

Mushfiqur shines in ruins

BISHWAJIT ROY from Ctg

It could have been a mundane finish to an exciting Test match following some irresponsible batting by the Bangladesh top-order batsmen on the fifth and final day, but wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur Rahim provided ample entertainment during his maiden Test hundred to make sure there was something for the Tigers to write home about at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the port city yesterday.

With great help from tail-enders Shahadat Hossain, Shafiqul Islam and Rubel Hossain, the 21-year-old batsman from Bogra completed his first three-digit score to take the team's second innings total to 301 runs from 170 for six, but according to the batsman it was the sledging from the Indians that incited him to play the sparkling innings which added some spice in the end.

"They did a lot of talking from behind the stumps and called me a school boy but I was enjoying it because I always love to take challenge and fortunately I was successful today. The way they treated us was not fair. And our reply could have been much better if we batted well," said Mushfiqur, who put the Indian bowlers to the sword by hitting 17 boundaries and a six during his 114-ball 101.

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan's confidence from

the previous day didn't materialise out in the middle on the last day even though the track was exceptionally well for batting on the fifth day. There was lack of application from the top-order batsmen and only Mushfiqur stood tall to salvage some pride for his team.

"It could have been a memorable day for us because the wicket was really good for batting even on the fifth day though there was some uneven bounce to assist the spinners," said the wicketkeeper batsman.

Bangladesh's promise to pull off something special was

dashed in the first session when they went for lunch with 136 for five after resuming the day on 67 for two. Mohammad Ashraful, Rokibul Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, who probably thought his job was done after reaching a half-century, gave their wickets away.

Captain Shakib, however,

rueed the missed chances in the first innings: "I think we had a few chances in the first innings but we didn't bat well which actually led to our downfall. We played too many rash shots outside the off stump and we need to work on it before the second Test [at Dhaka]. Hopefully we'll do better next

time. We need to improve on our catching and batting," observed Shakib, who was successful with his left-arm spin but flopped with the bat.

It was however surprising the way Shakib and the last specialist batsman Mahmudullah Riyad approached after

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India leg-spinner Amit Mishra jumps for joy after having Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan (L) caught at silly point during the fifth and final day of the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Straight Drive

SUNIL GAVASKAR

Mushfiqur Rahim's terrific century lightened up what was a pretty dull day for Bangladesh cricket. Over the years the one noticeable aspect of their cricket is the absence of determination when the odds are stacked against them. Mushfiqur's fine century and the manner in which he defied everything the Indian bowlers had to bowl at him showed that there is at least one cricketer who was not going to go down without a fight. In the first innings too he along with Mahmudullah, another fine cricketer in the making, showed admirable temperament to build a century plus partnership and took Bangladesh just one run short of India's first innings. Bangladesh needs more such players. Their skipper Shakib is also a very good all-rounder and it is these three who have to show the way to the others. The vastly experienced Shahrir Nafees, Mohammad Ashraful were disappointing not because they didn't score but the manner of their dismissals in the second innings. Even if Bangladesh did not hold hopes of winning the match they should have shown the application to try and save it.

Once again the game began late on the final day and with the light fading fast every evening it was really a matter of having one big partnership that would have thwarted India. The pitch still looked good and there was no help for the bowlers and if the Bangladeshi batsmen have an honest appraisal of their dismissals they would see that it was more their fault than anything special from the bowlers. Yes Zaheer and Ishant Sharma were at them all the time and did not give them any leeway but then that's what Test cricket is about. It is about biding your time as a batsman waiting for the bowler to tire out and then get the runs.

The exception was Mushfiqur. He showed great determination and was also looking for the chance to keep the score moving along. He used his feet very well to go either forward or back and it looked as if he was resolving to make up for his poor dismissal in the first innings. He was the shining light in the Bangladesh team though the bowlers also did their bit in the first innings.

Before the Test there were some comments that certainly stirred up the Bangladeshi bowlers and they dismissed a strong Indian line-up for only 243 runs. It is a pity that the batsmen let them down and Bangladesh lost in the manner that they did without a real fight bar the one from the little wicketkeeper batsman.

They will need to alter their approach and attitude if they are to stretch India in the next Test.

Veeru still believes in that

BISHWAJIT ROY from Ctg

In the end India came up with a comfortable 113-run victory against Bangladesh on the fifth and final day to take the lead as expected in the two-Test series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

But in no way was it a dull and drab or one-sided affair between the world's number one and bottom-side teams' contest in this port city. Dense fog might have hampered proceedings for hours each day, but there was no shortage of action in the first match and credit must go to the Tigers who proved themselves as an ever-improving side though batting remained a concern. Bangladesh definitely fought well against the formidable side.

India's stand-in captain Virender Sehwag fired the first salvo before the start of the match by branding the Tigers as an 'ordinary side' which seemed played as a tonic for the Bangladeshi bowlers. Batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar had to come up with his best in the first innings to rescue the vaunted batting line-up from complete embarrassment. Tigers captain Shakib Al Hasan, with his left-arm spin, and pacer Shahadat Hossain were the stars as they surprised the celebrated batting line-up by

equally sharing ten wickets to make many believe that they have got the ability to take the India's twenty wickets.

Then Bangladesh lost an opportunity to take the first innings lead while India bounced back in the second innings despite the local bowlers' disciplined effort to set an improbable target for

the hosts riding on Gautam Gambhir's brilliant hundred. True that Bangladesh's charge was busted due to the fragile top-order batting, but still wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim provided something on the final day to make the impression that the Tigers were not the 'ugly sisters' in the highest level of the game.

But all that had taken place on the field over the last five days was not enough for the Indian skipper to change his mind as he gave the impression in the post-match briefing that he still didn't believe that Bangladesh had got the quality to play decent cricket in the five-day game.

"Next question," was his answer when asked whether he still believed in his words he made during the pre-match briefing. Actually the dashing Delhi right-hander was not ready to take any questions regarding the issue. But he made it understood that he still believed Bangladesh did not have the quality to take 20 Indian wickets though the Tigers captured 18 scalps in the first Test. "I still believe that Bangladeshi bowlers can't take our 20 wickets," he said with 'anger'.

He was also not ready to give any credit to the Bangladeshi bowlers who dismissed them for a paltry 243 runs in the first innings.

"They did not bat well. I think they bowled well in the first innings because the conditions were helping. But we batted well in the second innings. We put 400-plus runs on the board. It was difficult for Bangladesh to chase those runs," he responded when asked about Bangladesh's bowling effort.

Sehwag was happy with the

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Master batsman Sachin Tendulkar stands with the man-of-the-match trophy at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday. Sachin scored a fabulous century under pressure in India's first innings against Bangladesh.

PHOTO: STAR

BOA all set to dazzle

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) on Thursday announced that it was set to dazzle the athletes and officials from the eight South Asian nations with stunning opening and closing ceremonies when the 11th South Asian Games unfolds at the Bangabandhu National Stadium on January 29.

Nearly 12000 performers are training tirelessly under the watchful eyes of some 20 choreographers from China, France and Singapore and the convenor of the opening and closing ceremonies Major General (ret'd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury said: "We want to put on something different along with traditional demonstrations that the subcontinent has never seen in the regional showpiece event before."

During a press briefing at the Olympic Bhaban, it was also revealed that performers of Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Ansar & VDP and students of school and colleges have been practicing since the first week of December to make it a success.

Opening and closing ceremonies are integral part of any Olympic sort of games. But for a country like Bangladesh a hefty budget of Taka 37 crore for the ceremonial when swimmers cry in vain for a new Taka 3.5 crore electronic scoreboard sparked a lot of flak in the sports fraternity.

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Laxman out of 2nd Test

AFP, Chittagong

Veteran Indian batsman Venkatesh Laxman will miss the second and final Test against Bangladesh because of a finger injury, team manager Arshad Ayub said on Thursday. Laxman, 35, left the field with a bleeding finger after diving in the slips during the fourth day's play of the first Test on Wednesday.

"Laxman is flying home but we have not asked for a replacement," Ayub told reporters.

Seamer Shanthakumaran Sreesanth is a doubtful starter for the second Test, which starts in Dhaka on Sunday, after suffering a hamstring strain.

"It is too early to say if Sreesanth will be fit for the game," said Ayub. "His condition is being monitored." Skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Harbhajan Singh, who were sidelined for the first Test with injuries, are expected to play in Dhaka, Ayub said.

Cricketers vow good show

SPORTS REPORTER



The players of National Cricket Academy were given priority when the selectors picked the squad for the Twenty20 event in the 11th South Asian Games, beginning on January 29.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Maldives will be vying in the shortest version of the sport, which has been included in the regional extravaganza for the first time. However, India are not sending their cricket team in the showpiece event.

"Our main strength lies in batting as six to seven batsmen have good strike-rates and we have also good spinners in the side. We only lack in the pace department," said team manager Ehsanul Haque during the announcement of the squad at the Olympic Bhaban yesterday.

Of the 14-member squad, 10 came from the Academy, two from the national U-19 side and remaining two from clubs.

"In the age-group competition, all participants of the subcontinent are equal in terms of strength and we are expecting good competition," said the former national player.

The squad will start its preparation from January 24 before facing Nepal in the opening match in Bogra on January 31.

Anamul Haque and Sabbir Rahman, who are now featuring in the ICC U-19 World Cup in New Zealand, will join the camp upon their return.

Assistant coach Sohel Islam said that late preparation would not affect much to his side because the players were in match practice in the domestic league as well as in different competitions.

Co-ordinator Nazmul Abedin Fahim believes there is a good chance for the hosts to put up good show though Sri Lanka and Pakistan are the strong opponents in the group-stage matches.

The participating five teams will first play

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Rajshahi, Sylhet and Dhaka strongly placed

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's injured skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's presence in the middle couldn't encourage his side Khulna as they capitulated from a healthy position of 196 for three to be all out for 242 on the second day in their National League match against Sylhet at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

Resuming at 196 for three, Khulna lost their next seven wickets for just 46 runs in 17.4 overs. Two overnight batsmen Tushar Imran and Habibul Bashar added 25 runs before being separated. Bashar scored 51 while Tushar got out on 59. The remaining wickets went down like ninepins as five of them got out without scoring. Sylhet pacers Tapash Kumar took three wickets

for 60 while Nazmul Hossain took two for 47.

In reply, Sylhet reached 227 for four at the stumps on the second day, only 15 runs behind the Khulna total with six wickets remaining. Sylhet skipper Rajin Saleh scored 83 runs before giving a catch to the bowler Mashrafe. The other notable scorer was Myshukur Rahman with 60.

At the Khulna Divisional Stadium, Barisal fared well in their second innings putting on 175 for three at stumps on Day Two. Opener Asif Ahmed remained unbeaten on 86 while the other opener Fazole Rabbi scored 54 runs. Barisal still trail Dhaka by 31 runs who ended their first innings on 295 after Barisal were skittled for only 89 runs in their first attempt on the previous day. Barisal's left-arm pacer Sajidul Islam took four of Dhaka's first innings wickets for 80 runs.

At the BKSP, Rajshahi overhauled

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Regular Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza walks back to the dressing room after a satisfying 10-over spell for Khulna during a National League match against Sylhet at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

What to WATCH

STAR Sports

Australian Open
Third Round
Live from 6:00am

Star Cricket

Australia v Pakistan
First ODI
Live from 9:30am

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
(Four-Day Match, Day 3)
Rajshahi v Chittagong
Venue: BKSP
Khulna v Sylhet
Venue: Shahid Chandu Stadium,
Bogra
Barisal v Dhaka
Venue: Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium,
Khulna