

SPORT

AFGHANS IN TIGERS' DEN



'Lucky to be still in the series'

SAKEB SUBHAN

In the immediate aftermath of a humbling defeat at the hands of Afghanistan, the image that immediately comes to mind is of Bangladesh wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim fluffing a simple stumping chance when an increasingly jittery Afghanistan needed 13 to win off 20 deliveries. Had Mushfiqur completed the stumping chance offered by Najibullah Zadran who had skipped down to hit Mosaddek Hossain over the top, Afghanistan would have been eight down, with the win no way a certainty.

The reality, however, is that it was the second match in a row that Bangladesh have underperformed with the bat, and their

visibly upset after the defeat. "On today's wicket 240 or 230 would have been a very good score. Unfortunately we got out after getting set. We lacked in that department."

The question was put forth in the press conference of whether a slow pitch is good for the batsmen's confidence. Mashrafe's reply put the onus on the bowlers as well as the batsmen.

"The pitch for the first match [when Bangladesh were all out for 265] was a flat one," Mashrafe said. "If you play on flat wickets the batsman's confidence is boosted. But there is no use of these excuses. There is no use blaming anyone in particular. As a team we played poorly in all departments. When [Mohammad] Nabi and Asghar [Stanikzai] was playing in the middle overs, maybe we could have been more attacking or bowled better. If we took wickets, maybe we could have plugged the flow of runs."

Afghanistan's two leg-spinners - Rashid Khan and Rahmat Shah - were big thorns in Bangladesh's side, bowling 18 overs for 65 runs and picking up four wickets. "Actually in the nets or in practice, in the last one-and-a-half months we played leg spinners, but maybe they were accurate and that is why we struggled a bit. The wicket too helped the spinners," the skipper said.

Mashrafe trotted out the positives, singling out Taijul Islam and Shakib Al Hasan, whose fourth wicket made him the first bowler to take 100 ODI wickets at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. But his ire at the underperformance of his team was not long hidden.

"Of course not. I believe no one in the team believes that after the first match," Mashrafe replied forcefully when asked whether this win was an upset. "I believe in both matches we simply played badly and we were lucky to win the first match, or else we would have lost the series by now. We are lucky to be still fighting for the series."



Tigers' all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan once again put on a brilliant bowling display, taking four wickets for 47 runs, but in the end that didn't prove to be enough against Afghanistan in the second ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE NATION'S PRIDE, THE PADMA BRIDGE!
ANWAR CEMENT

performance in the second ODI in Mirpur yesterday was much more abject after having explained the indifferent performance in the first match, which they happened to win, as a product of rustiness.

As easy as it would be to blame Mushfiqur for the loss, and this is certainly not the first time his unreliability behind the stumps has cost Bangladesh, the true damage was done when the last Bangladesh wicket fell in the 50th over of the first innings with the score on 208.

"Regarding batting I think that the top four batsmen all scored more than 20, one got more than 30, and then they all got out," said skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was

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বাঙালি কবির রোশনবাজন

A stellar debut

SPORTS REPORTER



A nerve-defying 45 under pressure, a wicket on his first delivery and a brilliant two-wicket haul in 10 overs that could have yielded three had Mushfiqur Rahim stumped Najibullah Zadran in the 47th over; at no point during yesterday's match did it seem like Mosaddek Hossain was playing his first ODI.

The calm with which he approached his batting at a time when Bangladesh were struggling at 141 for seven and after all the batsmen including skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza were sent back to the pavilion, was quite phenomenal.

The way he patiently waited for the deliveries and dissected the fielders on the offside, the manner in which he powerfully pulled the Afghani bowlers for sixes under pressure, were just some of the delightful moments of the Mosaddek show.

Batting under such pressure is nothing new for Mosaddek. He took Abahani home from vulnerable situations a number of times in the recently concluded Dhaka Premier League. In four-day cricket, he boasts a solid first-class average of 70.89.

However, all those records and numbers were achieved in domestic cricket. The real test, as many international players will tell you, begins when you start playing for your country in front of packed stadiums.

In a way, Mosaddek made his debut in one of the hardest circumstances. Bangladesh were struggling against an Associate Member nation whom they were expected to beat in front of 20,000 fans.

He took up the challenge and answered it in style. Mashrafe perhaps described his performance best: "He had an outstanding innings with the bat," the Bangladesh skipper said of Mosaddek during the post-match press conference. "With the ball, I initially thought of bringing [Mahmudullah] Riyad, but once I saw that he was confident, I continued with him. He bowled a lot better than what I had seen him bowl before. Had we all supported him a bit, we could have won this match."

BD-AFG SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH		R/B	4s/6s	
Tamim c D Zadrans b Ashraf	20/36	3/0		
Soumya c Shahidi b Ashraf	20/51	2/0		
Mahmudullah b Naveenul	25/39	3/0		
Mushfiqur c Naveenul b Rahmat	38/51	4/0		
Shakib lbw b Nabi	17/21	2/0		
Sabbir lbw b Rashid	4/16	0/0		
Mosaddek not out	45/45	4/2		
Mashrafe c D Zadrans b Nabi	2/10	0/0		
Tajjul lbw b Rashid	10/31	1/0		
Taskin lbw b Rashid	0/1	0/0		
Rubel run out	10/16	1/0		
Extras: (b-1, lb-7, w-8, nb-1)	17			
Total: (All out in 49.2 overs)	208			
Fall of wickets: 1-45, 2-50, 3-111, 4-122, 5-138, 6-138, 7-141, 8-165, 9-165, 10-208.				
AFGHANISTAN		R/B	4s/6s	
Shahzad c Taskin b Shakib	35/35	4/2		
Mangal c Taijul b Shakib	10/16	2/0		
Rahmat lbw b Shakib	0/2	0/0		
Shahidi lbw b Mosaddek	14/29	1/0		
Stanikzai c Sabbir b Mosaddek	57/95	4/2		
Nabi lbw b Mashrafe	49/61	3/2		
N Zadrans c Mosaddek b Taskin	22/32	2/0		
Rashid lbw b Shakib	5/14	0/0		
Ashraf not out	9/13	0/1		
D Zadrans not out	4/1	1/0		
Extras: (lb-2, w-5)	7			
Total: (For 5 wickets in 49.4 overs)	212			
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-14, 3-59, 4-63, 5-170, 6-174, 7-189, 8-208.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	10	0	31	1
Shakib	10	0	47	4
Taskin	4.4	0	32	1
Tajjul	10	0	38	0
Mosaddek	10	1	30	2
Sabbir	2	0	8	0
Rubel	3	0	24	0
Result: Afghanistan won by 2 wickets.				
Player-of-the-match: Mohammad Nabi.				

Jimmy to miss Kolkata Test

REUTERS, Kolkata

New Zealand all-rounder Jimmy Neesham will miss the second Test against India in Kolkata due to the rib injury that kept him out of the first match in Kanpur, coach Mike Hesson said on Wednesday.

Off-spinner Jeetan Patel's flight from England was cancelled which means he will land in Kolkata only a day before the Test gets underway on Friday.

Patel is replacing fellow off-spinner Mark Craig who sustained a side strain in Kanpur, where India registered a 197-run victory to go 1-0 up in the three-Test series.



Asghar Stanikzai and Mohammad Nabi (R) take a breather during their 107-run fifth wicket partnership which laid the foundation for an exciting two-wicket victory for Afghanistan against Bangladesh in the second ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Hosts take on Taipei today

India v Pakistan promises mouth-watering contest

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh are looking forward to fine tuning the side for the final of the 4th U-18 Asia Cup Hockey Tournament when they square off against lowly Chinese Taipei in the first semifinal at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium today.

The gulf of difference between the two sides was evident from Bangladesh's 8-1 thrashing of the same opposition in a warm-up match before the tournament, which is why the hosts are having their eyes on the final.

"Though we always think about going step by step, we are at the moment thinking both about the semifinal and the final," Bangladesh coach Kawsar Ali said ahead of the semifinal. "While we are keeping a close eye on who might be our opponents in the final if we win, we are also focused on tomorrow's semifinal against Chinese Taipei. We don't want to consider whatever happened in the warm-up match as Chinese Taipei have improved much after playing three pool matches."

"It is a very important match for us because we are one match away from the final. If we perform poorly and lose the match, our target of playing the final won't be realised. So we are serious like the first match," said penalty corner specialist Ashraf Islam.

While the first semifinal is expected to be a one-way traffic, the second one promises a mouth-watering battle between archrivals India and Pakistan, with the current political context providing extra fuel to fire.

"We know Pakistan are a good side who have been preparing for two months and they have remained unbeaten in pool matches. But we have our own plans and we expect the match to be a nice and healthy competition," said India coach BJ Kariappa, who said there won't be any impact of the ongoing political tension between two nations on the pitch.

"We will have to play our best. Pool matches are now past. I don't put India ahead of us because I think both teams are equal in strength and playing good hockey depends on the day. I know India will come strong on us but we are also ready for the challenge," said Pakistan coach Kamran Ashraf.



With an eye on the final, the Bangladesh players indulged in some keepy-uppy on eve of their U-18 Asia Cup semifinal against Chinese Taipei at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Big 5 given choice of franchises

SPORTS REPORTER



As per their request, Bangladesh's senior players were given the opportunity to choose their own teams for the fourth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League set to begin on November 4.

Member secretary of the BPL's governing council, IH Mallick, at a press conference in Mirpur yesterday told reporters that five senior players -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad, all belonging to the A-plus category -- had requested the BPL's governing council to increase their monetary value and be given an opportunity to select their own teams so that they could negotiate the payment terms personally with the franchises.

The statement cleared the air over the confusion regarding a change in system of signing up the top players. The top players not being a part of the auctions was an aspect that was met with some criticism in the last few days.

"They came to us and told us that in other T20 leagues, local and foreign players get the same amount of money, which is not the case here

For example, players like Chris Gayle, Andre Russel, Kumar Sangakkara, who have been already bought by the BPL franchises, will be getting a lot more than our A-plus category players.

"So accordingly, we adjusted the prices of our players. Shakib's price in the list has been kept at Tk 55 lakh; Mashrafe, Tamim, Mahmudullah, Mushfiqur have been valued at Tk 50 lakh while the prices of Soumya Sarkar and Sabbir Rahman, the other players in the A-plus category have been kept at Tk 40 lakh," explained Mallick.

Mallick also said that the seven players wanted to choose their own franchises so that they could gain some extra money. He also indicated that Shakib, Mashrafe and the other category A-plus players might have signed up for more money than their list value by each of the franchises.

"How much money they will eventually get will be based on the negotiations between the players and the franchises. As far as the BPL governing council is concerned, we will only take responsibility for the value given to them on the list. We won't be responsible for the extra money promised to any player during this tournament," said Mallick.

Shakib will be playing for the Dhaka Dynamites, Mushfiqur for Barisal Bulls, Tamim for Chittagong

Vikings, Mahmudullah Riyad for Khulna Titans, Mashrafe for Comilla Victorians, Sabbir Rahman for Rajshahi, Soumya Sarkar for Rangpur Riders.

Also the franchises that played in the last season were given an opportunity to retain two players from the squad. Dhaka retained Mosaddek Hossain and Nasir Hossain, Chittagong retained Taskin Ahmed and Anamul Haque, Rangpur retained Arafat Sunny and Mohammad Mithun, Comilla retained Imrul Kayes and Liton Das while Barisal retained Al-Amin Hossain and Taijul Islam.

As a result, the new franchises that joined this year -- Khulna and Rajshahi -- will be given the opportunity to make the first bids during the auctions which will take place on September 30.

Aside from the foreign players who have already been bought, there will be 170 more foreign cricketers to be auctioned. Each franchisee has to buy at least 10 local players and at least three foreign players.

National selectors and coaches, except for the foreign staff, have also been given leeway. They will be able to work with the franchises as consultants. They will, however, not be able to enter the dressing rooms of teams during the matches.

The auctions will follow last year's format. After Khulna and Rajshahi buy two players each, all the teams will take part in a lottery. They will be able to buy their players from different grades based on the number that they get in the lottery.

A total of 46 matches will take place in Dhaka and Chittagong, with the first match on November 4 and the final on either December 7 or 8.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CONFLICT OF INTEREST

On another note, questions regarding a conflict of interest were raised with regards to the ownership of the Dhaka Dynamites. Both the BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon and director IH Mallick are officials of Beximco, the owners of the Dynamites.

Owners of other franchises alleged that while looking for players abroad or while signing the desired A-plus category player, the Dynamites had an advantage since they allegedly had a head start during the hunt.

Mallick, however, said that there was no scope for a conflict of interest since the department which he and the president works for under Beximco did not deal with the BPL franchises and that those matters were dealt with by a separate department which they were not part of.