



JOB WELL DONE! Captain Mushfiqur Rahim (R) greets star batsman Mominul Haque after the latter and Shakib Al Hasan took Bangladesh to safety on the fifth and final day of the second Test against Sri Lanka at Chittagong yesterday where the top order, including Imrul Kayes (inset), helped the cause with responsible contributions.

PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS



Committed Tigers achieve honour

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Displaying sheer Test-match aptitude, Bangladesh batted out the fifth day for a glorious draw against Sri Lanka in the second Test at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday. The pocket-sized dynamo, Mominul Haque, was the hero of the day with an unbeaten, match-saving hundred but it was a combination of the right approach and application on a testing fifth day from all of the top order batsmen that forced the frustrated Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews to accept the draw soon after completion of the little man's feat with less than an hour of the scheduled play remaining.

The batting of the top five batsmen -- that helped the team end on 271 for 3 before a draw was declared -- on a pitch on which the Lankan bowlers tried to exploit the rough patches on offer but in vain, was the perfect example of what a team can achieve if there was steadfast concentration on the job at hand.

Resuming the day on 12 for no loss with hope and doubt jostling for primacy, Tamim Iqbal and Shamsur Rahman set the tone and motto of clinging to the crease without being bogged down by passing the crucial first hour without any damage. Then Mominul and Shakib Al Hasan perfectly followed the mantra, other than a small period of nervousness, to take the team to safety. Imrul Kayes also displayed enough fortitude, enhancing the team message that they were in it for the long haul, although he made only 25.

With the second consecutive draw at the same venue against higher-ranked opponents as well as only the second draw against the dominant Lankans after the stalemate achieved in Galle last year, the Tigers once again established their steady progress in the longer version.

Although they lost the series 1-0, Mushfiqur Rahim's men the kudos for the way they bounced back from their sub-par performance in the first Test at Mirpur

(which they lost by an innings and 248 runs) and strengthened their oft-repeated claim that they will only improve in the format if they get more chances to play.

It was the Tigers' eleventh draw in 83 attempts but only the sixth achieved without any help from the elements like bad light or rain. Yesterday's draw was slightly more special because the Tigers had to bat out the entire fifth day without any hopes of a win -- or for that matter the safety of a mid-day second innings lead -- against a strong subcontinent side like Sri Lanka who are well-versed in these conditions. The fifth day challenge was the same in the drawn match in 2005 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium which the team achieved through a brilliant hundred from Nafis Iqbal, but the opponents were Zimbabwe.

The Tigers exorcised the ghost of failure after their poor display in Mirpur to dampen the joy of man-of-the-match and man-of-the-series Kumar Sangakkara's record run-spree.

An encouraging sign was that two Bangladesh openers concentrated on survival, evidenced by the way they sensibly passed the first hour even as the going became tough. Tamim however finally fell victim of impatience by playing a forceful drive against part-time bowler Vithanage, with the resultant inside edge cannoning into his stumps. Shamsur's leaky technique meanwhile allowed spinner Perera to burst through between bat and pad and onto the stumps.

On the back of a lack of runs and confidence, Mominul then came to the scene to showcase true Test batsmanship in his attempt to shut out Sri Lanka. The afternoon session became a vital phase following the two dismissals before Lunch and Mominul, first with Imrul and then Shakib, managed it greatly.

Benefiting from a life when on four, the 22-year old left-hander showed excellent balance in his batting to continue providing hopes of a new era in Bangladesh's top-order.



Crown Cement has been contributing to nation building since its inception. All recent mega structures of the country like Jatrabari-Gulistan Flyover, Kuril Flyover and Hatirjheel Project are built with Crown Cement.

Turnaround pleases Mushy

Answers Mathews's 'lack of intent' comment

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong



"To me this is the best I have seen my batsmen commit,"

was the delighted comment from Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim after his side overcame a fifth day hurdle with conviction yesterday.

Bangladesh's little master is not a man to be overwhelmed with success and yesterday was no exception, although he showered praise on the batsmen for a creditable draw during the post-match press conference.

"It's not equal to a win. The way we got out (in the first Test and first innings of the second Test) wasn't right in Test cricket at least, and in this case we have managed to improve a lot, so that's a good sign," said Mushfiqur.

"Tamim (Iqbal) worked hard to

stay and bat and Shuvo (Shamsur Rahman) and Imrul (Kayes) and Shakib (Al Hasan), so I think this is one of our most dominating draws. Because sometimes, yes, we play the whole series well and play well when in form, but this match we had to turn it around. Because we batted badly in the first Test, and then in the second Test we had bad shots in the first knock, overcoming all that and drawing is a good sign," he continued.

He was however not fully satisfied with the outcome of the series. After the official press conference, where he came before Angelo Mathews, the gutsy Bangladesh skipper released a salvo for his counterpart when his attention was drawn by local reporters that Mathews had blasted the home side's lack of intent to win the game.

"I'm also surprised. If I was their captain then I would have definitely

declared the innings with at least 20 overs left yesterday and with a 350 to 345-run lead," he responded to his counterpart's observation of his side's lack of intent to chase down the 467-run target in 98 overs.

Replying to a question of Mathew's criticism over the unsporting wicket, Mushfiqur said: "It seems nobody is ready to give credit when we bat well. I didn't feel that their bowling was enough to take 20 of our wickets."

With Bangladesh losing the two-match series 1-0, Mathews had said that there was no difference in losing a series by a 1-0 or 2-0 margin. Mushfiqur made his position very clear in response to this particular volley from the Sri Lanka skipper. "It may be the same for them but not for us. Despite the draw, I am disappointed because we could have drawn the series if we played the first match to our potential."

Back to his team's batting perfor-

mance in the second innings, the home skipper was effusive in praise of centurion Mominul Haque.

"I obviously had trust in him, but he might have been under pressure. We didn't have to tell him how to play, he was just telling us that he has to bat for one more hour. He was thinking about the team, and that's a good sign, hopefully we will all think that way."

"Yes we were a bit worried in that period, because the spinners were bowling well, but we had one belief that if there was a partnership it would not be that difficult. So before lunch we were a bit worried, but after that they settled and it never felt as though they would get out," he added.

In the end Mushfiqur, who has been rested for the two-match T20 series, expressed his optimism over a return for the three-match ODI series to be held in Mirpur.

'BD did not show intent'

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews said that he was disappointed that Bangladesh did not attempt to chase down a record target of 467 in the fourth innings of the second Test. The visitors had declared on the fourth day with six overs remaining and failed to make any late strikes.

It raised the question of whether Mathews had left the declaration too late.

Speaking to reporters after the match he said, "No it was not too late. If they wanted to chase they could have, they did not show any intent. We were one-nil up in the series and they had to make the move. We declared yesterday itself, (rather) than waiting for today. We were being positive."

Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim in his reply to the statement questioned Mathews's decision to declare so late stating that he would have declared with at least 'twenty overs to go' had he been in the visitors' position.

Despite being able to extract plenty of turn from the wicket through his spinners, Mathews described the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury wicket to be a batsman's paradise.

"I actually thought we could start another Test match tomorrow on the same wicket because it won't assist the bowlers at all; it was not a sporting wicket. I thought it was a batsman's paradise and good for batting once the seam got soft," said Mathews.

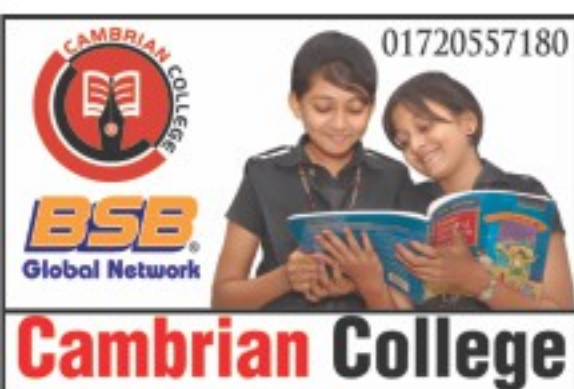
With just a few more days to go for the shortest format of the game to begin, Mathews stated that he expects a tougher fight from the hosts in the Twenty20s.

Mashrafe to lead in T20s

SPORTS REPORTER from Ctg

National pacer Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has been named captain for the two-match Twenty20 International series against Sri Lanka scheduled to take place in Chittagong on February 12 and 14. The Bangladesh Cricket Board selected Mashrafe for the position after regular captain Mushfiqur Rahim was ruled out of the T20 series with a finger injury. Tamim Iqbal, who was initially at the forefront of leading the side after being named vice-captain for the series, remains second in command.

The last time Mashrafe was given the captaincy was in 2009 when he took over from Mohammad Ashraful. He however suffered from an injury that year and as a result, could not continue. He captained Bangladesh in seven ODIs in 2010.



SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First innings 587 (Sangakkara 319, Jayawardene 72, Mendis 47; Shakib 5-148)				
BANGLADESH: First innings 426 (Kayes 115, Shamsur 106, Shakib 50, Nasir 42; Mendis 6-99, Perera 3-119)				
SRI LANKA: Second innings 305 for 4 declared (Sangakkara 105, Chandimal 100 not out, Mathews 43 not out; Vithanage 16 2-46, 1-80)				
BANGLADESH: Second innings (over-night 12-0)				
Tamim b Vithanage	31			
Shamsur b Perera	45			
Kayes lbw b Perera	25			
Mominul not out	100			
Shakib not out	43			
Extras: (b-12, lb-2, nb-13)	27			
Total: (for 3 wickets in 84.4 overs)	271			
Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-81, 3-151				
Bowler	O	M	R	0
Lakmal	13	5	30	0
Perera	28	7	55	2
Mendis	16	0	61	0
Pradeep	9.4	1	33	0
Vithanage	16	0	73	1
Karunaratne	2	0	5	0
Result: Match drawn and Sri Lanka win 2-Test series 1-0.				
Toss: Sri Lanka.				
Player-of-the-match: Kumar Sangakkara.				
Player-of-the-series: Kumar Sangakkara.				

Mominul's steady rise

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

At a time when Bangladesh's top order has been struggling to find its feet with some of the more experienced batsmen being guilty of giving in too easy, Mominul Haque has over the last two years steadily gone on to become arguably Bangladesh's most dependable batsman.

The 22-year-old's century yesterday, which saw him gut it out for more than three hours on a fifth-day wicket where the ball seemed to have the ability to turn across the width of the pitch, was just another example of the enormous talent that he possesses.

Statistics perhaps best describe how important he has been in the top order. With 753 runs at an average of 75.30 he has been Bangladesh's highest run-scorer in Tests for the last two years, comfortably beating the likes of Nasir Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim and Shakib Al Hasan.

The same period has also seen him face 1236 balls at the crease, falling short of only Mushfiqur Rahim who played three more matches than the youngster over the last two years. His third hundred yesterday means that he just needs one more to go level with Tamim Iqbal and three more to match Mohammad Ashraful, Bangladesh's highest century-maker.

Despite the fact that the left-hander has played just seven Tests, he is already expected to surpass the standard of batting set by the Mushfiqurs and Tamims.

He was praised by Mushfiqur at the end of the Test yesterday, who described his innings as 'one for the team'. The left-hander himself is learning with every game and that was obvious from the fact that he rated yesterday's hundred ahead of the 181 and the 126 that he had scored against New Zealand in the last series.

"I will rate this century ahead because I had to work very hard right from the beginning. They bowled in very good areas and we were under pressure of surviving the last day," said Mominul.

His innings of course was not perfect. He did give away a few half-chances, with one particularly close chance at silly point in the early stages.

"It was difficult because the spinners used the rough areas on the wicket very well, the ball kept low and they used it against us. My plan was just to bat out the hours. I probably was a bit lucky to be there," he added.

Yes, the stats are on his side, but that he is likely to make it big in the near future is perhaps best reflected in his attitude. It seems to be a combination of Tamim's guts, Mushfiqur's devotion, Shakib's intuitive feel for the game and most importantly, a hunger to learn more. This last quality was best described by his reply to a question about the most memorable moment of the series. His reply: "Definitely Kumar Sangakkara's innings. He batted almost up to infinity. There's a lot to learn from him."

PCB feels cheated by CSA

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan cricket chief Zaka Ashraf Saturday said he felt "cheated" after South Africa abandoned their opposition to controversial reforms of the sport's world body, allowing the proposals to be approved.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman said South Africa had opposed the International Cricket Council (ICC) reforms, seen as favouring the "Big Three" of India, England and Australia, as recently as Friday.

But South Africa supported the proposals at an ICC board meeting in Singapore on Saturday, giving them the extra vote they needed to pass.

"I think South Africa cheated us," Ashraf told AFP by phone from Singapore.

"Just last night [Friday] they told us that they have changed their stance and told us that it was the decision of their board [CSA]. It disappointed us."

Dhaka thump Ctg

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka completed a comprehensive win at the Rangpur Cricket Garden yesterday as they thumped Chittagong by an innings and 99 runs on the third day of the second round of the National Cricket League. Spinner Nazmul Hossain Apu, who picked up nine wickets in the match, was adjudged the player of the match.

At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium at Bogra, Khulna rode on half centuries from Dollar Mahmud and Soumya Sarker to finish the day on 252 for eight and take a 377-run lead against Rangpur.

At the BKSP, Dhaka Metro were in control as they finished on 119 for 2 in their second innings and led Sylhet by 150 runs. Earlier, Sylhet rode on a century from Alok Kapali to post 284.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Barisal were set a target of 369 runs by the hosts. The visitors were struggling at 48 for 2 at the end of the day.

DHAKA: 379 all out in 105 overs
CHITTAGONG: 124 and 156 all out in 52.2 overs (Nafees 42; Nazmul 5-21)
RESULT: Dhaka won by an innings and 99 runs.
KHULNA: 408 and 252 for 8 (Dollar 63, Soumya 60; Sohrawardi 4-54)
RANGPUR: 283 all out in 85.3 overs (Saymon 83; Ziaur 3-35)
DHAKA METRO: 315 and 119 for 2 (Saykat 68; Zayed 1-36)
SYLHET: 284 all out in 115 overs (Alok 110; Sharifullah 3-54)
RAJSHAHI: 330 and 270 for 9 dec (Junaid 83, Jubayer 58; Monir 4-69)
BARISAL: 231 and 48 for 2 (Fazle 17; Tajul 1-7)