

SPORT



Khulna Titans skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (L) is overjoyed during a magical last over that yielded three wickets and condemned Rajshahi Kings to a three-run defeat in their Bangladesh Premier League match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A gamble that paid off

SPORTS REPORTER

It took Mahmudullah Riyad just one over to change the game. He scalped three wickets in over number 20 and defied Rajshahi Kings the seven runs they needed to lead the Khulna Titans to a crucial win.

It was a difficult over to bowl. And it therefore was not a surprise to see an ecstatic Riyad let out a roar after Nazmul Apu got stumped off the last ball.

It might have been just six balls, but there was plenty of planning required for that over and that is something that Riyad explained after the game yesterday.

"My main strike bowlers were Junaid [Khan] and [Shafiqul Islam] Shuhash. But they were done early. I didn't have any option and that's why I brought myself on."

"Honestly speaking, I tried not to take too much pressure during the over. My plan was to bowl in the right areas and hope that luck would be on our side. Fortunately it was. I was under immense pressure towards the end though. I think these kinds of matches happen once in a blue moon," said Riyad.

"I know that Nazmul likes to slog sweep the ball. And so I was never going to let him do that. I was planning to bowl full. But I still wanted to see what he would do and so I stopped just as I was about to bowl the last ball."

"I noticed that he would have tried to reverse sweep it. And so I was confident after that. I had my extra cover outside the circle and then I decided to stick to my plan and bowl it straight. Luckily the plan worked," he added.

Despite the close win though, Riyad said that he was disappointed with his team's batting performance.

"Personally, I was a little upset with my batting because it was a 160 wicket. We didn't use the opportunity. If we had been a bit more sensible and played aggressively, it could have worked for us."

"Hopefully we will improve. This was the first game and maybe we couldn't tune up well. I want them to play as a team. I believe that we can beat any team if we play as a team," said Riyad.

Rajshahi's Abul Hasan, who scalped five wickets also spoke to the media yesterday. He credited his slower deliveries for his wickets. "I can bowl them from the back of my hand and I have been practising very hard to perfect this art. So maybe that's why I managed to get that five-for," said Abul.

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Mahmudullah steals a thriller for Titans

SPORTS REPORTER

There are times when Mahmudullah Riyad is forced to take the back seat whenever Bangladesh cricket's main four take the podium.

He has not achieved what Mashrafe bin Mortaza has as a captain, neither is he as trusted an all-rounder as Shakib Al Hasan. He lacks the flashiness of Tamim Iqbal and is not as flawless in his drives like Mushfiqur Rahim.

But it is absolutely amazing how Riyad has transformed himself in the last two years. Just think about it from the national team's context. There are so many players in the fray who can bat and bowl off-spinners at the same time, and yet, due to his improvement in the last two years, he has managed to stay a grade ahead of the rest.

The stage that he has reached today would have been unthinkable to many who had followed his game prior to 2015. He has gone on to become one of the most trusted players of the national team, oozing confidence whenever given the opportunity.

It was a glimpse of that confidence that the sparse crowd at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium got to see yesterday during Khulna Titans' thrilling three-run win over the

Rajshahi Kings.

Rajshahi had reached 120 for five in 17.4 overs and with a target of 134 the match was seemingly in the bag. However, Mominul Haque, who had batted brilliantly for his 57-ball 64 suddenly lost his cool and got himself caught behind off Shafiqul Islam while trying to unnecessarily scoop one over the keeper.

That is when Rajshahi began to collapse. Riyad brilliantly caught the experienced Forhad Reza at cover in the 19th over. He took a few steps back and put in a backwards dive of sorts to hold on to that catch.

That brought the equation down to seven required off the last over with three wickets in hand. With Riyad having used up his key death bowlers Shafiqul Islam and Junaid Khan, he decided to bowl himself. He could have used the remaining specialist bowler in Shuvagata Hom or given the responsibility to someone like Alok Kapali but instead, he took the brave decision of bowling himself.

The first two deliveries were driven for singles and the third one was a wide. It was something that frustrated Riyad and he argued with the umpire for a few seconds. But that did not deter his focus.

He bowled a full-length delivery

and got Abul Hasan caught straight down the ground. The next one was a shorter ball that turned and skidded its way past Mohammad Sami's bat and into the stumps.

With four runs required off two balls, Nazmul Islam tried to reverse sweep but missed the delivery.

While the first five balls were completed in a jiffy, Riyad needed what seemed like an eternity to bowl his last delivery of the game.

He changed his field and then modified it again and then stopped on his bowling mark to see what kind of a stroke the batsman would try. Surprisingly, Nazmul was planning to go for the reverse yet again.

Eventually, Riyad bowled a quick straighter delivery, got Nazmul stumped and delivered a thrilling three-run win that seemed impossible only three overs ago.

Earlier in the day, both Riyad and Riki Wessels had posted 32 each to lead the Titans to 133. Abul Hasan, who finished with five for 28 and got a number of wickets due to the back-of-the-hand slower delivery that he bowls so well, was the chief destroyer.

After the exchange, Mominul's 64, which witnessed six fours and Darren Sammy's 23-ball 31, initially seemed to be taking Rajshahi home, before the game changed towards the end.

SCOREBOARDS

TITANS V KINGS				
	R/B	4s/6s		
KHULNA TITANS				
Mazid st Nurul b Patel	15/25	1/0		
Pooran b Mehedi	14/15	3/0		
Wessels c U Akmal b Hasan	32/22	4/1		
Mahmudullah c Reza b Hasan	32/21	3/1		
Shuvagata run out	3/4	0/0		
Kapali c U Akmal b Hasan	11/17	0/0		
Ariful c Sami b Hasan	14/8	1/1		
Shafiqul b Hasan	0/6	0/0		
Junaid not out	0/0	0/0		
Asghar not out	8/2	2/0		
Extras: (lb-1, w-3)		4		
Total: (For 8 wks in 20 overs)		133		
Did not bat: Mosharraf				
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-65, 3-65, 4-72, 5-111, 6-111, 7-125, 8-125.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Sami	4	0	23	0
Reza	1	0	8	0
Mehedi	3	0	15	1
Nazmul	2	0	22	0
Sammy	2	0	18	0
Patel	4	0	18	1
Hasan	4	0	28	5
RAJSHAHI KINGS	R/B	4s/6s		
Mominul c Pooran b Shafiqul	64/57	6/0		
Nurul b b Junaid	4/2	1/0		
Sabbir b Junaid	4/4	1/0		
U Akmal c Pooran b Junaid	0/1	0/0		
Patel c Ariful b Asghar	10/21	0/0		
Sammy c Ariful b Mahmudullah	31/23	0/3		
Hasan c Ariful b Mahmudullah	3/4	0/0		
Reza c Mahmudullah b Junaid	4/5	1/0		
Sami b Mahmudullah	1/3	0/0		
Mehedi not out	0/0	0/0		
Nazmul st Pooran b Mahmudullah	0/2	0/0		
Extras: (lb-5, w-2, nb-2)		9		
Total: (All out in 20 overs)		130		
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-24, 3-24, 4-59, 5-111, 6-120, 7-125, 8-130, 9-130, 10-130.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shafiqul	4	0	29	2
Junaid	4	0	23	4
Asghar	4	0	21	1
Mosharraf	4	0	24	0
Shuvagata	1	0	10	0
Mahmudullah	2	0	6	3
Kapali	1	0	12	0
Result: Khulna Titans won by 3 runs.				
Player-of-the-match: Mahmudullah.				

VIKINGS V RIDERS				
	R/B	4s/6s		
CHITTAGONG VIKINGS				
Tamim b Shohag	11/10	2/0		
Smith c Dawson b Shohag	10/8	1/1		
Anamul run out	25/16	4/0		
Malik run out	30/32	0/1		
Jahurul c Shohag b Arafat	3/5	0/0		
Nabi c Afridi b Rubel	5/11	0/0		
Zakir c Gleeson b Afridi	9/13	1/0		
Nazmul c Shahzad b Gleeson	11/10	1/0		
Razzak not out	4/7	0/0		
Taskin c Soumya b Gleeson	1/3	0/0		
Mills run out	5/3	1/0		
Extras: (lb-1, w-9)		10		
Total: (All out in 19.4 overs)		124		
Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-21, 3-69, 4-74, 5-82, 6-93, 7-104, 8-117, 9-119, 10-124.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shohag	3	0	18	2
Gleeson	3	0	30	2
Arafat	4	0	19	1
Dawson	2	0	22	0
Afridi	4	0	12	1
Rubel	3.4	0	22	1
RANGPUR RIDERS	R/B	4s/6s		
Shahzad not out	80/52	11/3		
Soumya c Anamul b Mills	23/25	1/2		
Mithun not out	12/15	1/0		
Extras: (w-4, nb-6)		10		
Total: (For 1 wkt in 15 overs)		125		
Did not bat: Muktar Ali, Rubel Hossain, Arafat Sunny, Shahid Afridi, R. Gleeson, Naem Islam*, Shohag Gazi, L. Dawson.				
Fall of wickets: 1-77				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Razzak	4	0	24	0
Nabi	2	0	10	0
Mills	3	0	30	1
Smith	2	0	20	0
Malik	1	0	6	0
Taskin	3	0	35	0
Result: Rangpur Riders won by 9 wickets.				
Player-of-the-match: Mohammad Shahzad.				

Root, Ali give England edge

AFP, Rajkot

Joe Root said England played fantastic cricket Wednesday after his sparkling century helped the tourists reach 311 for four at stumps on the opening day of the first Test against India.

The 25-year-old put on 179 with Moeen Ali, who reached the close one run shy of his century, after India's spinners had reduced the tourists to 102-3 on a placid track.

Ali, who is on the verge of his fourth Test century, was at the crease with Ben Stokes who was on 19 at Rajkot's Saurashtra Cricket Association ground.

Root smashed 11 fours and a six during his 124-run knock before being caught and bowled by Umesh Yadav, who almost dropped the chance as he rushed to celebrate the dismissal.

With Ali standing tall at one end, England looked set for a big first innings total, vindicating captain Alastair Cook's decision to bat first.

Root celebrated his 11th Test ton, and third against India, by waving his bat towards a grateful England dressing room.

In completing the feat, Root became the first overseas player to score a century in India since Australia's Michael Clarke in 2013.

"The way we played throughout the day was fantastic," Root said after the day's play.

"We always thought that seam bowling would be useful early on, but the guys handled it well and that allowed the boys in the middle order to build partnerships."

"I look forward to watching Moeen bat all day tomorrow too. It's pleasing, something to build on and a good position to be in."

The Root-Ali pair piled on the misery for India who were also set back by an injury to pace spearhead Mohammed Shami.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 311 for 4 (Cook 21, Hameed 31, Root 124, Moeen 99 not out, Stokes 19 not out; Ashwin 2-108)



England batsman Joe Root unfurls an elegant drive through covers during a magnificent hundred that put England in the driving seat after the opening day of the first Test against India in Rajkot yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Peterson calls it a day

CRICINFO

Robin Peterson, the former South Africa all-rounder, has announced his retirement from all cricket on Wednesday. He made his debut during the Champions Trophy in 2002, and played 15 Tests, 79 ODIs and 21 T20s, taking 137 international wickets and also scoring four half-centuries.

Peterson's career highlights include six wickets in the Perth Test of December 2012 to help South Africa clinch a series win in Australia, a crucial all-round display to help beat India in Durban in December 2013, and 15 wickets at 15.86 in the 2011 World Cup to finish as South Africa's top wicket-taker in the tournament.

SL close to series sweep

AFP, Harare

Rangana Herath registered his second five-wicket haul in as many days as Sri Lanka closed in on victory in the second Test against Zimbabwe at Harare Sports Club on Wednesday.

Herath followed up his five-wicket haul in the first innings with 5 for 45 in the second as Zimbabwe, set 491 to win, went to stumps on the fourth evening on 180 for seven.

The feat not only took Herath to 50 wickets in the calendar year -- in just his eighth Test -- but also gave him the seventh 10-wicket match haul in his career.

The tourists began the fourth day on 102 for four in their second innings, with an overall lead of 334, and spent the first half of the day extending that advantage.

With Dimuth Karunaratne anchoring the innings with a patient 88 and Kusal Perera adding a quickfire 62 towards the end, Sri

Lanka were able to declare their second innings on 258 for nine to set Zimbabwe 491 to win.

Left with 136 overs to bat in order to save the match, Zimbabwe were soon reduced to 39 for three before a 74-run stand for the fourth wicket between Sean Williams and Craig Ervine briefly revived them.

Once Williams edged to slip off Lahiru Kumara to fall for 45, Sri Lanka were able to chip away at the middle order and move within three wickets of a 2-0 series sweep.

Ervine reached stumps unbeaten on 65, with Donald Tiripano for company.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: First innings 504
ZIMBABWE: First innings 272
SRI LANKA: Second innings 258 for 9 decl (Karunaratne 88, Gunaratne 39, Perera 62, Lakmal 21 not out; Mumba 3-67, Cremer 4-91)
ZIMBABWE: Second innings 180 for 7 (Ervine 65 not out, Williams 45, Moor 20; Herath 5-45)