



South Africa captain Faf du Plessis holds the T20 Cup on his head as his teammates celebrate the 2-0 series sweep against the Tigers in the shortest version of the game at Mirpur yesterday.

Proteas tame lax Tigers

BISHWAJIT ROY



The intertwined roads of T20 cricket remained a mystery for the Tigers, as clinical South Africa

fact little resistance from the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led side on their way to sweeping the two-match series yesterday.

Bangladesh's bowlers bounced back strongly after the South African opening pair's onslaught, as an elegant Soumya Sarkar enthralled the crowd with his 37-run knock. However it was not enough, as the Tigers succumbed to a 31-run defeat in the second match at Mirpur.

The pitch was better than the first game but the home side's batting still lacked fire and the ability to make proper decisions in chase of a 170-run target.

One cannot blame the Tigers too much for their lack of craftiness in the shortest version of the game -- though they came to the series with a win against Pakistan in the previous T20I match -- as they do not get the chance to play many T20 games, either domestically or internationally.

After the first game, Mashrafe said he wanted his batters to apply themselves better in the middle. And while Bangladesh improved to score 138 runs, it did not ultimately do the job. Rather his team's sloppy fielding added salt to the wound, ahead of the three-match ODI series against South Africa.

On the slow pitch the target was a tough ask for the Tigers, but left-handed Soumya started like a dream as he threatened the visitors and outshone his more illustrious opening partner, Tamim Iqbal, during their 46-run partnership in 5.5 overs. The team required a long innings from the stylish left-hander but debutant leg-spinner Eddie Leie -- who trusted in flighting the ball and used his googlies --

pulled the batsman out of his crease with a flighted delivery which went past Soumya's outside edge and wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock made no mistake in finishing the job.

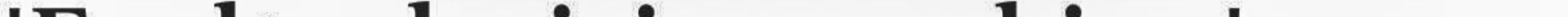
Left-arm spinner Aaron Phangiso then brought big smiles for the visitors, sending Shakib Al Hasan to the dressing room for eight runs, before Leie dismissed Mushfiqur Rahim and Sabbir Rahman to finish with figures of three for 16, which saw him claim the player-of-the-match's award.

South Africa once again displayed their strength in handling spin, while also showcasing their spin bowling. Phangiso added the wickets of Nasir Hossain and Litton Das to finish with figures of 3-30.

While Bangladesh strengthened their



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'Faulty decision making'

NAIMUL KARIM



Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza bemoaned his batsmen's decision making following his side's 31-run defeat against South Africa at Mirpur yesterday.

While he appreciated the opening partnership between Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar, he was disappointed to see his batsmen not form partnerships.

"Overall I think that there was a bit of a doubt in the decision making and that's pretty much it. I am talking about shot selection," said Mashrafe.

"Had we batted for a bit longer and gone into the last five overs with a good batting depth then even scoring 60 runs would have been possible," said Mashrafe at the post-match press conference.

For the second consecutive match, Bangladesh's batsmen fell prey to South Africa's spinners. While the visitors' spinners did bowl well, Mashrafe reckoned that his batters could have done a lot better.

"It's difficult to explain," said Mashrafe, when asked about the reason behind his batsmen's fall against the spinners.

"Maybe there was a bit of a turn or maybe they lost their confidence.

They probably got under pressure after a wicket had fallen. But on the whole I think we need to be a bit more cool on the ground.

"They will obviously come hard at us. I still don't think we have gone too far behind. We have a chance to prove ourselves in the coming matches. If we can play as a unit and maintain our confidence levels we can comeback," hoped the skipper.

The series defeat, according to the captain, is a sign that they have a lot of work to do ahead of the World Cup in India next year.

"We are very disappointed. I think this is a good lesson for us with the World Cup coming ahead. We have

to work on our skills in T20s after the Australia series. We will need to practise ahead of the World Cup. We need to work on some areas seriously," said Mashrafe.

"T20 is such a game that you can only improve by practising. A player like Mushfiqur [Rahim] for example played around 40 matches, but if you ask him he will tell you that he sees every game as a new match because we don't get to play too many T20s."

"But then again that's not an excuse. As professionals, when we get to the field we have to adjust to any format," added the disappointed captain.

After the first game, Mashrafe said he wanted his batters to apply themselves better in the middle. And while Bangladesh improved to score 138 runs, it did not ultimately do the job. Rather his team's sloppy fielding added salt to the wound, ahead of the three-match ODI series against South Africa.

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batting line-up by drafting in Rony Talukdar in place of off-spinner Shohag Gazi, it was proven once again that a batsman-crowded line-up is not the solution to big scores.

Earlier, AB de Villiers (40) and de Kock (44) added 95 runs in 10.3 overs to kick things off, after Faf du Plessis won the important toss for the second successive time. Bangladesh's spinners pulled things back just enough as Nasir picked up two wickets in an over while Shakib tossed the ball up to restrain du Plessis. Shakib however felt the heat in the 19th over giving away 19 runs thanks to Rilee Rossouw's 6-ball 19.

The focus now shifts to the ODI series, which begins here on Friday.

Faf calls it 'exceptional'

SPORTS REPORTER



South Africa captain Faf du Plessis lauded his players following the 2-0 series win over Bangladesh. Describing the victory as 'exceptional' the captain believed that the victory was a good omen for the ICC World Twenty 20, which is due to take place in India next year.

"I think we played exceptionally well once again. On a tough wicket we got 170, which was probably around 15 runs over par score. Bangladesh played better... but we had all the answers from a bowling point of view.

"They had batted incredibly against Pakistan and India so their confidence would have been sky-high. It was important for us as a team to try and

put an end to that confidence and we did it as a team," he added.

The key to the series victory, according to the skipper, was adjusting to the slow and low conditions.

"You need different skills at different times and I think that was probably the difference between the two teams. Our skills were on display when it came to not hitting boundaries, hitting it in the gap, rotating the strike, taking twos and threes; I thought we did better than them.

"Whereas they obviously tried to hit boundaries and in these conditions, it's not always as easy. You have to graft a little bit; put the bowlers under pressure and then hit a boundary. You need to earn the right to get to that stage where you can get the power hitters in," explained du Plessis.

Du Plessis also credited the IPL for the team's good performance.

"IPL is probably the biggest reason for South Africans to play so well in subcontinent conditions. South African cricketers are generally consistent in the IPL so we take a lot of confidence when we play at Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka," said du Plessis.

South Africa debutant Eddie Leie was adjudged player-of-the-match yesterday for his three-wicket haul. The jubilant leg-spinner was happy with his 'exciting' start to international cricket.

"I tried to keep it simple; just bowl wicket to wicket. Bangladesh had started well so I had to keep them from taking runs. The turn obviously encouraged me as well," he added.

Faruque said that Talukdar could count

himself unlucky after he was picked for the ODIs against Pakistan and India but did not get the opportunity to make his debut.

Faruque also said that although Litton Das and Anamul had similar roles, the former was a better choice.

The former national skipper also said that while there was a slim chance to play with three pacers, they preferred to keep leg-spinner Jubair Hossain, who was brought into the side for the third and final ODI against India after Taskin suffered an injury.

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