

# The steely Shamsur

NAIMUL KARIM

In September this year, Mohammedan were reeling at 75 for 3 in their chase of 282 against archrivals Abahani, with two of their top batsmen, Tillakaratne Dilshan and Upul Tharanga sent back. It seemed only a matter of time before they collapsed. But that's when 25-year-old Shamsur Rahman came to the crease, scored an unbeaten 105 and led his side to a last-ball win.

While Shamsur did not get his maiden ODI century at Fatullah yesterday, the manner in which he batted -- taking the enormous task of achieving a 300-plus target upon himself -- proved his mettle.

"I think this was the first time that I was not nervous when I reached the 90s. Usually in domestic cricket I get nervous. I have a few 90-plus scores there, but in the match, I did not even know that I was closing on to a hundred. My main aim was to get my team as close to the target as possible. It was hard luck," said Shamsur, at the post-match conference at Fatullah yesterday.

"Had I played for the hundred I probably would have given more dot balls. If I was there till the end the match would not have been so tight and we would have won with three to four overs to spare," he added.

When Shamsur and Ziaur Rahman came to the crease, they got to a flashy start, smacking 60 runs of the first seven overs. The batsmen, according to Shamsur, had a 'free license' to play their shots.

"We had a free license to play our shots in the first Powerplay because we knew that Mushfiqur [Rahim] and Nasir [Hossain] were to follow," said Shamsur. "The partnership in the first Powerplay [worth 61 off 45 balls] was the most important one I think," he added.

Despite Ziaur's fall in the seventh over Shamsur went about in his natural aggressive vein. He reached his 50 off 48 balls when he pulled Mitchell McClenaghan for a six over midwicket. His shot of the match came two balls later when he charged down and dispatched McClenaghan for a six straight down the ground. This was only his second ODI, but it seemed as though he had seen it all.

"It always feels good to score, no matter what level of cricket it is. The fact that my 96, along with Nasir and Naem's [Islam] partnership played an important role in the match is a big gain for me. I am very lucky that I scored in only my second match," he added.

Despite having got a flying start to his ODI career, Shamsur keeps a cool head on his shoulders. For a person who broke through the national squad back in 2009, it's taken a while for Shamsur to make his ODI debut and he knows that he has to perform in order to stay in the team.

# 307 an anomaly

SAKEB SUBHAN

Perhaps because of the popular obsession with batting and boundaries, Bangladesh's bowling has largely been ignored when talking about the country's brave new era of competence in ODI cricket. It is a curious phenomenon, because a team's health can best be gauged by how it performs on the field, when teamwork truly comes into the spotlight.

The brave new era can be traced back to the Tigers' previous series against New Zealand, the 4-0 white-wash in October 2010. Since that series, it is their bowling that has been the most impressive suit. While batsmen like Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Shakib Al Hasan have taken on all comers during that period, it was their bowling that had often set up victories. Of the 46 matches that Bangladesh played, starting with that series against the Kiwis, they held the opposition to less than 250 runs on 33 occasions -- 15 of them while fielding first, 11 of which turned out to be victorious. Of the rest, 10 were won while fielding second.

Perhaps that is why Bangladesh conceding over 300 yesterday against New Zealand seemed such a surprise and

an anomaly -- it was only their fourth such concession in 46 matches since October 2010, a number that compares favourably to all Test playing nations except West Indies (three) and their current opponents New Zealand (also four) over the same duration. These figures suggest that Bangladesh, although without any superstar bowlers like Dale Steyn or Saeed Ajmal, have the makings of a world-class fielding unit. Therein lies the basis of their remarkable improvement from being a team expected to surprise to one expected to win.

That there are no obvious superstars in the bowling line-up only underlines their cohesiveness as a unit. In this series the first two matches were won by Mashrafe Bin Mortaza applying pressure at the top in tandem with spinners Abdur Razzak, Shohag Gazi and part-timers Nasir Hossain, Mahmudullah Riyad and Mominul Haque. That is before the biggest improver, Rubel Hossain, came in with spells of surprising hostility and he has a hattrick and a six-wicket haul to show for it. Bangladesh's out-cricket generally has been excellent too with rarely a catch put down in the first two games or a boundary needlessly conceded.

It was partly New Zealand's ability to break this stranglehold -- which the Tigers had established on touring teams since last year's series victory over an explosive West Indian batting line-up -- and an excellent batting pitch that finally put the fielding unit under the cosh. And although the usually excellent Mashrafe had a bad outing and the fielding unit suffered lapses like Rubel's crucial dropped chance off centurion Ross Taylor, there were enough signs still of a bowling unit that can pull things back. Bangladesh briefly reined the Kiwis in after a rollicking opening start. In years past a team may have gotten away to much more than the Kiwis eventually scored, which made a huge difference in the outcome yesterday.

There are things to learn of course when you concede more than 300. One wonders when Mushfiqur will stop using Mashrafe as a death bowler - he conceded 32 in his final two overs. Also, the wisdom of choosing to field first on a belter can be questioned. But then again, maybe it was because of the faith he had in his bowling department who may not have, for once, fully repaid it yesterday, but in the final analysis did just about enough.



**MOMENTS FROM BANGLAWASH PART II:** (clockwise, from top left) Ross Taylor's aggressive hundred gave Mashrafe bin Mortaza, and his colleagues, a lot to worry about and provided the Kiwis with an imposing total. The Tigers fans at Fatullah, and millions across the world, though never lost belief. And they were paid in kind as the Tigers unleashed heroes like Shamsur Rahman and Mominul Haque and Nasir Hossain and Shohag Gazi to chase the target down handsomely and complete the Banglawash.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED



# Fatullah's flawed festival

SPORTS REPORTER



A festive mood permeated the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium at

Fatullah yesterday with an almost-packed stadium cheering for the Tigers at every minute of the game. Jubilant supporters had been flocking the stadium since 7:30 in the morning to witness the return of international cricket at the venue after seven years.

Even as the match got underway, the line of spectators waiting to get in stretched several hundred yards from the main gate. The rooftops of surrounding buildings were transformed into impromptu galleries as locals soaked up the return of their much-loved Tigers in such dominant form.

What was not visible though was the inconvenience faced by supporters, caused mainly due to the lack of facilities at the venue. The trouble began right before the innings break as supporters could not get hold of a food counter within the stadium. As a result many of them had to step out. Some of them were even seen toppling over the low boundary walls and then getting back in.

"There was no system to buy food within the stadium. I could not even get hold of any water. I had to buy lunch from outside, at double the rate," said tired-looking Ishtiaque, a college student, who along with his three friends were busy devouring a packet of khichuri.

There also was not a designated area for the bags carried by supporters, which they were not allowed to take

into the stadium. They were merely kept at a grass bank next to the entrance of the gate.

A similar scenario was witnessed at the press box end of the stadium as well. The air-conditioning system at the press box on the second floor was out of order, with the internet causing problems as well. This even led to a section of the media to protest against the board's arrangements and temporarily stop covering the match.

The lack of facilities comes as a surprise since Fatullah was supposed to act as a back-up venue to host the Twenty20 World Cup next year and that the ICC team had inspected the ground.

Speaking on the matter, BCB's ad-hoc committee member Jalal Yunus said, "We actually could not foresee the gravity of the problems."

# Abahani alive

SPORTS REPORTER



Prime Doleshwar, Mohammedan and Abahani won their respective ninth-round Dhaka Premier League matches yesterday. Wins for Doleshwar and Mohammedan put them in second and third positions on the table with twelve points each, while the win for Abahani took them two points ahead of last-placed Khelaghor Samaj Kalyan Samity.

**KALABAGAN KC:** 243 for 7 (Bilal 60, Jehan 51; Shafiu Alam 3-56)

**PRIME DOLESHWAR:** 244 for 7 (Dawid 75, Rony 42; Imamul Hossain 3-21)

**Result:** Prime Doleshwar won by three wickets.

**MOHAMMEDAN SC:** 282 for 8 in 43 overs (Rajin 90; Sanjamul 2-49)

**BROTHERS UNION:** 259 for 9 in 43 overs (Thilan 78,

Sanjamul 53; Habibur Rahman 3-51)

**Result:** Mohammedan won by 23 runs.

**KHELAGHOR SKS:** 161 all out in 46.3 overs (Ariful Haque 46; Al Amin 3-31)

**Result:** Abahani won by six wickets.

# BOA to run long-term camps

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) is going to run a long-term training camp for five disciplines ahead of the 2014 Commonwealth Games and 2014 Asian Games with a hope of achieving some medals from both Games. The BOA training committee had initially made a list of 61 athletes from 15 disciplines but the executive meeting of BOA yesterday cut it down to five disciplines -- shooting, archery, taekwondo, boxing and swimming -- on the basis of priority.

BOA vice president Harunur Rashid informed that BOA will manage the training with its own fund for the first time. Rashid also informed that they would even bring foreign coach for each discipline for 8 to 10 months.

# C'Ron double sinks Rayo

AFP, Madrid



Gareth Bale provided two assists for the second consecutive game as a double from Cristiano Ronaldo and a Karim Benzema header saw Real Madrid squeeze past Rayo Vallecano 3-2 on Saturday.

Ronaldo had scored a hattrick in the 7-3 mauling of Sevilla on Wednesday and the Portuguese took just three minutes to open the scoring with a cool finish after racing onto Luka Modric's pass.

Rayo then had a strong penalty appeal waved away and a goal disallowed, but Madrid doubled their advantage just after the half hour mark as Bale's right-footed cross picked out Benzema to nod home his seventh goal of the season.

Ronaldo added a third just after the interval from Bale's low cross, but two Jonathan Viera penalties in as many minutes gave Rayo hope.

The hosts then piled on the pressure for the final half hour and Alberto Bueno struck the post as they came agonisingly close to an incredible comeback.

Bale was starting a second consecutive game for the first time in his Madrid career

## RESULTS

**Real Sociedad 5** (Ansotegui 34, Inigo Martinez 47, Griezmann 56, Castro 81, Seferovic 88) **Osasuna 0**, **Almeria 1** (Rodri 38) **Valladolid 0**, **Rayo Vallecano 2** (Viera 53-pen, 55-pen) **Real Madrid 3** (Ronaldo 3, 49, Benzema 31), **Sevilla 0** **Celta Vigo 1** (Alex Lopez 47)

and Real started where they left off in mid-week as Ronaldo took advantage of Rayo's dangerous high line to skip past Alejandro Galvez and slot calmly past the keeper for his 19th goal of the season.

Rayo were very unfortunate not to be awarded a penalty moments later when Dani Carvajal appeared to clip Nacho inside the area.

The hosts did have the ball in the net on the half hour mark when Iago Falque turned Lass Bangoura's cross towards goal, but the ball struck Viera on its way into the net and was rightly ruled out for offside.

Within two minutes of that let off Madrid had made it 2-0 when Bale raced clear on the right and his measured cross was headed home at the far post by Benzema.

Ronaldo looked to have wrapped up the points when he prodded into an open goal from Bale's inviting cut-back four minutes after the break.

Powered by Citycell

THIS OFFER WILL KNOCK YOU DOWN

REACTIVATE YOUR **Ultra** AND GET **30% FREE**

ALSO GET 300% BONUS with tk. 250 recharge

Zoom **Ultra**

Helpline: 121,011 99 121 121 | www.citycell.com | www.facebook.com/citycell