

SPORT

Regular Tests the key: Mushy

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim believes that the Tigers will be able to reach a certain level of competence within the next two years if given enough opportunities in the format. The Tigers have been enjoying the T20 entertainment in the ongoing BPL but it seems that the afterglow of their scintillating success in the Test series against England is persisting. And why not when the tour of New Zealand is knocking on the door and there is a lot of promise surrounding Bangladesh's Test cricket. And yesterday was November 10; a day on which, 16 years ago, the Tigers had started their Test journey against India at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

That is the reason Mushfiqur answered more questions regarding Test cricket than about today's match between his side, Barisal Bulls, and defending champions Comilla Victorians.

"Bangladesh could have been in a much better position in Test cricket today but it was too tough to improve in Test cricket if you played it after one or two years' break. Look at Mominul [Haque]; he plays only one format and how difficult it must be for him to play after such long breaks. I hope we can reach a good position if we can play Tests consistently," said Mushfiqur during a conversation with reporters at the Academy ground.

The wicketkeeper-batsman however painted a bright picture of 2017 as they are going to play a number of Test matches in the next year to uplift their stature in the longer version.

"The year 2017 will be challenging for us. We didn't play nine or 10 Tests [in a year] ever but we are going to play that amount of matches in the next year. I hope we can take this challenge. There are many things for us to prove and one is to play good cricket overseas. Hope we can start a new era from the New Zealand trip and I personally believe the batsmen must take huge responsibility," opined Mushfiqur.

There had been a question about whether Bangladesh are capable of taking 20 wickets but in favourable home conditions the Tigers proved everybody wrong by taking 40 wickets in the two-match Test series and Mushfiqur believes that they



also have the ability to take 20 wickets in seaming conditions in New Zealand.

"We have to have the confidence like we had during the England series. We have good seam bowlers in our team. You see, our seam bowlers did well in the last World Cup in Australia-New Zealand compared to other teams. I hope Mustafizur [Rahman] will return from injury and if the others can give their best then we will be able to take 20 wickets, but once again I believe the batsmen should take the responsibility," he continued.

To Mushfiqur the most satisfying fact in Bangladesh's 16 years of Test cricket was that the number of performers in the team has increased, which has been bringing success.



Shahid Afridi's four wickets led the charge for Rangpur Riders at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday as they sent Khulna Titans packing for just 44 runs, the lowest-ever score in the Bangladesh Premier League. Arafat Sunny co-starred with a haul of three wickets for no runs as Rangpur cruised home.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

MATCH STATS

Khulna Titans' 44 all out is the lowest total in BPL history, beating Barisal Bulls' 58 all out against Sylhet Superstars in the last edition

The 64 balls Khulna survived was also the lowest played by a team in the BPL, eclipsing the 71 Sylhet faced against Rangpur Riders to be all out for 59 in the last edition

Rangpur recorded the biggest margin of victory in terms of balls remaining (72), bettering their own record of beating Sylhet with 61 remaining in 2015

In bowling 2.4 overs and taking three wickets for zero runs, Arafat Sunny bowled the most balls in a T20 innings without conceding a run

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Different lessons

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The Tigers simply cannot forget the match India had snatched from the jaws of defeat in the last World Twenty20. They do not have to be prompted much to recall it as Rajshahi Kings batsman Sabbir Rahman did while mentioning their heartbreaking three-run defeat to Khulna Titans on Wednesday ahead of today's match against Dhaka Dynamites.

"For a professional cricketer the main job is to play and he has hardly enough time to dwell on a win or loss but as a human being I cannot forget the loss in the last game. It actually brought back the memory of our defeat against India," said Sabbir yesterday.

It was however difficult to be gloomy for too long when a character as cheerful as Darren Sammy is leading them. "Everybody knows Sammy is a cheerful character. We are really enjoying his company. Under his leadership West Indies won two World Cups

in this format and he is a very interesting man. We are enjoying his sense of humour and you know if you cannot enjoy T20 cricket you will not succeed."

Meanwhile, another all-rounder in Dhaka Dynamites' Nasir Hossain has been enjoying his time in a different manner with the teammates like legends Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara.

"We can learn a lot of things from them. How they live their lives, how they prepare themselves before batting, how they prepare before each match -- we can learn these things. Jayawardene-Sangakkara are two legendary players and we can learn many things from them -- I am trying to learn something," said Nasir.

"We don't talk too much on cricket; we discuss many other things. They are very friendly," he added. While asked about his brilliant catch to dismiss Barisal Bulls batsman Dilshan Munaweera in their first match on November 8, he said that he always enjoys fielding and took many such good catches in his career.

LaFrance upstaged

SPORTS REPORTER



Top-seed Katie LaFrance of the United States became the biggest casualty of the Walton 30th Bangladesh ITF Junior Tennis Championship so far as she lost against sixth seed Muskan Gupta of India in straight sets (6-3, 6-4) in their quarterfinal fixture at the Ramna National Tennis Complex yesterday.

LaFrance, who caught the media attention when she arrived in Dhaka on a chartered flight along with her affluent parents, started brilliantly, winning her first round games easily but came unstuck when it mattered most. The 17-year-old however made sure her maiden Dhaka visit extended at least one more day when she, teamed up with Ji Min Park of South Korea, won the doubles fixture against the India duo of Gauri Agarwal and Riddhi Ramesh Sharma 6-1, 6-3.

Ji Min, seeded third, also made her exit from the quarterfinals when she suffered a 6-4, 7-6 defeat against Tanisha Kashyap of India. China's Xiaowei Hu and Jingyi Wang completed the semifinal line up when they beat India's Harsha Sai Challa Runa and Japanese Ichinose respectively.

In the boys' singles, India's Mritunjay Badola, Rishabh Sharda and Pranash Babu and South Korea's Chan Woo Park moved into the semifinals beating their respective quarterfinal opponents.

SCOREBOARD

TITANS V RIDERS			
	R/B	4s/6s	
Mazid run out	6/11	1/0	
Pooran b Shohag	0/1	0/0	
Wessels b Afridi	5/10	0/0	
Mahmudullah lbw b Gleeson	2/3	0/0	
Shuvagata b Afridi	12/8	2/0	
Kapali lbw b Afridi	0/1	0/0	
Ariful lbw b Arafat	7/8	1/0	
Nur b Afridi	8/11	2/0	
Junaid c Soumya b Arafat	0/4	0/0	
Asghar b Arafat	0/5	0/0	
Shafiqul not out	0/2	0/0	
Extras: (lb-4)	4		
Total: (All out in 10.4 overs)	44		
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-10, 3-15, 4-15, 5-15, 6-31, 7-40, 8-40, 9-44, 10-44.			
Bowler			
	O	M	R
Shohag	1	0	6
Rubel	2	0	8
Arafat	2.4	2	0
Gleeson	2	0	14
Afridi	3	0	12
RANGPUR RIDERS			
	R/B	4s/6s	
Shahzad c & b Junaid	13/16	3/0	
Soumya not out	13/19	0/1	
Mithun not out	15/15	2/0	
Extras: (w-2, nb-2)	4		
Total: (For 1 wkt in 8 overs)	45		
Did not bat: Muktar Ali, Rubel Hossain, Arafat Sunny, Shahid Afridi, RJ Gleeson, Naeem Islam, Shohag Gazi, IA Dawson, Fall of wickets: 1-16.			
Bowler			
	O	M	R
Junaid	2	0	14
Asghar	2	0	6
Shuvagata	2	0	10
Nur	2	0	15
Result: Rangpur Riders won by 9 wickets.			
Player-of-the-match: Shahid Afridi.			

Stokes, Ali put England on top

AFP, Rajkot

Centurion Moeen Ali said patience was the key as England posted the highest score by a visiting team in nearly five years on the second day of the first Test against India on Thursday.

England's first innings score of 537 was built around Ali's 117 and an impressive 128 runs by Ben Stokes, who managed to banish memories of three ducks against India in his three previous innings.

India's openers responded with an unbeaten stand of 63 in the final session, the hosts trailing by 474 runs with all their wickets intact.

The stylish Joe Root (124) had notched up a century on the opening day to lay a solid foundation for England's middle-order batsmen at Rajkot's Saurashtra Cricket Association ground.

The day belonged to England's batsmen who made India work hard on an easy-paced track after captain Alastair Cook had elected to bat first.

"Patience is something Saqi (spin coach Saqlain Mushtaq) talks about a lot, we knew we needed to be patient," said Ali, 29, after the day's play.

"It's a very good pitch. I knew if I bat 200 balls I will surely make a hundred... We didn't plod much against the spinners and tried to be attacking in our approach," said Ali, who was on 99 overnight.

India's bowlers struggled in the heat and grime, with top-ranked spinner Ravichandran Ashwin conceding 167 runs while taking just two wickets.

But left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja was quick to spring to Ashwin's defence, saying any bowler can have an off-day.

But at least five dropped catches and some sloppy fielding underlined a miserable day for the Indians before their home fans.

of their last 13 Tests at home since England sealed a historic 2-1 victory in Kolkata in 2012.

Although the tourists lost a succession of tailenders in the period immediately after lunch, Stokes stayed put to help England post their third highest total on Indian soil.

Stokes hit 13 fours and two sixes on route to his fourth ton in the longest format of the game.

England were on the attack in the morning session, hammering 139 runs while losing two wickets including that of Ali who was bowled by Mohammed Shami (2-65).

Jonny Bairstow, the highest Test run-scorer this year, made 46 and shared a brisk 99-run partnership for the sixth wicket with Stokes before also falling to Shami.

Stokes was dropped twice in his sixties by wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha with Umesh Yadav (2-112) being the unlucky bowler on both occasions.

The Indians took the new ball in the morning after England resumed at 311 for 4, but failed to get an immediate breakthrough.

Ali reached his century off the third ball of the day from Shami who seemed to have recovered from the cramps he suffered on the opening day.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: First innings 537 (Root 124, Moeen 117, Stokes 128, Bairstow 46, Ansari 32; Shami 2-65, Yadav 2-112, Ashwin 2-167, Jadeja 3-86)

INDIA: First innings 63 for no loss (Vijay 25 not out, Gambhir 28 not out)



England all-rounder Ben Stokes continued his fabulous form, scoring 128 which was punctuated by 13 fours and two sixes on the second day of the first Test against India in Rajkot yesterday.

SL sweep series

AFP, Harare



Rangana Herath recorded the best figures by a bowler in a Test in Zimbabwe as Sri Lanka completed a 257-run victory in the second Test at Harare Sports Club on Thursday to sweep the series 2-0.

Sri Lanka went into the final day needing just three wickets to wrap up the match, and Herath required less than an hour to claim them as he finished with eight wickets in the second innings, bowling Zimbabwe out for 233.

The left-arm spinner's 8 for 63 were the best figures in an innings by a player in Zimbabwe, while his 13 for 152 were the best figures in a match.

"I am always trying to improve," said the 38-year-old. "I don't think about records and will take each series as it comes."

Zimbabwe's only real hope of pushing Sri Lanka on day five rested with Craig Ervine, who resumed on 65 not out with Zimbabwe on 180 for seven in pursuit of 491 for victory.

But the left-hander was the first batsman to fall as Herath had him well caught by Dhananjaya de Silva at slip for 72.

Carl Mumba was next to go, trapped lbw by the left-arm spinner, who also had Chris Mpofu in the same fashion to bring the game to a close.

Zimbabwe lost both games by large margins, but took both Tests into the final day and nearly secured a draw in the first match.

"We're happy they've gone five days, and there were a lot of positives for us," said Zimbabwe captain Graeme Cremer. "But a lot of the mistakes we made at crucial times, like dropping silly catches, changed the games in a huge way. We need to improve on that."

The two teams will play each other in a one-day international on Monday, when a triangular series also involving the West Indies gets underway at the same venue.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SRI LANKA: First innings 504; ZIMBABWE: First innings 272

SRI LANKA: Second innings 258 for 9 decl

ZIMBABWE: Second innings 233 (Ervine 72, Williams 45, Moor 20, Mpofu 20; Herath 8-63)

Result: Sri Lanka won by 257 runs and clinched 2-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Rangana Herath.

Player-of-the-series: Dimuth Karunaratne.

More good news for Sharapova

RT, Moscow

Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova will be reinstated as a UN goodwill ambassador when her enforced ban from the sport ends next April.

Sharapova lost her role with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) after she admitted in March to taking meldonium and was subsequently suspended for two years, reduced to 15 months after her successful appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which ruled that her actions were "not about an athlete who cheated."

"UNDP was glad to learn that Maria Sharapova can return to the sport she loves sooner than expected and we will lift the suspension of her role as our goodwill ambassador once the reduced ban expires in April 2017," a spokesperson told the Guardian.

The UN's decision is a further boost to Sharapova, following the lifting of sponsorship deal suspensions by the likes of Nike and Evian.