



India captain Virat Kohli (L) is ecstatic after the fall of Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (C) on the final day of the one-off Test at Fatullah yesterday. The rain-hit match ended in a draw.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Match saved, not follow-on

BISHWAJIT ROY

The rain-hit one-off Test ended in a predictable draw at Fatullah yesterday. But not before hosts Bangladesh faced the embarrassment of following-on and managed to stave off an Indian ambition for an improbable win in the final session of the final day.

Bangladesh came out to bat in their second innings after they were bundled out for 256, seven runs short of the follow-on mark. They were left to negotiate the remaining 30 overs of the day that included a mandatory 15 overs, which openers Tamim Iqbal and Imrul Kayes safely played out scoring 23 in 15 overs before India skipper Virat Kohli started handshakes all around in fading lights.

The Test, which has been a subject of inclement weather, could offer only 184.2 overs in five days including a total no show on the second day.

The sun did come out just before the lunch break yesterday, allowing two sessions of play only to expose Bangladesh's batting flaws. Resuming on 111 for 3 in reply to India's massive 462 for 6 declared, Bangladesh fell in a heap against the twin off-spin attack of Ravichandran Ashwin and Harbhajan Singh, with the two combining to take eight wickets.

The procession started with Shakib Al



16, company.

Litton looked calm and compact and had plenty of shots too, but he tried to tuck a ball which turned and bounced from outside off and only got an inside edge to reach the safe hands of Rohit Sharma at left.

The draw marked a disappointing start for the Kohli era as the result pulled India down to the fourth position from third in the ICC Test rankings. Rain might have ruled the Test, still some individuals excelled in the middle. Ashwin claimed his first five-wicket haul outside India, man-of-the-match Shikhar Dhawan (173) entertained the Fatullah crowd with some exciting strokeplay, Murali Vijay scored a flawless 150 and Ajinkya Rahane hammered a fluent 98.

The home side that hit the headlines after dropping front-line pace bowler Rubel Hossain from the match also got some bowling boost with Shakib returning among the wickets, young leg-spinner Jubair making a good impression and Litton showing signs of rivalling Mushfiqur behind the wicket.

But their batting performance in the match provided ample food for thought ahead of the two-match Test series against South Africa at home next month.

In the end, the lesson perhaps the Indians have learnt the most is that June-July in Bangladesh is not good for Test, let alone a good result.

Hasan when the left-hander fell to Ashwin, manufacturing a cut shot against a packed off side cordon with two slips, one silly mid-off and a silly-point.

Another overnight batsman Imrul Kayes charged down the wicket against Harbhajan only to be stumped for 72 off 139 balls. Soumya Sarker chopped a back of a length delivery from Varun Aaron on to the stumps while the dismissal of Shuvagata Hom, who put on 43 runs for the seventh wicket with Litton Das, gave the proof that a batting-heavy team was not the solution for success.

Debutant wicketkeeper-batsman Litton however kept the hopes of avoiding the follow-on alive, but Ashwin ended his excellent innings to complete his five-for and make the hosts bat again as Mohammad Shahid and Jubair Hossain, the last batsman who was run out, failed to keep Tajjul Islam, who was not out on

'Getting out after 30, 40 runs is a big crime'

NAIMUL KARIM



Generally known for resorting to a more balanced approach in press conferences, a seemingly frustrated Mushfiqur Rahim, didn't have too many positive statements in his armoury after the Tigers completed a rare draw against India yesterday.

After all, it's difficult to be optimistic when a team with eight batsmen, on a decent batting track, gets bundled out in a little over 50 overs.

"It's a big crime when a batsman gets out after scoring 30 or 40 runs on this kind of a wicket. It gets difficult," said the sorry-looking Test skipper.

"In Test cricket you need to analyse and know when to go against a bowler and when to defend. It's not as though our top order hasn't scored runs by playing aggressively in the past, they should have been cautious with two off-spinners bowling in tandem.

"They made bad decisions and that's why they got out. I guess we can only learn to do that as we play more Test cricket. Our first target today was to avoid the follow-on, but unfortunately we couldn't do that," he added.

He was harsh on his bowlers as well

and claimed that their inconsistent line and lengths made it difficult for him to set a field.

"In countries like Australia and England by the time a bowler comes to this level, he is expected to be able to tell the captain what his plan is or how he wants to set up a batsman so that the captain can set a field. We have a big gap in that area. Bowling on either side of the wicket doesn't help," said Mushfiqur.

"A bowler needs to be consistent so that we can set a field. If we set a field for full length deliveries and he bowls a short-pitched delivery, the captain may look foolish," he added.

He was also disappointed to have seen his bowlers give away so many runs in the first innings of the Test match.

"One can't just leak runs at four or four and a half runs an over. It becomes difficult to comeback from there. If an opponent scores 300 to 350 runs in a day, it becomes difficult," said Mushfiqur.

While Bangladesh may have earned only their second draw against India, the tour hasn't begun the way that the Tigers would have hoped for. The question that remains now is whether the hosts can use the format that they are more comfortable in to turn around their fortunes.

MS wants back old technique

TIMES OF INDIA

Two days before he flies out to Dhaka for the ODI series, Mahendra Singh Dhoni turned back the clock by turning up for a surprise practice session at the National Stadium in Delhi.

This was the turf where he honed his skills under coach MP Singh before becoming a household name. Singh was there too, helping Dhoni rediscover the flourish in his strokeplay. Now that he has retired from Tests, Dhoni is seeking to undo changes he had made to firm up his technique for the longer format.

Singh said, "Now that he doesn't have to think about Tests, he wants to get back to his previous technique."

Obviously, he has the slow, low tracks of Bangladesh - and the barrage of spinners he may face - in mind. "He was hitting them hard and clean, like in his younger days. Don't be surprised if you see an attacking Dhoni in action in Bangladesh," Singh said.

Nadal claims the crown

AFP, Stuttgart

Rafael Nadal defeated Viktor Troicki 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 on Sunday to become the first man to win clay and grass titles at the Stuttgart Open.

The Spanish top seed set another minor career record, adding the grass honours to his clay successes in 2005 and 2007 at the Weissenhof Club. Stuttgart switched to grass from this edition in order to become part of the new three-week Wimbledon run-up.

Nadal finished with 11 aces as he beat Troicki for the fifth time.

Mushy's focus is on keeping!

SPORTS REPORTER

That Mushfiqur Rahim is desperate to don the wicketkeeper's gloves when the ODIs begin later this week was obvious from the post-Test press conference at Fatullah yesterday.

The player, who has been having a bad run with the bat ever since he hurt his finger in the Pakistan series, was asked if the injury was affecting his batting. The focus of his reply though seemed to be on his keeping.

"No. I fielded for almost three days and I think it hurt just once or twice. Otherwise I don't think I am in a bad situation to keep either. Hopefully I will be fit to keep in the ODIs."

"Regarding my batting, I actually can't give an excuse. The injury hasn't affected it. It might have affected my fielding and keeping, but not my batting. Hopefully I'll be back behind the stumps in the one-dayers," he added.

Litton Das, who has been selected as the backup keeper in the ODIs, kept wickets in the one-off Test against India instead of Mushfiqur.

BD-IND SCOREBOARD

INDIA: First innings 462-6 decl (Vijay 150, Dhawan 173, Rahane 98; Shakib 4-105, Jubair 2-113)

BANGLADESH: First innings (overnight 111-3)

Tamim st Saha b Ashwin	19
Imrul st Saha b Harbhajan	72
Mominul c Yadav b Harbhajan	30
Mushfiqur c R Sharma b Ashwin	2
Shakib c Saha b Ashwin	9
Soumya b Aaron	37
Litton c R Sharma b Ashwin	44
Shuvagata c R Sharma b Ashwin	9
Tajjul not out	16
Shahid c Dhawan b Harbhajan	6
Jubair run out	0
Extras: (lb-9, nb-3)	12
Total: (All out in 65.5 overs)	256
Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-108, 3-110, 4-121, 5-172, 6-176, 7-219, 8-232, 9-246.	

Bowler O M R W

I Sharma	7	0	24	0
Ashwin	25	6	87	5
Yadav	7	0	45	0
Aaron	9	0	27	1
Harbhajan	17.5	2	64	3

BANGLADESH: Second innings

Tamim not out	16
Imrul not out	7
Extras:	0
Total: (For no loss in 15 overs)	23
Did not bat: Mominul, Mushfiqur, Shakib, Soumya, Litton, Shuvagata, Jubair, Tajjul, Shahid.	

Bowler O M R W

Yadav	2	1	4	0
Ashwin	6	2	8	0
Harbhajan	5	2	11	0
Vijay	1	1	0	0
Dhawan	1	1	0	0

Result: Match drawn.

Player-of-the-match: Shikhar Dhawan.

Kohli talks of reserve day

SPORTS REPORTER



Rain ruined most of the play in the one-off Test between Bangladesh and India to enforce a draw at Fatullah yesterday. The frustrating outcome compelled visiting skipper Virat Kohli to entertain the idea of keeping a reserve day for Test matches.

"That's a debatable question. Say, on the fourth day a team is struggling to save the game, the next day it rains for two sessions and the game is drawn. The team that deserves to win doesn't get a win. So yes, there might be a thought there. It's a good suggestion actually. You might want to add another day seeing the situation of the game. If there is a possible result, there is no harm in giving the team that's winning a fair chance to compete for three sessions. You earn a draw or the deserving team gets a victory. Might not be a bad thing, but I'm not sure how the discussions are going to be going," said Kohli in response to a question for a reserve day in Test matches during the post-match briefing.

Kohli, who made it clear that winning will be main mantra during his tenure, began his career as a full-time Test captain with a draw but he had little to do in the match as rain started playing foul from the very first day and that's why he was not bothered with his side's demotion to number four in the rankings.



(L-R) Shakib Al Hasan, Shikhar Dhawan and Mushfiqur Rahim share a light moment during the presentation ceremony at Fatullah yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

"Rankings really don't matter as far as I'm concerned, not at this stage. We know that we want to go to the top. This game, we literally had two days of proper cricket and we can't judge ourselves on that. We can judge ourselves on how we played in whatever time we had available and that was pretty good as far as I'm concerned and the team is concerned," said a confident Kohli.

The India skipper had also no complaint about the scheduling of the series as rain was predicated in June-July in this country.

"See, you can't control the weather. You can't schedule games according to the thought that it might rain or it might not rain," opined Kohli.

Praising Bangladesh, Kohli said: "It's always going to be challenging to play against them, no matter what the format is."

He also looked forward to a bigger challenge from the Tigers in the three-match ODI series which will start on June 18 at Mirpur.

"In the one-day format they are obviously a very dangerous side. They've beaten Pakistan as well in the last series. There is no question about them being very competitive in one-day cricket. They have the ability to upset any team in the world and we all know that. We give them equal respect as any other opposition when we play them," said Kohli.

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