

## The Last Session at Madras: a New Account.

### (July 2023 Update)

The famed Tied Test in Madras (Chennai) in 1986 is so familiar that it is rather surprising, and sad, that no original score for the match was known to survive. The Australian touring team did not return with a scorebook, and nothing was found in Indian archives, although scores for the other two Tests of that series exist. The match was not broadcast on Australian television (the final day clashed with the Brownlow Medal!); the known surviving video highlights were fragmentary, and the upshot is that many details of the match have been obscured.

In 2022 there was a breakthrough. Lawrie Colliver, editor of the *Australian Cricket Digest* annual, has obtained a complete videotape of the final session of the match. Lawrie has made a scoresheet from it, covering one of the most dramatic sessions in any Test match, at a level of detail never reported before.

Then in 2023 a facsimile score of the final innings came to light. It had actually been published in 2016 in a book "*From Mumbai to Durban*" by Giridhar and Raghunath, a volume that was rare, perhaps non-existent, in Australia. I have now obtained a copy and re-scored the innings into ball-by-ball form. There were a few uncertainties; the image in the book was small and quite hard to read, and the scorer's writing was not especially neat.

This report of the final session is drawn largely from these sources...

In stifling Madras heat, 40 degrees with high humidity, the Test scheduling was limited to 5.5 hours per day (2+2+1.5), with a minimum of 82 overs. The final day was extended to 87 overs, because the 'final hour' applied a minimum of 20 overs at the time (reduced to the current 15 overs in 1991). The required over rate was effectively impossible in those conditions, and the final day ran long over time. The crowd size was reported at 25,000 to 30,000. Play started at 9:30.

Border had declared overnight, setting India a task of 348 runs in 87 overs. It was a challenging declaration, even 'sporting', and right from the start India batted with purpose. Opening bowlers McDermott and Reid evidently made little impact, and Greg Matthews and Ray Bright were brought on in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> overs. Kris Srikkanth then went on the attack with a fluent 39 off 49 balls (the last 31 off 23) before he was out in the 17<sup>th</sup> over. Advancing to 1 for 94 in 29 overs at lunch, Mohinder Amarnath and Sunil Gavaskar maintained momentum until Amarnath was out for 51 off 113 balls in the 49<sup>th</sup> over. Matthews bowled through the second session from the south end, while Bright shared the bowling with Reid, McDermott and Waugh.

The tea score was 2 for 193 off 57 overs, Gavaskar 84, Azharuddin 15. With 155 to win off 30 overs, at this point the video begins. The time was 2:30 pm.

The bowling for the climactic final session was left mostly in the hands of Bright and Matthews. Matthews, in his Baggy Green, bowled unchanged from the southern end, while Bright too bowled for most of the session. In the fifth over, with Gavaskar on 90, Bright missed a caught & bowled chance, only to have Sunny caught by Jones off the very next ball. Young CS Pandit hit his first two balls for four and stayed ahead of the clock until drinks were taken, ten overs into the session, at 230 for three. The 'final 20' overs were signalled with 118 runs to win.

This last 'hour' must have been one of the most exhausting in any Test match. There were all sorts of delays; multiple drinks breaks called for by both teams, Bright and Matthews changed their shirts. Disputes broke out between the teams, some involving umpire Dotiwalla. Meanwhile, Azharuddin hit Matthews for six, but was caught for 48 off Bright in the next over, the 72<sup>nd</sup> of the innings. When first innings century-maker Kapil Dev was out in the next over Indian hearts sank, but Pandit and Shastri kept the runs coming without pause. There were two sixes by Shastri in two Matthews overs, but the last ball of the latter over (the 77<sup>th</sup>) saw Pandit out for 39, made at a run a ball. Chetan Sharma also scored well, bringing up 300 in 351 minutes. A difficult caught & bowled chance was dropped by Matthews; it could have been a turning point.

Bruce Reid relieved Bright for four overs, with little result. A new ball was available but apparently not taken, and Reid bowled without a slip field. With only 17 needed in four overs with four wickets in hand, the match was slipping away from Australia. Border's final gambit was to bring Bright back on, and immediately, in the 84<sup>th</sup> over, Sharma and More were dismissed. Eight down, fourteen to win in three overs. Shastri now had to contend with farming the strike as well as the scoring pressure. Yadav clobbered Matthews for six but was bowled on 344 in Bright's last over, the 86<sup>th</sup> of the innings. Bright had gone from 2 for 88 to 5 for 94 in two overs, transforming the match once again. The last over fell to Matthews, with four to win; it was Matthews' 40<sup>th</sup> over of the day, bowled in that debilitating Madras heat.

Shastri managed two and one, levelling the scores, but last man Maninder Singh could not squeeze out the winning run. At 5:19, with one ball still to bowl, a hopeful lbw appeal by Matthews was given out by umpire Vikramraju, with such startling speed that Shastri did not realise what had happened. Matthews and the team rampaged around with Shastri and Maninder standing rather dazed and confused.

The last 19.5 overs had taken one hour 48 minutes; the day as a whole took almost seven hours playing time (409 minutes). Lawrie Colliver reports that, based on the video, the scoring in the final session is completely accurate. Since that day, there have been rumours that an error was discovered in the scoring and Australia had really won (Dean Jones once told me that he believed this). However, no errors can be seen in the final session, or in the final day scoresheet for that matter, and both teams must have known exactly how the target stood throughout.

A final comment on Matthews. As far as I can find, no other bowler in the last 50 years has bowled a spell of 40 overs virtually unchanged in a single day (interrupted by a single over by Steve Waugh just before lunch). There have been longer spells, but always extending across a couple of days. Matthews took ten wickets in the match and scored 71 runs for once out; there is no parallel for such a performance failing to win a Man of the Match award, which was shared by Jones (deservedly) and Kapil (absurdly).

Balls faced by batsmen from this account sometimes vary from online scores. Notably, Chetan Sharma faced 25 balls not 38, Shastri 36 balls not 40, and Gavaskar 169 balls not 168.

INDIA	2nd Innings (target 348)	R	M	4,6	BF
<b>SM Gavaskar</b>	c-cv Jones b Bright	<b>90</b>	253	12,1	169
<b>K Srikanth</b>	c-In Waugh b Matthews	<b>39</b>	75	6,-	49
<b>M Amarnath</b>	c-sg Boon b Matthews	<b>51</b>	111	8,-	113
<b>M Azharuddin</b>	c-lf Ritchie b Bright	<b>42</b>	121	3,1	77
<b>CS Pandit</b>	b Matthews	<b>39</b>	83	5,-	39
<b>N Kapil Dev</b>	c-sq Bright b Matthews	<b>1</b>	5	0,-	2
<b>RJ Shastri</b>	not out	<b>48</b>	94	3,2	36
<b>Chetan Sharma</b>	c-In McDermott b Bright	<b>23</b>	38	3,-	25
<b>KS More</b>	lbw b Bright	<b>0</b>	3	0,-	1
<b>NS Yadav</b>	b Bright	<b>8</b>	14	0,1	8
<b>Maninder Singh</b>	lbw b Matthews	<b>0</b>	8	0,-	4
<b>Extras</b>	b 1, lb 3, nb 2, w 0	<b>6</b>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.5 overs all out</b>	<b>347</b>			

	Ov	M	R	W	nb,w	6s
<b>CJ McDermott</b>	5	0	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	-, -	-
<b>BA Reid</b>	10	2	<b>48</b>	<b>0</b>	1,-	-
<b>GRJ Matthews</b>	39.5	7	<b>146</b>	<b>5</b>	-, -	5
<b>RJ Bright</b>	25	3	<b>94</b>	<b>5</b>	-, -	-
<b>AR Border</b>	3	0	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	-, -	-
<b>SR Waugh</b>	4	1	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	1,-	-

Fall of Wickets					
	Ov.	Partn.	Mins		
1-55	17	55	75	Srikanth/Gavaskar	
2-158	41	103	111	Amarnath/Gavaskar	
3-204	61.3	46	64	Gavaskar/Azharuddin 20	
4-251	71.3	47	56	Azharuddin/Pandit 24	
5-253	72.1	2	5	Kapil/Pandit 25	
6-291	76.6	38	19	Pandit/Shastri 24	
7-331	83.2	40	38	Sharma/Shastri 40	
8-334	83.5	3	3	More/Shastri 43	
9-344	85.4	10	14	Yadav/Shastri 45	
10-347	86.5	3	8	Singh/Shastri 48	

Named scorers include KS Mani, G Ganesh.

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