

SPORT



Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar (L) and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan steadied the ship after the fall of two early wickets with a 127-run third-wicket stand on the first day of the second Test against New Zealand at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Soumya happy but not sated

AL-AMIN from Christchurch



Injury to regular opener Imrul Kayes gifted Soumya Sarkar an opportunity to open a Test innings with Tamim Iqbal yesterday. The young left-hander grabbed it with both hands with a sublime 86 on the opening day of the second Test against New Zealand at the Hagley Oval.

Some may say it is a blessing in disguise for Bangladesh after so many injuries in the team going into the game. But the truth is that after Soumya's phenomenal rise as an opener in the shorter versions of the game there was never any doubt he would also excel as an opener in Test cricket. He was tried as a lower middle-order batsman in his four previous Tests but he was not much of a success in that position. Besides, he was going through bad times with the bat for at least a year and his place in the team became uncertain after a long lean spell. He gathered some momentum in the last two T20s playing in his favourite position. So when he came out to bat with Tamim yesterday, it looked like something Bangladesh have long been waiting for.

His 86 with a strike-rate of nearly 90 is a hallmark of his seamless style of batting against any opposition and in any condition. He struck 11 boundaries, including an eye-pleasing on-drive with which he reached his maiden Test fifty. And had the left-hander stayed at the wicket for a longer period of time it could have been a fruitful day for Bangladesh.

He also made no secret of the fact that he enjoyed batting in his favourite position.

"I always feel comfortable as an opener. Since Imrul Bhai and Tamim Bhai have been very good in that place for a long time, I always waited for my chance to get an opportunity and prove myself. As I got an opportunity I wanted to seize the opportunity. [It was the] first time I got the chance to bat at the top in a Test match and I tried to give my 100 per cent. If I could have worked harder it could have been better for the team and also for me," said Soumya after the first day's play.

"I desperately wanted to get some runs and I was trying to do that in whichever format I was playing. It feels good but I'm not satisfied. If I had been at the wicket for longer we could have had more runs on the scoreboard," added the left-hander.

He said he was positive right from the start and played his natural game.

"I was not sure early on but once I got settled I got the confidence that I can play my shots and tried to play to the merit of the ball. The pitches here are very hard. In the morning it looked green. It was always difficult to play against the new ball. But if you can survive that early part it becomes easy to bat," observed the left-handed batsman.

"I tried my best. Along with Shakib [Al Hasan] Bhai we tried to build the innings

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ANTI DIRT
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BD-NZ SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH: First Innings R/B 46/66
Tamim c Watling b Southee 5/17 1/0
Soumya c Grandhomme b Boult 86/104 11/0
Mahmudullah c Watling b Boult 19/24 3/0
Shakib c Watling b Southee 59/78 9/0
Sabbir c Southee b Boult 7/8 1/0
Nazmul c Raval b Southee 18/56 2/0
Nurul c Watling b Boult 47/98 5/0
Mehedi b Wagner 10/13 2/0
Taskin c Williamson b Southee 8/26 0/0
Kamrul lbw b Southee 2/63 0/0
Rubel not out 16/21 3/0
Extras: (b-4, lb-2, w-5, nb-1) 12
Total: (All out in 84.3 overs) 289
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-38, 3-165, 4-177, 5-179, 6-232, 7-248, 8-257, 9-273, 10-289.

Bowler O M R W
Boult 24 4 87 4
Southee 28.3 7 94 5
Grandhomme 14 4 58 0
Wagner 18 1 44 1

NEW ZEALAND: Raval, Latham, Williamson, Taylor, Nicholls, De Grandhomme, Watling, Santner, Southee, Wagner, Boult.

Audience with an all-round king

AL-AMIN from Christchurch

New Zealand cricket great Sir Richard Hadlee said Bangladesh should get enough opportunity to play Test cricket against top teams like

Australia, England and South Africa. "Bangladesh won a number of Test matches but I do believe world cricket has got to really entertain Bangladesh and give them more Test cricket and I mean against the best countries -- against Australia, against England and South Africa. Your game can benefit from that experience and it can actually grow. Until that happens it's going to be stagnant a little bit in Test cricket," said New Zealand's greatest fast bowler while talking to the Bangladesh media standing next to the member's stand named after him at the Hagley Oval yesterday.

He observed that Bangladesh are a very competitive team in ODIs and T20s, but they are still learning the most demanding five-day format.

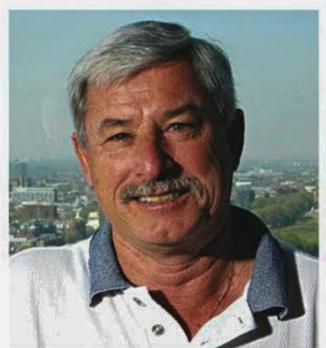
"Test cricket is a bit different. I think Bangladesh learnt a very valuable lesson in the Test match at Wellington. When cricket goes for five days you can't take your eye off the ball. Some indifferent shot selection, gifting of the wickets in the second innings just opened the door for New Zealand to pounce on that," he said while reflecting on Bangladesh's defeat in the first Test. "And having said that Bangladesh with their win against England [at home in October 2016] was a significant success story for Bangladesh. Look, it took us 25 years in our history to win our first-ever Test," said the idol of many fast bowlers around the world.

The first bowler in the history of Test cricket to take 400 wickets also said that Pakistan's Imran Khan is perhaps the best of the four all-rounders of his era -- a

select club that includes England's Ian Botham, India's Kapil Dev and himself.

"During the 70s and 80s the battle of the all-rounders I think was a pretty special era -- with Ian Botham from England, Kapil Dev from India, Imran Khan from Pakistan and myself from New Zealand. We were all well aware of what each other was doing around in world cricket. So, whenever we had a one-on-one battle it tended to lift your performance a little bit because you wanted to out-skill and outperform the all-rounder.

"I think of the four of us Imran was a better player simple because he was more consistent than the rest of us. A



SIR RICHARD HADLEE

potent strike bowler, he could bat anywhere in the top four or five in the batting order. Botham was explosive as a batsman and as a wicket-taker. Kapil was there all the time but batting was perhaps the weaker of the four. I like to think my bowling was the stronger of the four," added one of the finest all-rounders of all time.

He said an all-rounder is a very valuable member of the team but he felt that it would be tough to find a group of lethal all-rounders like them in a changed scenario of the game and

with the advent of T20 cricket.

"The game has changed so much today with the advent of T20 cricket and lot more one-day cricket. You have got what is called bits-and-pieces players, those who can do a little bit of both and be effective as far as all-rounders are concerned. It's become harder to get a genuine all-rounder today than in our time simply because of Test cricket, one-day cricket and T20 cricket. And the body can only take so much. When you talk of Jacques Kallis, I give you the greatest all-rounder in the history of the game. You just need to look at the stats and that shows how good he was in all formats of the game. I think he is a special breed," observed Hadlee.

Asked what a young cricketer needs to do to be a Sir Richard Hadlee: "There never will be another one like me... the original one," he said with a hearty laugh.

"Look, anyone who wants to play the game and wants to be a very good all-rounder he will certainly have to be an out-and-out strike bowler. You just need to dedicate yourself to the game; you will have to sacrifice yourself. You need to get out there to do the physical work -- running, sprinting, that sort of thing. But more importantly from the bowling point of view you got to bowl a lot of overs.

"I get a little bit concerned today when the players monitor for how many balls he is allowed to bowl. In practice you can bowl 36 balls, what if you got to bowl 136 balls the next day. To me, your body takes shape through your bowling. If you want to be an all-rounder you need to put in a lot of effort into your batting and bowling. Most importantly, whether you are a bowler or a batsman you got to have a sound technique. And that sound technique can only come through repetitions of those skills," concluded the great all-rounder.

Hales out of India tour

AFP, New Delhi

England opener Alex Hales was Friday ruled out of the rest of the India tour after breaking his hand in the second one-day international in Cuttack.

Hales sustained the injury while attempting a catch in the outfield on Thursday and scans revealed that he has fractured his right hand, according to the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) media release.

Hales will return home on Saturday to see a hand surgeon.

England will announce Hales' replacement for the three Twenty20 matches against India starting January 26.

India won the second ODI by 15 runs to clinch the series against the Eoin Morgan-led England side. The final ODI is scheduled in Kolkata on Sunday.

'An improvement on Wellington'

SPORTS REPORTER



Rookies Soumya Sarkar and Nurul Hasan, along with middle-order batsman Shakib Al Hasan, led a makeshift Bangladesh side to a competitive 289 but New Zealand claimed the honours on Day One of the second Test in Christchurch yesterday.

"I think if you can bowl a side out on Day One then I guess it's a pretty good effort. They came out with a positive intent and looked to put any balls that we missed away to the fence, and they especially did that in that period before lunch," New Zealand strike bowler Tim Southee said after taking his sixth five-wicket haul.

Despite removing stand-in captain Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad within the first 11 overs, the hosts found it difficult to break the 127-run stand between Shakib and Soumya, and Southee admitted that the bowlers were not at their best.

"We were pretty good at the start, then they got a bit of a partnership going," Southee said. "We knew if we could hang in our areas for a long period of time it was our best chance of taking wickets. So once we got that right we looked more effective."

"I think we were a little bit off still, but it was an improvement from Wellington. We managed to crawl the run-rate back a bit there towards the end, so yeah I think it's a good day," he continued.

Southee also addressed one of the major problems that has plagued the Black Caps in the Test series -- their fielding.

The hosts dropped three chances today, adding to their seven drops in the first Test at Wellington.

"It's part of cricket. No one means to drop a catch. We've dropped a few in the last couple of games, we set a high standard as a fielding group in all three formats, so it is disappointing," Southee said.

"We put a lot of work into our fielding," Southee said. "We pride ourselves on our fielding and that's because we do a lot of fielding work at training."

"It's not a skill thing, we know everyone can catch and has done, it's just a coincidence in the last couple of games we've put a few catches down, which isn't ideal. But we still managed to take 10 wickets today."

Rubel X-ray comes out fine

SPORTS REPORTER from Christchurch

An X-ray conducted on Bangladesh fast bowler Rubel Hossain's right elbow after play on the first day of the second Test in Christchurch yesterday revealed no fracture, which is good news for Bangladesh on what has so far been an injury-mired tour of New Zealand.

Rubel, back in the Test side after almost two years, suffered a painful blow from a Trent Boult delivery just minutes before close of play. It was a short of length delivery that did not bounce as much as expected and snuck past the bat to crash into the unprotected area just below Rubel's right elbow. The number 11 batsman was floored in pain after the blow to his bowling arm.

There was swelling on the arm, but it cannot yet be said for certain whether or not he will bowl on the second day, when Bangladesh start their defence of a first innings total of 289 all out.

Mathews to lead till WC

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka Cricket has not lost faith in skipper Angelo Mathews despite the drubbing in South Africa and backed him to continue as captain until the 2019 World Cup.

"Angelo has our fullest backing. We are looking at him leading us at the 2019 World Cup," SLC president Thilanga Sumathipala told reporters on Thursday.

Chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya blamed the loss on inexperience and urged patience.

Tigresses battered

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh women's series against South Africa ended on a poor note as the hosts crumbled to an eight-wicket defeat in the fifth one-day at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium at Cox's Bazar yesterday as Rumana Ahmed and co ended up losing the series 4-1.

It was arguably the Tigresses' worst performance of the five-match series as the hosts were bundled out for just 68 in 36.3 overs on a track that seemed to support the bowlers. In reply, the South Africans, reached home in just 10 overs and with eight wickets in hand.

After having elected to bat first, South Africa's pacers Odine Kirsten and Marcia Letsoalo took a total of seven wickets to run through Bangladesh's middle order. While Kirsten finished with brilliant figures of 4 for 10 in 10 overs with a staggering five maidens, Letsoalo gave away 13 in her 10 and scalped three wickets.

Nigar Sultana and Sharmin Sultana were the only batters who managed to reach the double figures for Bangladesh with Nigar scoring 10 and Sharmin 13.

After the exchange, South Africa opener Lizelle Lee scored a 19-ball 37 with seven fours to provide the visitors with an aggressive start. While Salma Khatun and Rumana Ahmed took a wicket each, former captain Mignon Du Preez and top order batter Chloe Tryon ensured that there were no further hiccups and they reached home in ten overs.

While the series was quite one-sided, Bangladesh have a number of positives to take from this tour. For starters, they were quite competitive in the second ODI and won the third ODI by ten runs. However, they were not consistent enough.

Rumana Ahmed was Bangladesh's highest run-getter and the fourth highest scorer of the series with 142 runs in five matches while Khadijatul Kubra was the highest wicket-taker of the series with 11 wickets.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: 68 all out 36.3 overs (Sharmin 13, Nigar 10; Kirsten 4-10, Letsoalo 3-13, Fourie 2-22)

SOUTH AFRICA: 69 for 2 in 10 overs (Lee 37, Tryon 13 not out; Rumana 1-13)

Result: South Africa won the match by 8 wickets and won the five-match series 4-1.

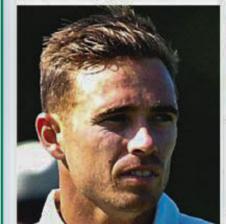
Player-of-the-match: O Kirsten
Player-of-the-series: L Lee

IPDC DEPOSIT

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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

TIM SOUTHEE



A tour of New Zealand would not have been complete without one or both of their two premier bowlers, Tim Southee and Trent Boult, coming to the party. Both fired yesterday, but it was Southee who excelled with his sixth five-wicket haul. He started the Kiwis' charge by getting Bangladesh stand-in captain Tamim Iqbal out early, and followed that up by scalping Shakib Al Hasan later in the day. He added the shocked debutant Nazmul Hossain to his collection, before cleaning up the tail with the wickets of Taskin Ahmed and Kamrul Islam Rabbi to finish with figures of five for 94.



TIM SOUTHEE ... 5 for 94