them. With England being way short of the target set by South Africa the timing of the declaration will be discussed endlessly by the followers of the game. The highest successful fourth innings chase has been 418 by the West Indies so asking England to chase 467 was being ultra cautious by Graeme Smith. He himself had given his team the chance to win the game by playing an outstanding innings of 183 but on a pitch where there was hardly any turn England survived comfortably till suddenly in the last few overs of the game wickets tumbled and last man Graham Onions had to bat for the team's survival again as he had done in the first Test of the series. He did that again and that means that even if South Africa wins the last Test the series will be level and England will go home with the honors.

Smith for his brilliant batsman-ship is this week's CEAT International Cricketer.