



After smashing the winning runs with a six to lead India to Asia Cup T20 glory at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday, India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (C) casually takes off his gloves and goes on his way while Virat Kohli triumphantly raises his arms.

'Need to continue the momentum'

NAIMUL KARIM

One can't take anything away from Bangladesh in this tournament. From being a team that struggled to find confidence in the T20 format, they went on to reach the final of a mega event.

There are plenty of aspects for them to be proud about and there are several things that have learnt. However, the one thing that was obvious yesterday was that there is still plenty of room for them to learn and one of those lessons should be the ability to battle in high-pressure situations.

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza explained the situation clearly after the match.

"I don't want to give any excuse for the result. But we had some issues. Firstly, our mindset changed completely after the rain. The boys were really excited to get on the field and then they had to wait for so long.

"We aren't a strong side in T20s and when the match went down to 15 overs, it just made things worse. For any team in such a situation, setting a target first would have been difficult," said Mashrafe.

The skipper, who believed that the toss was a vital factor in yesterday's game, said that the hosts were at least 20 runs short of their target.

With Bangladesh leaving for India today and due to play their first World Twenty20

game the day after, the skipper believed that the defeat at the hands of India would not demoralize them.

"Obviously, we have to start from zero even though we played the final because we have to qualify for the main stage of the World T20. So we have to be mentally strong.

"I am hopeful that the boys will forget about this defeat and focus on the positives. We can't think about this defeat anymore. We need momentum to do well in the



World Cup," said Mashrafe.

Furthermore, the skipper thanked the spectators for coming to the stadium and braving the elements to support the Tigers.

"Bangladesh fans must be in a lot of pain right now. Many of them chose this match over their jobs. Many of them got injured while trying to buy tickets. So it must have been disappointing for them. But I guess, overall we did have a good tournament.

"But I am sure they will pray for us. We are leaving for the World Cup and I hope they continue praying for us, so that we can do well," concluded Mashrafe.



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'An important win'

SPORTS REPORTER

There was an air of inevitability about India's march to the Asia Cup T20 title. They were unbeaten throughout the tournament, and were not stretched in any of the games. And yesterday's final against Bangladesh was just more of the same. India were expected to win against a side that, though vastly improved, are not yet the finished article in the shortest format. But they had to battle more than the opposition yesterday in a match that was reduced to 15-overs-a-side because of a thunderstorm that threatened the very staging of the match, and in such matters India turned out to be mentally superior in their adaptability and preparedness.

Skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who embodies the team's ability to go for the jugular, finished the match with a flurry of boundaries. Afterwards he talked about the difficulties of the expectations a team like India face when playing a rising team like Bangladesh.

"What would have been the perfect headline? 'India loses the final' is a bigger headline than India winning the final. When you lose to Bangladesh people will

say, 'Oh, you lost to Bangladesh' but when you win they say 'You were supposed to win'. So it is a game where a lot is at stake but when you win, you don't really take anything home," Dhoni said, but went on to give his vanquished opponents their due.

"But I feel things have changed. It's not like the 2004 Bangladesh team. They are a fantastic squad right now; they are a very good team and have improved a lot. That is what they are showing with their performances on the field. It was an important one to win."

Speaking about the match, he praised Shikhar Dhawan -- adjudged man-of-the-match for his 44-ball 60 -- for taking India home. "It was a well-paced innings; it was the best batting wicket so far in the whole tournament and the bowlers did a good job to restrict them to 120. And we had the manpower to chase that total."

This win marks their 10th win in the last 11 games, which bodes well for the World Twenty20 at home. Dhoni, who rarely classifies wins as special or important, prioritised this win because of the timing. "Well, [it was] special because of the circumstances. Before getting into the world cup, if you see the performance, they will carry a lot of confidence and also it gives us some time to get into the groove."

BD-IND SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH		R/B	4/6		
Tamim Iqbal	b Bumrah	13/17	2/0		
Soumya c Pandya	b Nehra	14/9	3/0		
Sabbir not out		32/29	2/0		
Shakib c Bumrah	b Ashwin	21/16	3/0		
Mushfiq	run out	4/5	0/0		
Mashrafe c Kohli	b Jadeja	0/1	0/0		
Mahmudullah not out		33/13	2/2		
Extras: (w-3)		3			
Total: (For 5 wks in 15 overs)		120			
Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-30, 3-64, 4-75, 5-75.					
INDIA		R/B	4/6		
Sharma c Soumya	b Al-Amin	1/5	0/0		
Dhawan c Soumya	b Taskin	60/44	9/1		
Kohli not out		41/28	5/0		
Dhoni not out		20/6	1/2		
Extras:		0			
Total: (For 2 wks in 13.5 overs)		122			
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-99.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Ashwin		3	0	14	1
Nehra		3	0	33	1
Bumrah		3	0	13	1
Jadeja		3	0	25	1
Pandya		3	0	35	0
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Taskin		3	0	14	1
Al-Amin		2.5	0	30	1
Hider		1	0	14	0
Shakib		2	0	26	0
Mashrafe		2	0	16	0
Nasir		3	0	22	0

Result: India won by 8 wickets.
Player-of-the-match: Shikhar Dhawan.
Player-of-the-series: Sabbir Rahman.

Riyad has exceeded expectations: Mash

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahmudullah Riyad has clearly been Bangladesh's best batsman in the Asia Cup. As brilliant as his performance in the 2015 World Cup was, he surprised many with the way he consistently churned out knocks down the order for the Tigers in the Asia Cup T20.

The specialty about his batting throughout the tournament was that he seemed so calm every time he came to the crease.

Take yesterday's example. It was a final and the hosts were crumbling at 78 for 5. He arrived at that point and played some of the sweetest shots from the textbook. The inside-out four that he smacked off Hardik Pandya over cover, a stroke that seems to be his favourite at the moment, was a delight to watch.

Playing proper cricketing shots isn't anything new for Mahmudullah. He has never relied much on the scoops or the slogs in any format of the game.

The difference that has been noticeable in the last couple of years

is the immense amount of power that he has managed to generate. He has lost plenty of weight, and he seems to be able to dispatch deliveries with a lot more disdain. What was also great about his innings yesterday was the way he placed his shots to perfection.

The way he patiently waited to drive a slower delivery from Ashish Nehra for a double through point when facing only the second ball of his innings was an example of that.

Therefore it's not a surprise that he has managed to post his best batting performance in T20s in the Asia Cup. His average of 121 is the highest ever as far as T20I series with at least four matches are concerned.

Ireland's Ed Joyce, who averaged 114 during the ICC World T20 Qualifiers in 2012, previously held the best number. Virat Kohli and Darren Sammy are the only other batsmen who have averaged above 100 in similar scenarios.

With the T20 fervour on, there has been plenty of talk about how Bangladesh lack a proper T20 batsman; one who can perhaps judge the situation and play appropriately rather than just going for hits all the time.

Mahmudullah's performance in the Asia Cup suggests that he has the calibre to fill that role.

It could be a hasty call to suddenly promote Mahmudullah to the top -- he batted at seven yesterday -- considering that he has done well in the lower middle order.

However, with the kind of performances that he has displayed in the tournament, it won't be a surprise if the team management ask him to perform a slightly different role in the ICC World Twenty20.

Speaking about Riyad's performance after the game, Mashrafe said: "I feel Riyad has done a lot more than what we expected of him. And since he is among the runs we want him to continue. His performance will be very important for us in the World Cup."

When asked if there were any plans of playing Riyad at the top during yesterday's game, or even in the near future, Mashrafe said: "It's a very difficult decision because he has been doing well in his position. And we have top order batsmen who are capable of scoring runs. This is not the end; there will be several more tournaments where they will have to score."

IMPACT MAN



DEADLY DHAWAN

Shikhar Dhawan had found it very difficult to get going in the Asia Cup T20. Throughout the group stage, he could contribute only 19 runs. In the opening match against Bangladesh, he had departed after Al-Amin Hossain shivered his timbers. However, the left-hander returned to form yesterday with a magnificent 60 off 44. He smashed 9 fours and a six, including smashing Shakib Al Hasan for 20 of the 26 runs he conceded. He was eventually dismissed by a brilliant take from Soumya Sarkar, but by then he had already set India up for their sixth Asia Cup trophy.

Oz win off last ball

AFP, Johannesburg



A record partnership between David Warner and Glenn Maxwell spurred Australia to a last-ball victory in the second one-day international against South Africa at the Wanderers Stadium on Sunday.

Australia's win by five wickets levelled the three-match series to set up a decider in Cape Town on Wednesday. Set a daunting 205 to win, Australia were in deep trouble at 32 for three after 5.4 overs.

But Warner (77) and Maxwell (75) thrashed the bowlers in a world record fourth wicket stand of 161 off 87 balls.

"They batted with great composure and played some great cricket shots," said Australian captain Steve Smith. They summed up the situation really well."

South African captain Faf du Plessis admitted: "That partnership blew us away."

There was a twist in the tail, though, as Maxwell was caught off the fifth ball of the 19th over and Warner was yorked by Kagiso Rabada off the first ball of the final over.

James Faulkner and Mitchell Marsh got their side home to set up a series decider in Cape Town on Wednesday. Two runs were needed off the last ball and Marsh was able to hit the ball past Rabada for the winning runs.

Int'l team's fixing plot foiled: ICC

AGENCIES, Dubai

The International Cricket Council's anti-corruption unit believes it has prevented a spot-fixing incident and identified the plotters.

The chairman of the unit, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, said on Sunday the alleged fix involved members of an international team. He did not disclose the individuals or the country involved as the case is still being investigated.

However, the unit has acted in an attempt to prevent another potential betting scandal by bringing the team together and reminding them of their responsibilities.

"Quite recently, we had reason to believe that members of a particular team had intentions to manipulate events in forthcoming matches," Flanagan said. "This was an international team, but I am not going to go into any details. Certain individuals had intention to manipulate events, to facilitate betting on those events."



With two fours and two sixes, Mahmudullah Riyad scored a mind-boggling 33 off just 13 balls to ensure that Bangladesh would reach a respectable total against India in their Asia Cup T20 final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STA