

■ India's wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant stumps out Sri Lanka's Pasindu Sooriyabandara.

AFP



Indian bowlers show 'character' on Day 4

SRI LANKA 16 RUNS AHEAD WITH 4 WICKETS IN HAND

COLOMBO

India are closing in on a big win in Colombo after Sri Lanka slumped to 229-6 at stumps on day four of the second Test, having been made to follow-on on yesterday.

Sri Lanka lead by just 16 runs with four wickets in hand and going into the fifth and final day the tourists will be looking to complete a 2-0 series sweep.

Sonal Dinusha, who batted superbly for a hundred in the first innings, was unbeaten on seven with Keshara Nuwantha (three) for company when rain forced play to end early.

Sri Lanka, who resumed the day on 265-8 in response to India's 503-9 declared, were bowled out for 290 and asked to bat again.

Follow-on crucial

"We wanted to insert the follow-on knowing very well that there is lot of rain around," India's spin bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said on the team's decision to enforce the follow-on.

"We knew that it was going to be tough on the bowlers, but everyone felt that we should put them in again. Great to see the character shown by the bowlers, stay patient and create those opportunities.

"This is a young spin attack that we have. There's nerves as some of them haven't played lot of Test cricket. But they were prepared to learn."

Dinusha, who made 103 in the first innings, said, "We need to get as many runs as possible. We lost too many wickets in the last session and we need to bat well tomorrow."

STARC BECOMES NO 1 TEST BOWLER

Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc has reached the No 1 position in the ICC Men's Test Bowling Rankings for the first time in his career after producing a match-winning 10-wicket haul against Bangladesh in Mackay.

His latest surge has taken him past New Zealand's Matt Henry and India's Jasprit Bumrah, with Starc holding a 10-point advantage over the Indian pace spearhead. His previous best ranking was No 2, a position he first achieved after the Boxing Day Test last year.

England seamer Ollie Robinson was another major mover in the bowling rankings. His five for 51 and three for 39 against Pakistan helped him climb 15 places to 11th.

His England teammate Josh Tongue, who also claimed eight wickets at Headingley, rose 16 places to 17th.

India left-arm spinner Manav Suthar made significant progress after taking 10 wickets in India's 165-run victory over Sri Lanka in the first Test in Galle. He climbed 28 places to a career-best 48th. Sri Lanka pacer Asitha Fernando and spinner Prabath Jayasuriya also moved up five places to 15th and 16th, respectively.

In the ICC Men's Test Batting Rankings, England's Harry Brook strengthened his position at the top by doubling his lead over teammate Joe Root to 24 rating points. India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant returned to the top 10 for the first time in a year after scores of 39 and 66. He climbed six places to seventh.

— Jai Rai



AFP

■ Mitchell Starc

The hosts lost both their openers early before Kamindu Mendis and Pasindu Sooriyabandara (92) gave Sri Lanka hope with a 115-run stand for the third wicket.

Sooriyabandara, who had made 80 in the first innings, once again played spin superbly with clever footwork, while Mendis took on the fast bowlers in his 55.

But India persisted with the short ball against Mendis, keeping three fielders on the boundary and the plan paid off.

Mendis took on Mohammed Siraj and perished, with captain

Shubman Gill running in from square leg to complete a stunning catch.

The spinners got back into action and three wickets fell for just nine runs as India regained control.

Sooriyabandara missed out on a hundred when he charged Manav Suthar.

The left-arm spinner cleverly fired the ball wide, leaving the batter stranded as Rishabh Pant whipped off the bails. Sooriyabandara hit 10 fours and one six in his 173-ball stay.

— AFP