

# Archer strikes on Test return before India's Gill falls cheaply

AFP:: England fast bowler Jofra Archer struck an early blow as he made a thrilling return to Test cricket at Lord's on Friday before in-form India captain Shubman Gill fell cheaply.

Archer removed Yashasvi Jaiswal with just his third ball after more than four years of injury-induced exile from Test cricket.

Gill, who had previously made a mammoth 585 runs in four innings this series, including three hundreds, was later caught behind for a mere 16.

India were 145-3 in reply to England's first-innings 387 at stumps on the second day of the third Test, a deficit of 242 runs.

KL Rahul was 53 not out alongside Rishabh Pant, unbeaten on 19.

Express quick Archer shone at Lord's during England's 2019 50-over World Cup final win and also made his Test debut that season at the ground, where his bouncer concussed Australia's Steve Smith.

With just his third ball Friday, the 30-year-old unleashed a 90 mph full-length delivery that had a squared-up Jaiswal edging to Harry Brook at second slip.

Archer roared in celebration, with the often restrained crowd at a sun-drenched Lord's joining in.

– 'X-factor' Archer –

England's backing for Archer, in the hope he can star in the 2025/26 Ashes in Australia, has often been questioned during his lengthy absence.

But the way he several times topped 90 mph during a miserly return of 1-22 in 10 overs was a reminder of Archer's quality.

"The noise, the pure joy everyone has seeing him (Archer) back in whites, everyone's genuine excitement to see him playing Test cricket again, it created a great atmosphere," England's Joe Root told Sky Sports after stumps.

"He's X-factor," added Root, who completed a hundred on Friday before setting a new Test record of 211 catches by an outfielder.

England captain Ben Stokes's career has been blighted by injuries and there were fresh concerns when he suffered a groin strain batting on Thursday.

But the lively seamer, in no obvious discomfort, reduced India to 74-2 when Karun Nair (40) edged him low to first slip where Root held a brilliant left-handed catch to take outright possession of a record he had shared with India great Rahul Dravid.

Veteran all-rounder Chris Woakes' three previous wickets this series had come at a hugely expensive average of nearly 97 apiece.

But the 36-year-old still had Gill edging defensively to wicketkeeper Jamie Smith, who held a good catch standing up to the stumps, with India now 107-3.

Earlier, Jasprit Bumrah gained a coveted place on the Lord's honours boards with a five-wicket haul before England paceman Brydon Carse's maiden Test fifty frustrated India.

Bumrah, the world's top-ranked Test bowler, took 5-74 in 27 overs as England were dismissed after lunch.

Bumrah's haul included a sensational spell of 3-1 in seven balls Friday, with the fast bowler dismissing Stokes, century-maker Root and Woakes.

"It's really special," the 31-year-old Bumrah told the BBC. "We don't come here (to Lord's) very often, maybe every four years... Being on the honours board feels good."

But Carse made 56 after he shared an eighth-wicket stand of 84 with Smith, out for 51 after Rahul dropped him in the slips on five.

That followed Smith's excellent 184 not out and 88 during India's crushing 336-run win in the second Test at Edgbaston last week, where the tourists levelled this five-match series at 1-1 despite resting Bumrah.

Root, 99 not out overnight, went to a hundred Friday with a first-ball boundary off Bumrah.

His 37th Test century took Root into fifth place on an all-time list headed by India's Sachin Tendulkar with 51 hundreds.

"I don't think I've been 99 not out overnight before," said Root. "I woke up in the night and couldn't get back to sleep."

Stokes had added just five runs to his overnight 39 when he was bowled by a Bumrah delivery that jagged back.

Next ball, Woakes fell for a golden duck following a thin edge to reserve wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel, deputising for the injured Pant.

Carse survived the hat-trick delivery but Bumrah later bowled Archer to complete his five-wicket haul.

Carse was dropped either side of completing a 77-ball fifty in style by driving Mohammed Siraj for six before the paceman bowled him to end England's innings.

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