

Application astute

Cricket

AL-AMIN

When West Indies put up 274 runs on the board not many in Bangladesh were convinced that the Tigers would be able to chase down the target. It was not just that it was something Bangladesh had not successfully chased before (their highest run-chase was 250 against Australia in Cardiff in 2005), but also the past records of the batters that often succumbed to self-destructed pressure, notwithstanding the strength of the opponents, that led to that belief.

True it was not a full strength West Indies team. Still, it was a tough ask from a team whose performance can be best described like the on and off power supply in the country.

Although the power remained as erratic as it can get to test the nerves of the millions of sports fans, who braved the phenomenon coupled with a nasty bout of overpowering rain that blitzed the city the previous night, the national cricket team, for a change, presented a big smile to the sleepless fanatics like the beautiful sunshine from the Caribbean.

And as if to prove that the Tigers can hardly set a foot wrong in the Caribbean this time, Shakib Al Hasan and Co. scaled the peak in Dominica with six deliveries to go and

three wickets still standing.

The moment for the non-believers to believe came when number nine batsmen Abdur Razzak misread an attempted pull just over the short third man fielder for a four off David Bernard Jr.

The finish was not as convincing as one would have liked. It was rather tense like any other close contest where players of both teams showed every sign of suffering a nervous breakdown -- two West Indian fielders collided while attempting a high catch, young pace bowler (Kemar Roach) bowled a second beam-

er only to be ruled out from bowling at a crucial stage, little wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim drove a full toss straight to the hands of a fielder when he should have hit the rank loosener anywhere in Windsor Park or beyond into the botanical garden.

But refreshingly though, the Bangladesh top-order batted like a professional should in such a situation. There were not many forceful fours or sixes. Rather there were judicious approaches of pushing singles, nudging the ball into vacant areas to force a

double and of course those odd necessary boundaries.

It was good to see Mohammad Ashraful hitting back-to-back fifties; a feat that he has not achieved in the last three years. Stand-in skipper Shakib was again at his sublime best. He top scored with 65 from 61 deliveries while Ashraful made 64 from 77 deliveries. A crucial 31 from wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim ensured that Bangladesh's required run rate remained manageable as the overs ticked away.

But the most eye-pleasing aspect of Bangladesh's chase was the attitude. It was positive, focused and did not cross to the limit that can be called arrogance bar that shocking shot from Ashraful.

He could have easily been the villain despite his valiant effort had Bangladesh lost the match. He came down the wicket only to play that expansive shot straight down the throat of the long-off fielder at a moment the asking run-rate was below six and along with captain cool Shakib he was milking singles with ease. It could have been a totally satisfying day in business had Shakib stayed there till the end.

It might not be as perfect as one would have wished. But signs were there that next time when one sits in front of TV set he would not lose much hair or nails if the Tigers bat with the assurance they adopted in their 200th ODI.



Mohammad Ashraful cuts one delightfully through point for four off West Indies seamer David Bernard Jr (not in picture) en route to his 64 during the 2nd ODI at Windsor Park in Dominica on Tuesday.

Bangladesh chase down 274

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Every time they step on the field, Bangladesh seem to be making history. After having beaten West Indies for the first time in Tests and ODIs, they sealed their first ODI series win against the hosts on Tuesday. More importantly, this win came by way of their highest successful chase in the limited-overs format, reaching the requisite 275 with six balls to spare.

At the centre of the accomplishment once again was Shakib Al Hasan, pulling West Indies back from a flying start, and then seeing his team through a tricky chase with a calm 65. Mohammad Ashraful, who got to back-to-back fifties for the first time since 2006, set up the Bangladesh reply after the openers struggled on a sluggish pitch that made it difficult to stroke the ball cleanly. The Shakib-Ashraful combination outdid an exceptional effort from Travis Dowlin, whose maiden international century lifted a fledgling West Indies to a fighting total.

Ashraful and Shakib came together

after a sensible third-wicket partnership between Ashraful and Rokibul Hasan had ended, thanks to the pressure created by a slow pitch and tight bowling. Nevertheless, they had added 52 after the openers fell in a quick succession.

It was here that Ashraful took the lead, not letting the pressure mount. He first made room and slashed Bernard in the 28th over for the first boundary in 70 balls. When Ravi Lewis replaced Bernard in the next over, Ashraful lofted him over long-off for a six, bringing up his second fifty in three days. Shakib joined him in that charge, sweeping both Lewis and Bernard over midwicket. Those three overs brought Bangladesh 32 runs, and also brought down the asking-rate to less than six.

When Ashraful went for another six off Lewis, he put his team in a tricky state again, holing out to long-off. Until then, his 77-ball 64 had been well-paced, and he had added 74 with Shakib in 63 deliveries. But with 85 still required, Shakib had a major role to play. The boundaries were not easy to come -- even Lewis negated the big sweep with googlies and straighter ones -- but Shakib ran purposefully. He had to run all but six of his last 50 runs, but

hardly did he ever let the scoring-rate fall.

During the match, the cameras panned to a spectator reading a magazine article on Shakib, titled the "Ice Man". Shakib indeed played like one, but needed some luck on his side. With 71 required off 60, Shakib tried to hit Lewis out of the ground, only skying it to land perfectly between cover and long-off, which also resulted in a collision between Darren Sammy and Bernard. That shot also took Shakib to his half-century, kicking off a spell of ordinary cricket from both sides.

With 56 needed off the last eight overs, Shakib called for the batting Powerplay, and Roach immediately threatened to finish the match in a hurry. Even before he could do that, Floyd Reifer almost let him bowl with five fielders outside the circle. Roach started with a half-volley and a fulltoss both hit for boundaries, before bowling his second beamer of the match to be removed from the attack. What's more, Shakib deposited it for a six.

Now it was the Ice Man's turn to falter with the match almost pocketed. He swung across the line to Sammy, getting

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Captaincy Shakib's oyster

BISHWAJIT ROY

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza kept his nerve and made it into the late hours port of his beloved cricket fitting reward when the Tigers highest successful chase in the day of the three-match series at Park in Dominica to script yet history in the Caribbean.

Definitely it was not a completely pleasant experience for the 'ill-fated' Bangladesh captain Mashrafe to watch the game in the living room instead of being in the midst of the roars and cheers at the ground, but he was more than happy to see the way stand-in skipper Shakib Al Hasan led the team from the front to glory.

"It's not so common that someone suddenly gets an opportunity and capitalises on it with both hands but I think Shakib showed that rare quality in the tour. It's my bad luck that I couldn't lead the team in the series but it's really encouraging for our cricket that we have discovered someone like Shakib," said Mashrafe heaving praise on his young comrade.

It's yet to be proved how good Mashrafe is as a captain as he was ruled out from the tour after sustaining a knee injury on the third day of the first Test at St. Vincent but many already started to see a shadow of future captain in the world's number one all-rounder in the one-day rankings.

The 25-year old Mashrafe however is one step ahead of the commoners as he believes that Shakib has already proved that he has got the leadership quality after making his marks in the 2-0 Test series victory and gaining an unbeatable 2-0 advantage in the one-day series against the makeshift West Indies side.

"I don't think it's right time to comment whether I want to continue as a captain because I am now more concerned with my injury. I don't know when I will be able to return to cricket and I am looking forward to the suggestion of my doctor (David Young)," said a dejected Mashrafe.

"But why Shakib as future captain? He already showed his quality as a captain and I don't find anything wrong if Shakib continues as captain though it's up to the board. The most important quality for a captain is that he should be a performer in the team and there is no question about Shakib's showings."

"You see he (Shakib) has been scoring consistently against different opposition since he made his international

was one of those who patience to follow a of the night in sup-team. And it was a managed their second one- Windsor another

debut and he is a good fielder. But above everything it's his bowling which is really top class. In my opinion Shakib is the number one spinner right at this moment and he has improved his bowling immensely," said Mashrafe.

Still the question remains whether there is anything proved against such a bits and pieces West Indies team.

"It's helped but you know, it's not an easy task to perform consistently no matter who are the nents. And I think he ed something as a captain which helped the team to win the game. It may be too early to make the final comments on his captaincy but there is something encouraging," he defended.

"I hope under his captaincy the team will also continue their success in Zimbabwe and I will never mind if the board wants to continue this flow with him," he added.

The game's governing body, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), was also thinking positively with Shakib.

"I think Shakib has made himself as a serious contender for the post. We are impressed at the way he led the team in the absence of Mashrafe. It's bad luck for Mashrafe but Shakib took the opportunity brilliantly," said BCB's director and media committee chairman Jalal Yunus.

"The board of directors will take the final decision but there is no question that Shakib will be a serious candidate. We have to sit again after the Zimbabwe tour to appoint a new captain because Mashrafe has been given the job for only two series (West Indies and Zimbabwe)," he added.

The question was also raised in the presentation party after the three-wicket victory in Dominica, and the response came from Shakib: "I didn't think about that but definitely I will think over it."

So, it seems as if that the stage is all set for Shakib to take the hot job permanently.



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan pulls a fulltoss delivery from West Indies pacer Kemar Roach for 6 during his knock of 65 in the second ODI at Windsor Park in Dominica on Tuesday.

WI, Roach reprimanded

AGENCIES, undated

West Indies fast bowler Kemar Roach and his team have been dealt misery on top of their one-day series loss to Bangladesh after being fined for breach of the International Cricket Council (ICC) code of conduct. Roach was docked 10 per cent of his match fee after he was charged for bowling two high, full-pitched deliveries at Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan in Tuesday's second one-day in Dominica, which the visitors won by three wickets.

He was barred from bowling by the umpire after he bowled a second 'beamer' and was then summoned for a hearing before the ICC match referee Roshan Mahanama after the game.

West Indies captain Floyd Reifer was handed an official reprimand for failing to ensure play was conducted within the spirit and laws of the game, an ICC release said on Wednesday.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 7

U-19 cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Adam Wheeler's unbeaten knock of 43 runs guided England U-19 to a five-wicket victory over Bangladesh U-19 in the first match of the U-19 Twenty20 series in Sleaford on Tuesday.

The visitors set a challenging target of 155 with Amit Majumder scoring a magnificent 74 off 47 balls. DR Briggs and Azeem Rafiq of England however damaged the visitors' batting order by bagging two wickets each.

In reply, England U-19 cruised to victory with two overs to spare with Wheeler scoring the highest 43 off 33 balls. Shabbir Rahman picked up 2/30.

The second match was expected to take place at the same venue yesterday.

England put faith in Flintoff

Third Ashes Test from today

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

England head into the third Ashes Test here at Edgbaston confident of all-rounder Andrew Flintoff's but without Kevin Pietersen against an Australia side looking to level the series at 1-1.

Flintoff's aggressive spell on the final day of the second Test sealed England's 115-run win as they defeated Australia in an Ashes match at Lord's for the first time in 75 years.

But soon after that match, batting star Pietersen gave in to a longstanding Achilles problem and announced he would take no further part in the series.

Flintoff, whose career has been blighted by injuries, said before the match at Lord's that this would be his final Test series.

A key figure during his country's 2005 Ashes triumph, and in particular at Edgbaston, where

England won by just two runs, doubts persist over whether Flintoff's knee injury will hold up for the final three matches of the series.

The dilemma confronting England captain Andrew Strauss was summed up by two contrasting headlines in British newspapers on Tuesday, with the Daily Express opting for 'I'll flog Freddie' and The Times going with 'How Strauss aims to ease load for Flintoff'.

In practice, Strauss will be prepared to use Flintoff as and when appropriate. "We don't want Fred bowling millions of overs when conditions are not in his favour," Strauss said. "But if we get into a winning situation and he is the right bowler to take us to victory, we will be expecting to see him put in the same sort of effort as at Lord's."

Flintoff himself has been sleeping with a special compression machine on his troublesome joint and Australia vice-captain Michael Clarke was not surprised that England were pulling out all the stops to get him on the field.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6



England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff (L) talks with teammate Ian Bell during training at Edgbaston in Birmingham yesterday.



Jose Mourinho

(Inter Milan soccer coach)
"I would consider going to Manchester United but United have to consider if they want me to succeed Sir Alex Ferguson. If they do, then of course."



TEN Sports

Sri Lanka v Pakistan
First ODI

Live from 11:30am

STAR Cricket

England v Australia

Third Ashes Test, Day 1

Live from 5:00pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 9:30pm

REIFER ASKS FOR TIME

Shakib full of praise

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Bangladesh celebrated their 200th ODI with their first ODI series win against West Indies, and Shakib Al Hasan, their stand-in captain, yet again played a major role in helping them achieve that feat. "I can't explain the feeling," Shakib, who was named Man of the Match for his crucial 65, said at the end of the game. "The boys have tried their best. The team has been supportive throughout the series, and so have the support staff, and we have done well."

Shakib was involved in two crucial partnerships in Bangladesh's chase of a challenging 275. He added 74 for the fourth wicket with Mohammad Ashraful, who, like Shakib, scored his second successive half-century. A 48-run stand with wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim

followed, which appeared to have sealed the game for Bangladesh before a flurry of wickets threatened to deprive them of victory.

West Indies' performance marked a major improvement from their previous game where the spinners had proved their undoing. "This was a good win, though," Shakib said. "It was much tougher. They really tested us, and they played our spinners really well."

The hosts were able to overcome the spin threat, thanks largely to a maiden ODI century from Travis Dowlin, who was involved in a steady stand of 62 with Devon Smith for the third wicket, and then opened up to help smash 98 in the last ten overs with support from the lower order. West Indies had thrown Bangladesh the challenge of chasing down their highest score for an ODI win, and Floyd Reifer, the captain, thought his team had managed enough. "We thought that 274 was a brilliant score," Reifer

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

'Aussies lack aura'

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

England captain Andrew Strauss insisted the present Australia side lacked the "aura" of the one that thrashed his country 5-0 in the 2006/07 Ashes.

Back then Australia's team featured such all-time greats as Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Adam Gilchrist, as well as opening batsmen Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer.

But all five players have since retired from Test cricket.

Last week England beat Australia by 115 runs at Lord's to go 1-0 up in the five-match series with three to play.

Strauss, speaking here at Edgbaston, where

the third Test starts on Thursday, said playing Ricky Ponting's men now was a much different proposition to what it had been during the recent past.

"I don't think this Australian side has got an aura about it to be honest with you and prior to this Test series starting we didn't feel they had an aura about them," Strauss told reporters here on Wednesday.

"That's not disrespectful to the players they've got because they've got a lot of very good players but I think the aura came with the likes of Warne and McGrath and Hayden and Gilchrist, all those sort of guys."

"This (Australian) team over time might develop an aura but at the moment you've got a lot of guys who are at the start of their Test careers."

"By definition, they don't have an aura

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2