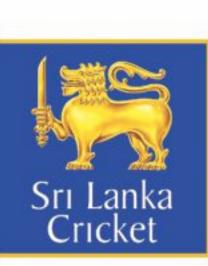


LIONS IN TIGERS' DEN



### 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 on it, but none successfully carried on.

Despite the progress in years, they need to step out : There were, however, anxious 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

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

Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. It

: perennially been a problem, but it was : a different scenario yesterday with expected to be comfortable . 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 other areas of Bangladesh's · wicket. In doing so they displayed their Test game over the last two • eagerness to seal a spot in the line-up.

of the mindset that sees the : moments. Both were given chances · on the field. They also admitted · going through nervous moments in gotten to him. : their 90s.

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.

my 90s and I did not want to make a two late wickets to put the visitors back 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

"I actually had plenty of painkillers "It was at the back of my mind. I 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 "I was nervous after lunch. I was in bowled both centurions and also took 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 BANGLADESH: First innings (overnight

Tamim b Lakmal Shamsur b Mendis Kayes b Mendis Mominul Ibw b Perera Shakib c Karunaratne b Perera

Mushfigur c Silva b Perera Nasir c Chandimal b Mendis Mahmudullah not out Sohag Ibw b Mendis Al-Amin not out Extras: (b-8, lb-1, nb-21) Total: (For 8 wkts in 115 overs) To bat: Razzak Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-232, 3-252, 4-259, 5

Bowler Pradeep Mendis

# Twin tons, but Tigers still behind

Shamsur blames 'bad decision'

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

The Tigers finally found their feet in the series, courtesy of maiden centuries from Shamsur Rahman and Imrul Kayes on the third day of the second and final Test at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday. The duo put on a magnificent 232-run second-wicket stand -- the secondhighest Test partnership for Bangladesh after Mushfiqur Rahim and Mohammad Ashraful's 267 against the same opponents at Galle -- and helped the home team finish the day on 409 for eight.

If that was all there was to the day then it would have been a fantastic story for Bangladesh. However as the game progressed and the partnership was broken the performance of the home team slipped. Despite the improvement, Sri Lanka still had the upper hand and in a position to effect a clean sweep as Bangladesh trailed by 178 runs with only two wickets in hand.

It could have been a much better day for the Tigers, who could have taken big steps toward a creditable draw if they sustained the temperament showed early by the secondwicket pair. Shamsur and Imrul laid the platform for that but unfortunately they have to take the blame for their dismissals which were brought about wrong shot selection. The rest followed in much the same vein to spoil the opportunity of finishing the day on a high note.

The home tent however did not fume over the poor dismissals but instead focused on an allegedly poor decision against Nasir Hossain, with Shamsur implying in the postday press conference that the decision spoiled the day for his team. "We were successful with the big partnership and at the end of the day I think [with] the umpire's bad decision, the entire day went against us. If that didn't happen then we probably would have been in a good position. I don't think that touched the ball. The bat touched the wicket, it was a bad decision. Obviously, Nasir is the key player at that spot."

With just less than four overs remaining in the day's play, a wide ball from the most successful spinner Ajantha Mendis failed to bounce and wicketkeeper Dinesh Chandimal collected what umpire Paul Reiffel believed was an under-edge to put end to Nasir's 42-run knock.

But Bangladesh team think-tank should instead ask the batsman why he played that cut shot in the dying moments when Bangladesh desperately needed to finish the day with him and Mahmudullah Riyad at the crease. Basically the right-hander paid the price for his frequent, aggressive shots much like Shakib Al Hasan did when he failed to convert his 50 into a big one. Injured skipper Mushfiqur cannot be blamed too much for his dismissal but Mominul Haque fell to an unnecessary sweep to deepen the crisis after opener Shamsur's departure.

Shamsur and Imrul resumed the day and were the unlikely source of hope as they played the entire first session with caution. But they themselves snatched away the hope after lunch as they lost their composure and failed to capitalise on the luck they had. Both went for slogs soon after completing their hundreds as if to say that their job was done, regardless of whether there was still a lot to do to save the match.

Shamsur reached his maiden hundred in his second Test by driving through the covers. His hundred however, seemed to make his partner more nervous.

Batting anxiously on 95, the left-hander Imrul, on his return to Test cricket after a two-year gap was incredibly fortunate as Kithuruwan Vithanage dropped an easy catch to give him a chance to achieve the magical three-figure mark.

While Sri Lanka will rue the dropped chances despite a late Mendis double-strike that swung the match decisively in their favour, Bangladesh must search for the elusive formula that will allow them to sustain Test-match temperament for an entire innings; not just a session or two.

## A day of fifties

SPORTS REPORTER



The second round of the National Cricket League began yesterday with a string of halfcenturies 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 halfcenturies 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 Stadim in Rajshahi between the hosts and Barisal saw a balanced game as Rajshahi finished on 291 for eight at stumps yesterday. Slow-left armer Taijul 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; Sohrawardi 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

