



England all-rounder Moeen Ali battled his way to a fine half century against Bangladesh on the opening day of the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Hardest 60 I ever made: Moeen

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

Moeen Ali would probably not have played a Test innings like he did yesterday when he was faced with an on-song Bangladesh spin machine on the first day of the first Test in Chittagong. The Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium pitch was one tailor-made for spinners and led by debutant Mehedi Hasan Miraz's fifer, Bangladesh reduced England to 258 for seven at stumps.

But were it not for Ali's 170-ball 68 England, who were at one stage struggling at 21 for three and then 84 for four, the story could have been much worse. It is not just the subdued nature of the innings which makes it a unique one for someone of Ali's naturally aggressive style, but the fact that he was involved in five umpire decision reviews on a day that the third umpire was given a thorough working over.

Curiously, he was given out leg-before-thrice to Shakib Al Hasan in the space of six balls officiated by Kumar Dharmasena either side of lunch, all of which he had successfully overturned, but the one time he

would have been out, off Miraz's bowling when he was on one, the opposition chose not to review.

"Today was the hardest 60 I've ever made," Ali said in the post-day press conference. "It was very tough. They bowled well. They bowled very accurately. And it's not just about surviving, it's about scoring runs. It's tough. They set good fields."

Despite being seven down at the end of a day on which they won the toss, Ali thought England were in a decent position.

"Yeah, decent. We said at one point that 250 might even be a good score, but Jonny [Baird, who scored 52] and myself had a crucial partnership and Joe [Root] gave us a good start. We are going to have to be quite greedy tomorrow, and hopefully get close to 300," Ali said.

Like most people, Ali was surprised by the amount of turn the pitch offered on the first day. "I thought they might open with a spinner but I didn't think it was going to spin as much. You saw the new ball... it spun straight away. And it's not easy to play against. Especially the new ball, as not every ball spins. After that it spun but more regularly which makes it a bit easier."

DAY'S MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

THE ALI-DHARMASENA CONNECTION

The stats are not in yet, but it will be surprising if there were more umpire decision reviews taken than on the first day of the first Test yesterday. At the centre of it all was England batsman Moeen Ali. He had survived a review off Taijul Islam in the 24th over taken by a trigger-happy Mushfiqur Rahim. But then, in six balls either side of lunch officiated by Kumar Dharmasena, Ali was given out thrice and he successfully overturned the decision thrice, each time against Shakib Al Hasan.

Asked whether he would have a few words with the umpire, Ali said: "We are normally pretty tight, but we didn't speak for a session. It was a tough pitch to umpire, but what can I say? The guy gave me out three times!"

He did however say that the secret of his innings yesterday were the reviews.

DEBUTANT CRUELTY, AND KINDNESS

Mehedi Hasan Miraz was undoubtedly the star debutant of the day, but he also had a hand in making the day worse for a hostile fellow debutant and better for a friendly one. Ben Duckett, playing in England whites for the first time, was comprehensively castled by a peach from Miraz in the 10th over, earning himself his first wicket and meting out Duckett's first dismissal. He organised another first for a friendly when he induced an edge in the third over, which allowed Sabbir Rahman to take his first test catch.

THE REVIEW AND THE FALLOUT

Skipper and wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim made an inspired decision to review a not-out call when Gary Ballance was pinned at the crease by an arm ball from Miraz. Apparently only he had detected that the ball brushed the pad just before it hit the bat. But, emboldened by the overturn he then proceeded to waste a further three reviews, some quite outlandish, on a day that saw the umpire being challenged seven times.

Ctg Abahani atop

SPORTS REPORTER



The first phase of JB Bangladesh Premier League ended yesterday with a mixed bag as teams such as lightweights Rahmatganj have been in contention for the prestigious title while traditional heavyweights like Sheikh Russel and Mohammedan have been struggling in the top flight.

Rahmatganj's rise is a surprise to all as the Old Dhaka outfit outshone heavyweights through spirited performances from unheralded players and, at the same time, the fall of big-spending Sheikh Russel also dominated discussions due to the below-par performances of their recognised players.

However, at the end of the first phase the title race is basically confined to three teams -- Chittagong Abahani and Rahmatganj -- who are almost neck-and-neck, with Chittagong Abahani holding onto a nery two point lead over third-placed Rahmatganj. Apart Sheikh Russel's underwhelming performances, the struggles of falling giants Mohammedan could also be termed unacceptable, with the Black and Whites playing their last two matches without head coach Kazi Joshimuddin Ahmed Joshy. They are currently languishing in 10th position with one win from 11 outings.

The league was held at three separated venues apart from Dhaka in a bid to attract spectators but the professional league could hardly draw their attention. While there were a moderate number of spectators in Chittagong and Mymensingh, the turnouts in Sylhet and Dhaka were disappointing.

Across a total of 66 matches in 88 days, a total of 184 goals were struck at an average

of 2.79 goals per game.

As usual, foreign strikers dominated the goalscoring charts, with Nigerian hitman Sunday Chizoba leading the way with 10 goals followed by Haitian Wedson Anselme (9) and Nigerian Nkwocha Kingsley (9). However, there is a bit of relief in the fact that local booters have collectively scored more goals (95) than foreign players (88).

In yesterday's first match, Muktiyoddha Sangsad returned to winning ways with a 2-0 victory over Feni, who extended their losing streak to four. Sohail Rana put Muktiyoddha ahead from the spot in the 83rd minute, before Nigerian Simon Ezeodika wrapped up their fifth victory in stoppage time.

In the day's second game, Team BJMC and Arambagh played out a 1-1 draw.

TOP FIVE						
TEAMS	M	W	D	L	G/D	Pts
Ctg Abahani	11	7	3	1	12	24
Abahani	11	6	5	-	11	23
Rahmatganj	11	6	4	1	7	22
Sk Jamal	11	5	4	2	5	19
Muktiyoddha	11	5	3	3	6	18

TOP 5 FOREIGN SCORERS	
Sunday Chizoba (Abahani)	10
Wedson Anselme (Sheikh Jamal)	9
Nkwocha Kingsley (Brothers Union)	9
Samsan Iliasu (Team BJMC)	7
Leonel Saint Preux (Ctg Abahani)	6

TOP 3 LOCAL SCORERS	
Zahid Hossain (Ctg Abahani)	5
Towhidul Alam Sabuj (MSC)	5
Towhidul Alam (Muktiyoddha SKC)	5

Kiwis draw level

AFP, New Delhi



New Zealand bowlers pulled off a thrilling six-run win over India in the second one-day international after skipper Kane Williamson struck a dazzling century to help his side level the series 1-1 in New Delhi on Thursday.

The hosts, who were chasing 243 for victory, were bowled out for 236 in 49.3 overs as Hardik Pandya's fighting 36 went in vain. Speedster Tim Southee claimed three wickets.

Pandya, who starred with three wickets for India on debut in the Dharamsala ODI, looked like completing the chase during his 32-ball knock but Trent Boult got the dangleman in the penultimate over.

With India needing 10 in the final over and a wicket in hand, Southee got Jasprit Bumrah bowled for nought as the visitors celebrated their first win in the five-match series.

Earlier Williamson's fluent 118 helped New Zealand post 242 for nine as Indian bowlers checked the visiting total with late strikes.

New Zealand bowlers also came back strong to hurt India's reply with early strikes as the hosts slipped to 73 for four.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner got the big wicket of Virat Kohli (9) with wicketkeeper Luke Ronchi taking a great reflex catch down the leg side. The teams now head to Mohali for the third match on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 242 for 9 in 50 overs (Latham 46, Williamson 118; Bumrah 3-35, Mishra 3-60)

INDIA: 236 all out in 49.3 overs (Dhoni 39, Jadhav 41, Pandya 36; Boult 2-25, Southee 3-52, Gupta 2-6)

Result: New Zealand won by six runs.

Player of the match: Kane Williamson

U-16 girls accorded reception

SPORTS REPORTER

Mutual Trust Bank Ltd (MTB) yesterday accorded a reception to the Bangladesh Under-16 women's team at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) headquarters to recognise their success after they emerged as unbeaten group champions to qualify for next year's AFC U-16 Women's Championship finals to be held in Thailand.

23 girls and three coaches were given Tk 30 lakh cash awards as well as a bicycle each.

Captain Krishna Rani believed such recognition would provide them with more inspiration in the future and that they would try to show their best in the final round.

BFF president Kazi Salauddin, MTB chairman MA Rouf and BFF women's committee chairman Mahfuza Akter were among others present.



Bangladesh under-16 women's team pose with their prizes sponsored by Mutual Trust Bank during a ceremony at the BFF House yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Messi destroys Man City

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi ran riot through Pep Guardiola's Manchester City defence as though it was a playground game, according to Barcelona coach Luis Enrique as he savoured a dazzling 4-0 Champions League win.

Inspired by Messi's hat-trick, Barcelona joined Arsenal, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint Germain in registering important wins on Wednesday night.

The Argentine genius was hailed for his composure after a month out with a groin injury.

Before 96,290 people at Camp Nou, Messi picked up on one City mistake on 17 minutes and added two more -- one brilliantly curled in -- in the second half after City keeper Carlos Bravo was sent off.

"We have seen the calm that Messi has to finish inside the area as if he was in the school yard," said Enrique.

"If there is anything you can expect of Messi it



is that. It doesn't matter how many days he has been out or the games he has missed."

Messi was "phenomenal," added Barcelona defender Samuel Umtitei.

"There will never be anyone like him. It is incredible what he did," added fellow defender Lucas Digne.

While Guardiola was adamant he would not change his style of pressing from the back, the former Barcelona coach is now under pressure with City second in group C, five points behind leaders Barcelona and just one ahead of Borussia Moenchengladbach.

"Until the last day I am a coach I will try to play from the goalkeeper," said Guardiola.

"It is always difficult to play in Barcelona with 11 players and with 10 the game was over," added Guardiola.

"We created enough chances, we arrive at the byline many times, but with their strikers when they arrive they punish you."

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger said his stars must

work on their "humility" after their 6-0 demolition of Ludogorets -- with Mesut Ozil also bagging a hat-trick -- in Group A.

"Let's not be too quick on the verdict. We have a strong squad and a strong spirit, but you have to take care of it and keep your feet on the ground," Wenger said.

"In this game a lot is linked with confidence. I feel that at the moment because we win game after game, maybe we get through dodgy periods with less psychological damage.

"The only way to win something big is to focus on the next one and work on humility."

As well as leading Group A on goal difference ahead of PSG, Arsenal are second in the Premier League level on points with Manchester City. Wenger is anxious however to get Ozil and fellow scorer Alexis Sanchez to sign new contracts.

Bayern Munich also romped to a 4-1 victory over PSV Eindhoven in Group D -- recovering some esteem after losing to leaders Atletico Madrid in their last European game and drawing twice in the Bundesliga.

Thomas Mueller, Joshua Kimmich, Robert Lewandowski and Arjen Robben were all on target in what coach Carlo Ancelotti said was the reaction he had expected from the German champions.

"The attitude was good, we learnt our lessons from Frankfurt," said the Italian, who had won his first eight games in charge before the Madrid defeat.

"We played well, but we have to give our best in the next few games to make sure we play Atletico for first place," warned Ancelotti whose team travel to PSV in two weeks.

Paris Saint Germain beat Basel 3-0 to stay on course to qualify from Group A with Arsenal.

Angel Di Maria, Lucas and Edinson Cavani gave PSG an ultimately comfortable victory but coach Unai Emery was not 100 percent happy.

RESULTS

Arsenal (ENG) 6 (Sanchez 12, Walcott 42, Ozil 56, 83, 87, Oxlade-Chamberlain 46) **Ludogorets (BUL) 0**
Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) 3 (Di Maria 40, Lucas 62, Cavani 90+3-pen) **Basel (SUI) 0**
Napoli (ITA) 2 (Mertens 30, Gabbiani 69-pen) **Besiktas (TUR) 3** (Adriano 13, Aboubakar 38, 86)
Dynamo Kiev (UKR) 0 **Benfica (POR) 2** (Salvio 9-pen, Cervi 55)
Celtic (SCO) 0 **Borussia Moenchengladbach (GER) 2** (Stindl 57, Hahn 77)
Barcelona (ESP) 4 (Messi 17, 61, 69, Neymar 89) **Manchester City (ENG) 0**
Rostov (RUS) 0 **Atletico Madrid (ESP) 1** (Carrasco 62)
Bayern Munich (GER) 4 (Mueller 13, Kimmich 21, Lewandowski 60, Robben 84) **PSV Eindhoven (NED) 1** (Narsingh 41)

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