



ON HIS LAST LEGS: Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan tries in vain to regain ground as England wicketkeeper Matt Prior stumps him off James Tredwell on the fifth and final day of the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

ENGLAND TAKE SERIES 2-0

Defeated Tigers not disappointing

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Alastair Cook's twelfth century could not overshadow Shakib Al Hasan's Herculean effort in the second Test match but it led to a nine-wicket victory for England on the fifth day yesterday.

The visitors took 44 overs, ten overs less than the target, to chase down 209 runs on a Mirpur pitch that was as flat as the first day. Cook, unbeaten on 109, and Kevin Pietersen shared an unbroken 167-run stand for the second wicket as the England captain brought up his second century of the series and 12th overall. And his senior teammate finally found fluency for the first time in the tour during his 74 as the two clinched the 2-0 series win for England.

The two-match Test series win and the earlier one-day series win for England went according to the formbook but it hardly reflected the true nature of the battle and resolve shown by Bangladesh. And on the final day, the result could have been different had a few things turned out differently.

Evidently only a few balls turned properly in the day's play and it further blunted a dispirited Bangladesh bowling attack, alighted depending on one man, and defending a small total.

The Tigers could have taken more than a 208-run lead had Naem Islam and Shafiu

Islam, first innings heroes with the bat, and to some extent Shakib Al Hasan showed a semblance of care in their shot-making.

Shakib and Shafiu, overnight batsmen with Bangladesh on 172-6, started off fine and made sure the English were left worried in the first hour. But then a brain explosion occurred.

Shafiu, who scored his maiden fifty only the day before, charged James Tredwell needlessly and holed out to Jonathan Trott standing a fair distance from the mid-wicket boundary. The nightwatchman made 28 off 49 balls but the shot was forgetful.

And it got worse half-hour later.

Naeem, the next man in, defended dutifully but in a moment's madness, the right-hander also decided to charge Tredwell and slogged it easily down mid-on's throat. It ended a promising partnership between him and Shakib, who had by then started to dominate the England attack.

The Bangladesh captain, later adjudged man-of-the-match, blasted eleven boundaries and took advantage of the quicker new ball. He brought out his favoured sweep shot late in his innings and just when it seemed he would reach another Test century, the left-hander had the third brain explosion.

He moved from 92 to 96 with a crunching sweep off Tredwell but off the next ball, Shakib swung hard but missed the ball by a mile as the

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2011 WORLD CUP Renovation of KSOS begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The renovation, development and modernisation works at Khan Saheb Osmani Stadium (KSOS) in Narayanganj ahead of the 2011 ICC World Cup have been launched yesterday with State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker inaugurating the process.

Khan Saheb Osmani Stadium, the alternative venue for the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, will cost Tk 57.13 crore as floodlights and electronic scoreboard will be set up at the stadium apart from other renovation works.

The construction firm has been asked to hand over the venue by October.

Bangladesh, one of the three co-hosts of the World Cup, will

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BANGLADESH LEAGUE 2nd leg starts on March 29

SPORTS REPORTER

The second-leg of Bangladesh League will begin from March 29 with three giants -- Abahani, Mohammedan SC and Sheikh Russel KC -- all playing outside the capital.

Beanbazar SC will host holders and league leaders Abahani at Sylhet Stadium, Feni Soccer Club take on Mohammedan at Shaheed Salam Stadium while Sheikh Russel will play against Shuktara Jubo Sangsad in Narayanganj.

Apart from matches of the three Dhaka giants, Muktiyoddha Sangsad will face Brothers Union at the Bangabandhu National (BNS) on the same day.

Perennial foes Abahani and Mohammedan will square off on June 5 in the final round.

The professional league will once again see a break from May 11 to 21 following the AFC President's Cup as two-time B. League champions Abahani will host the tournament from May 12 to 16 at the BNS.

We deserved better: Shakib

BISHWAJIT ROY



"A draw would have been a great result for us." This was the way Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan summarised the feelings of the entire team following his side's nine-wicket defeat in the second and final Test against England at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Shakib was outstanding with his all-round showing and appropriately received the man-of-the-match award, but there was every reason for the young skipper to be frustrated with the final outcome because the winning margin did not reflect the true picture of a match where the Tigers played hard and good cricket under scorching heat to justify their claim as an improving side in the five-day version of the game.

The Tigers showed that they have the ability to push their formidable opponents hard especially in home conditions. A draw, which might have been even more sweeter than the wins against Zimbabwe and a depleted West Indies, could have been a fairly reasonable result for the home team after the way they dominated proceedings for the first three days but "some silly mistakes, funny dismissals in the second innings, frustrating behaviour of the pitch [ball didn't turn even in the last session of the last day's play] and some decisions which might have gone in our [Bangladesh's] favour" were the reasons pointed out by the skipper for the disappointing finale of the series.

Bangladesh ended the tour empty handed with not a single win in the three-match one-day and two-match Test series but one can't deny the fact that Shakib Al

Hasan's men gave the impression that they are slowly but surely coming of age.

And what was the big mistake on the final day?

Obviously, it was the suicidal dismissal of Naem Islam. Naeem's decision to charge down the wicket was nothing short of criminal, and coming on the back of his patience and determination in the first innings it was even more shocking. The right-hander needlessly charged spinner James Tredwell only to reach at the safe hands of Kevin Pietersen at deep mid on to spoil the party.

"I tried to keep Shafiu (Islam) cool to spend more time in the middle and asked him not to play lofted shots but what he told me was that it would be hard for him to survive if he was too defensive and finally he played a bad shot to get out. And then Naeem made a huge mistake that didn't go with the team plan. Things could have been totally different if we could play ten more overs or add 40 more runs on the board," said Shakib with disappointment.

"These are the things we should improve on. I had a doubt about our physical fitness in the end as I thought we were tired after such hard work in trying conditions. We played good cricket for the first three and half days but we might have lost our hope for some reason, which should not have happened. We are in a learning curve and I think we learn from the mistakes very quickly," he added.

Because of these two senseless dismissals the remarkable effort of the Bangladesh skipper went in vain on his 23rd birthday. "If you considered the weather and conditions, definitely this was my best effort. I did whatever I could," said Shakib reflecting on his contribution in the match where he made

49 runs in the first innings, took the maximum load on his shoulder bowling 66 overs for four wickets and then put up a 96-run knock in the second innings.

"It was hard for me to keep faith on Rubel (Hossain) and that's why I had the intention to ensure scoring maximum runs," said Shakib adding that luck not only disfavoured his team but particularly also him. "You see I scored 49 (not fifty), hit 96 (not hundred) and bagged four wickets (not five)," he said with a smile.

Bangladesh captain also said that it was not surprising that England posted the 209-run winning target with the loss of one wicket. "It was not a fifth day wicket. It was difficult to dismiss any batsman in this kind of pitch until the batsman makes a mistake," he defended.

In the end the Bangladesh captain however was happy with their performance in the series as he believed they could take big steps forward from this showing.

"I think we played decent cricket throughout the series and it will be great if we can continue our good showing," hoped the Bangladesh skipper.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and England at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur on Wednesday:

BANGLADESH: First innings 419 (Tamim 85, Naeem 59 not out; Swann 4-114)
ENGLAND: First innings 496 (Bell 138, Bresnan 91; Shakib 4-124)
BANGLADESH: Second innings (172-6 overnight)
 Tamim c Broad b Swann 52
 Kayes b Broad 4

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SPORTS REPORTER



Graeme Swann was asked only a couple of questions during the series ending press conference in Mirpur yesterday but when he did, his mischievousness aside, he spoke highly of the Tigers.

The England off-spinner was adjudged the man-of-the-series for taking 16 wickets in the two Tests and his effectiveness was one of the few differences between the two sides.

"Coming to Bangladesh, we were expected to win every game and that too handsomely but they are no pushovers these days," said Swann who was also celebrating his 31st birthday.

"We had to play good, hard cricket, have a strong leader and play as a cohesive leader. I think (Alastair) Cook did an exceptional job," he said before cheekily advising Cook to improve on his team talks.

Cook, who felt fully satisfied with the 2-0 and 3-0 scoreline, also said he found Bangladesh a tough opponent to handle.

"Bangladesh made us work for the win. They have a lot of talented players and beating them was a satisfying thing,"

said a smiling Cook.

He added that the surprise element of the whole tour was the surfaces on offer. "I was surprised at the flatness of the pitches. It didn't spin and it was

difficult to roll over any side on those surfaces," said Cook.

"It was my first time playing in Chittagong and Dhaka in Tests and I don't know what

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AFTER ALL THAT: A smiling England captain Alastair Cook poses with the winners' trophy after the second Test in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

MIRPUR MASALA

SPORTS REPORTER

NERVOUS 96

In Australian cricket folklore, 87 is considered as unlucky since it is 13 away from a century. For Shakib Al Hasan, 96 seems to bring him all the bad luck.

The Bangladesh captain has now completed three innings at 96, once staying unbeaten and twice dismissed including his second innings score against England yesterday.

The first time it happened, Shakib was involved in a huge run chase against Sri Lanka but he dragged a Dhammika Prasad delivery on to the stumps. In the next occasion, he was overseeing Bangladesh's fantastic chase against West Indies in Gros Islet last year. He later said he was happy to have that 96* under his belt as the Tigers won.

But the last one, when he missed a swipe off James Tredwell, was heart-breaking as he revealed later.

GOODBYE HEERA?

It was announced before the England series that former captain Shafiu Haque Heera would be relieved off his duties as Bangladesh's team operations manager. But when the media heard his farewell speech, it seems his departure is only momentary.

"They (the Bangladesh Cricket Board) said I'd be here under some capacity. Maybe I could be back in the same position (team manager), you never know. They always change their decision," dead-panned Shafiu, who has served the Tigers intermittently in the past.

But this proclamation killed off the farewell nature of the evening!

(ALMOST) CATCH OF THE DAY

Jonathan Trott would want to forget the Dhaka Test as soon as possible. First, he was bowled off his elbow on the third day. Then he dropped the easiest catch of his career when Tamim skied one to him at point. The ball popped through his fingers.

But when Shakib lofted another towards deep square leg, Trott sprinted, dived but no sooner had he held the ball for a split-second, the ball splattered out.

He however, made amends a few overs later when he caught Shafiu at mid-wicket.

ANOTHER SMALL STEP

Bangladesh made their highest aggregate score in Test cricket

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INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Easy win for Rajasthan

PTI, Mohali

A resilient Rajasthan Royals put a competitive total on the board and defended it with all their might to carve out a 31-run win against Kings XI Punjab in their Indian Premier League clash at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium in Mohali yesterday.

Put into bat, the Royals rode on brisk cameos by Adam Voges (45 not out), Faiz Fazal (45) and Michel Lumb (41) to post 183 for five.

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Bangla Games underway in Kolkata

SPORTS REPORTER

The third Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games got underway in Kolkata yesterday with a colourful opening ceremony at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Indoor Stadium.

Athletes from both Bengals will battle for 61 gold medals in 10 disciplines from today to establish their supremacy as both sides emerged champions once in previous two editions.

The disciplines of the Games, which was not held in 2009 due to the South Asian Games, are athletics, swimming, football 5

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Bukola puts MSC back on track

SPORTS REPORTER



Struggling Nigerian striker Alamu Bukola Olalekan returned to form with a hat-trick in the Bangladesh League to put title contenders Mohammedan Sporting Club back on winning track as his side recorded an emphatic 4-1 win over their Chittagong namesake at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Apart from the Bukola treble, his compatriot Emeka Christian struck the other for the winners while Akbar Hossain Ridon pulled one goal back in the dying moments for the Chittagong side.

With nine victories in 12 matches of the first leg, Mohammedan have now 30 points, four less than leaders Abahani while Chittagong Mohammedan with nine points stuck to the second position from bottom with seven defeats in 12 outings.

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STANDINGS

Name	Match	Win	Draw	Loss	G/F	G/A	G/D	Point
Abahani	12	11	1	0	22	2	20	34
Mohammedan	12	9	3	0	22	3	19	30
Russel	12	8	3	1	20	7	13	27
Feni Soccer	12	4	5	3	7	7	0	17
Arambagh	12	3	5	4	19	17	2	14
Brothers	12	3	5	4	6	8	-2	14
Ctg Abahani	12	4	2	6	11	16	-5	14
Farashganj	12	2	5	5	8	10	-2	13
Beanbazar	12	2	6	4	10	16	-6	12
Rahmatganj	12	3	2	7	9	14	-5	11
Muktiyoddha	12	3	2	7	11	22	-11	11
Ctg MSC	12	2	3	7	12	23	-11	9
Shuktara	12	1	4	7	4	16	-12	7



SuperSport3

Primera Liga

Getafe v Real Madrid
 Live from 1:00am (Friday)
 Bilbao v Athletic Madrid
 Live from 3:00am (Friday)

SuperSport2

Indian Premier League
 Bangalore Royal Challengers v
 Delhi Daredevils
 Live from 4:30pm
 Mumbai Indians v
 Chennai Super Kings
 Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India
 Sports News
 Live at 8:30pm



Dancers perform during the opening ceremony of the third Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games at the Netaji Subhash Bose indoor stadium in Kolkata yesterday. PHOTO: BANGLARCHOKH.COM