

SPORTS

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LIONS IN TIGERS' DEN



TIGERS

whitewashed

BISHWAJIT ROY

When Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews smashed the winning runs with a six to complete a whitewash, it also completely smashed the morale of the Tigers ahead of their two big events at home. With the six-wicket defeat against a depleted opponent in the third and final one-day international at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, Mushfiquir Rahim's men ended the home assignment against the Lankans without any celebration.

Bangladesh ended a home series winless for the first time since December 2011 at a time when they desperately needed to not only continue their progress but raise their game ahead of the Asia Cup and ICC World Twenty20.

There was nothing to lose for Bangladesh and the opportunity for gain was there despite the three-match ban on Shakib Al Hasan, but it was Sri Lanka -- without stalwarts Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene and Tillakaratne Dilshan -- who gained further ground with Kusal Perera notching his maiden hundred to overtake the hosts' below-par 240 for eight.

When pacer Rubel Hossain dislodged the stumps of Kusal it was too late for the Tigers to come back into the match as the visitors were then only 43 runs behind the target with seven wickets and more than 10 overs in hand.

Sri Lanka had needed some responsibility

from their future prospects in absence of the big guns and the left-handed Perera, along with Dinesh Chandimal (64), did the job in style sharing a 138-run third-wicket stand after being reduced to 60 for two following some good work from the spinners with the struggling Mahmudullah Riyad taking both wickets. Thankfully for the Tigers, opener Lahiru Thirimanne could not prolong his knock despite Nasir Hossain failing to hold on to a catch diving forward at point.

The two young men showed how to pace their innings keeping in mind the team's demand, in complete contrast to the approach of the Bangladeshi batsmen in the series. Kusal only opened up with his stroke-play when his side consolidated their position.

It was an innings from the left-hander to watch and he completed his maiden hundred in style by pushing a single after hitting a big six against spinner Shohag Gazi over deep midwicket.

The Tigers' total of 240 might not look a poor one but it could have been much better if one of the many batsmen who got a start had carried on with their innings. Mominul Haque looked good to do just that but his 60 ended through a brilliant direct hit from Kithuruwan Vithanage from mid-wicket. In Mominul's case fortune did not favour him but fortune must be earned and the Tigers were in no way deserving of its favour in this series.



PHOTO: STAR

HEAD STILL HELD HIGH? Bangladesh captain Mushfiquir Rahim leaves the field dejected after getting out for 30 in the third and final one-day international against Sri Lanka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.



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BAN ON SHAKIB

Mushy seeks leniency

SPORTS REPORTER

After the ODI series whitewash against Sri Lanka on Saturday, Bangladesh captain Mushfiquir Rahim and other team members requested the BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon to reconsider the three-match ban on Shakib Al Hasan, who was penalised for an indecent gesture on live television during the second ODI.

"They told me that they accepted the fact that what Shakib did was wrong and that he should be punished.

However, since there are plenty of injuries in the team they asked me if it's possible to reconsider the decision," Papon told The Daily Star.

"Since the subject has come up it may be discussed in the board. However, from my side I think there's a nil chance of reconsideration," he added.

'Lost sight of the processes'

A tour of worsening woes

SAKEB SUBHAN



It was only November last year when Bangladesh skipper Mushfiquir Rahim spoke glowingly of whitewashing New Zealand 3-0. Yesterday, after being whitewashed 3-0 by Sri Lanka, Mushfiquir painted a bleak picture of the Tigers' prospects ahead of the Asia Cup, in which they will open their campaign with a match against India on February 26.

"In the last Asia Cup we were the runners-up, but with the state of affairs this time around we are heading into the tournament with nothing to lose, I feel. The way we are going now, if that continues it will be very difficult. We may even have to struggle against Afghanistan," said the skipper at the post-match press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

In a damning assessment of his team's

progress, Mushfiquir seemed to imply that it may have been a red herring while bringing up the salient point that the litmus test of home improvement is how the team fares against subcontinent sides.

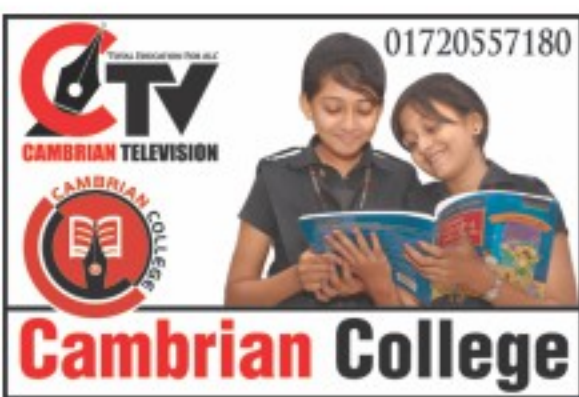
"In the last two series [home wins against West Indies and New Zealand], if you talk about our batting, bowling or fielding there was some lacking. Even though we won, we talked among ourselves that when we play against big teams like India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka we have to improve upon these areas. Unfortunately we could not do that throughout this series," Mushfiquir said.

A captain known for his attention to following processes, Mushfiquir felt that his team had lost sight of that in this series. "Maybe we have lost a bit of focus there, maybe we are thinking too much about the win. Win comes at the end of the day, before that the processes are important. We may have lost sight of the processes. As a team maybe we are taking

on too much pressure. Some of our batsmen are going through an off-form period which does not help either.

"We have the mental and physical capability to bounce back. One message that I would like to give to my countrymen is that, though like us I know a lot of them have been disheartened by our performance, but in our upcoming series we will play much better hopefully," said the skipper.

The captain also felt that the absence of Tamim Iqbal and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza through injury and the banned Shakib Al Hasan had an effect. "There is nothing to do about Tamim's injury. Hopefully we will try and wait till the last moment to see if he is ready for the Asia Cup. About Shakib, obviously that was an unwanted incident. He also realised it. As a captain I beg forgiveness for it and hopefully it will never happen again," he said of Shakib's indecent gesture on live TV, which served to make the series gloomier still.



BD-SL SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH	R	B	4s	6s
Anamul c Chandimal b Prasad	2	16	0	0
Shamsur c A Perera b Prasad	25	44	2	0
Mominul run out (Vithanage)	60	60	8	0
Mushfiquir c Senanayake b Prasad	30	37	3	0
Naeem c Prasad b Senanayake	32	55	1	0
Nasir c Priyanjan b Lakmal	38	43	4	0
Mahmudullah c Thirimanne b Lakmal	5	12	0	0
Shohag b T Perera	23	13	0	3
Shafiqul not out	15	18	2	0
Arafat not out	1	2	0	0
Extras: (lb-2, w-7)				
Total: (lb-2, w-7)				240
Did not bat: Rubel				
Fall of wickets: 1-17, 2-62, 3-108, 4-130, 5-184, 6-200, 7-201, 8-232				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lakmal	10	3	24	2
T Perera	9	0	39	1
Prasad	10	0	49	3
Senanayake	9	0	46	1
Priyanjan	6	0	42	0
A Perera	3	0	17	0
Mathews	3	0	21	0
SRI LANKA				
K Perera b Rubel	106	124	6	5
Thirimanne c Shamsur b Mahmudullah	18	31	2	0
Vithanage b Mahmudullah	9	15	1	0
Chandimal c Anamul b Rubel	64	70	4	0
Mathews not out	20	36	26	0
Priyanjan not out	22	26	19	4
Extras: (lb-4, w-3)				7
Total: (For 8 wickets in 50 overs)				246
Did not bat: T Perera, A Perera, Senanayake, Prasad, Lakmal				
Fall of wickets: 1-44, 2-60, 3-198, 4-205				



PHOTO: STAR

Defending Asia Cup champions Pakistan arrive at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka last night. The other Asia Cup teams India and Afghanistan, with Sri Lanka already in the country, are set to arrive today.

Dhaka record highest score

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Division continued their onslaught in the National Cricket League as they pounded 756 runs against Rajshahi on the third day of their fourth round match at BKSP yesterday. In the process Dhaka

scored the highest innings score in Bangladesh, beating Sri Lanka's 730, which they scored on the current tour.

Nadif Chowdhury scored 109 and became the fourth player to score a century in the innings. In reply, Rajshahi were bundled out for just 178. Spinners Nazmul Hossain Apu and Nur Hossain shared nine wickets and were the

key destroyers.

Surprisingly though Dhaka did not enforce the follow-on, that despite obtaining a lead of 578 -- the highest ever in Bangladesh.

At Sylhet, Khulna completed a nine wicket win over the hosts. Sylhet were bundled out for 245 and that could only result into a lead worth 16 runs. Khulna raced to 18 well before stumps.

At Bogra, Rangpur hold the cards against Dhaka Metro as they require just 69 more runs to win the match with seven wickets remaining. They were currently 113 for 3.

The match at Chittagong between Barisal and the hosts was heading for a close finish with the hosts, who reached stumps at a 113 for no loss, needing a further 182 more runs to win.

U-19s see off Canada

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh beat Canada by nine wickets in the ICC Under-19 World Cup's ninth-place play-off quarterfinal in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Batting first, the Canadians were bowled out for 75 runs in 27.1 overs. Pacer Mustafizur Rahman was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 3 for 11.

In reply, the junior Tigers reached their target in 13.5 overs. Opener Shadman Islam top-scored with an unbeaten 35.

The young Tigers had failed to advance into the Cup competition after conceding a thumping defeat against their Australian counterparts.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET: 123 and 245 all out in 72.4 overs (Kapali 41; Nahidul Islam 4-59, Murad Khan 4-56) v **KHULNA:** 352 and 18 for 1 (Imrul Kayes 7; Kapali 1-12) **Result:** Khulna won by nine wickets.
DHAKA: 756 for 5 declared (Taiabur 204, Majid 182; Delwar 2-104) and 28 for no loss (Majid 16) v **RAJSHAH:** 178 all out in 64.1 overs (Forhad Hossain 49; Nazmul Hossain 5-55, Nur Hossain 4-38)
RANGPUR: 240 and 113 for 3 (Mahmudul Hasan 27; Sharifullah 2-26) v **DHAKA METRO:** 48 and 373 all out in 115.3 overs (Asif 132; Ariful Haque 4-98)
BARISAL: 197 and 276 all out in 93 overs (Salman Hossain 50; Yunus 5-76, Yasin 5-91) v **CHITTAGONG:** 179 and 113 for no loss (Mahbubul Karim 79, Nafees Iqbal 34)