



Lost opportunity, says Mushfiqur

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong



A Test that began with plenty of hope ended up with two washed-out days and witnessed Bangladesh achieve their first-ever draw against South Africa yesterday. However, unlike their previous rain-affected draws, seven in total, this one felt like a lost opportunity.

The Tigers crossed a number of landmarks in this Test. This was the first time they scored more than 300 runs against the Proteas, they posted their highest-ever lead while batting second and also bowled with rarely-seen consistency which helped them bundle out the visitors for a paltry first innings score.

It therefore wasn't surprising when skipper Mushfiqur Rahim described the result as 'frustrating'.

"Such opportunities obviously come rarely. To take such a lead and then having four to five spinners in your side on a fourth day wicket, we were doing well. It is frustrating. Our players were hungry to perform."

"Bangladesh have been playing well in ODIs and there were questions as to why we have not been able to replicate that form in Test cricket, so we had something to prove here as well," said Mushfiqur at the post-match press conference.

"It's not as though the perception would have changed after just one match. But it shows that if we can do everything according to our plan and be a bit more strong mentally, then we can do well in Tests as well," added the skipper.

When the last ball of the match was played, South Africa were 17 runs behind Bangladesh and had all their second innings wickets intact. The visiting skipper, Hashim Amla, reckoned that the visitors held the advantage.

Mushfiqur however, believed that the

hosts were just a wicket or two away from putting the visitors under pressure.

"What he said was his opinion. They were behind by 17 runs and they also wanted to score quickly. You never know, had they lost a couple of wickets, things could have been different. Our bowlers bowled quite well in the first innings after all and our spinners would get more help," said Mushfiqur.

"They probably would have had the advantage if they had world-class spinners. So from that aspect I think we were ahead in this game. Regardless, they will come back hard at us in the next Test and we need our planning and application to be better," he added.

While there are plenty of positives that the Tigers can take to the second Test, Mushfiqur is also aware of the areas that



*For home delivery: 01730450533-4

needed improvement.

"I think we could have bowled better with the new ball and taken more early wickets. But then again it would have been difficult for any side to take wickets on a flat track early on. We need to work on this."

"Our set batsmen often get out. They should try to score at least 100-plus runs. When you play against such a big side, you won't always be able to be in such a strong position if you don't make the most of it. Had they scored a bigger first innings total, we would have been under more pressure," said Mushfiqur.

The skipper was also happy with the way the new players have been performing in the side. Their consistency, according to him, had an astounding effect on all of Bangladesh's opponents this year.

We could've won: Amla

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



Having wiped away three-fourths of the lead in the second innings, South Africa captain Hashim Amla reckoned that the visitors could have eked out a win had the last two days of the Test had not been washed out.

While Amla didn't believe that the washed out Test was an opportunity lost, he did however feel that the game was poised in their favour.

"I think going into the fourth day we probably had a slight advantage certainly with Bangladesh having to bat on the last day. It would have been a really good Test match had we even scored maybe 250. It would have been a challenge for Bangladesh to go for it on the last day," said Amla in the post-match press conference yesterday in Chittagong.

"It goes without saying that when you come all the way from South Africa, you really want to be playing cricket. But these types of things... you can't really control, so there's no use getting frustrated about it."

"The game was poised in our favour I feel but there's nothing you can do about it. Whether you have rain or not is immaterial for me. What counts is that we make use of the opportunity that we get. The guys have played enough cricket to know that when it's raining, you need to take the break and hopefully when you do get on the park, you need to get on and perform in the series," added the South African skipper.

This was the first time that South Africa have drawn a Test against Bangladesh. The visitors, despite a good start from their top three, were bundled out for 248 in the first innings. Their middle order and late middle order failed to take the pressure set by some patient Bangladeshi bowling. In fact, South Africa's batting hasn't really clicked since the first ODI of this series, which they won by eight wickets.

Regardless of that, Amla didn't believe that the visitors' batting was a concern and reckoned that the Proteas would go into the second Test, due to begin in Mirpur on July 30, with plenty of positives.

"We took advantage of the first two sessions of the game, where we batted well and then we kind of lost it in the last session but things like that do happen in Test cricket. We also crawled our way back."

"Bangladesh to their credit batted decently in the first two sessions, but the way we held the game almost kept us in the running for a win. At 60 for no wicket, I think we probably had a bit of advantage with us," said Amla.

"From the bowling front, I think our seamers did exceptionally well. I think the best time to bat was when Bangladesh were batting and to their credit they did pretty well. But our seamers tried hard. And Simon Harmer took a three-for and he is turning out to be a really good bowler for us," the skipper added.

Persistent rain on Saturday denied the Tigers from entertaining the home fans like they have been doing for quite some time. But it hardly prevented them from having some fun at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong after the first Test against South Africa was declared a draw.

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

Pacers full of promise

NAIMUL KARIM from Chittagong

Prior to the start of the Chittagong Test, both coach Chandika Hathurusingha and captain Mushfiqur Rahim emphasised on one aspect; that this Bangladesh's bowling line-up had the ability to take 20 wickets.

It was something that the skipper had repeatedly stated in the past as well. So much so, that the statement had kind of earned the reputation of having become the team management's favourite filler; a line used in press conferences whenever too many questions regarding Bangladesh's bowling had crept up.

However, this time around, one could sense a difference in the demeanour of both the coach and the captain while those words were uttered. "I am very confident with this bowling line-up," Hathurusingha had asserted.

A day later, it was evident as to why the team management sounded so confident. Bangladesh may not have found the time to scalp 20 wickets, but their pacers seemed to have taken the visitors by a surprise with their accurate line and length.

Sure enough, Mustafizur Rahman's inclusion was bound to provide the team with a boost; however, it was the accuracy from Mohammad Shahid that amazed many.

In his third spell on Day 1, Shahid had bowled five consecutive maidens. It was a feat, which took the skipper's breath away.

"I don't think I have ever seen someone bowl such a good spell in Bangladesh, especially on this flat track. I think to bowl such spells even on wickets that have help for a pacer is rare."

"He should be given credit for the unselfishness with which he bowled and planned his bowling," asserted Mushfiqur during the post-match press conference in Chittagong yesterday.

"He was a bit unlucky. Hopefully next time when he creates a chance we will grab it," he added while referring to the two dropped catches off Shahid's bowling.

While Shahid contained the runs from one end, Mustafizur attacked from the other. It was a kind of combination that Bangladesh's fans rarely get to witness.

After all, since 2014, Bangladesh's pacers took only 28 out of 131 Test wickets.

Mustafizur's inclusion in the Test side, in a way, provided a new hope for the pace attack.

"In Tests there's no pressure to score runs so the batsmen can take lot of time. Be it the cutter or maybe even the reverse swing, the batsmen can handle them quite easily sometimes. He is a quick learner and that is something that he has realised on his own," Mushfiqur said while analysing the left-arm's performance in his first Test.

"I think that if he does it consistently he will be successful in Test cricket as well just like the ODIs. Not that we expect him to take five-fors in every match, but I think he can at least maintain a good average and a good strike-rate," wished the skipper.

Furthermore, Mushfiqur also hoped that the two young pacers can help solve the troubles that Bangladesh have been facing with the new ball in Test cricket.

"The Bangladesh team is really lucky that we have match-winning bowlers at the moment. Hopefully they will hold on to this form. Most of our wickets are spin-friendly. If the pacers can get early wickets, then it can help any captain in the world," believed Mushfiqur.

Few firsts in rainy draw

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

After 221 overs, the Test match at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong ended in a draw yesterday. Expectedly so, neither of the team captains were happy with the result, considering that the first match of the two-Test was still wide open and poised for an exciting finish.

With the match called off at 12 pm yesterday, Bangladesh's players decided to enjoy a game of football in the rain during the afternoon, before packing up their bags and heading for the team hotel for one last time.

While the hosts may have lost the opportunity to provide a final push for a rare victory, they have however, achieved a number of firsts in the game.

For starters, pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman, yesterday became the first-ever cricketer to be adjudged player-of-the-match in both his debut Test and ODI.

The left-arm pacer had grabbed a four-wicket haul, which was the key reason behind South Africa's downfall in the first innings. The only other bowler to have two player-of-the-match awards in his debut games is Elias Sunny, who won it in Test and T20I debuts respectively.

The 19-year-old Mustafizur has also become only the fourth Bangladeshi after Javed Omar, Elias Sunny and Mohammad Ashraful to be adjudged the player-of-the-match on debut.

This was also Bangladesh's 14th draw in Tests, their first against South Africa after eight consecutive defeats, and their third this year after draws against Pakistan and India.

Apart from posting their highest ever lead while batting second in a Test, this was also the first time they posted a total of more than 300 against the Proteas.

The draw also means that Bangladesh's good luck in Chittagong continues as they haven't lost a single Test match at this ground since their loss against Pakistan in December 2011. Prior to yesterday they had drawn Tests against New Zealand, Sri Lanka and beaten Zimbabwe at this port city venue.

IN A NUTSHELL

Yorkshire drop Maxwell

Australian cricketer Glenn Maxwell has been dropped from the Yorkshire Vikings Twenty20 team for disciplinary reasons.

It marked a premature end to the all-rounder's stint in the English domestic T20 competition with Yorkshire failing to reach the quarterfinals.

"It was just unprofessional behaviour and I don't wish to add anything further. It has been dealt with and we have moved on and the slate is clean. As soon as the decision was made, we cracked on," Yorkshire coach and former Australia quick Jason Gillespie said.

Pakistan suspend Zim tour

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) have mutually decided to defer Pakistan's tour to Zimbabwe, scheduled for August this year, for an indefinite period.

"Zimbabwe have now involved the West Indies to hold a triangular series, in place of the bilateral series, which does not suit Pakistan in the wake of qualifying for the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy," a PCB official told Dawn on the condition of anonymity.

"The decision to include the third team was clearly clashing with our interests. Therefore, we proposed Zimbabwe a T20 triangular tournament but it was not accepted. So, both cricket boards have decided to postpone the triangular event and any bilateral series for the next year," he added.

"Deciding fresh dates for the tour to Zimbabwe is not possible this year," the official said.

IPL 'spot-fixers' discharged

A New Delhi court on Saturday cleared Test fast bowler Shanthakumaran Sreesanth and two other players of spot-fixing during the Indian Premier League, a lawyer and media reports said.

Indian prosecutors had filed charges of cheating and conspiracy against the players over their alleged links to an organised crime syndicate during the 2013 edition of the Twenty20 competition.

Two of Sreesanth's teammates from the Rajasthan Royals franchise, Ajit Chandila and Ankeet Chavan, had also been charged along with bookmakers and underworld figures.

"The judge has passed the order and discharged all the players. There is no case against the players now," a defence lawyer told reporters outside the court Saturday.

The three players were arrested in May 2013 along with scores of bookies.

The players welcomed the verdict Saturday, hugging family members and friends.

"It's a huge relief. I have nothing against anybody. God willing I will return to cricket," Sreesanth said.

Compiled by Star Sport Desk

BD-SA SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 248 (Elgar 47, Van Zyl 34, Du Plessis 48, Bavuma 54, Philander 24; Mustafizur 4-37, Jubair 3-53)

BANGLADESH: First innings 326 (Tamim 57, Imrul 26, Mahmudullah 67, Mushfiqur 28, Shakib 47, Litton 50, Shahid 25; Steyn 3-78, Philander 3-40, Harmer 3-105)

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 61 without loss (Van Zyl 33 not out, Elgar 28 not out)

Result: Match drawn. **Player-of-the-match:** Mustafizur Rahman.

Tigers remain unchanged

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors picked an unchanged squad for the second and final Test which begins at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from July 30.

Soumya Sarker, Nasir Hossain and Rubel Hossain were left out from the playing eleven in the first Test, which ended in a draw yesterday after persistent rain washed out the last two day's play at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

SQUAD

Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Tamim Iqbal (vice-captain), Imrul Kayes, Litton Das, Mominul Hoque, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Soumya Sarker, Nasir Hossain, Taijul Islam, Jubair Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Mohammad Shahid and Mustafizur Rahman.



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