

SPORT



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal led the way as he took the attack to New Zealand in challenging conditions, making a 50-ball 56 and setting the tone for his side on the first day of the first Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

'Mominul has been amazing'

AL-AMIN from Wellington



154 for three, are you happy with that score?

"Happy, really happy," responded Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal while attending the

press briefing after the opening day's play of the first Test at the Basin Reserve yesterday.

It is not a big score but considering the context of the whole episode of an eventful day on a typical greenish wicket, coupled with extremely windy conditions and the two rain-breaks, it was a satisfying day for the left-handed opener, who struck a fine 56 in that total scored in 40 odd overs permitted by the weather.

"History says something else and it says that the first innings is very difficult on this wicket and the best of the teams have not scored too many runs in the first innings on this wicket. We handled them pretty well. If Mahmudullah [Riyad] was there it would have been an ideal day for us," said a smiling Tamim who actually set the tone with a positive approach.

"Before we faced the first ball there was a question mark. But the moment you see someone scoring or innings like Mominul [Haque's] you will definitely feel confident that this is a wicket where you can survive and also score runs," he said, adding that he came out with a plan and it worked.

"When we lost the toss and we came out to bat I came out positive. My target was to hit the bad balls to the boundary knowing that I won't get that many. I'm happy that I could utilise those opportunities, which was good," said the expe-

First day was 'Tigers': Wagner

SPORTS REPORTER



When it comes to Tests at the Basin Reserve in Wellington, Neil Wagner turns into a specialist, a position necessitated by the unique conditions that persist at the venue. He bowls against a stiff breeze that blows from North to South across the ground, and only in Wellington is this climatic feature so relevant that it requires a special skill set. Therefore, given a green pitch on which the hosts bowled first, it would have been expected that Bangladesh would wilt under the weight of the opposition's class as well as the unique conditions, but they ended the day in front at 154 for three.

"Today is Bangladesh's day," Wagner, who brought New Zealand back into the match late in the day with the wicket of Mahmudullah Riyad, said after the day's play. "It was a tough day [for bowlers]. It [wind] will make it a tough day for batters as well -- not easy as a batting group to come in and out, and start again in these conditions."

Most of Bangladesh's success came from the assurance and ability displayed by Tamim Iqbal and Mominul Haque, who scored 56 and 64 not out respectively. While Tamim has played in Wellington before, it is Mominul's first trip to New Zealand, but the Kiwis know the diminutive batsmen all too well as he now averages 219.5 against them.

"Nothing much has changed from the last time we played him in Dhaka a few years ago," said Wagner. "He is a pretty good batter and he showed a lot of patience and he showed a lot of fight. He never really gave a chance, he left balls well and played really well. Obviously he loves batting against us and we have to come hard at him tomorrow [Friday]."

Asked whether the pitch was playing easier than expected, Wagner replied in the negative. "When we put the ball in the right areas there was enough in it for us out there. The windy conditions made it difficult for both sides. Tough day of cricket, but Bangladesh played really well."

"At the Basin, normally as a batter if you can get yourself in you can score quite big. But also, if you get a wicket or two you can get a couple in clumps pretty quick. So we know that if we put the ball in the right areas for a long period of time, build that pressure and bowl in partnerships you can get two, three, four wickets quickly."

Windy even for Wellington

AL-AMIN from Wellington



Tamim Iqbal was very much correct to say that had it been any other ground in the cricket world the game could not have been played in such windy conditions.

"When you are batting there it will feel like someone was pulling you from behind. The good thing was that we got the permission from the match officials that we can move away any time if we feel uncomfortable against the wind. You will not find a second place in the world where cricket is played in such a windy situation," the Bangladesh opener quipped.

And how windy the Basin Reserve was during the stop-start opening day's play of the first Test cannot be gauged if you were not there.

Those who watched the game on TV sets perhaps wondered why they were watching the proceedings from one end of the wicket like the olden days. It was because the cameras posted at the other end could not be operated due to the strong wind, as the cameramen were perched atop scaffolding and it was perilous to continue operating from that position. The pitch cover was removed after the second rain break. But the ground staff had to endure a really tough time to fold that white canvas. While they were wrestling to fold the wind

attacked in force and for a moment it looked like the canvas turned into a big kite that was about to take off into the sky with as many as four people desperately clinging onto its edges.

The bails were dislodged on numerous occasions and the batsmen were allowed to withdraw from their stance any time while taking guard. Sitting inside the grandstand you may not be subject to that vigorous push, but you can still listen to the clattering of metal and other objects and that spine-chilling whistling of air, something heard in Bangladesh when there is a storm in full force. For the last four days we were feeling the pinch in windy Wellington. But Thursday was

exceptional and we were struggling to walk straight as we came out of the hotel to get into a taxi parked nearby.

It was more embarrassing for me when I opened the door and was about to close it after getting inside. The door was pushed vehemently by the wind and got stuck to another car parked next to our taxi cab. The driver of the other car came out with a stone-faced expression but spared my blushes, perhaps in the understanding that the offender is not familiar with these windy conditions. The driver, who was taking us to Basin Reserve, also admitted that the wind was more forceful than on an average day in windy Wellington.



The wind in Wellington was blowing with such fury that the groundstaff had a difficult time simply putting the covers on during breaks. PHOTO: BCB

rienced left-hander with four half-centuries in six innings against the Black Caps.

"Was he disappointed in missing out on a hundred?" "When you are batting well and can't make it big you feel a bit disappointed. It's disappointing that I could not score a century but the good thing is that I was not out playing a bad shot. It was a good ball," Tamim responded.

He however reserved special praise for Mominul Haque.

"He has been really good for us over the last two years. Even though he just plays in one format and gets his opportunity to play a game after six months' gap or sometimes after a year and a half. Considering that, he has been amazing. What has helped him is that he was with us from the beginning of the tour and it helped him to play well in these conditions," said Tamim about the little left-hander unbeaten on 64.

"He has been playing quite amazingly in his short Test career and I'm confident he will do well tomorrow as well. He is a kind of a batsman who doesn't come out of his comfort zone. He knows what he is doing and what he is capable of. And that makes him a really good player," Tamim opined.

He however said that it's too early to say where the game was heading.

"We actually are not in a position to say where we stand in the match at the moment because we have not even played the whole day today. The first session will be crucial tomorrow. If we can handle the morning session well, we can be in a position to set a target," concluded the left-hander.

Athar says he is not at fault

SPORTS REPORTER from Wellington

Athar Ali Khan, chief selector of the Bangladesh women's cricket team, has admitted that he should have been with the Bangladesh women's cricket team, who are now playing a five-match ODI series against South Africa in Cox's Bazar.

"I agree that I should have been with the team, but I am not actually at fault.

According to the initial plan, the South Africa women's team's tour should not have clashed with the Bangladesh national team's tour to New Zealand as it was initially supposed to be held in October 2015. I had arranged my plans for commentating [on the Bangladesh-New Zealand series] far earlier and I was not in a position to dishonour my commitment," said Athar, who is currently in New Zealand as part of the broadcaster's commentary team.

Athar's response came after Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hasan Papon said on Monday that he would talk to the former national player for not being with the women's team in Cox's Bazar.

Tigresses outclassed

SPORTS REPORTER



Nigar Sultana hit an unbeaten 59 but her effort was not good enough to save the Bangladesh women's team from a huge 86-run defeat against the visiting South Africans in the first ODI of the five-match series at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

After being sent in to bat first, the favourites showed their strength in batting courtesy of a 122-run opening stand between Lizelle Lee and Andrie Steyn gave them a good start. Lee smacked six fours and seven sixes during her 71-ball 87, while Steyn added 68 off 123 balls with two boundaries.

After Lee's dismissal, Mignon du Preez joined Steyn to share a 79-run second-wicket stand as the visitors reached 251 for the loss of three wickets in 50 overs.

Salma Khatun was Bangladesh's most successful bowler as she finished with two wickets, but she was also the most expensive, giving away 30 runs in 4 overs.

In reply, the hosts lost opener Sharmin Akhter in the very second over and another opener, Sanjida Islam, walked back with the score on 27 and 11.2 overs gone by.

Bangladesh were never in contention as the asking run-rate increased after every over.

The only silver lining was the bat-

ting of captain Rumana Ahmed and wicketkeeper Nigar Sultana, who was unbeaten after facing 90 deliveries. The latter's innings also contained seven fours and a six, while Rumana contributed 37 off 80 balls.

At the end of their allotted overs, Bangladesh could only manage 165 runs.

The rest of the ODIs will take place at the same venue on January 16, 18

and 20 respectively.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 251-3 in 50 overs (Lee 87, Steyn 68, Preez 62 not out; Nahida 1-45, Salma 2-30)

BANGLADESH: 165-6 in 50 overs (Rumana 37, Nigar 59 not out; Niekerk 2-23, Luus 3-52)

Result: South Africa won by 86 runs.

Player of the match: L Lee (South Africa)

BD-NZ SCOREBOARD				
BANGLADESH: First Innings				
Tamim lbw b Boult	56	50	11/0	
Mominul c Boult b Southee	1/7	0/0		
Mominul not out	64	110	10/1	
Mahmudullah c Watling				
b Wagner	26	64	4/0	
Shakib not out	5	11	1/0	
Extras: (lb-2)	2			
Total: (For 3 wickets in 40.2 overs)	154			
To bat: Mushfiqur, Sabbir, Mehedi, Taskin, Subashis, Kamrul.				
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-60, 3-145.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Boult	12.2	3	53	1
Southee	11	3	45	1
De Grandhomme	6	0	26	0
Wagner	11	2	28	1
NEW ZEALAND: Raval, Latham, Williamson,				

Aus-Pak first ODI today

AFP, Brisbane

Sarfraz Ahmed has become the second Pakistan player forced to return home this week in a troubled lead-up to Friday's opening One Day International against Australia in Brisbane.

Captain Azhar Ali confirmed on Thursday that his team will be without their vice-captain and wicketkeeper for the opening game and possibly this month's entire five-match series.

Mohammad Rizwan will take the gloves for the game, and perhaps the whole series.

Meanwhile, Australia can extend their lead in the ODI rankings if they can pull off a series whitewash.



Bangladesh's Nigar Sultana's unbeaten 59 went in vain as the Tigresses lost the first ODI against their South African counterparts in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED