



**PAKISTAN:** This photograph taken on December 30, 2014, shows Pakistani all-rounder Shahid Afridi attends a local event in Karachi. If fan following was a yardstick of greatness in cricket, Pakistan's colourful all-rounder Shahid Afridi would probably be ranked his country's greatest ever player. —AFP

## AFRIDI LEAVES VACUUM FOR FANS — AND ADVERTISERS

**KARACHI:** If fan following was a yardstick of greatness in cricket, Pakistan's colourful all-rounder Shahid Afridi would probably be ranked his country's greatest ever player.

Ever since he hit a 37-ball hundred in only his second one-day international against Sri Lanka in Nairobi in 1996 — Afridi has been a cult figure in Pakistan.

His announcement last week that he was quitting one-day cricket after next year's World Cup has left his millions of fans pondering: who to watch after him?

No cricketer in Pakistan has had the persona and the box office pull of the hyperactive, big-hitting Afridi, who filled stadiums throughout his career and often emptied them when he was out.

The fervor for watching him bat was such that when he was dismissed first ball by an unknown Zimbabwe bowler in Peshawar a few days after his world record hundred, the crowd chanted: "Try ball, let Afridi bat again!"

Girls swooned for a glimpse of him and many wanted to marry him. In 2004 two women came in bridal dress to a ground and were only convinced to leave after meeting him face to face.

Afridi won hearts with his unorthodox, buccaneering style—ignoring the coaching manual to rely on swagger and raw talent.

It was an approach tailor-made for TV and Afridi's career coincided with the explosion of Pakistani media that followed General Pervez Musharraf's liberalisation of the sector in 2002.

Pakistani cricket writer and historian Osman Samiuddin said the exposure meant Afridi's popularity become virtually unmatched, in any era.

"He has played in the right age for sure, when a booming electronic media has made him a bigger public presence than previous stars such as Imran Khan, Wasim Akram or Waqar Younis," Samiuddin told AFP. The Afridi effect can be seen in any street game in Pakistan, where millions of children copy his style—trying to smash every other ball out of the park.

Afridi's superstardom on the field made him the face of Pakistan off it, and his likeness is plastered across billboards and TV ads everywhere in the country.

Even now, in the twilight of his career, Afridi advertises everything from shampoo, banking and skin cream to chewing

gum, with a ubiquity surpassed perhaps only by Sachin Tendulkar in India.

"Afridi may not always be the star performer but he remains a star," said Kamil Ahmed, who works for a top advertising agency in Karachi. "His name can lift a product, especially those for young people, who are mad for him."

Afridi, now 34, has had ups and downs in his career but his support reached new heights when he became captain in 2010.

"I am lucky in the sense that people loved me more than anyone else," Afridi told AFP. "It's a great blessing and I always wanted to play for my country and for my fans."

With age catching up and form sliding, Afridi's fan following started to diminish two years ago. He was dropped from the one-day side for the tour of India in December 2012 and then for the Champions Trophy a year later.

But in typical style, he won back hearts with a blistering 18-ball 34 against India to help Pakistan reach the final of the Asia Cup in March.

Two sixes off Ravichandran Ashwin in the last over against arch-rivals India silenced the critics. "When Afridi wins a game in that manner it feels much more than just an ordinary win," said Samiuddin, author of "The Unquiet Ones," a new history of Pakistani cricket.

There are those who became exasperated with Afridi in recent years, seeing a player whose love for the spectacular often came at the expense of his teammates.

But Samiuddin says that for all his occasional failures, Afridi would be remembered as "a very very good limited overs player, among the greatest Pakistan has seen."

"He has changed the course of matches with his bowling many times and does so with his batting as well," he said. Despite bagging 391 wickets in 389 ODIs with his brisk leg-spin, Afridi agrees fans largely come to watch him bat.

"I know my contributions as a bowler count for little. They want sixes flying all the time from my bat and I always try to do that," said Afridi, whose 342 sixes in 389 matches is a world record.

Whatever his performance at next year's World Cup, it will be a long time before cricket sees another performer quite like Shahid Afridi.—AFP

## SOUTH AFRICA SEEK SERIES WIN

**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa will literally be trying to make up for lost time when they take on the West Indies in the third and final Test at Newlands tomorrow.

Although the West Indies put up an improved performance, South African captain Hashim Amla stopped short of acknowledging their credentials in his post-match comments after the rain-hit second Test in Port Elizabeth ended in a draw.

Amla suggested that South Africa's first innings total of 417 for eight could have been bigger had his team not been trying to force the pace after most of the second day's play was washed out.

He also pointed out that the West Indian reply of 275 for nine was largely due to a third wicket partnership of 176 between Kraigg Brathwaite and Marlon Samuels, who both hit centuries. The next highest West Indian score was 22 by Devon Smith.

According to Amla, the South African bowlers performed well on an unresponsive pitch in Port Elizabeth. "I think on a different surface we may have picked up a lot more wickets a lot quicker. We did very well to take seven wickets in 35 overs (on day four) so we have a lot of positives to take into the next game," he said.

Amla clearly felt that South Africa would have been favourites to win if the weather had not cut more than half the playing time from the second Test. The South African bowlers can expect more pace, bounce and possibly seam movement at Newlands. South Africa, who lead the series 1-0 after an innings win in the first Test in Centurion, added uncapped off-spinner Simon Harmer to their squad for Newlands.

"We would like to have the option of a second spinner," said selection convener Andrew Hudson. It would be unusual for South Africa to include two spin bowlers in the same team but Harmer, from the Eastern Cape Warriors franchise, is also a useful batsman.

If he plays he could possibly replace one of the seven specialist batsmen who played in Port Elizabeth if he is not picked ahead of leg-spinner Imran Tahir, who took three wickets but was expensive at St George's Park. The West Indies will have to choose between bolstering a fragile batting line-up or go in with the same bowling line-up that played in Port Elizabeth.

After Centurion, they dropped batsman Jermaine Blackwood and picked all-rounder Jason Holder. It led to an improved bowling performance but the lower order batsmen, including Holder, crumbled against the pace of Morne Morkel and spin of Tahir.

West Indian coach Stuart Williams said his team was a "work in progress" and the players were looking forward to playing at Newlands in what is traditionally South African cricket's biggest occasion.

### Teams:

**South Africa (likely, from):** Hashim Amla (captain), Alviro Petersen, Dean Elgar, Faf du Plessis, AB de Villiers (wkt), Stiaan van Zyl, Temba Bavuma, Vernon Philander, Dale Steyn, Morne Morkel, Imran Tahir, Simon Harmer.

**West Indies (from):** Denesh Ramdin (captain, wkt), Kraigg Brathwaite, Devon Smith, Leon Johnson, Marlon Samuels, Shivnarine Chandernaul, Jermaine Blackwood, Jerome Taylor, Suliaman Benn, Sheldon Cottrell, Jason Holder, Shannon Gabriel, Narsingh Deonarine, Kenroy Peters, Chadwick Walton (wkt).

**Umpires:** Aleem Dar (PAK), Paul Reiffel (AUS).  
**TV umpire:** Billy Bowden (NZL). Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (SRI). —AFP



**PORT ELIZABETH:** South Africa's Imran Tahir celebrates a wicket during the fourth day of their second cricket Test against West Indies in this file photo. —AP

## NOTRE DAME DEFEAT LSU

**NASHVILLE:** Notre Dame's Kyle Brindza kicked a 32-yard field goal as time expired to give the Fighting Irish an upset 31-28 win against Louisiana State in the Music City Bowl on Tuesday.

The day's other bowl games were not as close: Georgia running back Nick Chubb led the Bulldogs to a comfortable win against Louisville in the Belk Bowl and Stanford overwhelmed Maryland in the Foster Farms Bowl. Notre Dame (8-5) stopped a fake field goal just short of the goal line at the end of the first half and blocked a 40-yard field goal attempt by Trent Domingue early in the fourth quarter. The Fighting Irish got the ball with 5:41 left and never gave it back, driving 71 yards in 14 plays before Brindza finished off the win.

Coach Brian Kelly gave Malik Zaire his first career start, but he also played senior Everett

Golson, using both quarterbacks on the winning drive. Louisiana State lost for the first time this season to a team not from the Southeastern Conference's Western Division. Leonard Fournette ran for 143 yards and two touchdowns, and also returned a kickoff 100 yards for a score.

Georgia's Chubb ran for a career-high 266 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Bulldogs past Louisville 37-14 in the Belk Bowl. Chubb averaged 8 yards per carry and the Bulldogs (10-3) piled up 301 yards rushing against the nation's second-best run defense.

Georgia's starting quarterback Hutson Mason threw for 149 yards and a touchdown before leaving with blurred vision in the second quarter with the Bulldogs ahead 20-7. He was replaced by Brice Ramsey, whose primary duty was to hand the ball off to Chubb.

Georgia's defense made four turnovers,

with Dominick Sanders recording two interceptions. Quarterback Kyle Bolin made his first career start for Louisville and finished 20 of 40 for 301 yards with two interceptions and one touchdown. Brandon Radcliff ran for 91 yards and a touchdown.

Stanford's quarterback Kevin Hogan threw for 189 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Cardinal to a 45-21 victory over Maryland in the Foster Farms Bowl.

Remound Wright ran for three short scores as Stanford blew past the Terrapins with the kind of complete performance that had eluded them most of the season. The Cardinal out-gained Maryland 414 to 222 yards and looked right at home at Levi's Stadium, close to the Stanford campus. It was the most points scored in a bowl game in Stanford history. Maryland missed a chance for its first postseason win since 2010. —AP



**NASHVILLE:** Notre Dame wide receiver CJ Prosise (20) gets past LSU safety Jamal Adams (33) as Prosise scores a touchdown on a 50-yard run in the second half of the Music City Bowl NCAA college football game. —AP

## AUSTRALIA BRACE FOR EMOTIONAL TEST

**SYDNEY:** Australia may have sealed the four-test series against India but the final match in Sydney could prove the most emotionally taxing for the hosts as they return to the venue where Phillip Hughes was fatally struck by a bouncer last month.

Brad Haddin, Nathan Lyon, Shane Watson and David Warner were fielding at the Sydney Cricket Ground when Hughes sustained the sickening blow to his neck, never regaining consciousness and eventually passing away three days before his 26th birthday.

Australia coped well with the tragedy to take an unassailable 2-0 lead against India and coach Darren Lehmann is in no doubt that emotion will run high as they return to Sydney for the fourth test starting on Tuesday.

"I'm sure it's in the back of their minds and everyone's minds around Australia," Lehmann said. "For us we've just got to get on with playing the game as best we can. I actually don't know how they'll react, we have to see how we react.

"We've got to have a couple days off now and try to get through that over the next few days." Warner said Hughes' passing continued to impact his life. "It's going to be in the back of my mind every time I play," the hard-hitting opener said.

"Every time I sit at home and I'm thinking about nothing but that. We've got to keep pushing on. He'd want us to do that." Apart from being in control of their emotions, Lehmann also wants his team to improve their fielding, especially catching, in Sydney.

The butter-fingered hosts dropped both Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane in India's first innings in Melbourne, allowing them to post career-best scores in a 262-run partnership.

"(The fielding was) shoddy at best. We've done a lot of work and I can't complain about the work ethic from the lads, but the big one's that cost us were the first innings," Lehmann said. "It's not volume or practice, they're very good at that. It's probably more confidence to be honest." —Reuters