

SPORT

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LIONS IN TIGERS' DEN

Centuries
a means
to an end

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

The third day of the second Test saw Bangladesh display the best and worst of their batting in Test cricket.

While during phases of the 232-run stand between Shamsur Rahman and Imrul Kayes seemed to be taking the home side towards a new dawn, the events that followed brought them back to square one.

Both batsmen were bowled while attempting to play expansive drives right after they reached their respective centuries. Despite their statements that they had intended to continue after reaching the three-figure mark, the manner of their dismissals led many to believe that satisfaction had taken over, leading to carelessness. What happened next was nothing new; there was a collapse and the initiative surrendered.

Even if the observation is true and the batsmen did indeed believe that they had done enough to seal their spot in the side, they should be the last ones to be blamed. While both these batsmen haven't played too many Tests, they are part of a culture that does not ask for much more than a century and statistics bear this out.

Shamsur Rahman became the first opener to score a century for Bangladesh since June 2010; the last being Tamim Iqbal's century in Manchester. Of the 83 50-plus scores made by the top three Bangladesh batsmen only 14, including the two centuries yesterday, have yielded centuries. Moreover, a majority of the 33 overall centuries scored by Bangladesh range between scores of 100 to 130.

The wicket at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday seemed as though it was taken right out of a domestic game and the batsmen were expected to be comfortable on it, but none successfully carried on.

Despite the progress in other areas of Bangladesh's Test game over the last two years, they need to step out of the mindset that sees the century as the be-all and end-all of batsmanship if they are to truly arrive on the scene.



Bangladesh opener Shamsur Rahman has every reason to enjoy a full-throated shout after scoring his maiden ton on the third day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



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Comeback men shine

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



It was a day of comebacks at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. It first saw Bangladesh's latest entrants to the side, Shamsur Rahman and Imrul Kayes, bring the hosts back into the game with their maiden centuries. It then witnessed Ajantha Mendis, playing his first Test in eleven months, take crucial wickets to put the hosts on the back foot.

Bangladesh's top order has almost perennially been a problem, but it was a different scenario yesterday with Shamsur, playing in only his second match, and Imrul -- returning to the Test arena after more than two years -- sharing a 232-run stand for the second wicket. In doing so they displayed their eagerness to seal a spot in the line-up.

There were, however, anxious moments. Both were given chances on the field. They also admitted going through nervous moments in their 90s.

"It was at the back of my mind. I

was thinking what would happen if I miss out? So at that point of time I kept myself strong and was successful," said Shamsur at the post-day press conference.

Kayes, who was dropped and caught off a no-ball in the same over when on 95, had a similar response.

"I was nervous after lunch. I was in my 90s and I did not want to make a mistake. It felt better once I got the first run after that," he said.

While the centuries were no doubt a boost for the team, both batsmen throwing away their wickets after reaching three figures contributed to the side's mini-collapse late in the day.

"We both had planned to play as long as possible even after our hundreds. But it just suddenly happened. It was not turning as much and they were bowling it full and I tried to play my shot; it was a bad decision," said Shamsur.

Kayes, who got hit on his chest on Wednesday and later pulled a hamstring after he got out yesterday, stated that the physical toll had gotten to him.

"I actually had plenty of painkillers before coming in to bat. I had to be

mentally strong and it was difficult. I did play a bad shot and I kept admonishing myself, saying 'how could I do that!'" said Kayes.

While the batsmen were disgruntled about giving away their wickets, Ajantha Mendis was on cloud nine after a fighting performance. He bowled both centuries and also took two late wickets to put the visitors back in the driving seat.

"Really happy with my performance. It was a good wicket for batters, so I stuck to the basics. Just stuck to bowling my line and length and happy that I got the wickets," said Mendis.

Asked if the dropped catches were demoralising, he replied, "Can't help it. Maybe the guys were a little tired today. But its okay, it happens, you can't catch everything," he said, adding that the visitors still believe they can win this Test.

After a brief fight-back from the hosts, the question remains whether they can still save the game. Shamsur's reply, after more than a little consideration, reflected the uncertainty in the camp. "I think that if there is no accident, then there is a chance of getting a draw."



SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First innings 587 (Sangakkara 319, Jayawardene 72, Mendis 47, Shakib 5-148)

BANGLADESH: First innings (overnight 86-1)

Tamim b Lakmal 0
Shamsur b Mendis 106
Kayes b Mendis 115
Mominul lbw b Perera 13
Shakib c Karunaratne b Perera 50
Mushfiqur c Silva b Perera 20
Nasir c Chandimal b Mendis 42
Mahmudullah not out 30
Sohag lbw b Mendis 0
Al-Amin not out 3

Extras: (b-8, lb-1, nb-21) 30
Total: (For 8 wickets in 115 overs) 409
To bat: Razzak

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-232, 3-252, 4-259, 5-319, 6-350, 7-396, 8-396.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lakmal	23	5	68	1
Pradeep	15	2	96	0
Mendis	27	2	84	4

A day of fifties

SPORTS REPORTER



The second round of the National Cricket League began yesterday with a string of half-centuries in the four games. At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra, Khulna rode on Tushar Imran's unbeaten 86 to post 321 for five against Rangpur on the first day.

The Cricket Garden in Rangpur saw the start of the match between Dhaka and Chittagong delayed due inclement weather. After play resumed, Dhaka, courtesy of half-centuries from Shuvagata Hom and Abdul Majid, reached 253 for four at stumps.

Dhaka Metro, the other team from the capital, faced Sylhet at the BKSP yesterday and finished on 252 for six at stumps.

The game at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi between the hosts and Barisal saw a balanced game as Rajshahi finished on 291 for eight at stumps yesterday. Slow-left armer Tajul Islam continued to surprise with the bat by hitting 64.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA: First innings 321 for 5 (Tushar 86 not out, Ziaur Rahman 54; Sohrwardi 2-71)

DHAKA: First innings 253 for 4 (Shuvagata 65, Abdul 61; Aftab Ahmed 2-20)

DHAKA METRO: First innings 252 for 6 (Merhab Hossain 54; Nabil Samad 3-91)

RAJSHAHI: First innings 291 for 8 (Hamidul Islam 83,

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