

Stand-in Shakib stands tall



Cricket

BISHWAJIT ROY

When he arrived at the highest level of the game three years back, Shakib Al Hasan didn't make any buzz. But he has grown into a player of stature slowly but surely with every passing game. The 22-year-old baby-faced boy from Magura cemented his place with consistent performances very quickly to become not only the most valuable player for the team but also has achieved the rare feat of becoming the number one all-rounder in the one-day

rankings. There were whisperings whether it was too early to give him the additional responsibility of acting as deputy to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza few days before the Caribbean tour. Interestingly, there was more challenge awaiting the youngster after the regular skipper injured his knee on the third day of the first Test in St.

Vincent. And the young man took the opportunity with both hands and without any doubt came out with flying colours to script a new history for Bangladesh cricket after the Tigers achieved their first-ever away series victory since entering the elite club in 2000.

Obviously it is too early to comment anything on his captaincy but the way he led the team from the front in both Tests against the makeshift West Indies team simply made many believe that he has got the potential to become future captain in the team.

Shakib showed the character as a captain what we have been crying for. He provided the must-needed evidence that the captain has to be a performer in the team first and should have the courage to handle the team in difficult situations. And this is the quality which was missing in Mohammad Ashraful and that might have been the reason he looked so nervous while leading the team out in the middle.

One may raise question about the quality of opponents, but the fact remains that it's not an easy task to win a Test match and a series away from home, whoever the opponents are. The batting of the understrength West Indies team might have not been up to the standard, especially the way they faced the spin bowling, but they did have certain quality in their pace bowling.

So, one just can't demur the success of the Tigers and the efforts of their stand-in skipper who, with 13 wickets to his credit and a match-winning knock of unbeaten 96, contributed his part as a player. But as a captain what was encouraging to watch was his courage during a tough phase of the game.

If his bowling at a critical stage in the first Test was brilliant then the way he took the challenge in the second Test with the willow was simply outstanding.

It is the second time that the left-hander has missed his maiden hundred

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Bangladesh stand-in captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) sprints into history in dashing style while his partner in a match-winning fourth wicket stand Rokibul Hasan (above) plays a delicate cut shot on the fourth day of the second Test against the West Indies at the National Stadium in Grenada on Monday.

A rollicking Rokibul and a sublime Shakib saga

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

History was calling and Bangladesh showed they were all ears in Grenada. Rokibul Hasan and Shakib Al Hasan shared a thrilling 106-run partnership to charge Bangladesh to their first overseas series win. On an enthralling afternoon's play, Darren Sammy threatened to do the improbable but Rokibul lifted Bangladesh with a plucky innings before the equally aggressive Shakib joined him to clinch a euphoric win.

Set a target of 215, a counterattacking Rokibul, who had walked in at 29 for 2, was joined by Shakib at 67 for 4 and the pair batted bravely to seize back the initiative. Though Sammy took out Rokibul and Mashfiqur Rahim, 14 runs away from the win, Shakib held his nerve to steer the team home. The winning moment came in some style with Shakib lofting Kemar Roach over long-on.

Though Rokibul fell 42 runs short of the target, it was he who had set up the win with an inspired performance. He had never hit a Test fifty before and he had struggled in the first Test due to his penchant of playing away from the body. However, he had held his own in the first innings here and added a dash of bravado on Monday to lift Bangladesh from a hole.

It was a gem of a cameo under the circumstances. Every time West Indies picked up a wicket and threatened to charge ahead, Rokibul counterattacked to keep the hosts on their toes. He chose to take the adventurous route and didn't waste a single run-scoring opportunity; in fact he created a few chances of his own.

It was risky at times but someone had to seize the initiative back from West Indies and Rokibul decided to shoulder that burden. Apart from Sammy's superb spell, Rokibul's battle against Roach was the highlight of the session. Roach v Rokibul was the turning point in the first innings as Roach successfully probed a

weakness in Rokibul against the bouncers before proceeding to scythe through the rest of the line-up. Rokibul was in no mood to buckle down today.

He started with a fierce slash over point and remained audacious against anything that was pitched up to him. It was a tantalizing battle as Roach troubled him a bit with short-pitched deliveries and a couple of jaffas that left the bat late but Rokibul released the pressure with a couple of impish square drives. He flicked Sammy and guided him through to third man boundary and thus, preventing West Indies from deploying close-in fielders. And when Ryan Austin, the off-spinner, was brought in for the over before tea, Rokibul dispatched him over deep midwicket and in the last session, he unfurled a couple of peachy off drives to further calm the dressing-room nerves.

Thankfully, for Bangladesh, Rokibul found a willing partner in his captain Shakib, who too oozed intent through his knock. He started off a touch shakily with a stab past second slip, an airy drive past mid-off, and an edge past gully but soon settled down to blunt the attack. Now and then, he teased the slip cordon with his slashes but just when it appeared he was living on the edge, he would unfurl a meaty off drive, defend solidly or steal a single to frustrate the attack.

Shakib took on the dominating role in the final session, spanking boundaries almost at will, including a hattrick of fours against Roach. The first one, an extra-cover drive that brought up his fifty, was followed by a crunching cut and a feisty pull as Bangladesh galloped towards victory. If the final session was almost serene, the second was a dramatic and event-filled. The day had started with a two-hour rain delay and Bangladesh took just 4.1 overs to wrap up West Indies for 209; it was the first time Bangladesh had bowled out the opposition for less than 250 in both innings.

For a brief while, when Roach and Sammy operated in tandem, the game appeared to be hanging in balance but Shakib and Rokibul ensured their fans won't lose too much hair or nails.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the fourth day of the second and final Test between West Indies and Bangladesh at the National Cricket Stadium in St George's on Monday:

WEST INDIES: First innings 237 (Dowlin 95; Mahmudullah 3-44)

BANGLADESH: First innings 232 (Mashfiqur 48; Roach 6-48)

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U-19s match abandoned

SPORTS REPORTER

The third one-day match between the touring Bangladesh Under-19s and England Under-19 was abandoned without a single ball being bowled due to rain at Northampton County ground yesterday.

The rain also played foul in the second game as it was abandoned halfway at the Grace Road in Leicester on Sunday after the visitors set a challenging total of 269 for 6 in 50 overs batting first.

The home side took a 1-0 lead in the five-match series with a 84-run victory in the first game.

The fourth and fifth matches will be held on July 23 and 24 at the Hove county ground.

3rd Division cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russell KC, Mitaly Boys Club, Great Dania Sports Academy and Youth British Future Social Organization won their respective qualifying-round matches of the Metropolis Third Division Cricket League at separate city venues on Monday.

SK Russell KC (135/3) earned a seven-wicket win over Winkhunor SC (134/10) at the Gulshan Youth Club ground while Mitaly Boys Club (346/10) crushed DRS Cricket Academy (178/10) by 168 runs at the Dhaka University ground.

Great Dania SA (337/4) defeated Savar South Rajashah Academy (199/10) by 138 runs at the City Club ground and Meradha Ritel Club (243/8) outplayed Youth British Future Social Organization (181/10) by 62 runs at the Jagannath Hall ground.

Hail the Tigers

BCB announces additional bonus

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

The historic first-ever away Test series victory of the national cricket team against the West Indies was the talk of the sports arena on Tuesday as everyone greeted the Tigers for their brilliant success in the Caribbean.

It was not only the game's governing body, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), but also other sports federations like Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) that congratulated the cricket team for their 2-0 Test series victory over West Indies.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker also felicitated the national team.

BCB president Lt Gen Sina ibn Jamali hailed the team for their first Test series win on foreign soil and announced additional bonus for the Tigers.

The team will receive a bonus of Tk 15 million (1.5 crore), Tk 20 lakh extra money from the earlier announced amount.

The Bangladesh team was entitled to receiving Tk 1.3 crore for winning the test series.

In his immediate reaction to the media, Jamali said: "With this win, the Bangladesh Cricket team has fulfilled the dreams and aspirations of millions."

"I congratulate the players, team management, the (BCB) Cricket Operations

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SWEET TIME: Bangladesh Cricket Board president Sina ibn Jamali (L) is having a sweet festival with the board officials and national team sponsor Grameenphone's chief communications officer Rubaba Dowla (R) while celebrating Tigers' first-ever away series triumph at the BCB's Sher-e-Bangla Stadium headquarters yesterday.