

SPORT



A series of the pacers

SPORTS REPORTER

It might have ended on a sour note for Bangladesh. After all, nothing would have been sweeter than achieving a whitewash against a side ranked number two in the world.

However, despite the heavy defeat, the fact remains that Bangladesh have achieved a number of things in this series for the first time. It was, no doubt, a landmark series for the Tigers and the numbers go on to prove that.

For starters, left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman achieved a number of records in this series. He scalped 13 wickets in the three-match ODI series. By doing so, he equalled Ryan Harris's record for the most number of wickets in a three-match series. But he does however hold the record of getting the most number of wickets by any bowler in their first three ODIs.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza might not have had a good time on the field yesterday. He went away for 76 runs in his 10 overs and was hit for quite a few boundaries. His economy rate of 7.60 was very unlike him. However, the three wickets that he took helped him overtake slow left-arm Mohammad Rafique as the Bangladeshi with the highest number of wickets against India. It's a record though that is not likely to last very long. Mustafizur already has 13 wickets against them, while Shakib Al Hasan has 17.

The series might have been a disappointment for slow left-armer Shakib who ended the series with just three wickets. He needed two more to become the second Bangladeshi bowler, after Abdur Razzak to take 200 wickets in ODIs.



Bangladesh's pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman's parents were present at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday for the first time in this series to watch their son in action against India.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED



Mustafiz is here to stay

NAIMUL KARIM

The Indian cricket contingent may not have kidnapped Mustafizur Rahman, as per Ravichandran Ashwin's suggestion in the pre-match press conference on Tuesday, but their batsmen did seem to have their 'super cautious' glasses on while facing the left-armer in Mirpur yesterday.

On a track which didn't have a lot in it for the pacers, the 19-year-old bowled 28 dot deliveries. His figures of 2 for 57 could have looked a lot better had an overthrow not gone to the boundary and had Sabbir Rahman judged a mis-hit from Suresh Raina a bit better.

Despite those lapses on the field, Mustafizur recorded much better figures than his senior statesmen, both of whom went for over seven

runs an over.

There was a definite plan that the visitors had opted against the youngster. None of the batsmen went after him. For most part of the match, it seemed as though they were busy trying to differentiate between the cutter and the normal delivery. By the time they figured it out, all they could do was nudge around those for singles.

Those who did try to go after Mustafizur eventually got out to the left-arm pacer. After dispatching a short, wide delivery for a boundary in the seventh over, Rohit Sharma attempted to go after him again, two balls later, but only managed to edge one to the keeper.

Towards the end of the innings, Raina had no other option but to target the boundary ropes. After smacking the bowler for two boundaries in the 48th over, Raina lost his stumps to one of

Mustafizur's lethal off-cutters.

Raina's wicket took the left-armer's tally to 13 wickets in the series, the highest ever in an ODI series featuring a minimum of three matches. Mustafizur now shares the record with Australia's Ryan Harris, who had taken 13 wickets against Pakistan in 2010. Mustafizur also holds the record of scalping the most number of wickets in a three-match ODI series in Bangladesh, overtaking Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's 12 against Kenya back in 2006.

If being the most threatening of the lot wasn't enough, Mustafizur also showed how fit he is by taking a brilliant catch in the deep to dismiss India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni. It was a cutter from Mashrafe that forced a massive edge towards deep midwicket. He ran in to take a good low catch.

The left-armer, who was initially taken in the squad just to surprise

the visitors, went on to surpass everyone's expectations and showed that he is in this game for the long haul.

With the South Africa series due in a week-and-half's time, there's no doubt that the left-armer, who has won millions of hearts in the last one week, will be an ever-present fixture with his 'legendary' off-cutters.

For all we know, the likes of AB de Villiers and Hashim Amla have probably already begun looking for the left-armer's video footages.

Amidst all the glory and the records that the left-armer has broken, the one thing that the BCB and the player himself should be wary of is the fact that this is just the start for Mustafizur. Like his counterpart Ravichandran Ashwin had put it: "The challenge starts here for him. Now people are going to watch out for him."

TIGERS

now 7th in ODIs
STAR SPORT DESK
Bangladesh officially occupied the seventh place in the ICC ODI Championship table when the latest rankings were released on Wednesday.

Team	Mat	Pts	Rating
Australia	38	4899	129
India	48	5500	115
New Zealand	42	4710	112
South Africa	46	5131	112
Sri Lanka	55	5811	106
England	47	4592	98
Bangladesh	31	2868	93
West Indies	35	3094	88
Pakistan	45	3915	87
Ireland	11	549	50
Zimbabwe	30	1319	44
Afghanistan	15	618	41

Taskin may miss SA series

SPORTS REPORTER

Taskin Ahmed missed the third and final ODI against India yesterday due to side strain and the bad news for the right-arm paceman was that he might not recover in time for selection for next month's series against South Africa.

The final assessment on his injury will however take place today, but initial assessments suggested a three-week recovery time.

The Proteas arrive here on June 30 to play two T20 Internationals, three ODIs and two Tests. The first phase of the series will include the limited-overs matches. The T20Is take place on July 5 and 7, whereas the three ODIs will be played on July 10, 12 and 15. As a result Taskin will barely have two weeks to get ready for the South Africa series.

The Tigers will enjoy a four-day break from today and then get back to business to prepare for the South Africa series.



Nevertheless, Shakib is bound to reach that mark next month when he takes on the South Africans at home. That will be one series where Bangladesh will be expected to play a lot more spin.

For the pacers, this series has been a major success for Bangladesh. Bangladesh's pacers have scalped 21 wickets in this series, which is their highest ever in a bilateral competition. It overtook the 20 wickets taken by pacers back in 2009 in a five-match ODI series against Zimbabwe.

On the flipside, Arafat Sunny, who was the highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh in the last series against Pakistan, got a rude awakening in his first match of the India series yesterday as he was taken away for 42 runs in six overs. Thirteen matches into his ODI career, this is his worst bowling effort in terms of economy rate.

With another series to go, there is no doubt these numbers will change very soon.

'Sanga still undecided'

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's batting great Kumar Sangakkara is still in talks with selectors to discuss his retirement from Test cricket, captain Angelo Mathews said.

"Kumar has yet to confirm his retirement plans. He was supposed to meet the press over the last few days, but he has not done that yet. I know he is still talking to the selectors," Mathews said.

Mathews denied that Sangakkara had delayed the announcement because of Sri Lanka's stunning 10-wicket defeat in Galle which put Pakistan ahead in the three-match series.

"He had been speaking with the selectors even before the series began," Mathews said.

"Kumar has earned the right to decide when he should go," said Mathews.

'The loss is a lesson'

NAIMUL KARIM

At the end of the day, both the team management and the fans will readily acclaim the 2-1 series victory. After all, none of the players had spoken of a series-win prior to the start of the tour.

However, one can't overlook the fact that the Tigers were presented with an opportunity to create something even more special yesterday. The Indians had their backs against the wall. They were clearly under pressure and this would have been the best possible time to complete a flawless victory.

Yes, India did score a total past 300. But with seven batsmen on a good batting track and an Indian attack that lacked confidence, the target was reachable.

After the match, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza did say that they had achieved far more than what they had expected, however, he did admit that the Tigers weren't at their best on the field yesterday.

"I think there was more pressure on the last match than before the series. Whenever we win one match, there are chants of a Banglawash and that does put a bit more pressure on the players.

"So yes, the body language wasn't at the top of the mark. We couldn't get breakthroughs, neither could we form partnerships. But we have to learn from these aspects. On the whole we weren't too far away, but we weren't at our best either," said Mashrafe.

While the bowlers won Bangladesh the first two matches, they had a rare failure yesterday. Despite the 300-plus score in the first match, it would be fair to say that the batsman could have done much better. None of them for instance converted their good starts into three figures, something that they had managed to do against Pakistan in the last series.

"There were many batsmen who couldn't score despite making starts. Yesterday everyone did mistakes. Right from batsman number two to number seven, there were scores of 25, 30 and

40. We needed a 60 or 80.

"Until the 35th over, we were ahead of India in terms of runs. But it was the wickets column that was a concern. That put us on the back-foot and it was a big mistake on our part. Hopefully we can learn from this and do better next time," explained Mashrafe.

Among the seniors, Mushfiqur Rahim is one player who had a disappointing run. When asked if there the wicketkeeper-batsman was going through a tough time Mashrafe said, "I don't think he is going through any trouble mentally. But maybe its difficult when you expect something from a player all the time. He is bound to go through a bad patch.

"If you ask me if I am concerned about his focus, I'll tell you that I am sometimes worried that he is over-focused. Sometimes it's good to stay away from cricket. There's no chance of him being less focused. I think cricket dominates his life. He is an amazing batsman and he will come back," added Mashrafe.

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