



# Trapped by short stuff

BISHWAJIT ROY

It was not the desired start for new challenges in the New Year. It was not a performance that reflected the determination showed and hard work put in over the last one and a half year. The reason was the naïve batting approach of the Tigers, with skipper Mushfiquir Rahim being the exception, which saw Sri Lanka taking early control of the first Test match. At the end of the first day's play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, the home team were in a position to embrace the decade-old fate of humiliation against the Lankans, unless the bowlers do something special on a wicket which offers some uncharacteristic bounce. The visitors finished the day comfortably at 60 for no loss after wrapping up their opponents for 232. The Lankans wore black armbands to mourn the death of Sisira Terence Jayawardene, the father of teammate Prasanna Jayawardene, who missed the match and flew back to Sri Lanka yesterday.

The perennial top order batting problem resurfaced, even though a new face in Shamsur Rahman debuted to open the innings with Tamim Iqbal, as the home side went for lunch losing four wickets for 74 runs.

Many were surprised in the morning when Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews sent his opponents in to bat first on a surface known to assist batsmen but his two new-ball operators, Suranga Lakmal and Shaminda Eranga, executed the plan to perfection by using the bounce on offer with an ample supply of short balls which proved enough to trap the home batsmen. It was a good track for batting that only asked batsmen to be purposeful in their innings. Bangladesh, on the other hand, seemed not to have anticipated the Lankan's pace quality even after seeing the new-look pace attack trouble Pakistan's batsmen in their last series. There was also hardly any evidence that Bangladesh's batsmen came here on the back of good form in the just-concluded domestic four-day competition.

Tamim was struggling from the beginning and could not capitalise on a life. Eranga, who moved both ways off the seam in the morning, should have had Tamim for six in his fourth over but Kaushal Silva fumbled at short-leg. In the next over he tempted Tamim into a hook that the left-hander top-edges to fine leg. After Mathews had nailed Marshall Ayub with an in-ducker, Eranga also got the wicket of the ambitious Shamsur, who drove at one that swung away from him and was caught at gully to end his 33-run knock. The hero in the last home series against New Zealand, Mominul Haque became another victim of a short ball, this time from Lakmal, to leave Bangladesh at 59 for four.

The middle session provided hope through the batting of the rapid Shakib Al Hasan and the measured Mushfiquir. Shakib looked to get on top of the bowlers by counterattacking the short balls without keeping in mind that one could take the edge to the waiting close-in fielders. His impudence almost cost him his wicket more than once, before finally left-arm spinner Rangana Herath beat Shakib's ambitious sweep with one that dipped and straightened. Shakib had a partnership and a half-century to his credit but it was in no way the ideal innings in the circumstances.

Mushfiquir was the man who deserved all the praise for his sensible batting before a doubtful leg-before decision from Nigel Llong put an end to his 61-run knock. He smashed two consecutive boundaries through the cover area against Lakmal because the punishment was, but otherwise he fended away the short stuff and met moving deliveries with a dead bat.

Nasir Hossain might also have been unlucky to get out to a fine, rising delivery but overall the day's story was one of poor batting.



**BOUNCED OUT!** Bangladesh batsman Nasir Hossain desperately tries to avoid a bouncer. His athleticism however did count for nothing as the flamboyant batsman was given out caught behind on the opening day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Lankans employed the short stuff well to bowl the home side out for a modest 232.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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## Shakib wary of SL run-fest

'Bangladeshi batsmen helped us' - Eranga

NAIMUL KARIM



The stage for Bangladesh's return to Test cricket after a gap of three months seemed almost tailor-made for the hosts yesterday.

They had fielded their best possible team, their batsmen were amongst the runs in domestic matches and most importantly, Sri Lanka had elected to field on a wicket that seemed a belter.

Against the odds, the home side crumbled for 232. This was their lowest score at home in the last two and a half years and the frustration was quite noticeable. A puzzled look took over coach Shane Jurgensen, who was on the field for quite some time during the second innings, having a closer look at his players. Equally perplexed was Shakib Al Hasan, who did not have a clear answer on his team's batting failure.

"As long as I batted in the middle it seemed as though the wicket was really good for batting. I thought even if we batted normally and not to the best of our ability, we could have ended up scor-

ing around 375 runs on this wicket," said Shakib at the post-day press conference in Mirpur.

"We couldn't do that, and honestly speaking now we are really behind in this game. On this pitch, getting wickets will be very difficult and at the same time, scoring runs is easy," he added.

The left-hander, who scored a streaky 55, admitted that the batsmen had made mistakes.

"No one will tell you that the wicket had too many demons in it. It was not the case that the ball was moving, or we were getting beaten, nothing of the sort happened. They bowled well, plus we made mistakes. It was a combination of both," said Shakib.

"We should have done better... I fell to a bad shot as well, and in some other cases others did the same," he added.

The one thing that was quite evident yesterday was Sri Lanka's strategy of using the short ball. Seamers Suranga Lakmal and Shaminda Eranga banged the ball in hard. Some of the key Bangladesh batsmen struggled against the strategy and ended up throwing away their wickets. Tamim Iqbal, after being given a life at short leg

off a short delivery, decided to pull another only to be caught at deep fine leg. Mominul Haque's attempted pull merely looped to midwicket and Nasir Hossain failed to move away from a similar delivery from Eranga.

The Sri Lankan bowler had later stated that the plan to use the short ball at Mirpur provided better results than in the UAE against Pakistan.

"It was obviously a plan to use the short ball. The pitches in Abu Dhabi and Dubai are similar to here. But the Pakistani batsmen were harder to dismiss. The Bangladeshi batsmen helped us," said Eranga.

"The weather here is also similar to where we have come from, so it was easy to acclimatise," he added.

Having given away the advantage on the very first day, Bangladesh will hope that their unusual strategy of including three pacers pays dividends and produces a fightback.

"Honestly speaking we are really behind in this game. But what's happened has happened, we need our bowlers to perform for us to come back," Shakib said.

# Cricket selling its soul

ATIQUE ANAM

As the 10 full members of the International Cricket Council vote today to decide the future of cricket, Bangladesh stand perilously close to losing their right to playing Test cricket at the top level. The newest Test playing nation and the one in most need of nurturing could be struck down even before they were offered a chance to develop a mastery of an art which many other countries took much longer to come to terms with. It is almost universally accepted that Bangladesh have got one of the most passionate followings in cricket and infrastructure-wise Bangladesh stand tall among the smaller full members? Then what is it that drives Bangladesh to the edge? The simple reality that cricket has become more of a business than sport to the ones who dictate terms.

**SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS**

That is how the BCCI, the ECB and the CA or 'The Big 3' as they are being dubbed, like to think. And their 'more than equality' comes not by dint of any 'meritocracy' but from the fact that they bring more money into the game. But then again, Cricket South Africa does not find a place in this elite group despite producing good results on the field and gener-



**Students of Jahangirnagar University vent their anger against the draft position paper of the 'Big 3' at the university campus in Savar yesterday.**

ating good money off it. Their fault is they do not belong in the good books of BCCI, the biggest of cricket's bullies.

**MONEY MOVES CRICKET**

But India have been playing the Big Brother for quite a while now. Money earned BCCI the muscle, and they flexed that muscle by ignoring the FTP, taking a dogged stance against the use of DRS and the latest example -- drawing up a grand scheme to seize control over the sport and its participants; financially, administratively and decision-making wise. This will give the Big 3 the power to avoid 'financially unprofitable series', so as to maximise their profits.

What the draft proposal envisages

is a financial overhaul which would eventually lead to a situation where the rich will get richer, leaving the scraps for the poor.

The draft also aims at scrapping the FTP, replacing it with bilateral agreements and most frighteningly introducing a two-tier Test system where the teams in the second tier will have very little realistic chance of promotion and the Big 3 will enjoy an indemnity against relegation.

**DARK FOREBODINGS FOR BANGLADESH**

Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, not to mention the Associate and Affiliate members of ICC, will be the hardest hit by this proposal, if passed. The blow to Bangladesh and Zimbabwe will be two-fold as they would be

weaker financially and will be devoid of the chance of rubbing shoulders with the big teams. That would mean a lessened interest from international broadcasters and sponsors in bilateral series involving Bangladesh and a falling interest in the game domestically, which will eventually lead to a fall in the quality of cricket. Who will want to watch Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe, home and away, year after year?

**TAKING THE WRONG ROUTE**

This is without doubt one of the most insane and self-destructive proposals a sport regulatory body has ever made, and not just because of the long-term impact it will have on the globalisation of the game. Those who designed the proposal are either myopic or totally blinded by their own business ambitions. Because it is not a good business decision either. A good business model is one which will not be afraid of overlooking short term profits for sustainability of growth and development in the long term, thereby making profits sustainable too. The proposal tabled by F&CA will spell doom in the long run for cricket as we know it. At a time when all cricket needs is more funding for the fledgling cricket cultures and more investment to tap new markets, this proposal paves a path back to its colonial,

## Pace trio hints at positive mindset

SPORTS REPORTER

Fielding three seamers in a Test at home has not traditionally been Bangladesh's go-to move. So when young pacer Al Amin Hossain was picked alongside Rubel Hossain and Robiul Islam it was something unusual for the analysts.

It is not as though Bangladesh have never picked three pacers before. In fact on the tour to Zimbabwe last year, Bangladesh played with seam-bowling allrounder Ziaur Rahman apart from the regular bowlers. However, at home the tendency has traditionally been to play safe and depend on either a full-time spinner or an allrounder.

That theory gradually began to recede from last year, owing to the strengthening of Bangladesh's middle order. Bangladesh, for instance, decided against picking Mahmudullah Riyad in the New Zealand series and went in with seven batsmen, instead of the usual eight.

The team management's decision to pick another pacer had to do with coach Shane Jurgensen's desire to play more aggressive cricket and it could perhaps be considered as another positive step that builds on last year's change.

It was a sentiment that was expressed by Bangladesh Cricket Board chief selector Faruque Ahmed.

"The wicket was very hard and we did not think that it would break. As a result we decided to go in with three pacers. They are unique. Rubel bowls well with the old ball, while Al Amin and Robiul can swing the new ball," Faruque told The Daily Star.

"The Lankans did take advantage by bowling those shorter deliveries. If you notice, of their 64 overs only 22 were bowled by spinners," he added.

While the management's strategy was no doubt to take the game to the visitors and break the general defensive mindset, the failure of their batsmen proved to be an obstacle.

"I think we just tried to play too many shots. It's an effect of playing so many T20s and one-dayers. There were a few instinctive pull shots that led to wickets. We need to spend more time at the crease; that's important too," said Faruque.

## MOMENTS

**THE SLIPPERY START**

Shamsur Rahman's debut, opening the innings with Tamim Iqbal, was not the most comfortable one.

After getting his first runs with a half-hearted pull, Shamsur hit two streaky boundaries through the slip cordon. The nerves were clearly visible in the fourth over when he lost his grip and dropped his bat while attempting a drive. His expansive technique eventually led to him getting caught at gully.

**THE SHORT STUFF**

That the Sri Lankan bowlers were going to fire in the bouncers from the start reflected in their field settings. They placed a short leg a little more than a metre behind the batsman right from the start hoping, for an edge. While the fielder did not go on to catch any, the Bangladesh batsmen looked hapless against the shorter delivery with Tamim and Mominul Haque gifting their wickets while attempting unnecessary pull shots.

**OVER-GLOSSY**

**HOARDINGS?**

Halfway through Shakib Al Hasan's innings, the batsman asked the staff to remove a portion of the colourful, multi-branded boards on the boundary rope at the press box end. The glittery reflection had apparently caught the player's eye. The portion of the boundary rope remained empty throughout the day. A small victory against the growing calls for cricket's over-commercialisation by the Big Three, perhaps?

**ROBIUL THE STRIKE SHEPHERD**

With Bangladesh's batting hopes already having bitten the dust, it was up to new ball bowlers Robiul Islam and Al Amin Hossain to try and score as much as possible for the last wicket. With the score on 232 for nine, Robiul hit his 13th ball to the deep but declined the run, deeming Al Amin, who got off the mark with a six, not good enough to tackle the Lankans. Robiul's visions of batting competence were however obliterated two balls later, when he slashed a ball straight to gully.



## SCOREBOARD

<b>BANGLADESH:</b> First innings				
Tamim c Lakmal b Eranga	6			
Shamsur c Vithanage b Eranga	33			
Ayub lbw b Mathews	1			
Mominul c Vithanage b Lakmal	8			
Shakib lbw b Herath	55			
Mushfiquir lbw b Lakmal	61			
Nasir c Chandimal b Eranga	4			
Shohag c Eranga b Lakmal	42			
Robiul c Perera b Eranga	5			
Rubel b Herath	2			
Al-Amin not out	6			
Extras: (lb-4, nb-5)	9			
Total: (All out in 63.5 overs)	232			
Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-40, 3-40, 4-59, 5-145, 6-150, 7-203, 8-219, 9-222.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Lakmal	18.1	3	66	3
Eranga	17.4	2	49	4
Mathews	6	3	18	1
D Perera	11	2	45	0
Herath	11	1	50	2
<b>SRI LANKA:</b> First innings				
Karunaratne not out	28			
Silva not out	30			
Extras: (w-1, nb-1)	2			
Total: (Forn loss in 19 overs)	60			
To bat: Sangakkara, Jayawardene, Chandimal, Mathews, Vithanage, Perera, Eranga, Herath, Lakmal.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Robiul	4	1	12	0
Al-Amin	5	1	18	0
Rubel	4	0	20	0
Gazi	5	2	8	0
Shakib	1	0	2	0
<b>Toss:</b> Sri Lanka				
<b>Umpires:</b> N Llong and P Pfeiffer.				