

SPORT



Barisal Bulls captain Mushfiqur Rahim picks his favourite midwicket boundary during an unbeaten 52-ball 81 which helped his side to a four-run victory over Rajshahi Kings in their BPL encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'I believe T20 is my format'

SPORTS REPORTER



Sabbir Rahman has described his 122 off 61 balls against the Barisal Bulls as one of the best innings that he has ever played. He was however distraught at the fact that Rajshahi's middle order was not able to take his side past the finish line.

"I believe that T20 cricket is my format. It is through T20 that I got into the national team and it is through T20 that I got into the Test team as well. I believe this is my tournament and this is my format.

"And so a big score for me in this format is always around the corner. But you know, this is not the end. I scored 122 in 61 balls today and this is a record. Tomorrow someone else will arrive to break this record," said Sabbir after scoring the highest score in BPL history yesterday.

Apart from the fact that Sabbir was able to dispatch the bowlers to all corners of the ground, what was also noticeable was the way he celebrated with immense enthusiasm after each of his sixes. He punched the air every time he hit a six. It was a surprise considering that Rajshahi had a long chase on the cards.

"I celebrate to encourage myself, to lift up my spirit. It helps me focus. When I do that, I remain focused, when I don't, I am calm and I tend to lose that hitting spree. I enjoy celebrating like that," said Sabbir.

His knock was so powerful that following his wicket, almost every player on the field made sure to walk up to

him and give him at least a pat on the back. It was a special knock, something that all the players and spectators on the ground were very much aware of.

Barisal's Shahriar Nafees described the innings as the best he had ever seen in Bangladesh.

"I have never seen such a good T20 knock in Bangladesh. I think what's important to note is that we generally watch only the Indian Premier League. The lengths of the boundaries we have here in Mirpur are really big.

"And I think only the grounds in Australia can match it. The way he cleared these long boundaries so easily was amazing to see. In my eyes, this is definitely the best innings I have seen in Bangladesh," said Nafees.

Despite Sabbir's heroics, Rajshahi ended up losing the game. For the second time in the tournament, they lost a match that they should have packed up comfortably. On November 9 they needed seven runs off the last over with three wickets in hand against Khulna Titans, but squandered that. Yesterday, they needed nine and failed yet again.

It is a fate that Sabbir hopes will change very soon.

"I don't know what the batsmen think in the last over. Do they want to hit a six or do they want to take six runs in six balls.

"I think we need to be mentally strong. We lost both the games because we wanted to hit sixes, when instead we could have taken singles and won the game easily," reckoned Sabbir.



A picture perfect follow-through; Sabbir Rahman holds his pose and follows the trajectory of yet another humongous over-boundary during his BPL record 61-ball 122 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SCOREBOARDS

BULLS V KINGS

BARISAL BULLS	R/B	4s/6s
Munawveer c U Akmal b Reza	0/3	0/0
Malan c Nurul b Reza	13/11	1/0
Nafees c Nurul b Sammy	63/44	4/4
Mushfiqur not out	81/52	5/4
Perera run out	24/11	0/3
Extras: (lb-6, w-4, nb-1)	11	
Total: (For 4 wickets in 20 overs)	192	
Did not bat: Monir Hossain, R Emrit, Nadif Chowdhury, Al-Amin Hossain, Taijul Islam, Abu Hider.		
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-21, 3-133, 4-192.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Reza	4	0	22	2
Mehedi	3	0	15	0
Williams	4	0	37	0
Patel	2	0	27	0
Hasan	4	0	49	0
Sammy	3	0	36	1

RAJSHAH KINGS

Mominul c Perera b Al-Amin	R/B	4s/6s
Mominul c Perera b Al-Amin	12/11	2/0
Raqibul c Nafees b Monir	0/1	0/0
Sabbir c Malan b Al-Amin	122/61	9/9
U Akmal lbw b Al-Amin	0/1	0/0
Patel c Mushfiqur b Hider	15/15	3/0
Sammy b Emrit	27/19	3/0
Nurul not out	5/8	0/0
Hasan not out	3/4	0/0
Extras: (lb-2, w-2)		
Total: (For 6 wickets in 20 overs)	188	
Did not bat: K Williams, Mehedi Hasan, Farhad Reza.		
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-49, 3-49, 4-117, 5-159, 6-183.		

TITANS V VICTORIANS

KHULNA TITANS	R/B	4s/6s
Fletcher c Imrul b Mashrafe	23/17	3/1
Hasanzaman c Liton b Mashrafe	37/30	6/0
Shuvagata c Nabil b Mashrafe	16/18	1/0
Mahmudullah c Tanvir b Nazmul	11/14	1/0
Pooran c Liton b Tanvir	12/15	1/0
Kapali c Zaidi b Nazmul	3/4	0/0
Arifur c Nazmul b Rashid	7/11	0/0
Cooper c Liton b Tanvir	11/7	1/1
Mosharrarf b Tanvir	2/4	0/0
Junaid not out	0/1	0/0
Extras: (lb-14, w-14, nb-1)	22	
Total: (For 9 wickets in 20 overs)	144	
Did not bat: Shaiful Islam.		
Fall of wickets: 1-45, 2-92, 3-99, 4-109, 5-117, 6-127, 7-131, 8-143, 9-144.		

COMILLA VICTORIANS

Liton c Cooper b Shuvagata	R/B	4s/6s
Liton c Cooper b Shuvagata	8/5	2/0
Kayes b Junaid	21/16	1/2
Samuels b Shaiful	30/34	2/1
Nazmul b Shaiful	10/9	1/0
Zaidi c Fletcher b Mosharrarf	10/17	1/0
Tanvir not out	21/21	2/0
Mashrafe b Cooper	5/6	0/0
Rashid run out	10/7	1/1
Mohammad c Naem b Junaid	4/5	0/0
Nabil not out	0/0	0/0
Extras: (lb-3, w-9)	12	
Total: (For 9 wickets in 20 overs)	131	
Fall of wickets: 1-8, 2-38, 3-51, 4-84, 5-86, 6-99, 7-120, 8-125, 9-126.		

Sabbir's record ton in vain

SPORTS REPORTER



What is it with the Bangladesh Premier League and last-over failures this season?

Batsmen seem to be able to overcome the most difficult of phases with no problems but falter during situations that can be best described as routine.

One cannot help but feel for Sabbir Rahman. The 24-year-old played what was arguably the best knock of his life but still ended up on the losing side. His smouldering 122 off 61 balls was not enough for the Rajshahi Kings to get past Barisal Bulls' 192 as the Darren Sammy-led team fell short by four runs in Mirpur yesterday.

But the defeat does not take anything away from Sabbir's knock. The man who hit nine fours and nine sixes and seemed to be seeing the ball like a football yesterday, dismissed the bowlers at will.

His 122 overcame Chris Gayle's 116, scored for Barisal Burners against Dhaka Gladiators in the inaugural edition of the BPL, as the highest individual score in the tournament's history. But more than the records, it was just a joy to watch Sabbir dispatch the bowlers like he did.

The game could have been over a lot earlier had Al-Amin Hossain not

dropped Sabbir on 14 at point in the third over. However, it was thanks to that drop that the sparse crowd at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium got to witness one of the best T20 knocks ever played by a Bangladeshi.

It is difficult to pick and highlight a particular phase from Sabbir's innings because he seemed resolute throughout. From the calm-looking helicopter hits off the fast bowlers to the confidence with which he charged the spinners, from the well-timed scoops over the keeper's head to the positive intent he showed while chasing the highest total of the BPL this season, each of those aspects deserves its own detailed description.

It was one of those days when he timed the ball to precision every time he attacked a bowler.

The opposing captain, Mushfiqur Rahim, who himself had scored a brilliant 81 with the bat, did not seem to have any answer. His top spinners, Monir Hossain and Taijul Islam were dispatched for sixes every time Sabbir came down the track, while his faster bowlers were hoicked or muscled over mid-wicket for boundaries. The fact that Sabbir was celebrating after almost every six that he hit showed just how much he enjoyed the innings.

It was a mere double and not a

boundary that led him to the three-figure mark in the 15th over, off 53 balls. It was an innings he had enjoyed a lot and lost his bat while celebrating it. Out of respect for the innings, Mushfiqur picked up his bat to give it to his junior national colleague and patted him on the back.

To Mushfiqur's credit, he managed to keep his calm and once Al-Amin got Sabbir caught at mid-wicket in the 16th over, he inspired his team to pull the game back.

Rajshahi needed just 34 runs in the last four overs with five wickets in hand after Sabbir's departure. It seemed an easy equation but the new batsmen at the crease seemed to take too much pressure and Barisal's death bowlers Rayad Emrit and Thisara Perera capitalised.

Emrit dismissed Sammy in the penultimate over and all of a sudden the pressure was on Rajshahi with nine runs required off the last over and four wickets remaining. Perera bowled six perfectly placed length balls against the nervous Hasans—Abul and Nurul—and Barisal ended up winning by four runs.

Prior to Sabbir's spectacle, Mushfiqur's 52-ball 81 and Shahriar Nafees's 44-ball 63 helped Barisal post 192. Mushfiqur, who seemed in brilliant touch, hit four sixes and five fours.

'Mushy's aggression showed the way'

SPORTS REPORTER



The Barisal Bulls did end up winning yesterday but there was a point in the game when, with Sabbir Rahman smacking boundaries almost at will, a win for Barisal seemed highly unlikely.

Shahriar Nafees, who had scored a crucial 44-ball 63 to support Mushfiqur Rahim's 52-ball 81 in the first innings, admitted that Barisal were nervous when Sabbir was at the crease.

"When Sabbir was batting we thought we should have scored 220 or 230 on this wicket. But despite that we knew that we were just one wicket away from a comeback," explained Nafees.

"This wicket that we played on seemed easy but it wasn't. It was always going to be difficult for a new batsman. Thank God we managed to reach there at the end. Credit to our players for believing in themselves and playing confidently," said Nafees.

Nafees and Mushfiqur put on a 112-run stand for the third wicket and helped revive Barisal from a precarious 21 for two. After 10 overs

they were struggling at 62 for two and it seemed like they would not be able to post a score past 150.

However, both Mushfiqur and Nafees upped the tempo after that and Barisal hammered 130 runs in the last 10 overs.

It was the highest total of the tournament and yet Mushfiqur asked his players not to be complacent. It was almost as though the Test skipper had predicted Sabbir would play a special knock.

"At the break, Mushfiq repeatedly told us one thing. There are times when you can defend 130 easily and then there are times when even 190 is not enough. So there is no chance to take this lightly. He asked us to fight till the last ball," informed Nafees.

In fact, Mushfiqur seemed to be the most charged up Barisal player on the field yesterday. After smacking Kestrick Williams for a six over midwicket in the 18th over, he showed the bowler the direction that the ball went towards.

"Mushfiqur is a fighting cricketer and he always wants to win and tries to do well. The aggression that he showed on the field in the end led the team to a good win," Nafees added.

Eng dominate tense draw

AFP, Rajkot



Skipper Virat Kohli hit an unbeaten 49 under pressure before India pulled off a tense draw on the final day of the first Test against England in Rajkot on Sunday.

The tourists had declared their second innings at 260-3 shortly after lunch, leaving the home side to chase 310 runs off a minimum 49 overs on the fifth and last day.

But the Indians were soon fighting for survival after losing wickets in a clutch on a wearing track at the Saurashtra Cricket Association ground, hosting its first Test ever.

The Indians finished on 172-6 with local hero Ravindra Jadeja also remaining not out on 32.

England had India in early trouble at 71-4 but Kohli steadied the ship with a 47-run partnership that he shared with Ravichandran Ashwin (32).



England captain Alastair Cook celebrates his 30th century and fifth in India on the fifth day of the first Test in Rajkot yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Adil Rashid was the pick of the bowlers with 3-64 while his spin partners Moeen Ali and Zafar Ansari took one wicket apiece.

India's second innings began on a shaky note, with opener Gautam Gambhir falling to paceman Chris Woakes for a duck.

Leg-spinner Rashid then got going, getting rid of Cheteshwar Pujara (18) who was trapped leg before wicket and Murali Vijay for 31.

Both Pujara and Vijay had hit centuries in India's first innings total of 488 in reply to England's 537.

Ali shattered the stumps of Ajinkya Rahane (one) and Ansari sent back Ashwin, who had proved to be a thorn in England's side the last time they toured India.

Kohli held his ground amid the mayhem, hitting six fours in his crucial 98-ball knock.

England were bolstered by a 180-run partnership between skipper Alastair Cook (130) and debutant Haseeb Hameed -- a record opening stand for England in India.

It was the 30th Test century for the left-handed Cook and record fifth in India, more than any overseas batsman.

Hameed, 19, belied his tender years in making 82 off 177 balls that contained one six and seven boundaries.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings: 537
INDIA: First innings: 488
ENGLAND: Second innings 260 for 3 decl (Cook 130, Hameed 82, Stokes 29 not out; Mishra 2-60)
INDIA: Second innings 172 for 6 (Vijay 31, Pujara 18, Kohli 49 not out, Ashwin 32; Rashid 3-64)
Result: Match drawn.
Player-of-the-match: Moeen Ali.

U-19 Asia Cup squad announced

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has announced its team for the Under 19 Asia Cup, which will be held in Sri Lanka from 13-24 December 2016. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and hosts Sri Lanka will be joined by Afghanistan, Nepal, Singapore and Malaysia in the tournament.

The preparation camp of the Bangladesh U19 Team will start from November 19 at the BCB National Cricket Academy and the selected players including the stand-bys will report at the NCA on November 19.

SQUAD

Mohammed Saif Hassan (Captain),
Sozib Hosen, Nazmul Alam, Afif Hossain (Vice Captain), Aminul Islam Biplob, Rayan Rafsan Rahman, Habibur Rahman, Md Rakib, Mahidul Islam Bhuiyan, Nayeem Hasan, Shakhawat Hossain, Qazi Onik Islam, Yeasin Arafat, Mukidul Islam, Mohammad Abdul Halim
STANDBY: Hasan Mahmud, Shahadat Hossain, Abbas Musa,