

SPORTS



England all-rounder Ben Stokes first spit venom with the old ball -- his reverse swing fetched him four wickets -- to effectively dash Bangladesh's surge and then scored a sumptuous 85 to guide his side to a position of strength at stumps on the third day of the Chittagong Test yesterday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Game is still open: Walsh

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



On the first two days of the first Test, the performer of the day from either side had made their way to the media centre of the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. After the third day yesterday, while England sent their runaway performer of the day, Ben Stokes, for Bangladesh it was fast bowling coach Courtney Walsh who fronted up to the press after Shakib Al Hasan bagged his 15th five-wicket haul and in the process went past 150 Test wickets.

The day that ended so well for Shakib started in quite the opposite fashion. Being the only Test-experienced batsman left when Bangladesh resumed 72 runs behind England's first innings 293, Shakib stepped out to the second ball of the morning and had a wild swipe, but was beaten by Moeen Ali's off spin to be stumped. That set off a collapse of five wickets for 27 runs and a deficit of 45 runs which may prove decisive as England sit on a 273-run lead with two wickets in hand.

Therefore, the Jamaican legend's appearance -- while always welcome -- disappointed those who wanted to know the thinking behind the shot, as well as Shakib's thoughts on his superb bowling performance.

"It was disappointing. He came out today with big expectations," said Walsh when inevitably asked about Shakib's dismissal. "He knew he was the mainstay. He batted very well yesterday but it was a fresh day, when you start back over. Unfortunately he got out in the first over and that put a lot of pressure on the other batsmen. If he has to bat for us in the second innings, he will bat well again."

About the state of the game, Walsh was still optimistic as England have not yet run away with the game.

"I think we have to first get the two wickets early

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DAY'S MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER FROM CHITTAGONG

The Stokes ultimatum

Stokes played a match-turning hand with the bat yesterday before he was undone for 85 by the star all-rounder on the other side when the Englishman went down for a sweep and was struck plumb in front. Stokes remained knelt on one leg while discussing the philosophical merits and demerits of asking for a review with non-striker Chris Woakes, before finally deciding on signalling for the review. Umpire Kumar Dharmasena -- who has had six reviews go against his decision in the first three days -- was almost too quick to shake his head and signal Stokes on his way as the batsman had exceeded the 15-second limit in challenging the call.

The helmet giveth

In the 84th over of Bangladesh's innings, Ben Stokes had his tail up and was bowling to promising debutant Sabbir Rahman. The fast bowler dug in a short delivery that spat unexpectedly off the pitch and Sabbir, who had taken his eye off the ball, was dealt a hard blow on the side of his helmet. Stokes, normally a hard-nosed competitor, went down the pitch to check if the youngster was okay. Needless to say, if the helmet was not there, it probably would have resulted in a serious injury as it hit him quite flush.

The helmet taketh away

The helmet soon exacted its price however. In the 16th over Moeen Ali turned Shakib Al Hasan off his hips straight into Mominul Haque at short leg, and it seemed that the ball was taken cleanly at chest height. Ali stood his ground, and the umpires went upstairs -- the ball had deflected off Mominul's visor into his hands, so Ali was not out and he batted on.

The helmet was not done however -- in the 32nd over Stokes played a sweep off Shakib and bottom-edged the ball past the keeper, and you guessed it, it rolled onto the helmet positioned behind the keeper, netting England the easiest five runs of the match.

'Looking for a lead of 320'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



England all-rounder Ben Stokes was the main reason why the visitors have a more than even chance of taking a 1-0 lead in the two-Test series. He starred both with the bat and the ball for England on the third day of the first Test against Bangladesh yesterday, picking up three of the last five wickets of Bangladesh's first innings before rescuing England from a precarious 62 for five with a classy, assured knock of 85. The result was a 45-run first innings lead in the morning and a second innings lead of 273 with two wickets in hand at close of play.

His innings was all the more remarkable because he played the spinners much more assuredly than any of his top-six teammates on a Chittagong dustbowl.

"I think so. All the training that I have done has put me in decent stead for conditions like this," said Stokes when asked if this was the best he had played against spin. "We can hit boundaries, but the hardest thing to do is defend when you first come in. Today I thought my defence was pretty tight when I first went in, so the training's been helping."

The attack-defence balance was a particularly impressive feature of Stokes's innings, with the left-hander committing fully to a tight defence and holding nothing back when a bad ball came his way.

"It wasn't a case of scoring at a huge run rate -- just slowly rotating the strike and making sure we are still ticking over, not taking too many risks," Stokes said of his 127-run sixth wicket stand with Jonny Bairstow. "At the same time also

making sure that we are switched on to be able to put the bad balls away. We knew that if we kept rotating the strike then the fielders around the bat would have to go away to stop the singles. After being 40 for four we'll take being 270 ahead."

For his bowling success -- Stokes had first-innings figures of four for 26 -- he credited designated ball maintainers Alastair Cook and Joe Root for keeping the ball shiny on one side and rough and dry on the other, enabling it to reverse.

"If we can get up to a 300, 310, 320 lead it would be nice. We are lucky that we have a really strong batting line-up," said Stokes. "They've got a few left-handers which is going to be tough with the two off-spinners that we've got. So if we can get 320 it would be nice and hopefully we can bowl them out."

Windies crumble

AFP, Abu Dhabi

West Indies lost two late wickets to hand the initiative to Pakistan on the second day of the second Test in Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

West Indies had defied Pakistan's bowlers well until the 44th over with the score 106 for 2, but they then lost Marlon Samuels and Kraigg Brathwaite in the space of three balls without adding any further runs.

Nightwatchman Devendra Bishoo and Jermaine Blackwood were yet to score as West Indies trail by 346 runs with six wickets intact.

Darren Bravo made an attractive 43 but his dismissal left Pakistan in a dominant position.

A late collapse hit the West Indies hard as Samuels edged fast bowler Rahat Ali to slip before Brathwaite was run out by Misbah-ul-Haq's throw after setting off for a quick single.

Bravo, who opened the innings after Brathwaite was off the field when Pakistan were batting and could not come in at the start, helped the tourists reach 27 without loss at the tea interval.

But in the third over after tea Rahat gave Pakistan the breakthrough when he trapped Leon Johnson leg-before for 12.

SCORES IN BRIEF
PAKISTAN: First innings 452 all out (Younis 127, Misbah 96, Sarfaraz 56; Gabriel 5-96, Holder 3-47)
WEST INDIES: First innings 106 for 4 (Bravo 43,

Tale of two all-rounders

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chittagong



The third day brought the first Test alive at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday, but unfortunately for the home side it was England who edged ahead in their bid to take a 1-0 lead in the two-Test series against Bangladesh. After both sides battled tooth and nail for three days, it was the actions and achievements of their respective star all-rounders that brought the match to the juncture it is in today.

Shakib Al Hasan and Ben Stokes sit at two and seven in the ICC Test all-rounders' rankings respectively, but yesterday the Bangladeshis' performance was on a lower plane in the all-rounder stakes. His bowling was artful and brilliant, and his five for 79 is the reason Bangladesh are still in this match. Even so, that brilliance may well be remembered as an attempt to make amends for his shocking display with the bat, in which he was stumped going for a wild heave off the second ball of the day when he was the only non-debutant batsman left. It may be that his disregard for the match situation with the bat has a larger impact on the result than his 15th five-wicket haul.

Stokes meanwhile put in a genuine all-rounder's performance, perhaps the best of a career much younger than Shakib's. He utilised reverse swing and was England's best bowler during Bangladesh's first innings on a dustbowl where spinners otherwise ruled. He bowled with pace and untiring intent to take four for 26 and speed Bangladesh's demise 45 runs behind on the first innings. Most tellingly for an all-rounder much less experienced, he showed much greater match awareness than Shakib with the bat; admittedly not a high bar yesterday.

He came in at 46 for four with the Bangladesh spinners, Shakib at the helm, threatening to make short shrift of the England line-up. He hit only one four in his first 44 balls and scored just 17 as he defended resolutely and assuredly, never following the ball and instead focusing on playing it late in defence -- something that his more senior batsmen failed to do in unfamiliar conditions.

His 85 was studded with six fours and three sixes, but he was judicious in picking nine bad balls to blast in his innings, which he did as only he can -- holding nothing back.

Like he said after the day, "It wasn't a case of scoring at a huge run rate."

In contrast, Shakib seemed to be batting in a T20 match in which the 72-run deficit

when Bangladesh resumed would have to be scored in five overs.

If it seems unfair to pick on one shot that he hit on a day when he kept Bangladesh in the match, it must be borne in mind that it was not an instinctive airy shot to a wide ball bowled by a pacer but a premeditated hoick off a spinner turning the ball square. And it was not the first time he wasted an advantageous position for Bangladesh.

Fittingly, Stokes summed up the shot best. "It was a bit of a shocking thing the second ball this morning. Obviously he [Shakib] was their last top-class batsman. Luckily the way that Moeen [Ali] bowled throughout the innings and the amount of spin that he was getting, it was always going to be tough for him. It opened the door for

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ANWAR CEMENT

tomorrow. The game is still open. Probably, England got about 20-30 runs more than what we would have liked, at this stage," said Walsh. "I think the bowlers fought very well today. At one stage it was looking very, very good but they got a good partnership. This is what Test cricket is all about. Stokes played reasonably well, he had a good partnership with Bairstow. For me the game is still in the balance.

"We have to be positive. Play it as you see it. Put away the loose balls," Walsh said about what Bangladesh's batting outlook should be in the chase. "If we can get two or three good partnerships, we are in with a good chance. The aim has to be to get them under 300. It is not going to be easy but the game is still wide open."

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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

BEN STOKES

Ben Stokes had bothered Bangladesh during the ODIs last week and yesterday the 25-year-old all-rounder proved to be a thorn in the Tigers' flesh yet again when he singlehandedly revived England in the first Test. Stokes first took three wickets with some brilliant swing bowling on a dusty Chittagong track that barely had anything in it for the pacers, helping England take an unexpected first innings lead against the hosts. After the exchange, he helped resuscitate England from a dangerous 62 for 5 with a nerve-wracking 85. It was an extremely patient innings that frustrated the hosts and by the time he was trapped in front by Shakib Al Hasan, England had already built a sizeable lead.



This is the image of Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's stroke of madness on the third morning of the Chittagong Test against England yesterday. His down-the-wicket antic eventually cost the home side dearly as they lost their last five wickets for just 27 runs.

PHOTO: STAR

PREMIER cement

BD-ENG SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND: First innings 293 all out				
BANGLADESH: First innings	R/B	4/6		
Tamim c Bairstow b Batty	78/179	7/0		
Imrul b Ali	21/50	3/0		
Mominul c Stokes b Ali	0/3	0/0		
Mahmudullah c Root b Rashid	38/66	3/0		
Mushfiq c Bairstow b Stokes	48/77	6/0		
Shakib st Bairstow b Ali	31/62	3/0		
Shafiq c Broad b Rashid	2/29	0/0		
Sabbir c Cook b Stokes	19/32	3/0		
Mehedi lbw b Stokes	1/4	0/0		
Tajjul not out	3/11	0/0		
Rabbi b Stokes	0/3	0/0		
Extras: (b-2, lb-4, w-1)	7			
Total (All out in 86 overs)	248			
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-29, 2-29, 3-119, 4-163, 5-221, 6-221, 7-238, 8-239, 9-248, 10-248.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Broad	8	2	12	0
Batty	17	1	51	1
Woakes	7	2	15	0
Rashid	16	1	58	2
Ali	22	4	75	3
Stokes	14	5	26	4
Root	2	0	5	0
ENGLAND: Second innings				
R/B	4/6			
Cook c Mahmudullah b Mehedi	12/23	1/0		
Duckett c Mominul b Shakib	15/34	1/0		
Root lbw b Shakib	1/4	0/0		
Bairstow c Imrul b Tajjul	9/25	1/0		
Ali c Mushfiq b Shakib	14/50	0/0		
Stokes lbw b Shakib	85/151	6/3		
Bairstow b Rabbi	47/95	6/0		
Woakes not out	11/30	1/0		
Rashid lbw b Shakib	9/18	2/0		
Broad not out	10/26	2/0		
Extras: (b-2, lb-8, pen-5)	15			
Total (For 8 wickets in 76 overs)	228			
Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-27, 3-28, 4-46, 5-62, 6-189, 7-197, 8-213.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mehedi	18	1	54	1
Shakib	31	7	79	5
Tajjul	15	2	40	1
Rabbi	8	0	24	1
Mahmudullah	1	0	6	0
Shafiq	3	0	10	0