



There was a lot of focus on Bangladesh pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman (R) ahead of the Asia Cup opener against India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. However, the young pacer had an off day, conceding 40 runs in his four overs.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A new challenge for Mustafizur

NAIMUL KARIM



Mustafizur Rahman's first over yesterday was no different to the way he has fared in his short career so far. He kept pitching the ball up and kept getting it to swing away from Virat Kohli.

And every now and then there was the slower cutter that danced off the pitch. A restless Kohli tried his best to attack the left-arm pacer in the fourth over but failed to make an impact.

While Kohli struggled, his partner Rohit Sharma played him almost perfectly.

In Mustafizur's second over, Rohit stepped back and played him as late as possible. He moved away from the stumps frequently, almost as though he was expecting the cutter and played him once through third man and then behind point for two singles.

By the time Mustafizur had arrived to bowl his third over, the batsman had already shifted to another gear. He applied the same strategy -- took a step back and moved away from the wicket -- but this time instead of driving it for a single he flicked and cut the deliveries as hard as possible. One of his flicks went all the way for a six.

His partner, Hardik Pandya seemed to take a leaf out of Rohit's book and played with a wide stance and got rewarded with a four and two sixes.

Mustafizur, to his credit, did comeback well in his last over and gave away just seven runs.

However, by then the damage had already been done. With figures of 0 for 40 he recorded his worst economy rate so far.

Prior to the match, the main talking point was whether the Indians had decoded Mustafizur. While it's too early to answer that question, the one thing that is certain is that a number of these Indian batsmen had done their homework well.

Make no mistake, the kind of resilience the left-armed has shown in the past, he will likely be able to come back in the games ahead.

After the match skipper Mashrafe Bin



Mortaza pointed out that the wicket was wet and as a result Mustafizur's deliveries didn't manage to get much grip off it, which caused him some discomfort.

However, it is undeniable that his career has entered a period where every batsman he bowls against will try to make it doubly hard for him and that's a challenge he will have to overcome in the rest of the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20.

This of course isn't a surprise. With the kind of attention that he has received, this was something that was bound to happen; yesterday's game was just a soft reminder

ধুলো ময়লার দ্বন্দ্ব শেষ!

BD-IND SCOREBOARD

| INDIA | R/B | 4/6 |
|--|-------|-----|
| R Sharma c Soumya b Al-Amin/55 | 7/3 | 2/0 |
| Dhawan b Al-Amin | 2/4 | 0/0 |
| Kohli c Mahmudullah | | |
| b Mashrafe | 8/12 | 1/0 |
| Raina b Mahmudullah | 13/13 | 2/0 |
| Yuvraj c Soumya b Shakib | 15/16 | 1/0 |
| Pandya c Mahmudullah | | |
| b Al-Amin | 31/18 | 4/1 |
| Dhoni not out | 8/2 | 0/1 |
| Jadeja not out | 0/0 | 0/0 |
| Extras: (b-1, lb-2, w-3) | 6 | |
| Total: (For 6 wks in 20 overs) | 166 | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-22, 3-42, 4-97, 5-158. | | |

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|-------------|---|---|----|---|
| Taskin | 3 | 0 | 22 | 0 |
| Al-Amin | 4 | 0 | 37 | 3 |
| Mustafizur | 4 | 0 | 40 | 0 |
| Mashrafe | 4 | 0 | 40 | 1 |
| Mahmudullah | 2 | 0 | 9 | 1 |
| Shakib | 3 | 0 | 15 | 1 |

| BANGLADESH | R/B | 4/6 |
|---|-------|-----|
| Soumya c Dhoni b Bumrah | 11/14 | 1/0 |
| Mithun b Nehra | 1/3 | 0/0 |
| Sabbir c Dhoni b Pandya | 44/32 | 2/2 |
| Imrul c Yuvraj b Ashwin | 14/24 | 1/0 |
| Shakib run out | 3/8 | 0/0 |
| Mushfiq not out | 16/17 | 2/0 |
| Mahmudullah c Sharma b Nehra | 7/6 | 1/0 |
| Mashrafe c Jadeja b Nehra | 0/1 | 0/0 |
| Taskin not out | 15/15 | 1/1 |
| Extras: (lb-4, w-6) | 10 | |
| Total: (For 7 wks in 20 overs) | 121 | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-9, 2-15, 3-50, 4-73, 5-82, 6-100, 7-100. | | |

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|--------|---|---|----|---|
| Nehra | 4 | 0 | 23 | 3 |
| Bumrah | 4 | 0 | 23 | 1 |
| Pandya | 4 | 0 | 23 | 1 |
| Ashwin | 4 | 0 | 23 | 1 |
| Jadeja | 4 | 0 | 25 | 0 |

Result: India won by 45 runs.
Player-of-the match: Rohit Sharma.

'Couldn't handle pressure' Shaky Lankans face tricky start

SAKEB SUBHAN



If the special focus on T20 cricket over the past three months had raised hopes of an upturn in Bangladesh's fortunes in their least preferred format, yesterday's 45-run defeat to India in the Asia Cup T20 opener disproved the notion. Given the relative strengths of the teams -- India's limited-overs batting is feared all over the world -- a defeat was probably on the cards but the disheartening aspect of the heavy loss was that there was neither a tactical nor a technical improvement in the Tigers' approach to T20 batting.

The chase of 167 on a green pitch against an informal Ashish Nehra is admittedly a difficult one, but the manner of Bangladesh's meek surrender was cause for alarm. Opener Soumya Sarkar seemed woefully inept at handling the moving ball, Mohammad Mithun played across the line and Imrul Kayes with a 24-ball 14 exemplified the Tigers' inability to manoeuvre the ball into gaps when boundaries were not on offer.

"We lost early wickets and at the same time we could not build partnerships. If we could balance the two then maybe it would have been different," said a subdued Mashrafe Mortaza after the match. "I also think that it was the matter of one over, where if we scored something like 15 runs or so then we could have made up the difference."

The highest scoring over yielded 11 runs for the

Tigers, but that was in the 16th over when Mushfiqur Rahim, coming in at number six, hit two fours off Ravindra Jadeja. With a required run rate in excess of 16, the match was all but lost by then.

"Power is not something you can generate through practice but something you have naturally," said the captain when asked whether a lack of power was behind Bangladesh's batting woes. "It is more important to play to your strengths. Whether it was in our recent matches or during practice we were able to get 160-165 runs, so it was not like it wasn't gettable. I think we were not able to execute our plans after we lost two early wickets, and we could not do our job under pressure. If we told ourselves that we can turn things around like they did, we could have played better cricket. We faltered in our decision-making."

The turnaround Mashrafe talked about in India's innings came about when Rohit Sharma, after enduring a difficult start, made the most of his reprieve at the hands of Shakib Al Hasan at point. "That can happen in cricket, Shakib is one of our better fielders and anyone could have dropped that catch," said Mashrafe, adding that they will try to iron out the few fielding lapses that cost the team runs.

India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni was pleased with the win and praised the efforts of Sharma and rookie all-rounder Hardik Pandey, who helped boost India's total. "I think if you look, overall the wicket was difficult. Rohit's innings was special because you needed a partner-

SPORTS REPORTER



As Sri Lanka begin their Asia Cup T20 campaign with their first match against the UAE at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today, they will have a store of good memories of playing in Bangladesh to bank on. Of all the visitors in the Asia Cup, the Lankans would feel at home the most. Their run here in 2014 was quite spectacular; winning the Asia Cup and following it up with the ICC World Twenty20 title immediately afterwards. The way the fans cheered for them during the entire period suggested that the Lankans were at their second home.

In addition to all that, they did not go down to Bangladesh in 2015.

Pakistan were thumped, India were humbled, but the Lankans are yet to be fazed by the aggressive brand of this new Bangladeshi outfit. On the contrary, they beat them in the World Cup back in Australia.

However, despite all those positives, the fact remains that the Lankans have come into this tournament on the back of just one win in their last five games. They lost their last two games against India after winning the first match of that series. They also lost the two T20s they played against New Zealand prior to the India series.

Those are results that are very unlike what the

Lankans, who recently were ranked as the best T20 side in the world, are used to. The side is still trying to adjust itself after the retirements of their legendary batsmen Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene and they will look to use the Asia Cup to prepare well ahead of the ICC World Twenty20.

The key players for the Lankans in this tournament will be their skipper Lasith Malinga and vice-captain Angelo Mathews.

Although Malinga may not be as ferocious as he once was, he is still Sri Lanka's highest wicket-taker in the last two years and has been their go-to bowler. Mathews, who has been in terrific form with the bat, has been their most consistent batsman.

The duo will hope they can rekindle the spirit that the team embodied in 2014 in the Asia Cup. It's something that they need to do in order to live up to their expectations as the defending champions of the ICC World Twenty20.

Therefore, although it may appear a mismatch on paper, a spirited United Arab Emirates may give Sri Lanka a run for their money. The men from the Gulf have put in near-flawless performances in the Qualifiers. Their target in this competition will be to give their best and hope that it influences the board to speed up the process of providing them with professional contracts. The key players for UAE will be Mohammad Naveed and Rohan Mustafa. Naveed bowls a beautiful line up front, while Rohan has the ability to hit the ball a long way.

BANGLADESH CRICKET LEAGUE

Bowlers start on top

SPORTS REPORTER



It's been a while since any of the Bangladeshi cricketers took part in first-class cricket. So when the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), the country's premier four-day cricket competition, began yesterday it was quite a relief for a number of domestic players.

The matches took place at the scenic Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar. On day one, the Abdur Razzak-led Prime Bank South Zone were bundled out for 262 in 78.1 overs by the Mominul Haque-led Islami Bank East Zone. In the other game, Mosharraf Hossain's Walton Central Zone were restricted to 243 for 8 by Naeem Islam's BCB North Zone.

It was a combination of experience and youth that dominated South Zone's batting order. Their highest scorers were veteran Tushar Imran, who scored 78, and the young Mosaddek Hossain, who posted 65.

Mosaddek, who made his international debut earlier this year in the T20 series against Zimbabwe, has continued his brilliant form in the longer version. His 65

yesterday meant that he recorded his 11th 50-plus score in as many matches in first-class cricket.

It's a brilliant achievement considering that he is just into his 15th game. His average remains above 75. Mosaddek and Tushar shared a 147-run stand for the fourth wicket and helped South Zone recover from 48 for 3. However, once these two batsmen departed, the lower order could not resist

East Zone's bowlers and crumbled.

Young pacer Abu Jayed was the pick of the bowlers with a four-wicket haul and he was ably supported by Iftekhar Sajjad, who scalped three wickets.

East Zone could not bat after the exchange as bad light stopped play.

In the day's other game, Central Zone's lower-middle order helped them recover from 81 for 4 to finish the day on 243 for 8. Scores of 46 from Sharifullah and Mohammad Sharif, neither of who are specialist batsmen, helped Central Zone to a competitive

SCORES IN BRIEF

| SOUTH ZONE V EAST ZONE | CENTRAL ZONE V NORTH ZONE |
|---|--|
| SOUTH ZONE: 262 all out in 78.1 overs (Tushar 78, Mosaddek 65; Jayed 4-62, Iftekhar 3-67) | CENTRAL ZONE: 243 for 8 in 73 overs (Sharif 46 not out, Sharifullah 46; Ariful 3-43) |

IMPACT MAN



ROHIT'S DEADLY CARESS

The green-tinged Mirpur surface confounded Rohit Sharma at first; Taskin Ahmed's pace and zip beat him twice in succession. The drop at point off the next ball caused a recalibration; he scored 21 off 25 before and 62 off 30 after the reprieve. But instead of crash and wallop it was all silk. He hit seven fours and a six, but none was more special than when Mustafizur Rahman's dreaded cutter was waited upon deposited beyond the boundary with the most casual flick of the wrists.

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| SRI LANKA | | | UAE | | |
|-----------|---|---|-----|---|---|
| M | W | L | M | W | L |
| 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |

IN ALL T20IS

THE TEAMS HAVE NEVER MET IN T20IS BEFORE

Last meeting: Lahore, 26 June, 2008, where Sri Lanka won by 142 runs.

KEY PLAYERS

| LASITH MALINGA | Innings | MOHAMMAD NAVEED |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 61 | 10 | |
| 21.02 | Average | 14.40 |
| 74 | Wickets | 15 |
| 5-31 | Best | 3-14 |
| 7.27 | Economy Rate | 5.83 |
| 1 | 5-wkts | 0 |