

SPORT

Positives aplenty

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

The series began like any other matches that Bangladesh played this year. With a 101 required in the fourth innings of the first Test in Mirpur, the hosts were reduced to three for nought, the second worst score on 0 for a team in the history of Test cricket.

For the umpteenth time in 2014, the Tigers found themselves in a rut and seemed on the verge of gifting away yet another win to their opponents. However, that's where things began to change. Taijul Islam led the way with figures of 8 for 39, the best by a

series, 251 runs and 18 wickets, is one of the best all-round performances in a series of three-or-less Tests.

The other improvement was visible in Bangladesh's top order. The Tigers' top five batsmen have rarely taken the score past 200 this year and as a result Tamim and Imrul Kayes's 224-run stand for the opening wicket would definitely be a huge boost; especially since Bangladesh's opening has been a major issue. One would hope that Kayes, who scored a century, will be able to stick it out with Tamim and allow the BCB, for once, to maintain a stable opening partnership.

Prior to this series, Mominul Haque was guilty of getting out after making 50s. He

TOP 10 BATSMEN						
Player	M	INNS	R	HS	Ave	100 50
Masakadza (Zim)	3	6	356	158	59.33	1 2
Mominul (Ban)	3	6	321	131*	64.20	1 2
Chakabva (Zim)	3	6	317	101	63.40	1 2
Tamim Iqbal (Ban)	3	6	308	109	51.33	2 1
Mahmudullah (Ban)	3	6	264	71	44.00	0 3
Shakib (Ban)	3	6	251	137	41.83	1 1
Raza (Zim)	3	6	243	82	40.50	0 3
Mushfiqur (Ban)	3	6	159	64	31.80	0 1
Imrul (Ban)	1	2	145	130	72.50	1 0
Chigumbura (Zim)	3	6	135	88	22.50	0 1

TOP 10 BOWLERS						
Player	M	INNS	Wkts	BBi	BBM	Ave
Shakib (Ban)	3	6	18	6/59	10/124	18.27
Taijul (Ban)	3	6	17	8/39	9/81	21.70
Panyangara (Zim)	3	6	14	5/59	7/89	20.28
Jubair (Ban)	3	6	11	5/96	7/152	29.27
M'shangwe (Zim)	2	4	7	4/82	5/209	62.14
Waller (Zim)	1	2	6	4/59	6/124	20.66
Rubel (Ban)	2	4	5	2/16	3/62	25.00
Chigumbura (Zim)	3	6	5	4/21	4/55	37.40
Raza (Zim)	3	6	5	3/123	4/237	60.60
Shafiqul (Ban)	1	2	4	2/17	4/67	16.75

Bangladeshi bowler and Mushfiqur Rahim stuck it out with a gritty 27; for once this year, things went Bangladesh's way. The boost that the team received by the win worked wonders.

Runs that seemed hard to come by were achieved in abundance, the bowling attack had an extra zip and partnerships came aplenty.

One of the most pleasing sights was to witness Tamim Iqbal play out a Test day for the first time in his career. It was a completely different approach by the opener and it brought him his first Test century in four years. He followed that with another ton in the final Test and has hit form at the right time.

Shakib Al Hasan's majestic return showed exactly why opponents all over the world fear him. His performance in this

series, 251 runs and 18 wickets, is one of the best all-round performances in a series of three-or-less Tests.

Of all the developments though, it was Jubair Hossain's leg-spin that was perhaps the most exciting to watch. Sure, the 19-year-old has a lot to learn and he has to be a lot more consistent, but his five-wicket haul and the intent with which he bowled shows that the player has promise.

The fielding, when compared to the other departments was a bit sloppy even though Kayes managed to take a scathing catch at first slip in the final Test. But on the whole, Bangladesh would take this series as a series of improvements, especially because it witnessed their key players performing.



IT'S FAMILY TIME: Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and his wife Umme Ahmed Shishir come out of Hotel Peninsula in Chittagong yesterday. The Tigers enjoyed a richly-deserved rest day Monday, a day after their historic 3-0 series sweep over Zimbabwe.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

KING'S CUP Abahani take on Ugyen Academy

SPORTS REPORTER

Fresh from a 1-0 win over Assam Electricity Board in the opening fixture of King's Cup, four-time professional league champions Abahani are looking to strengthen their position in Group B with another win when they take on Bhutan's Ugyen Academy the at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thumphu, today.

Abahani and Indian Pune FC are on top of the group with three points each and a win today will put Abahani in pole position before facing defending champions Manang Marshyangdi Club of Nepal, who lost against Pune FC 1-2 in their opening match.

Abahani are apparently confident about a victory over Ugyen Academy, who were handed a 4-0 defeat by Sheikh Russel KC during the group stages of AFC President's Cup earlier this year. However, the team management will be hoping that the forwards would learn from the mistakes against Assam Electricity Board where they squandered at least three easy scoring chances including a spot-kick.

Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu informed that Atiqur Rahman Fahad would take the position of Pranotosh Kumar, who was sent off against Assam Electricity while the rest of the playing eleven would remain unchanged.

Srinivasan cleared

AGENCIES, New Delhi

An investigation into scandals in the Indian Premier League has cleared Indian and world cricket chief Narayanaswami Srinivasan of corruption, the Supreme Court heard on Monday.

"This individual was not involved in match-fixing activities. This individual was not involved in scuttling investigations into match-fixing," said a report by an investigative panel released to the court.

However, the report does state that Srinivasan, along with four other BCCI officials, knew about an IPL player violating the code of conduct, but took no action.

The panel, which was appointed by the court last year, submitted its findings earlier this month, but they were only made public on Monday.

The panel honed in on Srinivasan and three other top officials including his son-in-law Gurunath Meiyappan, who was the team principal of the Chennai Super Kings franchise.

ASIAN BEACH GAMES Basketball team in quarters

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh beach basketball team moved into the quarterfinal of the 4th Asian Beach Games after defeating Oman by 17-14 points in Phuket, Thailand yesterday.

Bangladesh will face China in the quarterfinal today.

However, Bangladesh beach volleyball and handball teams suffered defeats in their preliminary round fixtures yesterday. The volleyball team lost against Thailand in straight sets (11-21, 12-21) while the handball team lost against Pakistan in straight sets (5-21, 13-22).

Women ensure semis spot

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Bangladesh moved into the semifinals of the 3rd SAFF Women's Championship with a convincing 3-1 win over Maldives in their last match of Group A at the Jinnah Stadium in Islamabad, Pakistan yesterday.

The second win in three means Bangladesh finished runners-up in the group behind India and will be taking on two-time runners-up Nepal in the second semifinal on Wednesday.

It is the second time that Bangladesh advanced to the last four since their qualification for the last four in the inaugural edition held in Bangladesh in 2010. Bangladesh, however, failed to make it to the final after suffering a 0-3 defeat to Nepal in the semifinal.

Following their 6-1 win over Afghanistan and a 1-5 defeat to India, Bangladesh needed only a draw against Maldives to confirm their semifinal berth but they put up a commanding performance to ensure their semifinal berth.

Mainu Pru Marma put Bangladesh ahead in the 18th minute before Sabina Khatun doubled the lead in the 35th minute. Maldives pulled one back through Aishath Sama in the 84th minute before Sabina struck her fourth goal in the tournament three minutes before the end.

Two-time defending champions India emerged group champions after a 12-0 drubbing of Afghanistan in their last match yesterday. India will take on Sri Lanka in the first semifinal on Wednesday.



Striker Sabina Khatun (R) celebrates one of her two goals with Maynu Marma in Bangladesh's 3-1 win against Maldives during a Women's SAFF Championship football match in Islamabad yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

'It's like the Ashes for us'

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



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A determined cricketer, Sikandar Raza always ensures to make an impression. With the bat, he counters pressure with his aggressive stroke-play, when on the field he makes sure that the batsmen feel his presence. In fact his latter approach was the reason why he didn't make many friends in his first international tour of Bangladesh.

In the first Test, when Shahadat Hossain was at the crease, Raza, fielding at point, made sure that he was heard. Words were exchanged after which Shahadat pulled a delivery over deep-midwicket for a six. The batsman then looked towards Raza and then pointed towards the stands with the bat, showing him where the ball went. On the very next ball though, Shahadat was caught.

Ever since then Raza received a 'special welcome' every time he came out to bat; the sending offs haven't been any different either.

I had my share of sledging from Shahadat, Mushy and Shakib, I think I got more than my share

Sikandar Raza



In the second match Mushfiqur Rahim patted Raza on the shoulder and thanked him after he was given out lbw.

"It [sledging] has been happening. It shows that when people are playing for their country they are passionate and they want to win. And regardless of what I got, I have absolutely no hard feelings.

"It's such a big series, it's like the Ashes for us and I had my share of sledging from Shahadat, Mushy [Mushfiqur] and Shakib [Al Hasan], I think I got more than my share but

I give it back as well but there is a fine line that I don't cross," Raza explained.

Raza came close to scoring his maiden century in the last Test in Chittagong when he hit 82 and it was a landmark he was looking forward to.

"Bangladesh is a different team when they are on top. It's as good as playing against Australia. They are a totally different team in their own conditions," he claimed.

"At that point when I was on 80-odd I told myself maybe I need to

buckle myself a little bit and have a partnership with Regis [Chakabva], maybe because of that defensive approach I got out," rued Raza.

Born in Pakistan, Raza went to Glasgow for higher studies. That's where he played semi-professional cricket. Soon after, he moved to Bangladesh, where his parents lived. While it isn't common for a member of his community to play for the national team, Raza takes immense pride in it.

"I feel passionate about the country. The country has given me so much that it's beyond my words to describe. Zimbabwe has just not given me this identity but I have gotten a lot closer with my family my religion, the country has given me everything to be a better person.

For now though, Zimbabwe will need Raza to put in an inspiring performance in the ODIs, a series in which the batsman believes the visitors will put in a much better effort. As he puts it, "What matters now is how we finish this series, and we believe we can finish with a win."

MSC, Navy hold lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan SC and Bangladesh Navy Chess Team maintained joint lead at the close of the sixth round of the Walton Premier Division Chess League at the media room of Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

Mohammedan defeated Fire-Service & Civil Defence SC by straight 4-0 points while Bangladesh Navy routed Sreejan Chess Club by straight 4-0 points to share the top of the nine-team table with 10 points each. The two top teams will face off in today's crucial match.

In the day's two other matches, Leonine Chess Club beat Pritam-Prism Chess Club by 2.5-1.5 points while Bangladesh Navy Junior team beat Sultana Kamal Smrity Pathagar by 2.5-1.5 points.

Gazi's return lifts Sk Jamal

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Shohag Gazi returned to domestic cricket yesterday after being suspended from bowling in international cricket and took two wickets to help Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club snap Abahani's winning streak in the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

"I am now working to remodel my action to bring it within legal limits and playing a domestic league will help me to rectify my mistakes quickly. When I bowled today, I found some problems which I will work on," said Gazi, who was suspended in October after he had been reported following the second ODI at St George as his action was deemed to violate the ICC's 15-degree flex-limit.

Towards the end of the game, requiring nine runs from the last over with one wicket in hand, Abahani managed only three runs to suffer a six-run defeat in reply to Jamal's 219 runs.

Defending champions Gazi Tank continued their hundred percent successes as they defeated Kalabagan Krira Chakra in the

third round at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur while Prime Doleshwar registered their second win by beating Victoria Sporting Club at BKSP.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KALABAGAN KC: 205 all out in 48.2 overs (Shamsur 77, Tasamul 27; Shohid 3-34, Mosharraf 3-45)

GAZI TANK: 208-3 in 47.3 overs (Junaed 51, Mosharraf 45, Kapali 51 not out, Ashar 46 not out; Shahadat 2-39)

Result: Gazi Tank won by seven wickets.

SHEIKH JAMAL: 219-9 in 50 overs (Mushukur 33, Amit 48, Dawson 64; Ziaur 2-30, Nasir 2-53, Nazmul 3-29, Saqlain 2-44)

ABAHANI: 213 all out in 50 overs (Liton 34, Rokibul 83, Gazi 2-34, Dawson 2-34, Sajib 3-35, Nahidul 2-35)

Result: Sheikh Jamal won by six runs.

VICTORIA: 200 all out in 48 overs (Chamara 85, Nadif 83; Delwar 3-16, Sunzamul 2-29)

PRIME DOLESHWAR: 204-4 in 47.3 overs (Mizanur 23, Rony 56, Malan 47, Asif 33 not out, Elias 24)

Result: Prime Doleshwar won by six wickets.