

SPORT

'Deficit made a massive difference'

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong

The first Test may have ended in heartbreak, with a debutant showing unexpected strength of character to take Bangladesh within 22 runs of a steep 286-run target on a trying pitch. But in keeping with the skipper's hopes expressed before the match, Bangladesh had – perhaps for the first time – truly competed in every session against a team deemed far superior by popular opinion as well as official rankings.

"The biggest achievement is to have played decently for the whole Test match," said a downbeat Mushfiqur after the match yesterday. "I think we have done that 90-95 per cent of the time but we could have done better in some areas. We can take a lot of positives [Mehedi Hasan, Mirza and Shakib Al Hasan] bowled well. Tamim batted well, and it wasn't in his character to bat like he did. Sabbir [Rahman] batted well too. It was a good Test for Bangladesh."

"Nobody expected Bangladesh to play in this manner after 15 months so we had to prove that we could do something. We showed our character to a side like England. It was a learning experience."

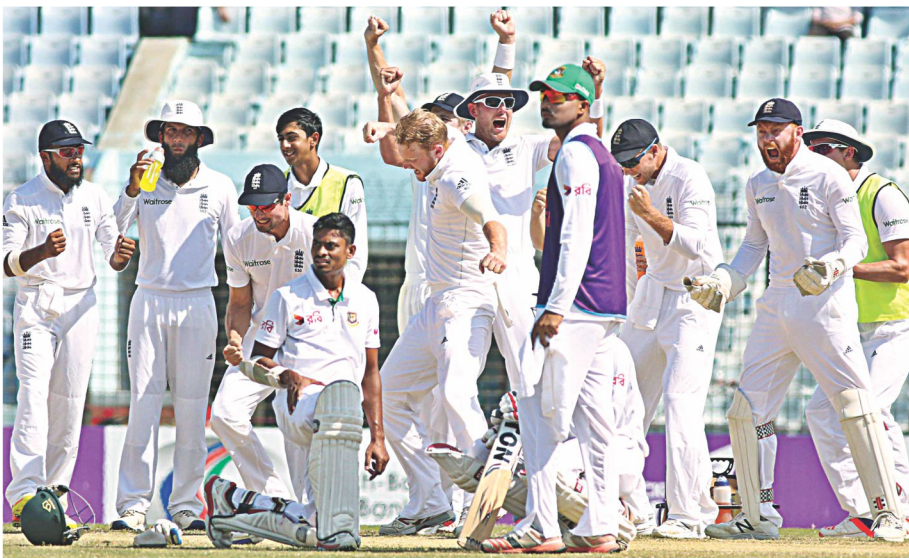
Mushfiqur identified the first innings deficit of 45 runs as a major turning point in a close Test match. In that respect Shakib Al Hasan's wild heave that resulted in a stumping off the second ball of the third day when Bangladesh were 72 behind was crucial.

"Those runs made a massive difference. We replied with five early wickets in their second innings and then Stokes put up that big partnership but I still think that had we gone close to their 290, the Test match could have taken a different path. It did matter in the end."

"I think he [Shakib] realises that he didn't do the right thing. We didn't expect this from such a matured player. We want him to have more impact for the team and it is something we can all learn from."

The pragmatist in Mushfiqur came out when he said before the match that Bangladesh would not become an extraordinary team even if they won the match. He stayed true to that sentiment after the game as well.

"Thirty runs and two wickets is a difficult equation. The match was tilted towards them almost 90 per cent. I think almost everyone in their line-up have first-class 100s. We



A fist punching Ben Stokes is certainly not crashing down on Bangladesh's number ten batsman Tajjul Islam, the odd one in the celebrating England camp, on the final day of an absorbing Chittagong Test that the visitors won by 22 runs.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANT DAS

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DAMP STOP

MR. EXPERT

DAMP STOP



Sabbir to see doctor for stomach pain

SPORTS REPORTER

Mosaddek Hossain has been included in the squad for the second Test against England, set to begin in Mirpur from Friday, as a safety net for Sabbir Rahman, who has complained of a stomach pain. In addition, the national selectors have also replaced Shaiful Islam with the uncapped Shuvashish Roy.

Sabbir, who played a magnificent knock in the second innings of the first Test, will undergo an endoscopy as soon as the team returns to Dhaka



don't have any tail-ender who has a first-class hundred, and even if we did, there's a huge difference between their first-class cricket and our first-class cricket," he said.

And that was a glimpse of the Mushfiqur the media and fans have missed for much of the last 15 months – his straight-talking persona that often cuts to the heart of the problems in Bangladesh cricket. That was the side of Mushfiqur that came out when asked about the Bangladesh pace bowlers as England's lethality with the reverse swing ball proved a crucial difference in the end.

"Does anyone know how many first-class bowlers we have who can bowl well with the old ball?" asked Mushfiqur. "If you look at a scorecard from our first-class competitions, you will invariably see a spinner taking a five-fer and the pace bowlers taking one or two wickets. If a bowler doesn't know how to set up a batsman, and bowl according to the field, then you can't expect him to do it at the Test level. It is easy for guys like [Iqbal] Bano and [Iqbal] Khan to bowl well because they've done it for years. I don't think Shaiful [Islam] and Kamrul [Islam Rabbil] bowled that badly. It was a learning experience for them, and they realised that they need to know how to bowl with the old ball."

from Chittagong today in order to know the state of his health. He has an appointment with the doctor today.

The batsman has been complaining about a stomach-related pain since the beginning of the first Test. A primary examination in Chittagong though didn't find anything wrong.

"Sabbir is a little sick and that's why we brought Mosaddek to the squad as a back-up. With regards to Shaiful, we felt that he needed a break as he played the ODIs and the first Test. Shuvashish has done well in domestic cricket and he was the next best option for us," explained chief selector Minhajul Abedin while speaking to The Daily Star yesterday.

SQUAD

Mushfiqur Rahim (C), Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Monirul Hque, Mahmudullah Riyad, Shakib Al Hasan, Shuvashish Roy, Mohammad Naim, Sabbir Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, Tajjul Islam, Kamrul Islam Rabbil, Mosaddek Hossain Sabbir, Nurul Hasan, Shuvashish Roy.

'A brilliant Test match'

SPORTS REPORTER

England skipper Alastair Cook said that he was 'fairly confident' of winning the first Test against Bangladesh despite the tight scenario.

On the final day of the first Test, Bangladesh needed 33 runs to win while England required two wickets.

"I was fairly confident this morning, to be honest. I thought we would be able to create enough chances. But the doubt was whether we would be able to take those chances."

"It was a brilliant Test match. After the first session I didn't think it would go onto the fifth day. There were ebbs and flows. The crucial moment was in day three when we managed to get a lead, and that proved the difference obviously," said Cook after the match in Chittagong.

Cook decided to go into the attack with both his pacers and he preferred to use the reverse swing rather than spin.

"I thought like a bumble bee. I took my time last night and floated around with a few ideas in my head and then decided it would be Broad's and Stokes. I think the real reason was that they would be able to take more runs against the spinners. Once the new ball was available I would have used the spinners, but if you used the spinners early on, you couldn't have

would definitely be changes in the second Test in order to give more players a chance ahead of their Tests against India.

"It's certainly more about rotation and also in an ideal world we don't want to get to India with people having not played much cricket. There are some fine players who didn't make that team and also the conditions of how hot it is and energy levels, knowing they will not be playing all seven Test matches will freshen things up as well. It's certainly more on the bowling side to start with," said Cook.

Player of the match, Ben Stokes said that he was happy to see his hard work paying off.

"It's been a pinpoint of myself against spin and knowing that I can take the aggressive route. The hard work I put in here before the game started, and not just the Test matches but the one-dayers as well, making sure that my defence is tight and still having options to be able to rotate the strike when they do bowl the ball in

changed," he said.

He also gave credit to Bangladesh for coming so close in the fourth innings.

"The way they played spin in these conditions, they deserve a lot of credit. I genuinely thought 280 was enough at first," said Cook.

Furthermore, he added that there



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PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE NATIONS PRIDE, THE PADMA BRIDGE

ANWAR CEMENT

Babu's pitch-perfect tune

SAKEB SUBHAN from Chittagong

There were three great acts in the classic Test that ended in Chittagong's Zahur Ahmed Stadium yesterday -- winners England, heroic losers Bangladesh and the pitch that made the displays of resolve and resource from both teams possible.

The pitch -- a parched one in appearance -- was an excellent one for Test cricket because while it was quite unusual in that it turned from the first ball of day one, it was unique in that it did not break or become dangerous over time. The turn was consistent, as was the bounce.

"If you come tomorrow, you will not be able to tell it apart from the other pitches on the square," said Zahid Reza Babu, the curator, to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon. Although he is barred from commenting on pitch preparation, this comment indicates that the reason the pitch held so well together was because of the grassy sub-surface that binds the soil.

Generally the men behind the scenes that make such entertainment possible remain hidden from view because their work is done when the cameras are turned off or focused on other things. Still, the role of the pitch in this cracker of a match was so central that Babu was shown as a smiling presence on the sidelines as the action unfolded in the middle on numerous occasions during the match.

But for once, the man behind the

scenes was brought forward by Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim yesterday.

"Babu bhai has made an amazing wicket," the skipper gushed at the post-match press conference yesterday. "This is the first time that we got a wicket suited to our plans. The positive sign was that we took 20 wickets."

These may seem like simple words, but they were golden for Babu. In a chat with The Daily

Star in his office at the ZACS yesterday afternoon, he proudly listed Bangladesh's mostly positive results at the ZACS after he had taken charge of the ground in 2010.

"We can ask for nothing more than this. We do not hear words like this," said Babu. "We do a thankless job mostly. This is our prize, that he said this in front of the media is the biggest thing in my life. It is reward for the work I have done all these years."

"Mushfiqur even thanked me on his way out of the stadium after the match just a little while ago," said the delighted curator.

His impact on this match was such that Sabbir Rahman, the young batsman who proved to the world over the last two days just how mentally strong he is with a debut half-century in trying conditions, came after the match and hugged 'Babu bhai' for providing him the opportunity.

"I told him that you will be part of history, and I have just joined you in a small way. I can say that you scored a fifty on my pitch on your debut," added Babu.



The Chittagong Test will be best remembered for many reasons including the sporting wicket -- a complete surprise by its curator Zahid Reza Babu.

PHOTO: STAR

BEN STOKES

His face-off with Tamim Iqbal after the second ODI didn't help him gain too many fans in Bangladesh. His technique, fight and resilience throughout the tour though have earned him accolades from nearly every viewer of this series. The way Ben Stokes, the player of the match, performed both with the bat and ball was exemplary. He singlehandedly changed the course of the game twice in the Test. He first reverse-swing his way through Bangladesh's batting line-up and then sweated it out in the heat to help reverse England from 62 for 5. It was only fitting to witness Stokes get the last two wickets and end the Test in style yesterday.

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