

## SPORT

CELEBRATING 2014

THE  
YEAR  
OF  
SPORTS

LIONS IN TIGERS' DEN



## Madly goes Tamim

SAKEB SUBHAN



Tamim Iqbal is a cricket writer's delight. There is a scarcely expressed but nonetheless widespread belief in sports journalism that a successful home team, although desirable, does not offer much fodder for the press. Which is why a player like Tamim, who confounds and delights in equal measure, often in the space of a single Test, is a precious commodity.

But he is much more precious to the Bangladesh cricket team which is why his dance down the wicket to the best opposition bowler, with just six overs to go for stumps and a deficit of 498 hanging over the Tigers' heads, is as inexplicable as it is unforgivable. This is not the first time a rash Tamim stroke has brought about his downfall and shot the Tigers in the foot. In the context of Bangladesh he may be a hugely successful opener but a sub-40 average, having played 19 of his 31 Tests on the docile pitches at home, and no centuries in nearly four years does not quite place him in the world-class category.

In his previous Test, in Dhaka against New Zealand last year, he became the toast of fan and media alike with a resolute and mature 218-ball 70 in the second innings -- an effort that was instrumental in Bangladesh drawing the Test and series. That is precisely why yesterday's madness has deeply wounded the fans. The innings against New Zealand, which followed a first innings 95 which ended with another wretched stroke, gave rise to hopes that Tamim finally realised his value

to the side and the responsibility he carries as arguably the team's best batsman and the only performing opener in the land.

Of the 18 50-plus scores Tamim has had in Tests, only twice were they followed by Bangladesh scoring less than 250. On eight of those occasions Bangladesh scored over 300. That illustrates how important Tamim's innings at the top of the order is to a team still learning the ropes of Test cricket.

After the 70 against New Zealand, Tamim reacted with anger when a journalist reminded him that he had not scored a Test ton in nearly four years. One of the things he said when asking the press to give him some space was: "One day I was thinking 'Thank God [Indian batsman Virender] Sehwag was not born in Bangladesh'. If he was he would have forgotten how to play cricket."

Now, this invoking the memory of the belligerent Indian opener when talking about himself may not mean much, but it is a bad comparison; Tamim has not scored the runs or the centuries that Sehwag did at the same stage in his career and much more importantly, Tamim is not playing in the team that Sehwag played in when the latter blasted his way to run-a-ball centuries.

Tamim's shot was played during a time when his cricket board showed rare courage to stand up and fight for the team's Test future, and it was even more galling coming as it did from the newly appointed vice-captain. No one expects them to bat out two whole days and save this game, but the least expected is that they fight with Test match temperament. Tamim's shot failed to uphold that very reasonable expectation.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal cuts an ungainly figure as he plays an ill-advised slog intended for the mid-wicket fence in only the fourth over of the innings on the third day of the first Test against Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The resultant leading edge however travelled in the opposite direction, into the palms of the fielder at point, further denting Bangladesh's hopes of a fight.



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IPL AUCTION LIST  
Shakib's base price Rs 1 cr

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan has been attracted a base price of one crore rupees for the 2014 Indian Premier League (IPL) player auction which will be held in Bangalore on February 12 and 13. Shakib, who played for the Kolkata Knight Riders in the past two editions of the IPL, attracted the highest base price among seven Bangladeshi players. Among the others, Tamim Iqbal attracted a base price of 50 lakh rupees while Shohag Gazi, Anamul Haque, Nasir Hossain, Rubel Hossain and Mahmudullah Riyad have been set a base price of 30 lakh rupees each.

A total of 232 international capped players from ten countries have been included in the auction register.



## SCOREBOARD

<b>BANGLADESH:</b> First innings 232 (Shakib 55, Mushfiqur 61, Shohag 42; Eranga 4-49, Lakmal 3-66)					
<b>SRI LANKA:</b> First innings (overnight 375-5)					
Karunaratne c Robiul b Shakib	53				
Silva lbw b Shakib	139				
Sangakkara c Nasir b Al-Amin	75				
Jayawardene not out	203				
Chandimal b Shakib	40				
Lakmal c Nasir b Shohag	0				
Mathews c Ayub b Shohag	86				
Vithanage not out	103				
Extras: (b-12, w-12, nb-7)	31				
Total: (For 6 wickets in 187.5 overs)	730				
Did not bat: Perera, Eranga, Herath.					
Fall of wickets: 1-118, 2-273, 3-302, 4-374, 5-375, 6-554.					
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>O</b>
Robiul	29	2	109	0	
Al-Amin	32	3	118	1	
Rubel	20	0	84	0	
Shohag	39	5	130	2	
Shakib	43	6	159	3	
Mominul	6	0	20	0	
Nasir	10.5	0	60	0	
Ayub	8	0	38	0	
<b>BANGLADESH:</b> Second innings					
Tamim c Perera b Herath	11				
Shamsur not out	9				
Ayub not out	11				
Extras: (b-4)	4				
Total: (For 1 wkt in 9 overs)	35				
To bat: Mominul, Mushfiqur, Shakib, Nasir, Shohag, Robiul, Al-Amin, Rubel.					
Fall of wicket: 1-15.					
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>O</b>
Lakmal	3	0	8	0	
Eranga	1	0	5	0	
Herath	3	2	8	1	
Perera	2	0	10	0	

## 'Need to play time'

SPORTS REPORTER

After being utterly outdone by Mahela Jayawardene and co on the third day of the first Test yesterday, Bangladesh's only chance of making a match of this Test remains in the hands of their batsmen, and according to Shohag Gazi it would do his side a world of good if they could 'learn' from the way Jayawardene batted.

"There's a lot to learn from him. He batted all day, made only one or two mistakes. There is a lot for our batsmen to learn from him. All we can hope for right now is to play out the next two days, we need to play time and play session by session," said Gazi at the post-day conference.

However, Bangladesh's aim of surviving suffered a jolt yesterday after Tamim unnecessarily threw his wicket away, something which Gazi thought was against the plan.

"He has played some big innings, has been playing for a few years now. Probably it was a mistake on his part. He felt really bad after returning to the dressing room. Not much we can do about that now," said Gazi.

The day saw Sri Lanka pile on 355 runs and lose just one wicket. The off-spinner stated that the team's plan was to restrict the runs and force the batsmen to make mistakes, something which eventually failed.

"They batted beautifully no doubt. We tried to bowl dot balls and maidens because any batsmen can get frustrated at that. But I guess luck wasn't on our side," said Gazi.

## Magical Mahela, terrible Tigers

BISHWAJIT ROY

The way in which the magnificent Mahela Jayawardene, along with his young partner Kithuruwan Vithanage, continued Sri Lanka's domination over the mundane Tigers was a clear lesson in Test cricket. But unfortunately Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal ignored this valuable lesson when his reckless shot late in the day exacerbated the home side's pain after the visitors put them under a pile of runs on the third day of the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The tone was set for the Tigers' sufferings by their ordinary batting display in the first innings, and the situation only worsened through the dropped chances on the second day. And when Sri Lanka posted a 498-run first innings lead after piling on a whopping 730 for six, riding on Jayawardene's masterful double-hundred and Vithanage's maiden hundred, one need not be an expert to predict the outcome of the match.

So there was only one thing to do for Mushfiqur Rahim's men -- to show their

Test-match ability, but the left-handed Tamim heightened the frustration for the fans by playing a shot, for which the word 'reckless' would be too soft.

He came to bat in the second innings on the back of a poor dismissal in the first essay; so it was believed that the newly appointed vice-captain would bat responsibly in the second attempt. Tamim was beaten by pacer Lakmal in his very first ball from where the experienced batter. Instead of putting his head down he hit two boundaries off admittedly poor deliveries, which made Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews call upon his main strike weapon, left-arm spinner Rangana Herath, as early as the fourth over. Inexplicably, Tamim jumped out to the third ball and played a hoick intended for the gallery behind mid-wicket, but the leading edge only spooned the ball to point, where Dilruwan Perera took a well-judged catch.

The irresponsible dismissal provided the perfect finish for Sri Lanka. Only if the remaining batsmen can take a leaf out of

Sri Lanka's book they can conceivably escape the match with some dignity. That however seems a big ask for a team physically and mentally fatigued after two days of chasing leather.

It is always a pleasure for any ardent cricket fan to watch the silent killer Jayawardene and yesterday was no exception. He pulled Robiul Islam to fine leg to bring up his hundred. His double-hundred was studded with the trademark late cut and paddle sweep against the spinners. He barely gave the bowlers a chance, except a close leg-before shout from Shohag Gazi when he was on 119.

Sri Lanka stretched the lead to 370 runs by Tea but only declared their innings when one of their finest batsman reached his seventh double hundred.

Neither the pacers nor the spinners were effective and Shohag Gazi's wicket of Mathews for 86 was the Tigers' sole success for the day. Mathews was also a recipient of Bangladesh's hospitality when he was dropped by the sloppy Mushfiqur on 68 off part-timer Marshall Ayub.

## 'Looked like they gave up a bit'

NAIMUL KARIM

Until yesterday, it did not seem as though Mahela Jayawardene would go on to score his 33rd Test hundred, let alone a double-century. In his initial moments at the crease on Monday, he seemed to be struggling against Shakib Al Hasan's left-arm spin and survived two close calls, one of which included a missed stumping.

However, the class batsman that he is, Mahela stuck it out in those initial moments and went on to maximise his innings. The innings in a way perfectly explained why this man has been dominating Sri Lanka's batting for the last 20 years.

Admitting that there were a few pressure situations during his innings, the Sri Lankan stated that he made most of his moves when the hosts seemed vulnerable.

"There was pressure put on us, especially yesterday in the afternoon session and today morning. We just needed to make sure that we don't make mistakes and once we got through those initial periods, yeah it looked like they gave up a bit, so it became a bit easier," said Jayawardene at the post-day press conference.

The 36-year-old was also surprised at the hosts' let-off towards the end of the day yesterday.

"I think this is what Test cricket is all about. We tried to take control of the situation and obviously they let us get away. Going forward they need to probably hang in there a bit more, fight it out and see whether they can create more opportunities," said Jayawardene.

This was the fifth time Jayawardene



Mahela Jayawardene struck a magnificent unbeaten 203, his seventh double hundred, in the first Test at Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

crossed the three-figure mark against Bangladesh and it took his average to an outstanding 81.76 against the Tigers. The sheer dominance however, did not mean Mahela always longed to play against the Tigers.

"I am pretty sure I have the same number of hundreds against England as well and South Africa, so you can't say that. It's not fair on Bangladesh. It's just about how you go about and get your opportunities. Just take it as it is," said the batsman.

Despite having attained a mammoth lead of 498, the Sri Lankan believes that the game is far from being over.

"Cricket is a funny game and I have played enough games to realise that it (wins) doesn't happen that easily. We got two days. So I hope that's enough time.

"The pitch is playing very decent. But there's a bit of rough now created, so there's a bit of turn. We just need to make sure that we bowl the balls in the right areas

as many times as possible and wait for those opportunities to come our way and create that pressure," said Jayawardene.

With that double century, the Sri Lankan became the sixth-highest run-scorer in Test cricket, surpassing Allan Border and Shivnarine Chanderpaul. He is also now on par with his colleague Kumar Sangakkara for the most number of centuries by a Sri Lankan -- 33.

When asked as to who, among the two of them, he thought would end up scoring more centuries before retirement, the Sri Lankan modestly deferred to his colleague and good friend.

"It's a healthy competition. If you see the number of matches, Kumar is way below me. So definitely he has got the upper hand. He has set a tremendous standard for the rest of the guys to follow. I am sure he will get one over me, hopefully in the next Test," said Jayawardene with a smile.

## Sk Jamal may skip IFA Shield

Yet to get visa of six foreign players

SPORTS REPORTER



Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi club's participation in the 118th IFA Shield tournament hangs in balance as the club has failed to secure Indian visas for its foreign players.

With their opening match against Mohun Bagan AC scheduled for today, the Federation Cup champions only received the visas for its local players and officials yesterday evening, but have not yet received the visas for its six foreign players who are considered as the main strength of the side.

Following the development, Sheikh Jamal DC yesterday made a request to the tournament committee to defer the schedule of their matches so as to ensure their participation in the tournament, also stating that they would otherwise skip the tournament.

Sheikh Jamal were invited in the second week of January and they applied for the visas immediately, but had trouble in securing Indian visas following some change in rules for granting visas to sports people. Yesterday, after the Indian sports ministry gave the green signal, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka issued visas for the local players, according to the club officials.

"We have been told by the Indian High Commission in Dhaka that they need at least 72 hours to issue visas for the foreign players. But by that time, we have two of the three group phase matches scheduled and we will have to play those matches with only local players. Some four to five key players of the side are carrying injuries and it will be impossible to play the matches without the foreign players", said Sheikh Jamal DC's football manager Anwarul Karim Helal yesterday.

The tournament kicked off yesterday and Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi club, who were scheduled to face Mohun Bagan in their match of Group B, which also features Kolkata Mohammedan Sporting Club and Sikkim United.

## MOMENTS

SLIPPERY HANDS

Nothing went right for Bangladesh's fielders yesterday. Catches were dropped, half-chances wasted, skied balls fell between fielders and a couple of close appeals denied. Adding to that, Mushfiqur Rahim continued his bad run behind the stumps by grassing another edge, taking his tally to four drops in the innings. Midway through the day, one of the many boundaries happened to find coach Shane Jurgensen outside the ropes. The Australian took the ball and merely threw it towards Shohag Gazi who, you guessed it, dropped the ball, summing up the appalling day the hosts had on the field.

HIGHEST SCORE

AGAINST BD

Sri Lanka's first innings score of 730 is the highest score made by any team against Bangladesh. The previous best was West Indies' 648 for nine scored in November 2012. This was the fifth time that Sri Lanka crossed the 700-mark. Tough times ahead for the hosts!

THE MAHELA EXCHANGE

Mahela Jayawardene seems to have a special liking for Bangladeshi pacers. His problem with Shahadat Hossain's loud grunt during the latter's bowling stride is quite well known. Yesterday he was seen exchanging words with Robiul Islam in between deliveries. This time though it seemed as though Robiul was trying to distract the Sri Lankan, who seemed in supreme touch. The players however, shrugged it off in the end after Robiul was seen congratulating Mahela for his 200 at the end of the innings.

THE MAHELA MILESTONES

Mahela Jayawardene's seventh double hundred lifted him past Australian legend Alan Border and West Indian Shivnarine Chanderpaul in the Test runs tally and made him the sixth-highest scorer overall. He now has a total of 11,236 runs, overtaking Border's 11,174 and Chanderpaul's 11,219. He now stands alongside Kumar Sangakkara to have scored 33 centuries, the most for Sri Lanka.