

SPORT

TIGERS' late surge evens Day 1

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

How the Tigers would acclimatise to Test cricket after five months without any form of first-class cricket was a major concern heading into the first Test against New Zealand at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. The fears proved well-founded initially, but by the end of the first day yesterday, Bangladesh displayed an unexpected appreciation of the rhythms of Test cricket as they prised out three crucial wickets and restored parity through the application of continued pressure on a wicket that did not offer them anything.

The Kiwis, who dominated most of the day courtesy of a century from Kane Williamson and a patient 73 from Peter Fulton, were caught in the Tigers' slow left-arm trap as Abdur Razzak (2-100) and Shakib Al Hasan (1-34) removed Williamson, Ross Taylor and captain Brendon McCullum in the last session.

At 244 for 2 and with 10 overs remaining it seemed as though the game was slipping away from the hosts. But Razzak who bowled with a great deal of flight throughout the day, got his reward late in the day when he induced a leading edge off Ross Taylor and got him caught at short cover in the 80th over.

Skipper Mushfiqur Rahim bowled his spinners for a majority of the day and the resultant swift over rate meant that the new ball was available as early as 3:55 pm. The spinners got extra zip with the new ball -- essential on a slow surface -- and both Williamson and McCullum were trapped in front in the last two overs of the day.

Prior to that Williamson had ambled to his fourth Test century with a battling innings that saw a mix of elegance and grit. He handled Bangladesh's slow bowlers with ease almost throughout the innings and had begun by cutting Shakib for two boundaries in the batsman's first over. He made it a habit to rock back to the spinners and as a result most of his twelve boundaries were scored through point and mid-wicket.

His only rash shot was the one which took him to his 100 -- a top-edge wide of slip which went to the third-man boundary.

Earlier, it was a tough day for Bangladesh on the field as the visitors made them toil hard. Pacers Robiul Islam and Rubel Hossain seemed unthreatening in the morning session as the openers played them with ease. The wicket was very slow and it gave the batsmen enough time to adjust to any movement on offer. Mushfiqur had enough of the two-man pace attack as early as the sixth over of the game when he replaced Rubel with Abdur Razzak. Robiul was replaced by Shohag Gazi from the other end three overs later.

The spinners induced a few chances by blocking the run flow. Gazi almost had Hamish Rutherford caught behind off a bottom edge in the 19th, over only for the ball to hit Mushfiqur's pads. Four overs later however, Rutherford skied a turning delivery from Gazi to be caught at mid-off.

Williamson came to the crease next and shared a 126-run partnership in 40 overs with Fulton -- their third highest partnership this year.

It was a steady stand and frustrated the Bangladeshis. Mushfiqur was busy juggling his spinners throughout the stand, with none of them proving to be especially effective. Mushfiqur even gambled with debutant Marshall Ayub's leg-breaks, but without success.

At the end, it was Nasir Hossain's off-breaks that got the breakthrough right before tea when Fulton carelessly punched a length delivery straight to cover in the 63rd over of the game.

Warning bells for Riyad

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

The inclusion of an extra spinner in the first Test in Chittagong yesterday meant that Bangladesh would have to step out of their traditional tendency of playing eight batsmen at home. The unlucky batsman turned out to be vice-captain Mahmudullah Riyad, who bats at number eight. Going by Riyad's recent form, him missing out for a second Test in a row -- the Tigers' previous Test against Zimbabwe being the first -- was always on the cards.

Riyad's last six Test innings fetched him a total of just 36 runs. He failed to hit form in the three-day practice match and the Dhaka Premier League, both of which were crucial to selection for this Test.

With a number of batsmen in good form -- Marshall Ayub, Naeem Islam and Mominul Haque have all hit centuries recently -- Riyad's spot in the side was bound to be tested, something which he is not used to. He began his Test career in 2009 against the West Indies where he picked up a five-for and played a crucial role with the ball and contributed to the Tigers' series win. 2010 was a good year for him with the bat -- he scored his first century against the Kiwis at Hamilton and also scored an unbeaten 96 against India as well as two half-centuries against England. Since then however, he registered just two half-centuries in eight matches, with his next-highest score being 32.

Riyad was dropped in the longer version for the first time during the West Indies' tour of Bangladesh in 2011. This time though there may be greater implications. Riyad is the vice-captain of the side and considering that a lengthier rope is extended to those in leadership roles, his omission is not good news.

If this is a concern, the player's public utterances do not reflect it. In a press conference last week, Riyad stated that he was content with his performance in the Dhaka League, where he scored two half-centuries, one 30 and a duck.

During the national team's fitness camp a few months ago, Riyad had told The Daily Star that it was his dream to get promoted and lead the national side one day. That dream, although not vanquished, seems far away now. He would want to spend all his energy into turning his form around although a comeback in this series may already be a stretch too far, especially if the current batsmen hit form on a benign pitch.



It was a long hard day for the Tigers bowlers on the greens at Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday. But they signed off the opening day of the first Test with broad smiles on their face after dismissing New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum (C) with what was the day's final delivery. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

'Still in our hands'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

Bangladesh batsman Nasir Hossain said that the hosts were not happy with the way the wicket panned out on the first day of the first Test against New Zealand at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium (ZACS) in Chittagong.

After losing the toss Bangladesh struggled for most parts of the day on the field. Both seamers found themselves removed from the attack as early as the ninth over of the day. The spinners too could not deliver until the last hour when they picked up three wickets in ten overs.

"We were hoping that the wicket would turn more. It did not turn as much as we wanted it to. It turned a little bit more towards the end in the evening. We are hoping that it will remain like that tomorrow as well," said Nasir at the post-day press conference. "We had hoped that the wicket would be a spin-trap of sorts. Had it been like that we would have been batting today."

Nasir though, was happy with the way the hosts came back towards the end of the day.

"I think considering the way we started, we did a good job in making that come back. We got three wickets in the last hour, so I feel that the game is still in our hands," he said.

At the post-day conference Peter Fulton stated that New Zealand would be satisfied with a score of around 400 in the first innings.

"If they say that they want to score 400 then our plan will be to not let them reach that. We are not concerned about how much they plan to put up on the board. We just want to bundle them out as soon possible," said Nasir.

The last time Bangladesh faced New Zealand at the ZACS, the wicket seemed to be improving as the Test match progressed and that in a way helped Daniel Vettori, who scored 73, rescue the Kiwis from a precarious position and lead his side to a win. However, the ZACS has undergone a face-lift and currently the players are playing on a newly-laid wicket. Nasir felt that the wicket would turn more as the match progressed.

"The wicket is breaking a little bit. The more it breaks it will turn more, so I think we have to be prepared to face more turn when we bat," he said.



Kiwis target 400

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

New Zealand opener Peter Fulton expressed his disappointment at his team losing three wickets in the last hour of the day yesterday, but stated that the Kiwis were looking to post a first innings score of around 350 to 400.

"We did a lot of good work in the first 85 overs. If we would have come in with three wickets down it would have been good. It was pretty disappointing to lose Kane [Williamson] and Brendon [McCullum] at the end. If we can get up around that 400 mark, it would put us in a strong position," said Fulton.

The wicket at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium seemed low, slow and barely had any purchase for the bowlers. According to Fulton, who scored 73, it was the kind of wicket that they expected.

"It was pretty much what we planned for. It was pretty low and slow, not a lot of bounce. As the day went on, it started to take turn. I wouldn't expect the bounce to improve [over the

next few days]," said Fulton.

"Over here with the heat and humidity, you start to get tired and maybe reign yourself in a little bit. You have to be happy to just be out there in the middle. When the bad ball comes along, you have to be good enough to put them away," he added.

Fulton, who was involved in a 100-run partnership with Kane Williamson for the second wicket, lost his wicket against the run of play to Nasir Hossain. It was a length delivery which he hit straight to cover. Nasir believed that the delivery he bowled should have been smacked away to the boundary and that he was lucky to get a wicket.

"I think the ball was there to hit, it was just unfortunate that I couldn't keep it down," Fulton said, referring to his fall.

Fulton also praised Williamson for the manner in which he handled the spinners today. "He [Kane Williamson] is a very good player of spin bowling. He made it look pretty easy out there at times," said Fulton.

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND: First innings				
Fulton c Mominul b Nasir				73
Rutherford c Razzak b Gazi				34
Williamson lbw b Shakib				114
Taylor c sub (Naeem) b Razzak				28
McCullum lbw b Razzak				21
Martin not out				0
Watling not out				0
Extras: (b-4, lb-6)				10
Total: (For 5 wkts in 89.5 overs)				280
To bat: Watling, Bracewell, Anderson, Boulton, Sodhi				
Fall of wickets: 1-57, 2-183, 3-244, 4-276, 5-280				
Bowler				
Robiul	10	2	16	0
Rubel	13	1	44	0
Razzak	31.5	4	100	2
Gazi	23	4	56	1
Shakib	8	2	34	1
Ayub	2	0	15	0
Nasir	2	0	5	1
BANGLADESH: Mushfiqur, Anamul, Tamim, Shakib, Ayub, Nasir, Razzak, Gazi, Rubel, Mominul, Robiul.				
Toss: New Zealand.				



Dilshan's bye to Test cricket

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's former skipper and opening batsman Tillakaratne Dilshan is to retire from Test cricket but will remain available for shorter versions of the game, the country's cricket board said Wednesday.

Dilshan, who will be 37 on Monday, is due to make a formal announcement at a press conference on Thursday, Sri Lanka Cricket spokesman Rajith Fernando told AFP.

"He is retiring from Test cricket but will be available to play in one-day matches," Fernando said.

The aggressive right-hander began his Test career in November 1999 playing against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo and the last of his 87 appearances came against Bangladesh at Colombo in March.

He scored 5,492 Test runs, including 16 centuries, with a batting average of 40.98. He is the sixth highest Test run scorer in Sri Lanka's history.

He also took 39 wickets with his off-spin at an average of 43.87.

Dilshan has been a key factor in Sri Lanka's rise to the top of the rankings in Twenty20 cricket, smashing an unbeaten 74 off 51 balls in his last match -- a six-wicket win over South Africa at Hambantota in August.



Kane Williamson provided the meat of the healthy New Zealand total on the opening day of the first Test against Bangladesh at Chittagong yesterday. Here he drives the ball on his way to a fine 114. PHOTO: STAR

Fed Cup from Nov 3

SPORTS REPORTER



The ongoing transfer window for the 2013-14 football season has been extended to October 31 from October 23, deferring the start of the Federation Cup to the first week of November and without any qualifying round.

The Professional Football League Committee (PFLC)'s initial plan was to start the Federation Cup from October 25, two days after the completion of the players' transfers. But the committee yesterday decided to start the season's curtain-raising tournament from November 3, where ten clubs of the Bangladesh Premier League and seven clubs from the Bangladesh Championship League will participate.

"Considering the long holiday for Durga Puja and Eid-ul-Azha, we have extended the deadline of the players'

transfer window," said PFLC chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy. "We have decided not to stage the qualifying round due to the political situation and also for the lack of interest from the teams which generally participate in the qualifying round."

However, it has been learnt that PFLC had to extend the deadline after being pressurised by Mohammedan SC. It has also been learnt that the Bangladesh Football Federation have not sent any invitation at all to any clubs such as the university teams, services teams and teams from outside the capital till yesterday.

Murshedy said that staging the qualification round of the Federation Cup would have disrupted their overall schedule for the season as they have little time before the start of the main competition on November 3 and want to start the Bangladesh Premier League at the latter part of November.

The committee also referred Mohammedan's complaint against

four players to the Players' Status Committee and asked them to reach a decision immediately.

It may be mentioned that Zahid Hossain, Shakil Ahmed, Nahidul Islam, Mamun Mia -- had reportedly taken money from Mohammedan as well as Sheikh Russel KC and according to the league bylaws, if they are proved guilty, they may face punishment.

The league committee also decided to recommend the BFF executive committee to lift dug-out band on BFF executive committee members during their respective club's matches.

Murshedy said they would also recommend the BFF executive committee to include club representatives in the Referees' Committee, even though he could not give satisfactory explanation behind such recommendation.

However, it has been learnt that the committee did this under pressure from Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club.

BCB POLLS TODAY

Ex-captain v another

SPORTS REPORTER

The highly-anticipated Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) elections will be held today. But months of gossip, court battle and the war of words between the incumbent president and one of his predecessors, both ruling-party lawmakers, have come down to a mere fight between two former national captains -- Gazi Ashraf Hossain and Khaled Mahmud.

They will try to win the hearts of 43 voters to become the director from Category III.

Voting will also be held for three other directorship posts out of a total of 23 as former skipper Naimur Rahman, Monjur Kader and Mirza Zillur Rahman will be fighting for Category I's two slots and Rafius Shams Paddy and Saiful Alam Swapan contesting for the lone post in Rajshahi Division. Nineteen directors have already been elected unopposed.

The voting will be held from 9am to 4pm at the NSC conference room.

There had been much hype about the polls once BCB asked the National Sports Council to start the electoral process. But it turned into a one-sided affair once ex-president Saber Hossain Chowdhury pulled out of the race.

Incumbent BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon is all set for an overwhelming victory to become the first elected chief when the directors give their vote after today's elections.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday served a showcause notice on the election commission asking why the election process will not be stopped.