

England survive umpiring nightmare: Hussain stands firm as four team-mates get rotten decisions

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Second Test

England survive umpiring nightmare

Hussain stands firm as four team-mates get rotten decisions

Mike Selvey
at St George's Park

South Africa 450
& 224-4dec
England 373 & 153-6

Match drawn

England survived the South African pace attack and despicable umpiring to save the second Test yesterday.

Asked to make 302 to win in 79 overs they had reached 153 for six when Hansie Cronje, frustrated by a slow pitch, called off his attempt to win the game with two overs left.

So ends a run of 10 successive home wins for South Africa and the prospect, much touted, of a whitewash to match that handed out to West Indies last year. Instead the sides will meet again on Boxing Day for the third Test in Durban with the series very much alive.

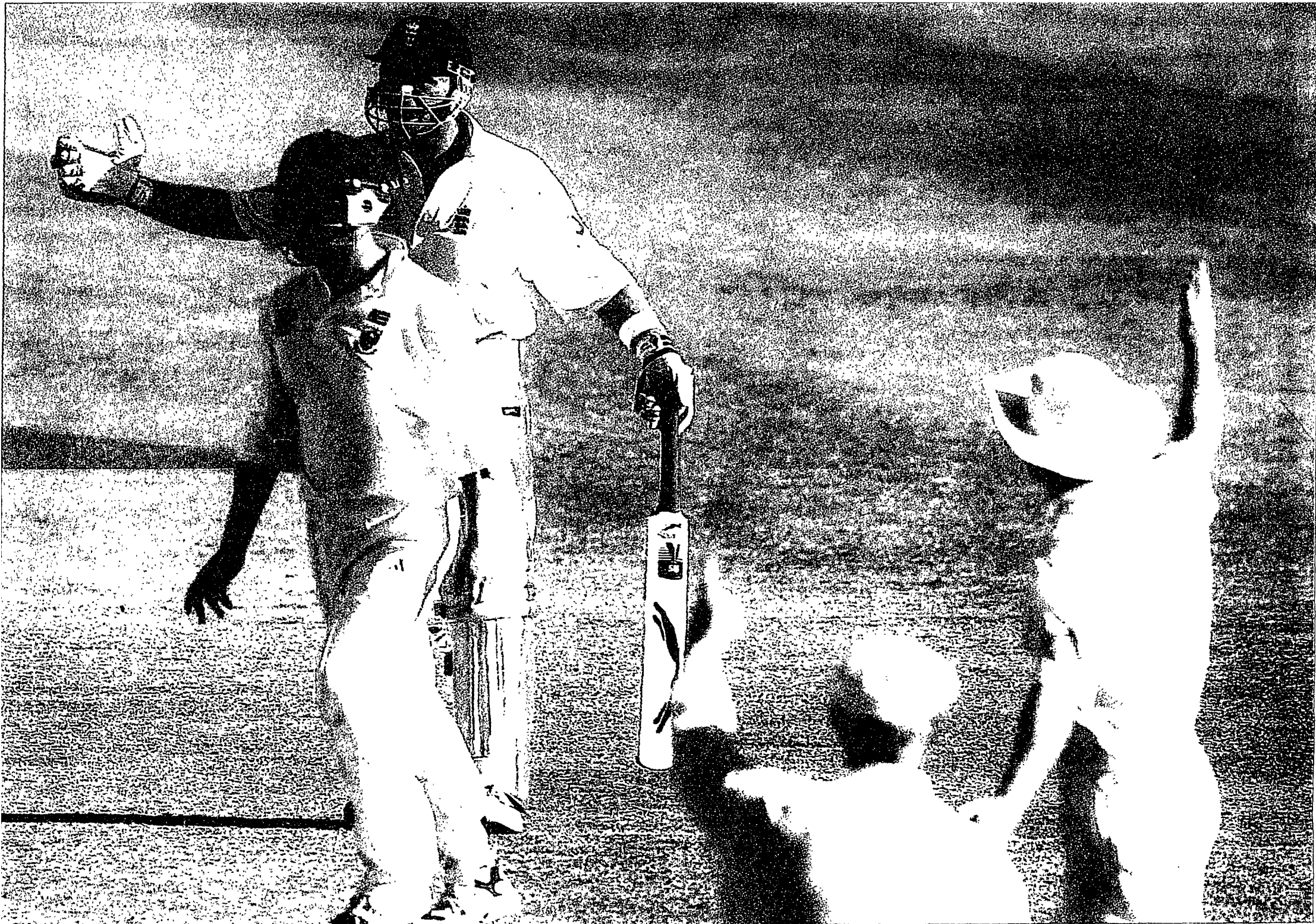
To see his side to safety Nasser Hussain, the England captain, had stood firm for more than five hours in making a brilliant unbeaten 70 — at first with blazing eyes and nostrils flared as the adrenalin pumped and later with calm dedication — as his side were relentlessly gunned down by the South African umpire Rudi Koertzen and the West Indian Steve Bucknor.

Mark Butcher, Michael Vaughan, Alec Stewart and Chris Adams were all on the receiving end of appalling decisions which could easily have swayed the match and closed down the series.

Late in the game, too, Lance Klusener twice committed flagrant breaches of the laws of cricket by bowling deliveries to Hussain from behind Bucknor. On neither occasion was a no-ball called and the implication is that had either of the deliveries hit Hussain's stumps he would have been given out. If this is the best that the International Cricket Council can come up with for Test cricket, then things have reached a sorry pass. The players and the game deserve better.

If a draw was the best England could hope for on a surface that had lost pace and against a bowling side capable of bottling things up, then South Africa will be deeply disappointed that they were not able to finish off a job they thought they had all but done when play began.

But they have only themselves to blame, first for stereotyping their attack by omitting the spinner Paul Adams (included on the wet greentop at the Wanderers, remember, but perversely not here) in the belief that the pace bowlers, especially Nantie Hayward on his home patch, would exploit low bounce on the last afternoon. More particularly, they



A disbelieving Chris Adams waves his arms in surprise as the South African umpire Rudi Koertzen gives him out caught by Jonty Rhodes after the ball clearly ballooned straight off his pad Photograph: Stu Foster

squandered their chances have reached a sorry pass. The players and the game deserve better.

Quick runs then, followed by a declaration half an hour before the close, would have left Cronje not just with two bursts with the first new ball, but also a second new ball late on the final day perhaps to finish things off. He would have killed for that yesterday. Cronje, not for the first time, let England off the hook.

For England to survive as they did represented a triumph, not just in the context of the game itself but in the aftermath of the blitzkrieg they endured in Johannesburg.

Hussain was superb and batted in all for more than 8½ hours in the match, not just surviving but taking the attack to the South African bowlers.

However, he has had enough experience of England collapses when games have seemed safe to recognise the massive improvement in the stickability of the team. After the match he praised the character shown by his side, particularly Vaughan yesterday.

"He looked composed," said Hussain, "he has a good head. If he needs to improve, it is in the tempo of his batting and I shall be speaking to him about that. But to come into a series like this and look so composed is excellent."

Hussain, under the ICC Code of Conduct, is not permitted to comment on the umpiring, ex-

cept in a confidential report, but no one can be in any doubt as to what his views would be. Koertzen is one of two South African umpires who are on

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the international panel, and yesterday's controversy raises doubts about the democratic national spread of umpires on the panel rather than just employing the best officials.

Of the first five wickets to fall only Mike Atherton — who was a victim of low bounce and away cut — can have little cause to grumble.

Butcher received the sort of lbw decision, with the ball pitching a distance outside the left-hander's leg stump, that a competent umpire ought to disregard out of hand. With 267 runs from 19 innings since his century in Brisbane more than a year ago, Butcher needs all the help he can get rather than this.

After a stay of 2½ hours, Vaughan was then given out caught down the legside off — surprisingly, given that he was

not supposed to be bowling yet — Kallis. Koertzen again.

Alec Stewart followed, lbw to Pollock's off-cutter, this time Bucknor — he of the slow death — failing to recognise a ball scuttling down the legside.

But the final indignity was Adams, who ballooned the ball to extra cover from his pad only to see the South African captain's delirious appeal upheld as Rhodes hurried back from silly mid-off and, without any undue enthusiasm, caught it.

Adams' reaction was one of incredulity and is nowadays deemed by some as fine-worthy. But really, honestly, who could blame him? Worryingly Koertzen is due to stand again in the final Test at Centurion in January. England cannot wait.

Paul Allott, page 29

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 450 L Klusener 174, D Cullinan 58, J Rhodes 50, Tufnell 4-124

ENGLAND: First innings 373 (M Atherton 108, N Hussain 82; Hayward 4-75)

South Africa
Second Innings (overnight 189-4)

J H Kallis not out 85

357 mins, 260 balls, 4 fours

J N Rhodes not out 57

175 mins, 145 balls, 6 fours

Extras (lb 4 lb 11 w 1 nb 9) 25

Total (for 4 dec, 92 5 overs) 224

Fall: 5, 17, 50, 98

Did not bat: S M Pollock, L Klusener, M V Boucher, A A Donald, M Hayward

Bowling: Gough 19-6-52-1, Caddick 18-4-29-2, Silverwood 10-1-24-0, Tufnell 35-9-71-0, Vaughan 2-0-9-0, Flintoff 8-5-2-24-1.

ENGLAND
Second Innings

M A Butcher lbw b Hayward 1

26 mins, 20 balls

ball swung in

M A Atherton b Pollock 3

20 mins, 14 balls

playing back to full length ball

N Hussain not out 70

303 mins, 211 balls, 9 fours, 1 six

M P Vaughan c Boucher b Kallis 29

147 mins, 108 balls, 2 fours

controversial legside catch

A J Stewart lbw b Pollock 28

71 mins, 55 balls, 4 fours, 1 six

beaten off pitch

C J Adams c Rhodes b Cronje 1

51 mins, 32 balls

running back from silly point

A Flintoff c Boucher b Kallis 12

16 mins, 19 balls, 2 fours

low diving offside catch

A R Caddick not out 4

8 mins, 6 balls, 1 four

Extras (lb 2 nb 3) 5

Total (for 6, 77 overs) 153

Fall: 5, 5, 80, 125, 137, 149

Did not bat: C E W Silverwood, D Gough, P C R Tufnell.

Bowling: Donald 13-4-37-0, Pollock 17-8-18-2, Hayward 20-8-55-1, Kallis 7-1-22-2, Klusener 14-9-17-0, Cronje 6-4-2-1

Umpires: S A Bucknor and R E Koertzen

Match drawn.