

SPORTS



Tamim Iqbal (L) and Mominul Haque enjoyed every bit of the third Test against Zimbabwe in Chittagong. Here the two Bangladesh top-order batsmen are seen sharing a light moment during a break on the fourth day at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Whitewash in sight

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



Nine wickets separate Bangladesh from achieving a 3-0 whitewash over Zimbabwe, the Tigers' best-ever Test result in a series. Considering that it took them a little over two sessions to bowl out Zimbabwe on the final day in Khulna, one could perhaps expect the hosts roll over the visitors in 90 overs in Chittagong today.

However, the way Bangladesh aggressively stroked their way to 319 yesterday, courtesy of Mominul Haque's fourth Test century, suggests that it might be touch-and-go for the hosts.

Having been set a huge target of 449, Zimbabwe finished the fourth day on 71 for 1 with Brian Chari getting an unfortunate lbw decision going against him; had he reviewed the decision, he could have continued.

While Day Five is expected to widen the cracks, the wicket still has something in it for the batsmen who are willing to spend time at the crease.

And that was exactly what Mominul did yesterday and his perseverance awarded him with his ninth consecutive fifty-plus score in Test cricket. While the innings was not as smooth as his free-flowing 181 at this venue last year, or the enticing 126 which saw him battle a turning track in Dhaka, it did have its share of excitement.

That Mominul was adamant to score a big one yesterday was announced with the sweetest of cover-drives off Shingi Masakadza in the 17th over, which saw him lean forward to a half-volley and dispatch it in style. Two balls later he tapped one for another boundary through the same region.

He did look a bit nervous at times and induced a few edges. One of them came right before he completed his half-century when an edge off Sikandar Raza's off-spin fell just short of Brendan Taylor in the slip cordon. The very next ball though he swept for a four and eventually completed his fifty.

That Mominul's a strong player on the off-side is a fact that is quite well known now. There were times, during his initial matches, when the opposition were compelled to place at least seven fielders on the off to pack his scoring areas.

In this series though, it's been his ability to flick the deliveries down the leg for singles and boundaries that attracted attention. The way he flicked Hamilton Masakadza through mid-on for a boundary in the 47th over showed just how much he worked on this aspect of his batting.

As he moved closer to his century, he seemed a bit under pressure. He mistimed a pull off Elton Chigumbura when on 89 and it was the extra height that saved him from being given out lbw. It took him another 26 balls to finally reach the three-figure mark. And he did so in style, by splitting the gap between short third man and point for a boundary.

Visibly relieved, the 23-year-old raised his bat, broke off into a smile and received a hug from Shakib Al Hasan at the other end. He remained unbeaten on 131.

Shakib on the other hand, scored 17 runs and, like most of the other batsmen, got caught at the boundary while attempting to up the tempo. The runs however, were enough to take his total tally of runs to 251 in the series.

Earlier, Tamim Iqbal was looking good to get another century in the match. He concentrated mainly on singles and scored just four boundaries. However, his attempt to guide one to third-man led to him edging one on to the stumps. Captain Mushfiqur Rahim seemed to be in the mood for a slog-fest hammering two sixes and four fours in his 36-ball 46.

Ton's for his younger sister

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

There was never really any doubt regarding Mominul Haque's talent. His textbook batting technique combined with his natural ability to go after the deliveries as late as possible made it obvious that the left-hander was a unique find ever since his debut half-century against Sri Lanka last year.

But then again that's nothing new. There have been after all, several talented cricketers in the country who seemed to have used the game as a reality television programme -- a means to be famous and talked about for a brief period and forgotten a season later.

What puts Mominul along the ranks of Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim -- he may even surpass them in the future -- is his diehard consistency and his hunger to learn.

He has been making waves in the world of records. And yet the left-hander has no apparent interest in the statistics.

"When you get a start like this there is always expectations from you and they only tend to increase. People want more from you. If I know that I am getting those records

HIGHEST AVERAGES

Player	Span	Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	100/50
DG Bradman (Aus)	1928-1948	52	80	10	6996	334	99.94	29/13
Mominul Haque (Ban)	2013-2014	12*	23	4	1198	181	63.05	4/7
RG Pollock (SA)	1963-1970	23	41	4	2256	274	60.97	7/11
GA Headley (WI)	1930-1954	22	40	4	2190	270*	60.83	10/5
H Sutcliffe (Eng)	1924-1935	54	84	9	4555	194	60.73	16/23

*Highest Test batting averages of batsmen who have played at least 20 innings.

Mominul Haque is only the seventh player to score nine consecutive 50-plus innings in Test matches. He joins the likes of Kumar Sangakkara, Jacques Kallis and Mathew Hayden. AB de Villiers tops the list with 12 consecutive 50-plus scores.

Mominul has scored 11 fifties in 12 Tests. The only Test he failed to score a 50-plus knock was against Zimbabwe at Harare in 2013.

Bangladesh match total of 822 runs against Zimbabwe is their highest

and if I get satisfied then that can't be good for me. I don't know about the other players, but that's how I think it works," the 23-year-old told reporters at the post-day press conference yesterday.

Mominul's conversion rate in the recent past seemed to have been

affected a bit. He scored four half-centuries and a 48 in the last four Tests but failed to make the most of those good starts. As a result, his unbeaten 131 against Zimbabwe yesterday was a much needed innings.

He seemed a bit nervous in the 90s and edged a couple that were

bowled on the off-stump line, but at the end kept a steady mindset to reach the three-figure mark.

"I was getting out in the 50s for a number of times. So I worked on that, thought about it how I could improve on it. There was no extra pressure; I was just trying to adjust. There was no technical adjustment; it was just about sitting in the room and telling myself what to do.

"Again if you think too much about it then that's a problem. I was telling myself not to lose my concentration. So I was a bit less negative in this innings as compared to the rest and by the grace of God everything worked out fine," said Mominul.

The left-hander dedicated the century as a gift to his younger sister.

"It was her birthday last week and all she asked for was a century from my bat and I am glad I could give that to her," a smiling Mominul said.

Bangladesh need nine wickets to complete a 3-0 whitewash on Day Five. While Mominul expects the wicket to break and assist the spinners, he reckons it will be a challenging job.

"Tomorrow's first session is important for us. The wicket will break but we need to bowl in the right areas," he said.

BD-ZIM SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH: First innings 503 (Kayes 130, Tamim 109, Shakib 71; Raza 3-123, H Masakadza 2-23, Panyangara 2-70, S Masakadza 2-77)

ZIMBABWE: First innings 374 (Chigumbura 88, Raza 82, H Masakadza 81, Chakabva 65; Jubair 5-96, Shafiqul 2-50)

BANGLADESH: Second innings (overnight 23-0)

Kayes c M'shangwe 65
Mominul not out 131
Mahmudullah c Mutumbami b Panyangara 30

Shakib c Ervine b M'shangwe 17
Mushfiqur c M'shangwe b Raza 46
Shuvagata not out 3

Extras: (b-8, lb-3, w-1) 12
Total: (For 5 wks decl in 78 overs) 319
Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-149, 3-204, 4-237, 5-308

Bowler	O	M	R	W
S Masakadza	7	0	28	0
Panyangara	12	3	31	2
Raza	25	0	114	1
M'shangwe	18	2	77	2
Chigumbura	9	2	19	0
H Masakadza	7	1	39	0

ZIMBABWE: Second innings

Raza not out 43
Chari lbw b Rubel 0
H Masakadza not out 26
Extras: (lb-2) 2

Total: (For 1 wkt in 19 overs) 71
Fall of wicket: 1-4

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shafiqul	4	0	8	0
Rubel	3	1	16	1
Tajjul	6	1	17	0

BCCI meeting on Nov 18

PTI, New Delhi

The Board of Control for Cricket in India has called an Emergent Working Committee Meeting on November 18 to discuss the scheduling of its annual general meeting which has been postponed by four weeks after president-in-exile N Srinivasan was named by the Supreme Court in the IPL spot-fixing scandal.

The AGM was originally scheduled for November 20 but has been postponed. It is learnt that Srinivasan will attend the meeting as the chief of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) where the members of the all-powerful sub-committee of the board will be apprised of the current situation in Chennai.

"The BCCI's lawyers will apprise the WC members of the situation and the legal implications. Obviously, for BCCI to announce a fresh date for the AGM, one needs to call a Working Committee Meeting. The AGM is now likely to be held in the third week of December," a BCCI official told PTI on Saturday.

Since the next hearing of the Supreme Court is on November 24, the BCCI decided to postpone its AGM.

Jubair duly rewarded

BCB names squad for first two ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER



Young leg-spinner Jubair Hossain was rewarded after his maiden five-wicket haul as selectors included him in the 13-member ODI squad for the first two matches of the five-match series against Zimbabwe scheduled at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong on November 21 and 23.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza will lead the team in the ODI series as the board decided to split captaincy for the first time with Mushfiqur Rahim only given the Test job.

Notable omissions from the team were all-rounder Nasir Hossain and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak. Chief selector Faruque Ahmed informed that Razzak was yet to fully recover from his hamstring injury, while they wanted to see Nasir in better shape before calling him up again.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed was also not considered due to injury, Mohammad Mithun was also deemed unfit and Shohag Gazi was the other player who was unavailable from the team that toured West Indies as the off-spinner is suspended for his bowling action. Poor form as well as the short list was the reason behind the exclusion of opener Shamsur Rahman.

Left-arm spinner Arafat Sunny returned to the side to replace Razzak while Shabbir Rahman was the other uncapped player included in the side beside Jubair, who took five wickets to wreck Zimbabwe's first innings in the ongoing third and final Test at Chittagong.

"We included Jubair in the side to add variety to the bowling attack in the absence of off-spinner Gazi. He looked confident and showed his nerve during the Test series and that's why we have decided to go with him. And you have to have the patience to prepare a leg spinner," said Faruque.

The last three ODIs will take place at Mirpur on November 26, November 28 and December 1.

'None likes to lose'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

With 378 runs required on the final day and nine wickets in hand, a win for Zimbabwe is out of the cards, unless the likes of Sikandar Raza and Hamilton Masakadza can churn out something special at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong today.

A more realistic goal for Zimbabwe would be to survive against the Bangladesh spinners and avoid a collapse like they did in the second Test in Khulna.

Zimbabwe pacer Tinashe Panyangara reckons that his side's batsmen can bat out the last day and does not expect the pitch to deteriorate much.

"I think the wicket will remain the same. I don't think it will change a lot. It is quite flat so I don't see it changing," said Panyangara at the post-day press conference yesterday.

"The best possible result is a Zimbabwe win. If we win it will make me happier. If it is a dramatic draw, we are happy. No one likes to lose," he added.

Panyangara took four wickets in the Test and was by far Zimbabwe's most threatening bowler. He described the Chittagong track as 'tricky'.

"I think it was a bit tricky to bowl on this wicket. Sometimes the ball was going through a bit and then other times it wasn't as much. It is a very good batting wicket, as a bowler you have to be very disciplined which is not the easiest of things against the Bangladeshi batting line-up. It was a challenge at the same time," he explained.

Chamara ton goes in vain

SPORTS REPORTER



Chamara Kapugedara's back-to-back hundreds went in vain as Victoria suffered a 53-run defeat against Mohammedan in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Out-of-favour Mohammedan Mithun (83) and Naem Islam (92) guided Mohammedan, who lost their first round match against archrivals Abahani, to 282 for five before Alauddin Babu and Rahatul Ferdous shared six wickets to restrict their opponents 221-9 in 46.1 overs before bad light stopped the match,

with the D/L method deciding the result in favour of Mohammedan.

Prime Bank recovered from their first round defeat as they registered a 14-run victory against Brothers Union despite Nazmus Sadat's 91 runs at BKSP, while Kalabagan Cricket Academy also came back from their first round defeat with a 11-run win against Old DOHS at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

SCORES IN BRIEF
MOHAMMEDAN: 282-5 in 50 overs (Mithun 83, Naem 92, Angelo Perera 50 not out; Kamrul 2-55, Shuvo 2-62)

VICTORIA: 221-9 in 46.1 overs (Marshall 36, Chamara 106; Alauddin 3-29, Rahatul 3-44)

Result: Mohammedan won by 53 runs.

PRIME BANK: 237-9 in 50 overs (Shadman 47, Dilshan 53, Nurul 40, Forhad 51 not out; Asif 2-30, Sadiqur 2-47, Milinda 3-51)

BROTHERS: 223 all out in 48.2 overs (Sadat 91, Milinda 39; Tapash 2-60, Forhad 2-42, Enamul 2-24, Forkan 3-26)

Result: Prime Bank won by 14 runs
KALABAGAN CA: 231 all out in 49.3 overs (Hasan 54, Mendis 62, Sharif 33 not out; Nehaduzzaman 3-61, Al-Amin Siddiqui 2-21)

Old DOHS: 220 all out in 49 overs (Shanaj 72, Jayasuriya 74; Sharif 2-25, Mendis 4-46)

Result: Kalabagan Cricket Academy won by 11 runs.

Djokovic downs Nishikori

AFP, London



Novak Djokovic survived his first serious test of the ATP Tour Finals as the world number one advanced to the final with a 6-1, 3-6, 6-0 victory over Japan's Kei Nishikori on Saturday.

Djokovic had swept through the group stage at London's O2 Arena in imperious style, but he was pushed harder by Nishikori, who became the first player to take a set off him this week, before a strong finish secured the Serb's fourth appearance in the final of the prestigious season-ending event.

The 27-year-old has now won 31 successive indoor matches, including 14 at the Tour Finals, and his final



opponent will be either six-time champion Roger Federer or Stan Wawrinka, who meet in an all-Swiss semifinal later on Saturday.

Wawrinka secured his place before his last group match against Marin Cilic had even reached the end of the first set on Friday.