

SPORT



ODD REQUEST!

Following Taijul Islam's eight-wicket haul, Mushfiqur Rahim asked the media to tone down the feat in their reports! "Many cricketers have performed like this in the past and he [Taijul] will perform like this in the future as well. Please don't do anything that makes him think that he is a very big player. This is normal. I get paid to

NUMBERS GAME

- 8 for 39:** Taijul Islam's figures are the best by a Bangladeshi. He beat Shakib Al Hasan's 7 for 36 taken in 2008. This is also the third best bowling stats by a slow left-artermer in a Test innings.
- 114:** Zimbabwe's 114 in the second innings is the lowest total any team has been bowled out for by Bangladesh. This was also the fifth instance of a team getting bowled out below 200 against the Tigers.
- 0 for 3:** The worst-ever start in Test cricket for the Tigers. Other teams who have lost three or more wickets with zero runs on board are Australia, India, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. India's 0 for 4 in 1952 tops the list.
- 17:** The number of wickets that fell on the third day yesterday -- one short of the Dhaka Test between South Africa and Bangladesh in 2003, which is the highest in Test cricket.
- 5:** This is Bangladesh's fifth win in Test

A win at last for Tigers



BISHWAJIT ROY

Generally a score of 23 is something that hardly makes any impression. But on a mad Monday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur where a staggering 17 wickets fell like an avalanche, captain Mushfiqur Rahim's unbeaten 23 was the cornerstone of Bangladesh's three-wicket win against Zimbabwe.

The dramatic third day of the first Test that witnessed several twists and turns eventually boiled down to a point from where Mushfiqur, with little yet significant contributions from the tail, navigated the Tigers to their first win in any format of the game against a Test playing nation this year.

It was also a day that young Taijul Islam would relish for the rest of his life. After a magnificent performance with ball that saw the left-arm spinner taking 8 wickets for 39 runs, the cricketer from Rajshahi also fittingly ended the nervy chase of an otherwise simple winning target of 101 by hitting the winning four through the backward square leg.

But he must thank his captain Mushfiqur for that precious unbeaten knock for not letting his individual achievement go in vain.

In the face of a batting carnage, the little right-hander showed how one should apply during his one and a half hour stay at the middle and why technically he is considered as the best batsman in the side on way to end his side's 14-match losing streak.

While others once again fell at the drop of a hat on a pitch that offered significant bounce which a ship-shape Zimbabwe attack exploited with aplomb and almost threatened to run over Bangladesh's second innings, Mushfiqur played with such authority that even an aggressive opposition captain Brendan Taylor resorted to defensive field setting for him.

An easy win seemed to be a reality for the home side when Zimbabwe were caught in the Taijul's web and were bundled out for 114 runs just after the lunch break.

A shockwave ran through the veins of a million home fans when Tamim Iqbal, Shamsur Rahman and Mominul Haque returned to the pavilion with the scoreboard reading a staggering 0-3.

Bounce and seam untied Tamim while Mominul paid the price for unjustly driving on the top. Shamsur dragged a wide Tinashé Panyangara-delivery onto his stumps.

Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib Al Hasan repaired the damage by adding 46 runs for the fourth wicket but they never looked comfortable and both survived at gully, where John Nyumbu was the culprit.

But both refused to learn from their mistakes. Tendai Chatara produced a back of a length delivery away to get Shakib's outside edge and Chigumbura tempted Riyad to drag a slower ball onto his stumps for 28, the highest score in the Bangladesh second innings.

In the same over Chigumbura dismissed Shuvagoto Hom, who looked like a fish out of water, to throw the challenge to Mushfiqur for scoring another 39 runs with the tail enders.

Shahadat lost his composure after hitting a six and the hosts were reduced 82 for 7. Mushfiqur however kept his calm and encouraged Taijul (15 not out) to safely take the ship to the shore.

Earlier, going by the first two days proceedings nobody expected a third-day finish. But the Zimbabwean batsmen stumbled against the flight and turn of Taijul, who started the carnage by removing Vusi Sibanda in the fourth over of the day.

Taijul got ample support from pacer Shahadat, who took the second wicket as Hamilton Masakadza shouldered arms to an in-dipper to lose his off stump, and Shakib, who claimed the other wicket of Nyumbu.

With a long-cherished win, impressive bowling and sordid batting the Tigers will now go to Khulna to play the second Test starting from November 3.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL: Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim (R) and Taijul Islam leave the field smiling after winning the first Test against Zimbabwe at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Hardwork pays off for Taijul: Nothing but relief

NAIMUL KARIM

Like most of the other slow left armers in Bangladesh cricket, Taijul Islam's rise was quite evident. With 37 wickets for North Zone in the last edition of the Bangladesh Cricket League he was easily the competition's highest wicket-taker, beating the more experienced Abdur Razzak by 10 wickets that year. He had also taken a ten-wicket haul in the National Cricket League the same year.

However, with the country producing an army of slow left-arm bowlers, the question as to whether Taijul was just another face in the crowd, constantly did the rounds.

With the likes of Razzak and Shakib Al Hasan, already dominating the national side, slow left-armers like Taijul needed a slice of luck to make it through to the national front; and that opportunity arrived during the West Indies series earlier this year.

With Shakib suspended due to disciplinary reasons, Taijul was called up and it took the 22-year-old just one innings to prove his potential. When all the bowlers struggled at the Arnos Vale in St Vincent, Taijul scalped a hard-fought five-wicket haul on debut. He had to bowl 47 overs for that achievement.

Fast-forward a few months and Taijul has gone on to post the best bowling figures—8 for 39—by a Bangladeshi. Was that expected? Not quite; especially considering the flat line he bowled in the first innings of the Test.

He was however, a different bowler yesterday, looping and flighting the deliveries almost at will.

"I was disappointed in the first innings. My performance bothered me. I told myself that there is a lot of competition in this team and I need to fight to keep my place," Taijul remarked

at the post-match press conference yesterday.

Taijul's ability to compete was the one feature that encouraged former national captain Khaled Mashud—who first spotted the bowler in one of Rajshahi's academy matches four years ago—to give Taijul a first-class break in 2011.

"There were many slow left-armers, but I wanted Taijul to play because of his hunger to learn more. Unlike the others, he emphasised on turning the ball rather than just letting it rip," Mashud told The Daily Star. The player's impression was as such that it compelled Mashud to make some calls and include the player in the auction list of the first Bangladesh Premier League. "His name was not there in the initial list. But I really wanted him. It was his accuracy that impressed me a lot," recalled Mashud.

And it was Taijul's accuracy—his ability to bowl at the right areas consistently—that led to his exceptional performance yesterday.

Going by Bangladesh's past record, Taijul, no doubt, has a long way to go. Critics have already highlighted the help Taijul received from the wicket and Zimbabwe's poor approach against spin, but as of now Taijul seems to have impressed those who matter the most.

His performance was described as 'outstanding' by coach Chandika Hathurusingha, while captain Mushfiqur Rahim was impressed with his work ethics. As for Taijul, he looks forward to the next game.

When asked as to whether he wanted a similar kind of a wicket in Khulna, his reply was a confident one. "No matter what kind of a wicket is available, the important thing is to bowl in the right areas and that will be my main aim."

BISHWAJIT ROY



If not satisfied then the three-wicket victory in the first Test yesterday must have come as a relief for Bangladesh. Mushfiqur Rahim's men desperately needed a win to escape from the vicious cycle of defeats this year.

There was nothing wrong with the Bangladesh captain's first reactions at the post-match conference yesterday. "I think this win is a big deal because for a team like us, we don't get too many wins. And we lost a number of matches this year despite going so close. So we are happy that we managed to hold on to our nerves. We wanted to win and overcome and that's what happened."

However, there is no scope to be excited as yet with this rare Test success because it reflected a perennial problem in Bangladesh's cricket; it's batting debacle. For an immediate remedy coach Chandika Hathurusingha could perhaps try increasing his batsman's workload. If someone faces fifty balls in the nets, they can perhaps face five hundred if required, as long as it helps them acquire the art of patience.

The way Shamsur Rahman got out in both the innings' barely reflected the value of an opener. Mahmudullah Riyad did score runs, but the way he lost his wicket on both the occasions' batsman inability

to play long knocks.

Tamim Iqbal, who had hit form during the West Indies series failed to live up to his expectations. The technique of almost all the batsmen, apart from Mushfiqur, remains to be questioned.

The decision to include Shuvagata Hom in the side should also be one that the Faruque Ahmed-led selection panel can discuss. Whether he is ready to play at the international level remains a question.

A player can be unsuccessful in the initial stages of his career, but the manner in which Hom played his two Tests gave the impression that he has to do lot.

The refreshing fact was that the Bangladesh skipper was very much aware of their deficiencies.

"Had we won this game easily then there would have been a number of areas regarding which we would have forgotten about. So at least now we know that where to work on," admitted Mushfiqur.

"This is a point (batting) that is a bit of a concern, no doubt. We were saying that we needed 20 wickets to win a Test, but I think what is more important for us is to put the runs on the board. Hopefully in the next match the batsmen will be more confident. The partnership in the top order is very important," he hoped.

The sooner they attend this problem, the better, for their bowlers won't always be there to save them at the end of the day.

'Winning pleases'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha was a relieved man after the Tigers had eked out a nervous win at Mirpur yesterday. He however reckoned that the match could have been won more comfortably had the hosts not given Zimbabwe opportunities to 'get back' into the game.

Speaking to reporters at the end of the match, the Sri Lankan said that the game would have been different had the Tigers not conceded the three run-outs in the first innings.

"I was disappointed with the three run-outs and that's where my main concern lies. It's something we learn when we play the under-13 cricket. Those were really, really poor mistakes and I am going to address that. We allowed the opposition to come back into the game. If we didn't have that we would have gotten a 100- or 150-run lead and then we would be talking differently," said Hathurusingha.

The plan for the first Test, according to the coach, was to make a spinning track and utilise Bangladesh's spinners. He was however surprised with the amount of uneven bounce that the wicket offered.

"The plan was to for our spinners do well against Zimbabwe, but I must say I didn't expect that much of a variation in bounce. Bit of a surprise for me. I expected our spinners to do well against them because we have a very good variety in spin attack," said Hathurusingha.

The coach also stated the wicket, which saw 17 batsmen fall yesterday, was a difficult one to bat on.

"It was a hard wicket to bat on. The top order got a few unplayable deliveries at times. But I am happy with this outing. Winning a Test is always satisfying. We played better than them and that's why we won, despite it being a close finish," said Hathurusingha.

"I am relieved in the sense that it [the win] brings confidence. Every time we win I can implement other positive things," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal trudges back to the dressing room after yet another failure with the bat on the third day yesterday.

'Both teams batted badly'

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite ending up on the losing side of the dramatic first Test, Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor was proud of the way his side fought on the field throughout the third day. He praised his side's bowling and the energy that the players showed on the field. At the end of the day though, Taylor believed that the visitors did not deserve to win because of the way they batted.

"Losing a match always hurts. But we can be proud of the way we fought and tried to defend a 100 runs. Again being bowled out for 114; that's what hurts the most. We were very disappointing. The way we got out, we didn't really show any fight."

"At the end of the day, if we are not going to put runs on the board and put a price on our wickets, we are not going to win too many games. So we have got a lot to learn from this game. But I can assure you that in the second game the guys will be a lot more disciplined, lot more hungry for success," said Taylor at the post-match press conference yesterday.

After reducing the hosts three down for nought at the start of the fourth innings the visitors had a chance to go for the kill. Their fielders however, did not respond as they dropped both Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad. And those were the, according to Taylor, game-changing moments.

"That was really tough to accept. They could have been 10 for 5 but that's the way it goes. If we could have got Shakib there and Riyad, that would have been a big difference. Good teams and good fielders will take those chances and probably we didn't have our best fielder there at that time," rued Taylor.

He was later asked if he thought that the wicket was a 'bad' one for Test cricket. It was a notion he denied. "It was a good cricket wicket. Pace and bounce and turn that's going to make entertaining cricket, but definitely bad batting will have to be the case. I think we can agree that both sides batted badly."

Anamul taken in Al-Amin's place

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made one change to the squad for the second Test against Zimbabwe as opener Anamul Haque has been included in place of paceman Al-Amin Hossain.

The second Test will be played in Khulna from November 3.

Al-Amin will not be available for the match for his Rajshahi University exams over November 6-17. His bowling action report is also expected to arrive from Chennai on November 4.

The selectors replaced the bowler with an opener because three seamers in Shafiqul Islam, Rubel Hossain and Shahadat Hossain are already in the side and they wanted to give solidity to the opening as Shamsur Rahman and Tamim Iqbal both failed in the first Test.

Anamul is now visiting India with the BCB XI and he is likely to return home on October 30 to join the team in Khulna.

SQUAD

Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Tamim Iqbal (vice-captain), Shakib Al Hasan, Shamsur Rahman, Mominul Haque, Anamul Haque, Rubel Hossain, Shuvagoto Hom, Mahmudullah Riyad, Shafiqul Islam, Jubair Hossain, Shahadat Hossain, Marshall Ayub and Taijul Islam.

BD-ZIM SCOREBOARD

ZIMBABWE: First innings 240 (Raza 51, Taylor 28, Chigumbura 28, Ervine 34; Shakib 6-59, Jubair 2-58)				
BANGLADESH: First innings 254 (Mominul 53, Mahmudullah 63, Mushfiqur 64, Taijul 19; Panyangara 5-59)				
ZIMBABWE: Second innings (overnight 5 for no loss)				
Sibanda c Mushfiqur b Taijul	14			
Chakabva c Shamsur b Taijul	10			
Masakadza b Shahadat	5			
Raza c Shakib b Taijul	25			
Taylor not out	45			
Chigumbura c Shuvagata b Taijul	10			
Ervine lbw b Taijul	0			
Nyumbu c Mushfiqur b Shakib	1			
Panyangara c Shamsur b Taijul	0			
Chatara lbw b Taijul	4			
Kamungozi c Mushfiqur b Taijul	0			
Extras:	0			
Total: (All out in 35.5 overs)	114			
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-24, 3-53, 4-58, 5-58, 6-92, 7-93, 8-104, 9-114.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shahadat	8	2	25	1
Shakib	10	2	44	1
Taijul	16.5	7	39	8
Jubair	1	0	6	0
BANGLADESH: Second innings				
Tamim c Taylor b Chigumbura	0			
Shamsur b Panyangara	0			
Mominul c & b Chigumbura	0			
Mahmudullah b Chigumbura	28			
Shakib c Nyumbu b Chatara	15			
Mushfiqur not out	23			
Shuvagata c Chakabva b Chigumbura	11			
Shahadat c Taylor b Panyangara	0			
Taijul not out	15			
Extras: (b-4, w-5)	9			
Total: (For 7 wks in 33.3 overs)	101			
Did not bat: Jubair, Al-Amin.				
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-0, 3-4, 4-46, 5-62, 6-62, 7-82.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Chigumbura	10.3	4	21	4
Panyangara	8	2	30	2
Chatara	8	2	34	1
Kamungozi	5	1	7	0
Raza	1	0	1	0