

Mehrab's timely knock

MOHAMMAD ISAM in Chittagong

Just like he allowed no good opportunity go through to the wicket-keeper, Mehrab Hossain showed the mood to hold on to a chance to cement his place among the Tigers once again.

Playing in his first Test since making debut in Sri Lanka last year, the left-hander batted with a lot of confidence and determination against the New Zealand attack from the word go while most of his colleagues struggled to get the ball off the Chittagong Divisional Stadium square.

It could have been curtains for the home side who won the vital toss yesterday morning and decided to bat first on a flat deck that provided little for sideways movement and was too slow to spin.

But even on favourable conditions and with the visitors under a blazing sun, the first session yielded only 34 runs. Then came a break and with that came three quick wickets for the Black Caps and Mehrab had 44 for four in his hands with another new batsman at the crease.

His first move was to attack the spinners, Jeetan Patel in particular, and he did it with minimum risk. He followed the golden rule -- keep

the ball on the ground -- and thrived.

The young left-hander smashed six off his eight boundaries off the New Zealand off-spinner who had a poor day that began with Tamim Iqbal being dropped off his bowling at short leg in his first over.

"(Jeetan) Patel's deliveries were coming on to the bat nicely and it was difficult for (Daniel) Vettori to get much purchase out of the wicket on the first day," said Mehrab.

"The wicket is pretty flat and we realised that pretty soon. From then on it was just a case of playing the ball on its merit," he added.

Mehrab knew what was there on menu as he made sure the pacemen, both of whom relied heavily on line and length, were dealt with respect.

Iain O'Brien, who took two wickets on the day, gave Mehrab one testing over late in the day, bowling short and even asking the batsman to go for the hook. "I thought their pacers, O'Brien in particular, bowled very well," he later remarked.

"We can't say that we are safe as we are 183 for 4 and need to bat like this tomorrow also," he added.

Mehrab talked about grinding the opposition in the oppressive heat of Chittagong adding that he did, in fact, detect a sense of frustration among the visitors.

"They looked tired. It is really hot out there and I could see frustra-

tion creeping in, especially in the pacers when we were playing them easy. It is hard work playing out there in that heat," said Mehrab.

His 139-run unbroken partnership with Mushfiqur Rahim is now the best fifth wicket stand for Bangladesh and Mehrab revealed that his days in the age-group teams with the young right-hander gave them an edge.

"I have great understanding with Mushfiqur (Rahim) and also with Shakib (Al Hasan) as we have played a lot of cricket together," said Mehrab.

"We never looked at the scoreboard and just stuck to the team plan. Throughout our partnership Rahim and I just talked about that and concentrated on executing the plan. We also decided to take no risk when the second new ball was taken," added the 21-year-old.

"It was a very tiring day and I think I will sleep well tonight," quipped the left-hander when suggested that he would have a sleepless night thinking about a hundred.

Unbeaten on 79 off 164 balls, a maiden Test century would be the natural progression for the batsman who showed great maturity in handling all the criticism after failing to keep a place in the World Cup team last year. He had a solid outing in the last domestic season and made sure he ticked all the

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BRING ME THAT HORIZON: India legend Sachin Tendulkar shoulders arms in celebration after reaching the milestone of the highest run-scorer in Test cricket during the second match against Australia at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium at Mohali yesterday. Tendulkar's achievement, which saw him overtake West Indian star Brian Lara, means that he now enters uncharted territory for cricketers and stands alone in the pinnacle of the cricket world.

He misses his father

PTI, Mohali

The family man beneath the champion cricketer came to the fore again and Sachin Tendulkar said he missed his deceased father after eclipsing Brian Lara's world record for most runs in Test cricket's history.

Once he reached the mark, Tendulkar took off his helmet and looked upwards, as if muttering a silent prayer.

"When I looked up, I had two thoughts in my mind. First I thanked the almighty for all he has given to me. Then I thanked my father. Today I miss him. Definitely he would have been a proud man today," Tendulkar said.

On this momentous occasion, none of his family members was around and the batting great explained, his family members don't believe in public display of emotions.

"I don't play for records and it's not that everyone has to be around. We'll celebrate. They all value this, they all must be extremely happy for me, I know. But it's not my family style to go over the top. As long as I know their feeling, it's important and I know that everyone must be extremely happy for me." Asked how his son would celebrate the feat, Tendulkar said, "Well, I'm not sure because he always surprises me." Tendulkar said today's historic feat was one of the proudest moments of his career.

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Talk Turkey



David Beckham

(England star soccer player)
"Sir Bobby Charlton was a hero of my dad's and also of mine. I went to his soccer school when I was a boy. With him being a Manchester United legend I'm very honoured to be above him in the list and as close to him as I am."
While paying tribute to Sir Bobby.

What to watch

- BTV**
Bangladesh v New Zealand
First Test, Day Two
Live from 9:30am
- Neo Cricket**
India v Australia
Second Test, Day Two
Live from 10:00am
- ESPN**
English Premier League
Middlesbrough v Chelsea
Live from 5:40pm
Liverpool v Wigan
Live from 7:55pm
- STAR Sports**
English Premier League
Arsenal v Everton
Live from 7:55pm
Man United v West Bromwich
Live from 10:25pm
Primera Liga
Espanol v Villarreal
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)
- TEL Sports**
ICL Twenty20
Chandigarh v Chennai
Live from 8:00pm

Days of the Week

- Nat'l Cricket League**
Barisal v Khulna
Venue: Fathullah Cricket Stadium
Rajshahi v Chittagong
Venue: Rajshahi Divisional Stadium
Sylhet v Dhaka
Venue: Sylhet District Stadium
Citycell B. League
Farashganj v Khulna Abahani
Time: 9:30pm
Venue: Narasingdi Stadium
Cig Abahani v Rajshahi
Time: 9:30pm
Venue: MA Aziz Stadium

CHITS FROM CHITTAGONG

MOHAMMAD ISAM and NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Chittagong

There was hardly any crowd when play started at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday. The galleries were empty and even the seats under the shades had no takers, while the AB Bank ticket counters had very few customers on the first day of the Test match. The 79-run defeat by the Kiwis in the third ODI also contributed to the frustration of the port city cricket lovers.

However, the Mehrab Hossain-Mushfiqur Rahim partnership saw a few more people coming in and by the time play ended, some of the galleries were seen half-filled.

RUNS AND OVERS CHASED EACH OTHER

Runs and overs chased each other for half the day. Following the jolt of losing the first wicket in the second over, Rajin Saleh and local boy Tamim Iqbal stonewalled for the first session. The Tigers got off the mark in the fourth over and moved from two to three after 29 deliveries.

After 19 overs Bangladesh had 17 runs while it was 31 in the 28 overs. In the 38th, 39th and 40th overs the runs tied with the number of overs while the score was 54 runs off 44 overs when skipper Mohammad Ashraful met Mehrab at the crease. The Tigers ended the day at a 'high' run rate of 1.94.

FROM GREEN TO WHITE

One good thing about the venue is the greenery in and around the area. The southern part of the ground had a welcome sea breeze as an added bonus. But during this tour, the authorities decided to cover that with first green (during the one-day match) and then white in the Test match. There's not much point to cover that area as there is hardly any inhabitant who would watch the game for free.

India assume control

Cricket

AFP, Mohali

Sachin Tendulkar created history as India thwarted a spirited fightback from Australia to reach 311-5 on the opening day of the second Test here on Friday.

Tendulkar, 35, surpassed West Indian Brian Lara's tally of 11,953 runs to become the highest run-getter in Test cricket and overshadow everything else that happened on the field.

He reached the landmark in the first over after tea when he steered debutant paceman Peter Siddle past third-man for three runs to move past 15, sending the 15,000 crowd at the Punjab Cricket Association stadium into a frenzy.

Tendulkar (88) looked in ominous form as he cut, pulled and drove in exquisite fashion to reach his 50th Test half-century and complete an incredible 12,000 runs in the process.

His 111-ball knock, containing 10 fours, was cut short by Siddle when he edged him to Matthew Hayden who took a fine low catch at first slip.

Ganguly, batting on 54 at close with four fours, also achieved a personal milestone when he reached 39, becoming the fourth Indian to score 7,000 runs behind Sunil Gavaskar, Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid.

The 142-run stand between Tendulkar and Ganguly lifted the Indians, who were placed at a shaky 174-4 after Australian pace-man Mitchell Johnson (3-68) picked two key wickets in the post-lunch session.

The 26-year-old left-arm quick sent back opener Gautam Gambhir (67) and the stylish Venkatsai

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LEADING RUN-SCORERS

Test cricket's top batsmen after India's Sachin Tendulkar broke Brian Lara's record to become the leading run-scorer on Friday.				
Player	Country	Tests	Runs	Centuries
Sachin Tendulkar	India	152*	12,027	39
Brian Lara	West Indies	131	11,953	34
Allan Border	Australia	156	11,174	27
Steve Waugh	Australia	168	10,927	32
Rahul Dravid	India	127*	10,341	25
Ricky Ponting	Australia	121*	10,239	36
Sunil Gavaskar	India	125	10,122	34

* Indicates match in progress
- Tendulkar, Dravid and Ponting are the only ones in the list still playing Test cricket.

The tributes flow in

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's President and Prime Minister on Thursday led a grateful nation in paying glowing tributes to record-smashing batsman Sachin Tendulkar.

"I am extremely delighted and proud that you have reached the pinnacle of achievement in cricket by becoming the highest run-getter in Tests," President Pratibha Patil said in a message to Tendulkar.

"You have given joy to millions of Indians and I am sure you will continue to set new standards of achievement in the future."

Tendulkar, 35, broke retired West Indies captain Brian Lara's record of 11,953 runs when he reached 15 on the opening day of the second Test against Australia in Mohali.

"I congratulate Sachin Tendulkar on becoming the highest run-scorer in Test cricket," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said.

"Sachin is truly worthy of the mantle of the greatest run-scorer in Tests. I have been following his cricket and there is no doubt that he is a genius."

Former India star Chandu Borde, who was the team's manager when Tendulkar made his Test debut aged 16 on the tour of Pakistan in 1989, said he was delighted at the achievement.

"His career has been the most followed one in the cricketing fraternity," said Borde. "It seems records chased him and not the other way round."
"His career has been a fantastic

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Bangladesh middle-order batsman Mehrab Hossain drives through the off-side during his responsible unbeaten knock of 79 on the first day of the first Test against New Zealand at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

Merdeka Cup Booters face Myanmar

Football

Bangladesh hope to bounce back from their 1-0 defeat in the opening match of the Merdeka Cup when they take on neighbours Myanmar in the second round match of Group B in Kuala Lumpur today. The match will kick off at 6:45pm Bangladesh time at the Shah Alam Stadium, where Shafiqul Islam Manik's side were beaten by an 88-minute strike from Mozambique Under-20's Francisco Jange on Thursday night.

Bangladesh were unfortunate to lose the game after dominating almost the entire show and having missed sure sitters. "The national team really looked committed and inspired after a long time and if the players can repeat their performance of the first game we are bound to get a good result," team leader and Bangladesh Football Federation vice-president Badal Roy told from the Malaysian capital over the phone last night. "It's not impossible to beat Myanmar," said Badal adding that the management was happy with the team performance despite the loss. Myanmar were thrashed 3-1 by Vietnam's Olympic team (Under-23) also on Thursday night. "In fact, we paid for failing to give the national team adequate preparation. We lost the game in the last ten minutes, a period which is very difficult for players under prepared, especially against a tough team like Mozambique. Also, the team were playing so well that they perhaps never thought of conceding a goal." Bangladesh, however, have conceded too many goals in the last five minutes of the first and second halves in recent times including matches against Kyrgyzstan in the

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Siddons relieved

SPORTS REPORTER in Chittagong

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons was satisfied with his charges after the Tigers fought hard on the first day of the first Test against New Zealand at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

"I think it is fine how they went although I would have liked another 40 runs," said the former Australian batsman.

"It would have been better if we had more than 34 runs in the first session. Probably something like seventy would have been ideal but only one wicket down before lunch is always good," said Siddons, who felt relief after the Tigers recovered from a slow start and another mini-collapse but the shaven-headed Aussie was at a loss of words while describing the cluster of wickets just minutes after lunch.

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Second round NCL matches from today

SPORTS REPORTER

The second round of the Ispahani Mirzapore Tea 10th National Cricket League will start today with the country's lone first-class competition returning to Sylhet division after five years.

The Sylhet District Stadium has been prepared for top-level cricket and the game roll into the ground with the match between the home side and Dhaka Division.

Sylhet last hosted a National League game in the 2003-04 season. Sylhet lost the first round four-day game against defending champions Khulna despite a century in the second innings by Rajin Saleh, who is now playing the ongoing first Test of the two-match series against visiting New Zealand at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium. Dhaka, however, get back

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Sachin fulfils destiny

Cricket

THE TELEGRAPH

If ever a destiny was written in stone it was that Sachin Tendulkar would one day become Test cricket's leading run-scorer.

Ever since he made an unbeaten 326 in a school match, supreme greatness has been predicted and now, on the first day of India's second Test against Australia in Mohali, that karma has finally come to pass.

Having failed to break the record in Bangalore, Tendulkar needed to wait until the first ball after tea to exceed the 11,953 runs made by Brian Lara. Needing 15 at the start of his innings, he passed his old rival with a guide for three to third man off the relatively unknown seam bowler Peter Siddle, hardly a box office combination with which to crack cricket's blue ribbon feat.

Tendulkar's celebrations, a couple of glances to the heavens, no doubt to thank his peers in the vast pantheon of Hindu gods, were more muted than those around him. Otherwise it was firecrackers and a standing ovation from the adoring crowd and handshakes all round from the Aussies.

Those runs, with power to add (he currently has no thoughts of retirement), consign the brilliant Lara to second place. A wistful left-hander, Lara held the record for almost three years after overtaking Allan Border's total in 2005, and many will feel this latest succession has seen the rightful ruler deposed.

Rightly or wrongly, Lara's runs, the bulk of them made when West Indies were a waning side, are seen to have a greater value than Tendulkar's.

Then there is the manner of the run-scoring. Even his greatest acolytes would struggle to find great artistry in Tendulkar's shots, and it was entirely apposite when Don Bradman, the most efficient but not the most elegant run-scorer in history, confided to Tendulkar's wife that her husband reminded him of himself as a batsman.

Certainly, Lara's strokeplay had more of an instinctive flourish to it, a quality that could destroy the best laid plans. Pressure stalks you constantly at this level and while Lara felt it propping up a poor team, the burden upon Tendulkar is one of enormous expectation. With over a billion citizens, most of them cricket-obsessives, India exerts a crushing pressure on its cricketers. As the country's central idol, Tendulkar is the most worshipped batsman in world cricket, a potentially overwhelming force should such distractions ever have caught his eye. They say that when Tendulkar bats India stops, which may be why they haven't yet taken over the global economy.

That unerring eye has yet to be deflected, and while occasionally lured into indiscretions outside off-stump, he has never been lured into any outside the laws. No match-fixing taint, nor hussy fits, has ever strained Tendulkar's saintliness over his 20-year career.

Indeed, he appears to have no unnatural appetites whatever, save for scoring runs and Formula One.

Plenty are born with talent but few are as driven as Tendulkar to express it in full and he is as much a product of the nets as blessed genes. He came to recognise his gift at an early age and did not squander it, which is not as easy as you might think among "chosen ones."

The endless practice has not yet dulled his zest for the game, but it has made his batting mechanically precise. That does not make him dull to watch, though, and he seduces the same way that a Rolex watch does - ticking and tocking inexorably along in a manner that is both silk and steel.

He is certainly tough. His Test debut, made against Pakistan when he was 16, left him bloodied but unbowed, after Waqar Younis struck him in the mouth during the second innings. At five feet six inches tall, he has always looked ripe for some bullying by nasty fast bowlers, but he dusted himself down and carried on, making his maiden half-century in the process.

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ফাগুয়া! নিউজিল্যান্ড ক্রিকেট দল!

KIA ORA! WELCOME TO BANGLADESH

Congratulations to Blackcaps for Winning ODI Series against Bangladesh Good Luck for Test Series

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