

Irani Trophy: Dravid helps Rest Of India stretch lead to 286

Former India captain Rahul Dravid struck a patient 69 to help Rest of India (ROI) take a 286 runs lead over Ranji Trophy champions Delhi at lunch on the third day of the Irani Trophy match here Friday.

ROI were 211 for the loss of five wickets in the second innings at the break with Mahendra Singh Dhoni batting on 32 and skipper Anil Kumble 4. ROI made 252 runs in the first innings and skittled Delhi out for 177.

Resuming at their overnight 99 for one, ROI batsmen scored 112 runs, losing four wickets, in the first session.

Delhi fast bowler Ishant Sharma troubled the ROI batsmen in a long fiery first spell this morning. He bowled five maiden overs on the trot and overnight batsman Subramaniam Badrinath (36) played on for the second time in the match. Mohammed Kaif survived one ball before snicking Sharma to wicketkeeper Puneet Bisht. Kaif thus lost an opportunity to impress the selectors.

Dravid and V.V.S. Laxman (18) then stitched a 42-run partnership to keep the Delhi bowlers at bay. Laxman was in fluent touch and fell at a time when he was looking settled. He tried to hit Chetanya Nanda against the spin and the leading edge flew to substitute Mayank Tehlan.

Dravid played patiently for his 100th first class half-century off 173 balls.

Dhoni batted briskly, smacking Delhi captain Virender Sehwag for a couple of fours over long-on. He added 55 runs with Dravid for the fifth wicket.

Dravid's 211-ball innings came to an end when he cut Nanda to first-slip Aakash Chopra.

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