

Victorious Aussies... Once again

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In a nutshell, Australians beat the Pakis, nothing new there. But one had hoped that the Pakistanis under the new captaincy of an able player would be able to put up a respectable resistance. It was with this expectation and the memories of previous games between Australia and Pakistan which were tantalising to watch, that over 30,000 people packed the SCG on Sunday afternoon. The weather behaved and remained nice and cool, Sydney's transport system behaved and we got there on time, and the crowds behaved and enjoyed themselves... all until Pakistan's wickets fell faster than ice cream melting on a hot summer's day.



Pakistan won the toss and elected to field, giving the Aussies an opportunity to make some quick runs in the daylight hours, on a pitch the Pakistani bowlers couldn't quite use to their advantage. Watson hit Aamer's first ball for four and the crowd murmured appreciatively at the taste of what was to come. Watson and his opening partner Shaun Marsh knocked up 100 by the 17th over and the Pakistanis were looking lost and regretting the decision made at the toss. They fielded well, there was no fumbling or drops of easy catches and a great catch by Shoiab Malik when Watson smashed Afridi towards deep mid-wicket raised cheers from the crowd, but it just wasn't enough to stop the Aussies from cruising to a substantial 6-267. Watson and White had the highest scores of 69 and 55 respectively with good partnerships with Marsh and Hussey to keep the crowds satisfied.

As the Aussies left the field for the break, the crowd got up to stretch their legs and anticipated a good resistance from the Pakistanis to make this one dayer a worthwhile watch. It didn't happen. The top order crumbled and only the captain struggled to 58 before he too was caught by Hauritz on a ball from McKay. Australia's fast bowlers kept the pace at a punishing high with Bollinger and McKay alternating the attack and the crowd going wild with chants of 'Come on Duggie, Come on!' Salman Butt's 72



runs in the last ODI at the Gabba seemed a distant memory as Bollinger dismissed him for 2. Butt's dismissal left his opening partner Akmal struggling in the face of McKay and Bollingers bowling and soon he was run out at 16. Afridi's entry onto the pitch raised the hopes of a dwindling Pakistani crowd but he too failed to deliver, caught and bowled by Watson, having made only 9 runs.

The team's morale was low and the crowd's lower. People began leaving as the lower order crumpled with a fine catch from Ponting dismissing Malik for 2. The unexpected last breath for the Pakistani team came with the 27 notched up by Naveed -ul-Hasan, but he too was out and soon after, the game was over. Pakistan had struggled to 127, their lowest score against Australia. They fielded well but their batting was shocking, and their lack of strategy worse. I felt sorry for the crowds of Pakistanis that went home dejectedly from the SCG, let down once again by a side with young talent, loads of potential but no strategy, no discipline and no guidance. If Pakistan has any desire to regain its international fame as a reputed team that can deliver exciting world-class cricket, it needs to move beyond locker room politics and band together as a team. It's more experience players need to keep up team morale and guide the younger players to perform under pressure.

At the end of the day, the Aussies pulled through once again. A solid performance by both bowlers and batsmen, good fielding, strong defence and use of power play and an overall team morale and energy that was felt by the opposing team as well as the crowd. The crowd may have missed Gilly and Warne but they were definitely not disappointed by the Australian team's performance which delivered on the promise of exciting cricket made by their skipper.