

## Indian bowlers rein in Australian top-order

India turned the heat on Australia on the fourth day of the first cricket Test at the M. Chinnaswamy stadium here.

Establishing a first innings lead of 70, after bowling out India for 360 against their 430, Australia had crawled to 74 for two in their second essay at tea. In effect they are 144 runs ahead, but they would need at least another 170 runs to set India a stiff target on a wearing fourth-inning wicket.

Though India lost the services of skipper Anil Kumble to a shoulder strain, Zaheer Khan, who has had a brilliant run in this Test, Ishant Sharma and Harbhajan Singh bowled remarkably well to tie down the naturally aggressive Aussie top order.

Zaheer struck early when he removed Matthew Hayden with a debatable leg before decision, again by umpire Asad Rauf. The ball seemed to be heading down the hill, but Rauf deemed Hayden, who had been victim of a poor verdict in the first innings as well, was plumb in front!

Ricky Ponting survived anxious moments against the wily Harbhajan before Ishant Sharma accounted for his scalp for the fourth time in four Tests. An intended clip to leg saw Laxman pouch the cherry at short mid-wicket.

At 49 for two, Australia needed Simon Katich, who was spilled by Gautam Gambhir at forward short-leg off Harbhajan when he had made five, and first innings batting hero Michael Hussey to steady the rocking ship. The left handers rose to the occasion to smother an increasingly threatening Indian attack, which seemed to bite and snap at both ends of the wicket.

Earlier, India, resuming at their overnight 313 for eight, waged a dogged battle, consuming as many as 85 minutes before Australia belatedly wrapped up the innings.

The Indian tail, which showed more character than the top order, batted out 18 crucial overs in the morning session before left-arm twacker Michael Clarke brought the curtains down on the innings 35 minutes before lunch. Clarke yorked Ishant (6, 34 minutes) who played the supporting role to the gallant Zaheer Khan.

Zaheer Khan, resuming at his overnight 35, went on to score his second Test half century, capping his five-wicket haul (5 for 91) in the Australian first innings. Interestingly his unbeaten 57 was the highest score of the Indian innings. Harbhajan Singh had made 54.

Left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Johnson (4 for 70) and all-rounder Shane Watson, who produced the breakthrough in the morning when he had skipper Anil Kumble right in front of the wicket with a ball which broke back into the batsmen, shared the bowling honours for Australia. Watson returned with figures of 3 for 45.

Australia conceded their highest extras (52) in an innings against India, bettering the 45 they had given away in 1986-87 at Mumbai.

*James Keith* ( © IANS / India eNews)