

SPORT



HATS OFF: Shakib Al Hasan bows to the Mirpur crowd after his five-for, in fact 6-59, against Zimbabwe.

PHOTO: STAR

Caught in the Tigers' spin

BISHWAJIT ROY

Six-shooter Shakib Al Hasan made a dazzling return after serving a two and a half month ban as Bangladesh gave Zimbabwe the message that spin-threat would be as inevitable as Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo breaking Raul's Champions League's goal-scoring record.

And there was plenty of proof on the very first day of the opening Test at Mirpur yesterday, where the Southern African nation lost nine of their 10 first innings wickets to the spinners led by Shakib.

The spin trio that also included debutant leg-spinner Jubair Hossain and another young left-armed Taijul Islam exploited the bounce and turn to create a web around the Zimbabwean batsmen, who were eventually bowled out for 240 and with half a session still to go.

The loss of opener Tamim Iqbal might have spoiled the party a little bit for the Tigers, but Bangladesh certainly got off to the start they needed on the opening day after Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor won the toss and opted to bat first. The Tigers were 27-1 at stumps with Mominul Haq and Shamsur Rahman looking confident at the crease.

The day's hero was Shakib as his six-wicket haul shot the visitors out for a below par total. But a 19-year-old spinner also provided him with enough good support to draw attention from the home crowd, which gathered pace with the progress of the game.

Jubair, a first leg-spinner in the team, finished with

two wickets. But it was the manner in which he bowled which gave a good first impression and also provided much-needed variety in the attack. If he did not bowl with authority, he kept the control while Taijul also added his value in an attack that made sure that three specialist spinners took the maximum burden by bowling 53.5 overs out of 75.5.

Pacer Shahadat Hossain might not be as brilliant as Shakib, but the right-arm pacer deserved some praise as he made his return to the side after a long nineteen months break by providing the breakthrough in the very first over, winning an edge from opener Vusi Sibanda. Then it was Shakib's show. The sparse crowd greeted the ace spinner with thunderous applause as he came to bowl the eighth over and Hamilton Masakadza was his first scalp as the right-handed batsman, attempting at clearing the straight boundary, played straight to Jubair at mid-off. Jubair first wicket was the prized wicket of Zimbabwean skipper Taylor as the visitors were reduced to 83 for three.

Zimbabwean batsmen struggled against the spinners on a wicket that offered bounce, turn and at times kept low. Initially it looked like 200 was a far cry for them but Sikandar Raza's patient 51-run knock enabled his side to cross the mark, before Jubair broke his resistance.

Shakib took wickets at regular intervals and, once again, his accuracy was the key behind his 12th five-for.

In reply, Zimbabwe's two opening bowlers also used the bounce brilliantly and a superb delivery from Tinashe Panyangara gave them the early breakthrough as Tamim was dismissed by a snorter that the left-hander could only fend off into the slip cordon.

Five-for against all but Aussies

NAIMUL KARIM



With Shakib Al Hasan back in the side, the idea of not unleashing him against the Zimbabwean top order on a wicket that surprises batsmen with its sudden bounce would have been ludicrous. As a result, it took captain Mushfiqur Rahim just eight overs to introduce the left-armed into the attack. And the response from the spinner, simply put, was very 'Shakib-like'.

The ace all-rounder posted his 12th five-wicket haul in 35 matches yesterday and, oddly enough, very few spectators in the stadium seemed surprised. It was almost as though they had expected Shakib to ease to those six wickets yesterday, as though anything less would have been considered an underachievement.

Shakib's haul of 6 for 59 is his second best bowling figures and also the first five-wicket haul in an innings against Zimbabwe. With that performance he now has five-wicket hauls against every Test nation that he has played against. The only team that does not feature in this list is Australia, against whom, he is yet to play a Test.

While Shakib did not target the record, he was happy to have achieved it. "This is obviously a good achievement and I take it well. I don't know if I feel anything differently for this stat, but if I can play against Australia and get a five-wicket haul against them, it will be a good experience and it's something that I can carry on till the end of my career," said Shakib at the post-day press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

The fearsome rate at which Shakib is gobbling these wickets can perhaps best be understood from the fact that he is only the seventh player to take 12 or more five-wicket hauls in Test cricket since 2007. Dale Steyn, Rangana Herath, Graeme Swann, James Anderson, Stuart Broad and Mitchell Johnson are the others who make the ranks.

Having taken six wickets in the match already, what remains to be seen is whether Shakib can take four more and get his career's first ten-wicket haul in a match.

'Support like this kind will make you forget everything'

NAIMUL KARIM

Following his six-wicket haul against Zimbabwe yesterday ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan thanked his family and friends for their immense support which he claims helped him overcome 'a difficult period' in his life.

In the post-play press conference at Mirpur yesterday Shakib said that he had spent 'hard times' after being slapped with a disciplinary suspension by the BCB in July.

"Those two-three months, I went through a difficult period. And I guess I managed to comeback... I won't actually call it a comeback. I did not think I was out for a long time or that I have come back after a number of things have happened," said Shakib.

The morning session yesterday saw the crowd at Mirpur burst into cheers after Shakib was introduced into the attack in the ninth over. The trend in the stadium continued whenever the player was given a spell.

"Most importantly, before I was about to deliver the first ball, the way the crowd cheered for me, I forgot all my concerns and all my other thoughts disappeared. I am very lucky to get this support and hopefully will continue to get it," said an emotional Shakib.

When asked if the two-month suspension provided him with an extra drive to perform, Shakib said, "There was no special kind of motivation. But I was inspired by those who supported and prayed for me right from my family to those whom I don't even know properly.

"When you get that kind of a support all the negative feelings that you have disappear. Because when I compare the negative and positive feelings, I think it's the positive feelings that have inspired me a lot more. So rather than concentrating on the negative thoughts I think of the good stuff," explained Shakib.

Shakib's performance was the crucial factor on the first day of the first Test at Mirpur and according to him, the hosts -- despite losing Tamim Iqbal before the close of play -- hold the edge.

"We bowled them out and our game-plan at the moment is on the right track. We wanted to get early wickets and we got two in the morning session which was a good start for us.

"It's not as though the pitch is really easy for the batsmen to play on but I think somewhere in between 350 to 400 will be a good total.

"The wicket did not bounce consistently. There were a few deliveries which shot up; I have never seen the ball bounce like that here before.

"Their fast bowlers have bowled well. The delivery against Tamim was really a good one. But at the end of the day we should do well because we are more experienced in these conditions," reckoned Shakib.

A good total: Raza

SPORTS REPORTER

The Zimbabwean batsmen seemed baffled against the Bangladesh spin attack during their innings on the first day of the first Test yesterday at Mirpur, but half-century scorer Sikandar Raza was not ready to blame the wicket.

"I think we read the wicket pretty well. I think there were a couple of balls that bounced a little more than we expected. But apart from that, the wicket played well. Normally, you come to Asia and expect low-bounce wickets. This didn't really surprise us, especially since we come from a place where we are used to bouncy wickets," said Raza at the press conference after the first day's play.

"We cannot change what we have on the board. What we can change is how we bowl. Our bowling department has been doing really well recently and we will back ourselves and our bowling department and the fielding department to fire quickly. Hopefully we can wrap it up before they can get to our total," he said, looking ahead to Day 2.

Jubair even impresses Sikandar

SPORTS REPORTER



When Zimbabwe elected to bat yesterday they would have had special expectations from their skipper Brendan Taylor and their in-form batsman Sikandar Raza.

Before the start of the first Test, Taylor's batting average against Bangladesh was 82.25, while Raza had a good time in Bangladesh's domestic circuit in the last season.

Both these batsmen however, were removed by debutant Jubair Hossain whose leg-breaks caused plenty of trouble for the Zimbabweans.

Both the wicket-taking deliveries from the 19-year-old were dippers which forced the batsmen to play mistimed shots. While Taylor spooned one to mid-off, Raza merely prodded one straight into short cover's hands.

Jubair's figures of 2 for 58 however do not do justice to the way he bowled. His googly was well disguised while his line-and-length was accurate. He would have in fact had two more wickets had Shakib Al Hasan and Al-Amin Hossain held on to their catches in the last session of the day.

The presence of Jubair in the side provided Mushfiqur with another attacking option apart from Shakib. The visitors seemed to be under immense pressure when the duo bowled in tandem after lunch.

"As a debutant he [Jubair] bowled well and impressed everyone. If there are two or three attacking bowlers in the team then it's really good for everyone, not just the bowling unit. Everyone appreciates the other," said Shakib after the day's play yesterday.

Zimbabwe's Raza too was impressed with the



A leg-spinner in the Tigers' den at last. 19-year-old debutant Jubair Hossain is pictured in full flight on the opening day of the first Test against Zimbabwe at Mirpur, where he took two crucial wickets.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

leg-spinner.

"I think he is very talented. I would definitely say that to give the credit where it's due. I wish him the very best. I wish him a long career ahead," said Raza, while subtly adding that he was beaten more 'in the mind' rather than 'flight' of Jubair's delivery.

Judging by the performances of Bangladesh's previous spinners, Jubair still has a long way to

go. All that he needs to do is look at the career-graphs of the likes of Elias Sunny, Shohag Gazi or even Mahmudullah Riyad, in order to overcome the obstacles that lie ahead.

However, what his inclusion has done is provide Mushfiqur with a much-needed variety in the attack, which in the long run can prove to be extremely useful for the Tigers.

BD- ZIM SCOREBOARD

ZIMBABWE: First Innings				
Sibanda c Mushfiqur b Shahadat	6			
Raza c Mahmudullah b Jubair	51			
H Masakadza c Jubair b Shakib	13			
Taylor c Taijul b Jubair	28			
Chigumbura c Mominul b Shakib	29			
Ervine c Mominul b Taijul	34			
Chakabva c Shamsur b Shakib	25			
Nyumbu lbw b Shakib	14			
Panyangara c sub (Marshall) b Shakib	8			
Chatara not out	14			
Kamungozi c Shamsur b Shakib	5			
Extras: (b-12, nb-1)	13			
Total: (All out in 75.5 overs)	240			
Fall of wickets: 1-6, 2-31, 3-83, 4-128, 5-142, 6-192, 7-200, 8-221, 9-230				
Bangladesh: First Innings				
Tamim c Masakadza b Panyangara	5			
Shamsur not out	8			
Mominul not out	14			
Extras:	0			
Total: (For 1 wkt in 12 overs)	27			
Fall of wicket: 1-10				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Panyangara	5	0	20	1
Chatara	5	2	5	0
Chigumbura	1	1	0	0
Nyumbu	1	0	2	0
Toss: Zimbabwe				

Pakistan sniff a win

APP, Dubai



Ahmed Shehzad put them in the driving seat in Dubai on Saturday.

Pakistan took a huge step towards victory in the first Test by taking four key Australian wickets after hundreds from Younis Khan and earlier, Younis hit a record making 103 not out and Shehzad 131 to bolster Pakistan to 286-2 declared. Younis added 168 for the second wicket with Shehzad as Pakistan plundered 248 runs after resuming at 38-0.

Australia conceded a big 151-run lead after being dismissed for 303 in their first knock.

It was actually Shehzad who set the tone for quick runs in the morning.

Shehzad, 22, drove pacer Peter Siddle for his eighth four towards long-on to reach his second Test hundred. Pakistan, 116-1 at lunch, cut loose in the second session against a hapless Australian attack on a flat pitch.

The second and final Test starts in Abu Dhabi on October 30.

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN: First innings 454 (Sarfaraz 109, Younis 106, Shafiq 89, Misbah 69, Azhar 53; Johnson 3-39)

Australia: First innings 303 (Warner 138, Rogers 38; Yasir 3-66, Rahat 2-55, Babar 2-81)

PAKISTAN: Second innings 286 for 2 declared (Shehzad 131, Younis 103 not out; O'Keefe 2-112)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings 59 for 4 in 23 overs (Warner 29, Rogers 23 not out; Yasir 2-8, Babar 2-22)

M'singh upset Ansar

SPORTS REPORTER



Mymensingh emerged as new champions in the National Women's Football Super League after a 4-3 shootout win, beating three-time champions Bangladesh Ansar in the final at the Bangabandhu National stadium yesterday.

The match rolled into shootout after the 90 minutes of regulation and 30 minutes of extra time ended 1-1. 'Player of the Championship', Marzia cancelled out a 27th minute lead from Sajeda of Bangladesh Ansar in the 70th minute.

The girls of Mymensingh, who have been together for the last three years since their participa-

tion in the Bangamata Primary School Gold Cup, came from one goal down to level the game in the second half and had the last laugh in the shootout, courtesy of two brilliant saves from their goalkeeper Taslima Akhter.

Bangladesh Ansar, consisting of mostly national players, dominated proceedings from the onset but the tides turned from the start of the second half. The Mymensingh girls, who are studying between classes V to VIII, levelled following a brilliant passage of play against their experienced opponents, who beat them 3-2 in the group stage.

"It is the outcome of staying together for three years. All the girls are from the same ward and the same school, Kalsindur Govt Primary School," said coach Mokbul Hossain.

Hosts meet Thailand Nov 30

SPORTS REPORTER

According to the fixture released by the Bangladesh Hockey Federation yesterday, the five-nation U-21 meet, which also includes Chinese Taipei, Oman, Sri Lanka, will end on December 7. Top two teams will qualify for the finals in China next year.

The Bangladesh U-21 national hockey team will play Thailand in one of the two opening Men's Junior AHF Cup qualifying round robin matches at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on November 30.

Younis on top of them all

AGENCIES, Dubai

Pakistan batsman Younis Khan hit a record making 103 not out on the fourth day of the first Test against Australia here on Saturday.

He surprised Steve O'Keefe to square-leg boundary for his sixth boundary to get to his second hundred in the match following his 106 in the first innings.

Younis became the seventh Pakistani batsman, but first against Australia, to score twin hundreds in a Test.

Hanif Mohammad, Javed Miandad, Wajidullah Wasti, Yasir Hameed, Inzamamul Haq and Mohammad Yousuf had also achieved the distinction in the past.

With his 26th hundred, Younis also edged ahead of Inzamam (25 hundreds) as the highest Test century maker for his country.

TOP 5 PAK TONNERS

Batsman	Tests	Inns	HS	100
Younis	92*	164	313	26
Inzamam	119	198	329	25
Yousuf	90	156	223	24
Miandad	124	189	280	23
Malik	103	154	237	15