

India's warm up game ends in draw -- hold over

There weren't too many positives that the Indians could gather ahead of the first Test match against Sri Lanka as their only warm up game against Sri Lanka Board President's XI ended in a tame draw at the Nondescripts Cricket Club Ground here.

However, the game, hampered by bad weather, gave tourists ample time to get adjusted to the longer version of the game after being engrossed with Twenty-20 and ODI competitions over the last three months.

The tourists were 129 for two at close in their second innings after Sri Lanka declared on 247 for six, setting them an improbable target of 275 in 43 overs.

Earlier, India had declared their first innings on 196 for eight. A top order collapse had left the Indians struggling on 80 for five and half-centuries by Sachin Tendulkar and wicket-keeper Dinesh Karthik were the only positives.

The Sri Lankan top order too struggled for runs on a good wicket as the wickets were shared among all Indian bowlers.

A cause for concern, however, for the Indian management is the inconsistency of left-arm seamer Zaheer Khan. Zaheer bowled 13 overs and picked up the wicket of opener Upul Tharanga but was no balled for overstepping 11 times.

Ishant Sharma, meanwhile, was sharp and bowled at a good pace while off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, returning to the side after suspension, bowled with control and picked up two wickets.

Captain Anil Kumble, who bowled only 13 overs in the hosts' first innings, didn't bowl at all in the second innings despite being on the field.

When India batted second time around, Virender Sehwag was dismissed early and then Rahul Dravid (26) and Gautam Gambhir (60) added 66 runs for the second wicket.

Dravid was bowled by Rangana Herath's quicker delivery with 40 minutes to go for stumps. Dravid's wicket brought Sourav Ganguly to the crease and he remained unbeaten on 22.

Chamara Silva, once again, stood out for the Sri Lankans with an unbeaten half-century, his second in the game. Captain Jehan Mubarak made 41 before falling for a loose shot like a few other top order batsmen while Dhammika Prasad came in late and made a quick 43 in 53 balls with four boundaries and a six, adding 74 runs for the seventh wicket with Silva.

India coach Garry Kirsten was content with India's effort in the warm up game. "It was a good practice opportunity for the guys. It's not ideal when just one or two guys get the practice, but that's the nature of a practice match. I am just happy with the preparation and the way things are going," the former South African opener said.

However, he admitted that rain and wet outfield hampered India's preparations. "We can't control the weather. We've got to manage it. There was forecast for 80% rain today, so we changed our

plans. We wanted to declare early last evening to make a game out of this, but once we were told the weather predications, we changed the plan as we thought we wouldn't get much of play. As it went, Gautam Gambhir made a good 50 and Sourav batted a bit towards the end."

When asked why Kumble didn't bowl at all in the second innings, Kirsten said: "He's just looking after himself. He's comfortable with the area he was landing the ball and he wants to take care of his body," Kirsten said.

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