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The Export Leader



Tigers give a new account

SPORTS REPORTER

For a brief period yesterday, Pakistan's batting seemed to breathe again. Their leader, Azhar Ali, the most dependable batsman among the lot, scored the first century by a Pakistan skipper since 2010 and gave the visitors a good start at Mirpur.

His 101 was built on two vital 90-plus partnerships and took the visitors' score past the 200-run mark by the 39th over. He looked calm and composed and pounced on the loose deliveries.

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However, despite the initial thumping, the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and company barely looked worried. The bowlers went about their merry way, almost as though they were expecting the Pakistanis to collapse.

While the Tigers' confidence levels may be riding high on the back of the series victory, the stability they showed during those comparatively trying moments though isn't something that they are used to; especially against a side like Pakistan.

In the 39th over Pakistan were cruising at 202 for 2. On any other day they would have gone on to make a score past 300 and in all likelihood won the game; at least that's what the statistics suggest.

Pakistan have posted 300-plus totals nine times against Bangladesh and on every single occasion they crossed the 200-run mark by the 40th over. Yesterday was one of those rare passages of play, which witnessed Pakistan crumble for just 250 and the entire credit goes to the way the Tigers bowled.

The fielding especially seemed a step-up from the rest of the games. Nasir Hossain's diving catch at deep mid-wicket to dismiss Fawad Alam was the highlight of the first innings.

As soon as Fawad swept Mashrafe, Nasir was on the prowl. Not for a second did he take his eye off the ball. As the ball dipped near the boundary line, he made a final sprint, held on to it and ended up with a rough landing on his knee.

That tremendous catch, in a sense, described Nasir's tale in ODI cricket thus far. From being dropped and written off prior to the World Cup due to his lacklustre form to playing a series of brilliant domestic knocks to return in the brink of the mega event, he has clearly overcome a huge struggle; and his whole-hearted performances on the field suggest that he doesn't want to go back.

Although he didn't get an opportunity to display his batting skills in this series, he made up for it with his bowling and fielding. His bowling especially has seemed to make remarkable progress.

He was given the ball within the first 10 overs by Mashrafe in a bid to plug the runs; a move which the skipper had tried against India in the quarterfinals of the World Cup as well.

Having spent a difficult few months outside the national team, Nasir seems to be back with a vengeance to not only do well but also excel in all the three formats.

Nasir's all-round performance was equally matched by Shakib Al Hasan. Not only did he bowl the most economical figures yesterday, but also he displayed great awareness on the field to get Umar Gul run-out. It was his quick pick-up and throw at the non-striker's end that left Gul stranded mid-way.



Bangladesh bowlers struggled for wickets early on but their perseverance earned them eight wickets for 47 runs off the final 62 balls of the Pakistan innings, establishing a target which was chased down with ease.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



'It's a habit that I do not celebrate a lot'

NAIMUL KARIM

What's the difference between playing club cricket and international cricket? Ask Bangladesh's newest batting sensation Soumya Sarkar and he will sum it up in a line.

"When I play club cricket I tell myself that I need to play in this particular position or else I won't be able to play, but when I play for my country, I'll play wherever they ask me to... there's no choice," chuckled a calm and composed Soumya while speaking to reporters after the third ODI against Pakistan at Mirpur yesterday.

Not only can the 22-year-old blow your mind away with an array of strokeplay, he has got a sense of humour as well; a good one at that.

Bangladesh's latest centurion provided an exhibition of shots yesterday. You would visit youtube, watch his highlights a number of times, in order to decide which one you enjoyed the most.

Be it the down-the-track loft over long off or the perfectly timed cut through point or be it the cross-batted punches, some of which went all the way or the gaps that drilled through fine-leg with his late hits, almost every shot would make you twitch your eye and move around in your seat in excitement.

While the innings compelled most of the 24,000 spectators forget their assigned seats and stands -- some might have even misplaced their relatives; for Soumya, Wednesday night was just another night in the park. There were no special plans; no special intent. All he wanted to do was be a witness to this terrific whitewash.

"There was no different plan. I tried to play my natural game. But once I reached the 40s, Tamim bhai told me to play a big knock... he said if I stay till the end I will

experience a different kind of enjoyment.

"I was getting starts [before this match] but got out in the 20s and 30s. I talked to my elder brothers and they asked me to just keep playing my natural game and then I would be able to overcome it.

"So I started similarly today. And then when I saw my score for the first time, I had already scored 18 runs. And that's when I realised I was doing well. I didn't do anything differently today. I just managed to finish well," a calm and composed Soumya said while explaining his knock.

While his strokeplay was exciting, his celebration, after he reached the three-figure mark, barely depicted a similar approach. After pulling a six just above the outstretched hands of the mid-wicket fielder, all Soumya did was take a few steps towards the dressing room almost as though he was confused with regards to the ball crossing the boundary-line.

It was only after Mushfiqur Rahim repeatedly clapped for him that he, almost reluctantly, raised his bat.

"It's a habit that I don't celebrate a lot even after doing something big. The shot I played didn't go too far and I didn't know if it would go all the way. And then I had cramped immediately. When I saw the ball go all the way, that cramp surprisingly went away... maybe because I was really happy.

"At the end of the day, I think I celebrated a lot more than I expected," smiled Soumya.

When asked as to whether he thought twice about reaching his century with a big shot, Soumya replied, "When I was in the 90s, I never really was worried about losing my wicket. I just wanted to play naturally. Scoring a 50 or a 100 was not in my mind. I tried to finish the game the way I started it. I had started it with a four."



Opener Soumya Sarkar's low-key celebration after reaching his maiden century in the third ODI against Pakistan on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR



BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN	R/B	4s/6s
Azhar b Shakib	101/112	10/0
Aslam c Mushfiqur b Nasir	45/50	7/0
Hafeez b Arafat	4/15	0/0
Sohail c Mushfiqur		
b Mashrafe	52/58	1/2
Rizwan c & b Shakib	4/6	0/0
Fawad c Nasir b Mashrafe	4/9	0/0
Nasim c Taskin b Rubel	22/24	3/0
Riaz c Mashrafe b Rubel	7/8	1/0
Gul run out	0/2	0/0
Babar not out	1/4	0/0
Junaid b Arafat	4/6	0/0
Extras: (lb-1, w-5)	6	
Total: (All out in 49 overs)	250	
Fall of wickets: 1-91, 2-105, 3-203, 4-207, 5-213, 7-243, 8-244, 9-245.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	10	0	44	2
Taskin Ahmed	2	0	22	0
Nasir	7	0	37	1
Rubel	6	0	43	2
Arafat	10	0	43	2
Shakib	10	0	34	2
Sabbir	2	0	17	0
Mahmudullah	2	0	9	0

BANGLADESH	R/B	4s/6s
Tamim lbw b Junaid	64/76	8/1
Soumya not out	127/110	13/6
Mahmudullah b Junaid	4/10	1/0
Mushfiqur not out	49/43	6/0
Extras: (lb-1, w-4, nb-2)	7	
Total: (For 2 wickets in 39.3 overs)	251	
Did not bat: Shakib Al Hasan, Sabbir Rahman, Nasir Hossain, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Arafat Sunny, Taskin Ahmed, Rubel Hossain.		
Fall of wickets: 1-145, 2-154.		

Result: Bangladesh won by 8 wickets and clinched the 3-match series 3-0.
Player-of-the-match: Soumya Sarkar.
Player-of-the-series: Tamim Iqbal.
Toss: Pakistan
Umpires: RSA Palliyaguruge (Sri Lanka) and Sharfuddoula
TV umpire: NJ Llong (England)
Match referee: JJ Crowe (New Zealand)
Reserve umpire: Anisur Rahman

NUMBERS GAME

- 312** Runs Tamim Iqbal scored in the series; the highest in a three-match bilateral series against Pakistan and the third highest overall
- 145** Soumya Sarkar and Tamim's 145-run stand is Bangladesh's second highest opening stand against Pakistan and the fourth highest overall
- 6** Soumya is only the sixth Bangladeshi opener to score a century
- 5** years - Pakistan's Azhar Ali is the first skipper to score a century for Pakistan since 2010
- 4** After Zimbabwe, New Zealand and West Indies, Pakistan are the fourth Test nation to suffer a whitewash against Bangladesh in a series with at least three matches



Azhar Ali became only the eighth Pakistan captain to score a century, radiating calm on his way to 101 off 112 balls.

PHOTO: STAR

Fresh T20 team

SPORTS REPORTER



Rubel Hossain has been rested for the only T20I against Pakistan due to take place on Friday. He has been replaced by 20-year-old left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman, a surprise inclusion in the 14-member side announced yesterday.

Also included in the side is opener Liton Kumar Das, who received his first call up in the national side.

"Liton has been on our radar for a while now. He has the runs behind him in first class and List A cricket. He is one for the future," Faruque further said.

Rubel has been rested in order to keep him fresh for the Test series as he will be Bangladesh's main strike bowler for the series.

BANGLADESH T20 SQUAD

Tamim Iqbal Khan, Rony Talukdar, Soumya Sarkar, Liton Kumar Das, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmud Ullah, Nasir Hossain, Sabbir Rahaman, Masrafe Bin Mortaza, Taskin Ahmed, Abul Hasan Raju, Mustafizur Rahman, Arafat Sunny

SUPERCRETE CEMENT

SUPER PERFORMER OF THE DAY

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SHAKIB AL HASAN



Shakib Al Hasan was brought into the attack in the 19th over of the Pakistan innings, when the visitors were batting comfortably going at five runs an over. The ace all-rounder went for only two runs in his first

over and more of the same in his next five. By the time Shakib was taken off the attack, even though he didn't get a breakthrough himself, he made sure the batsmen didn't get enough room to free their arms, resulting in two wickets falling at the other end. The wily spinner's first spell of six overs went for just 18 runs. Shakib was called into action in the 39th over as Pakistan had reached 200 for the loss of only two wickets. The champion spinner got rid of centurion Azhar Ali right away in the very first over before removing Mohammad Rizwan in the next, thereby initiating an incredible collapse. Shakib finished with figures of two for 34 and affected a brilliant run-out as Pakistan folded for 250.