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By: *Lawrie Colliver*

Sheffield Shield cricket returned with a bang yesterday, with 46 wickets falling across the opening day of the three games. It was a day where ball dominated the bat, some poor shots were played and at least half dozen batsmen across the country got out not offering a shot.

At the MCG, 17 wickets fell, even though Queensland were 1-74 just before lunch. The Bulls were all out for 149, having lost eight wickets in the middle session and then the Vics found themselves 5-11 before making it to 7-61, Michael Nesar taking 3-9 off nine overs. It was good that Peter Handscomb (25*) stuck up for the pitch, as many of the Vics dismissals were to poor shots or ill-judged leaves.

At the SCG, New South Wales was 3-122 before Nathan McAndrew (4-23) ripped through the middle order to bowl them out for 202. Sam Konstas (44) batted three hours and stuck it out well, but again it was a mix of good bowling as some poor batting. South Australia were battling at 3-42 before finishing on 4-97, Alex Carey out just before stumps for 26. Jason Sangha played well to be unbeaten on 39 at the end of play, he has a chance to go on with the job today on a pitch with cracks already appearing. Given that SA need a lead of 100 as any last innings chase will be tough.

Then in the west, Tassie's bats chipped in here and there to make 239, Jordan Silk (55) the only batsman across the day to reach 50, while Jake Weatherald (44) got in before getting out to a poorly played pull shot. WA is 5-64 at stumps – as 15 wickets fell at the WACA.

Hopefully today will see the games settle down, but in the first round of the second half of the Shield, don't be surprised if we see more BBL "hangover" cricket played around the country!



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Morphettville	Caulfield	Randwick	Doomben
Crystal Clear	The Shark	Harbour Harry	Jungle Jim
R1 : 2 , 5 , 1 , 4	1 : 3 , 4 , 6 , 7	1 : 6 , 14 , 4 , 5	1: 1 , 3 , 4 , 8
R2 : 2 , 6 , 1 , 5	2 : 3 , 2 , 4 , 6	2 : 12 , 8 , 5 , 2	2: 3 , 9 , 2 , 4
R3 : 10 , 7 , 8 , 4	3 : 3 , 1 , 4 , 6	3 : 5 , 7 , 11 , 3	3: 4 , 8 , 6 , 12
R4 : 5 , 2 , 8 , 1	4 : 2 , 3 , 1 , 10	4 : 9 , 7 , 3 , 1	4: 4 , 1 , 8 , 13
R5 : 10 , 5 , 3 , 1	5 : 1 , 8 , 3 , 12	5 : 7 , 1 , 6 , 3	5 : 5 , 4 , 8 , 1
R6 : 4 , 11 , 2 , 13	6 : 8 , 5 , 1 , 7	6 : 6 , 7 , 3 , 1	6: 7 , 9 , 19 , 4
R7 : 7 , 2 , 6 , 3	7 : 4 , 5 , 1 , 3	7 : 4 , 14 , 2 , 5	7: 1 , 6 , 9 , 11
R8 : 10 , 5 , 6 , 4	8 : 5 , 2 , 6 , 12	8 : 3 , 2 , 5 , 8	8: 1 , 13 , 20 , 2
R9 : 12 , 3 , 6 , 5	9 : 12 , 5 , 6 , 1	9 : 14 , 16 , 12 , 8	9: 3 , 2 , 4 , 6
R10: 1 , 5 , 4 , 13	10: 8 , 5 , 6 , 9	10: 10 , 3 , 6 , 5	10 : 14 , 9 , 1 , 2

Jimmy Olsen BR SR 3 # 3 Nomadic SR 6 # 7 La Roja SR 7 # 7 Defensemen	The Mailman BR 2 # 4 The Stars BR 7 # 1 Fabulantes MR 7 # 4 Zou Sensation	Tower Of Knowledge AR 2 # 2 Intellectual AR 6 # 11 Dirty Old Town AR 8 # 10 Mic Drop
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The AFL announced plenty of additional rule changes that will to come into effect for the 2026 Men's season. Best read them before the season commences !!

The rule changes: Last disposal rule , Goal square starting positions , Centre square ball-up , Aligned kick-in times , Ruck nominations , Shrugging in the tackle , The stand rule . The most dramatic rule change will be the introduction of a free kick to be awarded when the ball crosses the boundary line from a disposal between the 50m arcs, bringing the men's game in line with the current AFLW rule. However, if a player doesn't play the ball or blocks an opponent before the ball crosses the line, a normal boundary throw in will occur.

In a further rule change, there will no longer be a requirement for at least one player from each team to start in the goal square, despite the retention of the 6-6-6 rule. **At centre ball-ups, competing rucks will now be unable to cross the centre line before engaging with their opposition ruck.**

For kick-ins, players will now be allowed eight seconds to retrieve the ball and return it to the field of play. This was previously 12 seconds, with the AFL hoping this will reduce the overall match time.

The ruck nomination rule has also changed, with the umpires now able to restart play without a nominated ruckman being present. If there is no nomination, or the ruckman is too far away, play will start immediately. **A 'shrug' in a tackle will now be determined as prior opportunity. It will be adjudicated similar to how a fend or an attempt to evade a tackle is umpired, and therefore holding the ball should be awarded to the tackling team.**

Finally, there has been a slight amendment to the 'stand rule'. According to the rule change, if a player is within 5 metres of a mark or free kick when it is paid, they will be required to 'stand' and can no longer reverse to being 'outside five'. This will essentially be a stronger enforcement of players being told to 'stand' if they are inside the protected area. **AFL Executive General Manager Football of Performance Greg Swann said the changes have been made following significant consultation. "The changes have been made with a focus on making the game easier for our umpires to adjudicate and also reducing total match length," said Mr Swann.**