

SPORT



FALLEN HEROES: Regardless of how the rest of the team performed in the second innings on the fifth day of the first Test in Wellington, the courage and grit shown by the injured Mushfiqur Rahim (R), who battled 53 balls and a barrage of bouncers before being sent to hospital by a mild concussion-causing bouncer, and Imrul Kayes, who hit three boundaries although he could not run and could barely stand on an injured left leg, are examples the team can learn from.

A lion among Tigers

AL-AMIN from Wellington



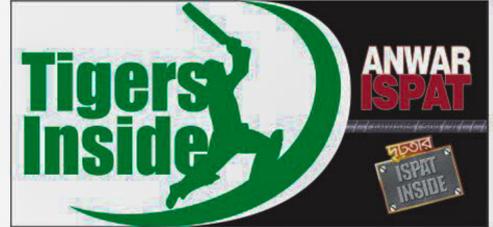
You may not like his defensive captaincy; you may not rate him as a very good wicketkeeper but you simply cannot help but love and admire him for his unquestionable commitment to the cause of the team.

The little Bangladesh Test captain Mushfiqur Rahim is the epitome of a true warrior. He came out to bat when any other professional would have preferred to avoid the crease considering the risk factor of aggravating a fractured thumb. He battled against those countless short-pitched deliveries in a desperate attempt to bail his team out of danger on the fifth morning of the opening Test against New Zealand at Basin Reserve yesterday. He took a few painful blows on his injured left thumb while tackling the short stuff, especially from Neil Wagner, who was well aware of the Achilles Heel and was exploiting it ruthlessly.

But Mushfiqur stood firm until he was struck by a bouncer from Tim Southee on the helmet. He fell on the ground and received treatment from paramedics for about 15 minutes before being taken to the hospital for further assessment. He had a mild concussion and this is something which takes three to four weeks to recover from. But while at the hospital Mushfiqur, who suffered a blow to his neck, desired to

return to the field and resume batting. He wanted a quick release from the hospital after an X-ray on his neck came out fine.

He returned straight to the ground from hospital only to find his team in tatters. And more importantly most of the batsmen were out playing rash shots. He scored 13 off 53 balls and while he was at the crease his application was exemplary. There was only one delivery he negotiated unconvincingly to short square leg. But apart from that he was not only playing well but also guiding the team to safety. And had his application been replicated by some of his key team members, Bangladesh could have easily avoided this



embarrassing defeat.

Opener Imrul Kayes also deserve plaudits for limping onto the ground and put a price tag on his wicket. Mushfiqur was desperately missed in the limited-overs series. His return in the first Test not only brought back that stability but also played a key role in Bangladesh's imposing first-innings total of 595 for eight declared, where his contribution was 159. Bangladesh need more of Mushfiqur and less of glory-hunters if they are to avoid such heart-stopping defeats.

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Mushy a doubt for Christchurch

SPORTS REPORTER from Wellington

Bangladesh will desperately need Mushfiqur Rahim to lead the team in the second Test at Christchurch beginning on January 20. But according to Bangladesh physio Dean Conway it is an unlikely prospect at the moment. Conway, the busiest man for the last couple of days who will probably prefer a hospital closer to the Hagley Oval if the injury procession in Wellington is anything to go by, said that Mushfiqur needs time to heal his thumb.

He also said that Imrul Kayes needs rest to recover. Regarding Mominul's pain in the chest the Englishman said he was little concerned about his pain. He looked more impressed with the way he batted in the two innings. The injury-plagued Bangladesh team is at the moment struggling to find a suitable eleven for the second Test. If Mushfiqur is ruled out, Nurul Hasan will

'We have ourselves to blame'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal has said that even though the Tigers were a bit unlucky due to the injuries in the second innings, they lost the game mainly because of their poor cricketing shots.

While Bangladesh's batsmen handled the bounce at the Basin Reserve quite well in the first innings, they were wayward in the second. In addition, the batsmen seemed to be in a hurry in the second innings, hoping to add as many runs as possible in quick time. It seemed as though the confusion in the approach eventually led to their downfall in Wellington yesterday.

"We were not unlucky. We have ourselves to blame," Tamim told reporters after the game yesterday.

"I think in the second innings we could have batted better. We were

unlucky regarding the injuries but we definitely could have batted well. We had a good partnership early and then Imrul [Kayes] got injured; that was unlucky. Mushfiqur [Rahim] and Sabbir [Rahman] were batting quite well and after Mushy got injured, we fell. It was a mixture of bad luck and bad shots," added Tamim.

When asked if New Zealand's strategy of bowling bouncers consistently was a bit unfair, he replied in the negative. "No, that's part of the game. You can't complain about it. That was their strategy maybe and I have no complaints. I am sure Mushy doesn't have complaints. When they come to Bangladesh we know that they did not like spin. We will bowl spin all day... that's what happened, you know," smiled Tamim.

One of the most shocking dismissals of the day was that of Shakib Al Hasan's. The batsman, who had scored 217 in the first innings, the highest ever score by a Bangladeshi batsman, was caught at

mid-on trying to smack Mitchell Santner for a boundary off only the eighth ball of the day. While Tamim defended Shakib's attempt, he also admitted that it would have been better had Shakib tried to unleash himself a little later during the day.

"We knew that if we had to survive the whole day we had to play our normal game. We can't go overly attacking or overly defensive. If we go too defensive, that would be a problem. Shakib was a lefty batsman against a slow left-arter with the wind. If he was confident about taking him on, then that was the right shot. Because he didn't connect it well, we can say a lot of things now," said Tamim.

When asked if that wicket had a bad effect on his teammates mentally, he replied: "As cricketers, we do talk about it... I feel that if he could have taken a bit more, it would have been good for everyone," he said.

Bangladesh missed an experienced pace attack in this game. With Mohammad Shahid, Shafiqul Islam

and Mustafizur Rahman injured, this was more a back-up pace attack. Kamrul Islam Rabbi had played two Tests prior to this game, while Taskin Ahmed and Shubhashis Roy were playing their first game. It was one of the reasons New Zealand managed to post a strong reply in the second innings of the Test.

Tamim however said that he was happy with the effort of his pacers, considering that they were all really inexperienced.

At the end of the day, despite the defeat, Tamim felt that there were more positives than negatives. "The result is different, but we played really well in the first four days. Posting 500-plus runs is a huge achievement and I am sure the boys are more confident than before."

"We are disappointed as cricketers. Yes there are 10 positives, but at the end of the day we lost the game. Had we won or drawn the match, it would have been special but we lost. Now we have to identify what went wrong and work on it because we

IPDC DEPOSIT

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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

KANE WILLIAMSON



New Zealand's quest for a victory was half met when they managed to bundle the Bangladeshis out quickly on the final day. However, they still had to chase down more than 200 runs in the final sessions of a Test and no matter where you play, that is always a daunting task. The Black Caps were in trouble when they were reduced to 39 for 2 early during their chase, however, Kane Williamson concentration never wavered. He went to the crease with an aim to win the game and returned having accomplished his mission and also added a century to his name. The captain truly led from the front yesterday.

BD-NZ SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH: First innings 595 for 8 decl.				
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 539 (Raval 27, Latham 177, Williamson 53, Taylor 40, Nicholls 53, Watling 49, Santner 73; Subashis 2-89, Kamrul 3-26, Shakib 2-78, Mahmudullah 2-15)				
BANGLADESH: Second innings R/B 45/6s (overnight 66 for 3)				
Tamim b Santner	25/44	2/0		
Imrul ret'd hurt	36/46	5/1		
Mominul c de Grandhomme				
b Wagner	23/37	3/0		
Mahmudullah c Watling b Wagner	5/9	0/0		
Mehedi run out	1/8	0/0		
Shakib b Williamson b Santner	0/5	0/0		
Raval c & b Mehedi	50/101	9/0		
Mushfiqur ret'd hurt	13/53	1/0		
Taskin b Boult	5/23	1/0		
Kamrul c de Grandhomme				
b Southee	1/14	0/0		
Subashis b Boult	0/8	0/0		
Extras: (nb-1)	1			
Total: (All out in 57.5 overs)	160			
Fall of wickets: 0-46* (ret'd not out), 1-50, 2-63, 3-66, 4-66, 5-96, 6-114* (ret'd not out), 6-137, 7-148, 8-152, 9-160.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Boult	13.5	3	53	3
Southee	13	5	34	1
Santner	16	5	36	2
Wagner	15	3	37	2
NEW ZEALAND: Second innings R/B 45/6s				
Latham b Mehedi	16/32	1/0		
Raval c & b Mehedi	13/29	1/0		
Williamson not out	104/90	15/0		
Taylor c Mehedi b Subashis	60/77	6/0		
Nicholls not out	4/10	1/0		
Extras: (b-14, lb-6)	20			
Total: (For 3 wks in 39.4 overs)	217			
Did not bat: De Grandhomme, Watling, Santner, Southee, Wagner, Boult.				
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-39, 3-202.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Kamrul	7	0	31	0
Mehedi	11.4	0	66	2
Shakib	10	0	30	0
Taskin	6	0	38	0

'Great to bounce back'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh probably did lose their steam on the last day of the Test, but the hosts still needed more than 200 runs to win the game on the fifth day and for that they needed a touch of brilliance. That came in the form of skipper Kane Williamson, who absolutely bludgeoned the visitors after the Black Caps had lost two early wickets.

Sure, the wicket at the Basin Reserve was good for batting and Bangladesh were morally down, but Williamson still needed to be aggressive in order to tilt the balance of the match towards his side after they were reduced to 39 for two and that required plenty of guts.

He eventually ended up scoring 104 off 90 balls and was the key reason why the Black Caps managed to race home.

Speaking to reporters after the game, Williamson appreciated the fight that his teammates had displayed and also praised Bangladesh. He thought that the visitors were a bit unlucky due to the injuries in the game.

"They were certainly unlucky with the injuries. That's never nice and hard to control. In terms of the weather, I thought they handled it better than us in the first innings. The way they batted was beautiful on a soft, damp wicket and both teams were going to bowl first. It was dark and rain [there was] around and they played well."

"We took lessons from them going into the second innings. They played fantastic cricket and it was great for us to bounce back and learn and playwell and get the result," said Williamson at the post-match press conference yesterday at the Basin Reserve.

"Mushfiqur's injury didn't help Bangla's cause. He played a great innings in the first innings and was very unfortunate to be out with the injury. The guys were genuinely concerned for his safety. You never want to see that happen."

"We can control what we can, the guys stuck to the plans. The Bangladeshis showed their class with the bat and composure to bat long periods of time in our conditions and score such big runs. Both teams should be credited for a great game of cricket," he added.

New Zealand's obvious strategy against Bangladesh was to bowl bouncers consistently and Neil Wagner was their main weapon. The pacer never stopped troubling the Bangladeshi batsman. He even got a warning at one point.

"He got one [warning] at one point and if you get two warnings you're off. It is a fine line and he got one warning. Both teams used the short ball well and it is very unfortunate when you do see someone get hit. It's a delicate place and both teams were very concerned. It was uncanny that there were so many people hit on a fast bouncy wicket, which often it goes over the top. You never like to see someone in an ambulance on a cricket field but nice to see he's okay."

"It's a tactic to get players out and it is unfortunate. Nowadays with where cricket gear has got to, the quality is very high. It's nice to see Mushfiqur here doing the interviews. It looked like he's okay, which is really good from our perspective," said Williamson.

He described the last day of the Test as a very exciting one. "When you go into the last innings of a Test anything can happen. If you are able to bowl you can exert pressure and take wickets in clumps. The way our bowlers came back after a really tough first innings and bowl with energy and put the ball in the right areas was a great effort and that set the game up for us."

Tigresses strike back

SPORTS REPORTER



While the men's team sent out shockwaves of disappointment through the country, the women's team provided some solace in Cox's Bazar as Khadija Tul Kubra spun Bangladesh to a 10-run victory against South Africa to stay alive in the five-match series yesterday.

Defending a paltry 136 runs, pacers Panna Ghosh and Jahanara Alam along with spinner Kubra initiated the top-order collapse as South Africa lost half their wickets for 64 runs and Kubra finished the job brilliantly to wrap up the visitors for 126 runs in 31.2 overs.

The home team lost the first game badly but fought well in the second match, although they suffered a defeat, and needed to win yesterday at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium to keep the series alive.

"We were confident that we could defend our total as the wicket was turning and our spin attack was also good," said an excited Kubra after the match. "We had a good start in defence of a small total which I think was the turning point in the match. I missed a hat-trick chance but I have no regrets as my team won the match."

But she said that they will need to perform much better in the next matches which will take place on

January 18 and 20 at the same venue.

National men's team selector Habibul Bashar, who watched the match as proxy for women's team chief selector Athar Ali Khan who is now in New Zealand as part of the broadcaster commentary team, gave full credit to the bowlers.

"The bowlers actually won the match and we must give full credit to the bowlers. South Africa are a very strong side, so beating them is an achievement but our batting lacked the power. We need to play more international matches and we need to work with this team,

especially with the fitness and batting," observed Bashar.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH WOMEN'S TEAM: 136 all out in 49 overs (Sharmin 21, Rumana 28, Nigar 21, extras 20; Kapp 2-18, Luus 2-29, van Niekerk 2-18)

SOUTH AFRICA WOMEN'S TEAM: 126 all out in 31.2 overs (Lee 46, van Niekerk 42 not out, extras 9; Panna 2-25, Jahanara 2-21, Kubra 4-33)

Result: Bangladesh women's team won by 10 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Khadija Tul Kubra

Khadija Tul Kubra, who took four wickets, initiated Bangladesh's 10-run victory against South Africa in the third ODI at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHME