

Small issues lead to big loss

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Apart from a few thorns on their side, some of the cricket played in the Asia Cup final has been nothing short of exhilarating. The Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium witnessed its greatest game of cricket and the packed house was thrilled at every turn and chicanes.

The Tigers have made the country proud by finally playing the brand of cricket the nation has wanted for a very long time. They fight, these Tigers. They didn't give up against India, they held themselves together against Sri Lanka and though they failed to touch the tape despite crossing the final hurdle against Pakistan, they can stand up tall and play like this for the foreseeable future.

Now back to those thorns. The first bone of contention was the manner in which Shahadat Hossain let himself be manhandled in the final over. After two decent deliveries, the man who hails from Signboard, Narayanganj fell apart as a cricketer. He bowled a throat-high full-toss to Sarfraz Ahmed and got hit past point for four; it was followed by a needless extra effort delivery which resulted in a foot-fault no-ball. The freehit next ball was still tolerable but off the fifth ball he got smacked for another boundary. In total, it was 19 runs the Tigers couldn't afford to concede in a big game where they are playing for the very first time. More than blaming Mushfiquir Rahim for giving the ball to Shahadat, it would be the bowler who should bear the brunt for bowling so poorly. The other options were Mahmudullah Riyad or Nasir Hossain, but less talented spinners in the final over seemed riskier at the time.

Another was the innings played by Nazimuddin, and to some extent Nasir. The right-handed opener poked around for an hour and two minutes to score 16 off 52 balls. He tried too hard to hit boundaries but never found a single one. Instead, he batted as if he was on playing a green seamer or a rank turner. Shahadat and Nazimuddin were given the nod for this game for only one reason and that doesn't have anything to do with their contribution. The think-tank didn't want to

break the winning combination.

If Nazimuddin made batting look extremely hard, the man at the other end, Tamim Iqbal, played as if he was having nets. The left-handed opener is back in form and with his fourth consecutive fifty (a Bangladesh record), proved to his detractors that what happens off the field has stopped affecting him on it.

"You can't underestimate those two guys [Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal]. Without those two the job is a little tougher. They set the tone. You do rate them very highly," said coach Stuart Law after the emotionally draining game. "Tamim did everything in this Asia Cup except get a hundred. His preparation was fantastic. He put aside the cloud above him and got on with his cricket and reaped the benefits."

The other guy that Law has spoken of is now the best player of the tournament, and the biggest contributor for Bangladesh. Shakib was tremendous once again, picking up two wickets in an economical spell of bowling followed by yet another innings of substance and pluck. Shakib took a slow game by the scruff of the neck every time Nasir managed to give him the strike. His fall playing the much-maligned scoop shot, was critical to the Tigers' cause but another brave soul kept the fire burning.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's return has not only fascinating for the cricket lovers but the manner in which he has performed has once again showed what he's really made of.

"Having a strike bowler like Mashrafe back to cricket is something, especially how he has recovered.

"He contributes big time, he is clever with pace, he is a positive influence and gives other senior players a break, everyone has chipped in, a complete team performance, we have achieved what we wanted to achieve. He lights the fire so that the other seniors can take a break," said Law.

"Apart from a boundary off the last ball, we didn't lack anything, we had penetration with ball, batters also did well. We could have rotated the strike a bit better during the middle part. To chase a total of 240 was a manageable task. We could find a million different areas where we could improve. We played the best game of cricket we possibly could this evening," he added.

BD-PAK SCOREBOARD				
PAKISTAN				
Hafeez c Nazmul b Razzak	40			
Jamshed c Mahmudullah b Mashrafe	9			
Younis lbw b Nazmul	1			
Misbah run out	13			
Akmal c Mushfiquir b Mahmudullah	30			
Azam c & b Shakib	30			
Afridi c Nasir b Shakib	32			
Sarfraz not out	46			
Gul c Shakib b Mashrafe	4			
Ajmal b Razzak	4			
Cheema not out	9			
Extras: (b-2, lb-8, nb-4, w-4)	18			
Total: (For nine wkts in 50 overs)	236			
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-19, 3-55, 4-70, 5-129, 6-133, 7-178, 8-199, 9-206.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	10	0	48	2
Nazmul	8	1	36	1
Razzak	10	3	26	2
Shahadat	9	0	63	0
Shakib	10	1	39	2
Mahmudullah	3	0	14	1
BANGLADESH				
Tamim c Younis b Gul	60			
Nazimuddin c Younis b Afridi	16			
Jahurul c Younis b Ajmal	0			
Nasir c Misbah b Gul	28			
Shakib b Cheema	68			
Mushfiquir c Jamshed b Cheema	10			
Mahmudullah not out	17			
Mashrafe c Jamshed b Ajmal	18			
Razzak b Cheema	6			
Shahadat not out	0			
Extras: (lb-5, w-4, nb-2)	11			
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	234			
Did not bat: Nazmul.				
Fall of wickets: 1-68, 2-68, 3-81, 4-170, 5-179, 6-190, 7-218, 8-233.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hafeez	10	0	30	0
Gul	10	2	65	2
Ajmal	10	2	40	2
Afridi	10	1	28	1
Cheema	7	0	46	3
Azam	3	0	20	0

Public holi

FROM PAGE 19

Many enjoyed the game on big screens set up by Rajshahi City Corporation at different spots of the city. They expressed their joy by dancing and shouting, and obviously by waving huge flags of Bangladesh.

Youths in a huge motorcycle rally encircled the city blowing horns while many fire-eaters only added a mood of joy to the already cheering fans. Many clubs and organisations at several city points arranged for food for the poor.

Our Staff Correspondent in Sylhet reports, unlike other days, the movement of pedestrians in the city went thin by 2pm as people left for their houses to enjoy the Asia cup final. Festivity was seen everywhere with people expecting a big victory against Pakistan.

Our Rangpur correspondent adds, people of the new divisional town of Rangpur were seen everywhere cheering on the national team for a victory against Pakistan in the Asia Cup final.

Smooth

FROM PAGE 16

embroiled in the controversy, resigning and then being asked to return by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

His batting method too has gone through a lot of change. With two new balls in place, Tamim has become cautious but the shot-making hasn't stopped. He now settles for the odd boundary in the midst of a lot of solidity.

Tamim is now the 43rd batsman to reach this feat with the New Zealand great Glenn Turner being the first man and the young Indian batsman Virat Kohli being the last one to complete four fifties in a row. Even his batting hero Sanath Jayasuriya has done it once.

After his first half-century in the tournament, also against Pakistan, Tamim thanked chief selector, uncle, Akram for sticking with him through the controversy of his selection ahead of the Asia Cup. Yesterday's celebrations were also a wonderful reminder of his boyish celebrations after reaching his Lord's hundred in 2010. It was his own way of telling the dressing-room attendant to put his name on the honours board.

Cheeky he may be, but he has returned the faith of the nation.

Chronicles of a heartbreak

Following is a blow-by-blow account of the key highlights from yesterday's Asia Cup final between Bangladesh and Pakistan.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal walks back to the pavilion after scoring a brisk 60 during the Asia Cup final against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

TOSS: Mushfiquir Rahim has no hesitation in choosing to bowl first and chase -- a formula that has worked successfully in their last two encounters

1st over: Poor start for Bangladesh as ace seamer Mashrafe bin Mortaza strays on the leg stump too often and Pakistan opener Nasir Jamshed takes full advantage with two boundaries. The signs are ominous.

4th over: Huge appeal for leg-before turned down as dangerman Mohammad Hafeez looks plumb in front to a beauty of a Nazmul Hossain delivery which seamed in and struck him in front. Umpire Gould shakes his head but the home side and fans are not convinced.

5th over: OUT! Mashrafe with the breakthrough as Jamshed fails to pick a slower one from Mashrafe and finds the waiting hand of Mahmudullah Riyad at cover. The crowd go ballistic and it's not even a full house yet.

6th over: OUT! Nazmul finally gets his man. Using his stock nipper, Shafiul Islam's replacement has the veteran Younus Khan trapped leg-before. Replays suggest a slight deviation off the inside edge. Pakistan are 19 for 2 and on the ropes.

10th over: Hafeez looks determined to make Bangladesh play. Two superb boundaries off Nazmul; one driven past the bowler and the second glanced towards fine-leg sees him move to the 20s.

15th over: OUT! A promising partnership between Hafeez and captain Misbah-ul Haq is nipped in the bud by some sharp fielding from Nasir Hossain whose quick pick up and throw finds Misbah short. 3 down for 55 and the crowd are in raptures.

22nd over: OUT! A period of sustained bowling pressure pays dividends as a frustrated Hafeez tries to go for the big one and only manages to find the hands of Nazmul at mid-on. Pakistan are 70 for 4 and a real upset looks on the cards.

32nd over: 50 partnership between Umar Akmal and Hammad Azam, both of whom have played responsibly. Pakistan looks to have repaired the early damage that was caused by Bangladesh

34th over: OUT! Wicket at a bad time for Pakistan as Hammad Azam's fluent innings comes to an end as he goes for a big one but only manages a top-edge that is caught by Shakib.

35th over: OUT! And his partner Akmal follows, caught down the leg-side. Unlucky dismissal and Akmal makes his

feelings known launching into a string of expletives.

39th over: With Pakistan on the ropes, Shahid Afridi lives up to his nickname of 'Boom Boom' as he strikes a string of boundaries. This is the pick of the lot as he absolutely carves Mashrafe over the long-off boundary for a huge and flat six.

42nd over: Afridi goes, mistiming a full toss from Shakib to long-off where Nasir takes another sharp catch. The blaster has a little query about height but he had advanced a long way down the track. Pakistan are 178 for 7.

43rd over: Sarfraz Ahmed now takes charge cavorting Shahadat Hossain for two boundaries as Pakistan up the tempo.

50th over: Wickets fall but Sarfraz stands tall with an inventive innings. He takes full advantage of a loose last over bowled by Shahadat striking 19 runs the biggest over of the innings so far. Pakistan finish on 236 and they will be happy with the ending after an inauspicious start.

Bangladesh innings

4th over: Good start for Bangladesh as Tamim Iqbal carries over his sparkling form. Two stupendous boundaries off Umar Gul both through the off side as Bangladesh are off and running.

10th over: Bangladesh are 35 at the end of ten. Tamim looks imperious but worryingly, Nazimuddin looks completely out of sorts, failing to get to terms with the pace of the wicket.

17th over: WICKET! Bangladesh have moved comfortably to 68 but mostly due to Tamim who looks in supreme touch. But here Nazimuddin is finally put out of his misery falling for a painstaking 52 ball 16. The crowd don't seem to mind; if Tamim stays, an unbelievable win looks on the cards.

18th over: WICKET! It's a one-two blow as 68 for no loss quickly becomes 68 for 2. The crowd suddenly goes quiet as Saeed Ajmal bamboozles Jahurul Islam with a corker.

22nd over: WICKET! The public are stunned and belief turns rapidly to doubt as Tamim Iqbal falls victim to Umar Gul. You can hear a pin drop now. The silence is deathly.

Shakib al Hasan, always the saviour, and Nasir Hossain rebuild the innings, but the newcomer is slow to pick up the singles. There are mutterings of discontent and some sections of the crowd are not happy.

42nd over: Shakib smotes Aizaz Cheema for six over long-on. Spectacular shot from the all-rounder under immense pressure and the crowd begins to dream again. Bangladesh are 169 for 3. 68 is needed off 48 but crucially the Tigers have seven wickets in hand. Seven! An improbable win looks achievable. How many overs does Ajmal have left again?

43rd/44th over: Life turns on a dime. First Nasir goes for a painstaking knock, and with Mushfiquir at the crease turning singles it looks possible. But suddenly, without warning, Shakib al Hasan's cheeky attempt to flick beyond fine-leg sees his leg stump disturbed by Cheema. The silence is complete, overwhelming.

46th over: Mushfiquir Rahim is caught on the mid-wicket boundary. Game over.

47th over: Or is it? This is thrilling from Bangladesh. Mahmudullah and Mashrafe rack up 14 with the man nicknamed Braveheart slamming two boundaries. 25 needed off 18 and Bangladesh can earn an absolutely remarkable victory.

48th over: Oh! There must be heart attacks happening somewhere. Twist again as Mashrafe falls victim to a catch at short-fine leg trying a cute flick. Some say it's over, but with 19 needed off 14 who can say eh?

49th over: Who can say indeed! The Tigers smote ten runs off Gul. No boundaries but Mahmudullah and Razzak rotate strike expertly. Oh where were these singles earlier on?

50th over: It is over and Pakistan nick it. With 9 to win of 6 the valiant Tigers manage only 6. They lose by 2-runs, 2 runs. The margin is maddeningly small but heartbreakingly wide. The dream is over.

Mushfiquir is despondent, weeping into the shoulders of long-time comrade Shakib who himself looks teary-eyed. Mahmudullah cannot yet believe it and neither can the public. The crowd is shocked. There will be time for what-if's later but right here and now there is a pallid silence. This is what heartbreak tastes like.

SPORTS REPORTER



Don't measure Bangladesh's bowling performance by only focusing on the final over of the innings. Shahadat Hossain conceded 19 diabolical runs off the 50th over to give Pakistan a shred of momentum they dearly required towards the end of their innings in the Asia Cup final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. It is an aberration; in fact his entire spell should be taken afar from the heroic tasks completed in the tournament by the more serious campaigners.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Abdur Razzak and Shakib Al Hasan decided that a final's day performance has to be A-class and the three men conceded 113 runs from their 30 overs to pick up six wickets. If it were a performance by one bowler in a Test match, Bangladesh would have actually considered a win, but more to the point, it gave the Tigers an excellent platform.

The Narail Express has given a remarkable account of his fitness and rehabilitation that has gone on for almost a year after he underwent knee surgery in Australia in April last year. In four games, he returned to the Mashrafe of old, bowling tight, keeping batsmen honest to their footwork and making sure the dressing-room is bubbly. He finishes the tournament with six wickets after his two in the final, removing Nasir Jamshed with a nice slower ball early in the piece before picking the dangerous Umar Gul in his last spell.

Razzak's performance has also been a tribute to his focus after being sidelined from the Test squad. He took a bucket of

wickets in first-class cricket and remained steady in the Dhaka Premier League as well as the BPL T20s. Some had suggested that this could have been the final chance for the Khulna-born left-arm spinner as the season has thrown up several contenders for his position in the team. But he has prevailed, four good shows out of four. He finished with two wickets as well, bowling some of his most disciplined spells by going for just 2.6 in ten overs. Shakib meanwhile has been quite erratic at times with the ball, not really his best against India or Sri Lanka. But he has bowled well against Pakistan in the first game and repeated that performance by taking two wickets.

Nazmul too bowled well until he fell over in his eighth over, twisting his ankle while trying to bowl a slower one to Umar Akmal in the 28th over. Mahmudullah Riyad however was left unused, bowling just three overs to take the wicket of Akmal by strangling him down the leg-side.

Shahadat however has been lucky to play all four games despite his first day three-wicket haul. His 0-81 against India was swept under the carpet due to the fine work by the two senior men while his spells against Sri Lanka should have urged a rethink on the part of the team management. But two new balls from each end have given him the edge, though his use of the newer ball hasn't been up to the mark.

As far as bowling is concerned, the think-tank must be pleased as the base is set for a proper attack for the near future. It is time to think forward so the new crop of steady pace bowlers should be tried alongside Mashrafe, Nazmul and Shafiul Islam while the left-arm spinners across the country can rest for a while.

mayhem, hartals, stocks collapsing, loadsheddings and prices spiralling. Life throwing more and more challenges at us, let us for a moment stop to think of this team as more than a bunch of young men playing a game. These young men, more than most others qualified for the same in our various capacities, have managed to give this country a sense of oneness and collective pride as a nation, here in Mirpur, and around the world. Wherever word of this has travelled. In Bangkok, a non-cricketing destination if ever there was one, I now feel more strongly what it feels, to not being there when history was almost in the making.

Let us but not miss the point. These 2 runs are the most important runs that Bangladesh did not score. But never before in our cricket history have losing a match counted more than a victory.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS					DOWN				
1 Close	40 Commercial	3 Eye layer	22 — Island		1 Feed the hogs	16 Mischievous kid	40 Matter-horn, for one		
5 Sidewalk eatery	41 Search for prey	4 Candle fat	23 Inning trio		2 —	20 Kiwi's extinct cousin	41 Comic strip		
9 Eccentric	43 Plant life treatises	5 Trash containers	24 Rocker		27 Second person	Christian Andersen	42 Incursion		
12 Volcanic outflow	47 Rowing	6 "All the Things You —"	25 Weeding tool		28 Out of control		43 Money supply		
13 "Caro nome" is one	48 Getting the jump on	7 Ever-green type	26 Small town description		31 Charged bit		44 Laugh-a-minute		
14 Ultra-modernist	51 USO audience	8 Supporter of the arts?	27 Play area		32 Pismire		45 "— Karenina"		
15 Comic's specialty	52 Trumpet	9 — bandit (snot machine)	28 Have bills		33 Ram's mate		46 Like custard or quiche		
17 Flight angle	53 Chinese gang	10 Sandwich shop	30 Barbie's companion		34 Profound		49 Present		
18 Book after Job	54 Praise in verse	11 Action figure, really	35 Parishioner's seat		36 In medias —		50 Before		
19 iPhone function	55 Dumb-struck		37 Takes as one's own						
21 Chance, for short	56 Remain		39 Island greeting						
22 Hue			40 Matter-horn, for one						
24 Presentation			41 Comic strip						
27 Second person			42 Incursion						
28 Out of control			43 Money supply						
31 Charged bit			44 Laugh-a-minute						
32 Pismire			45 "— Karenina"						
33 Ram's mate			46 Like custard or quiche						
34 Profound			49 Present						
36 In medias —			50 Before						

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CRYPTOQUIP

E J V O A Z Q A E A P D N E E D N U
I A E E A D E O H K A T L H K U L J Z N J V,
J Z Q J V S I I T Z Q A K N E
V N Z J I A A V P D J E Q U A N S A L E .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I KEPT ZONING OUT AS MY SHIPMATE, A HATMAKER BY TRADE, BABBLED INCESSANTLY ABOUT CAP SIZING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals F