

SPORT

Tigers stumble in warm-up

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's first impression ahead of their one-off Test against India was anything but inspiring yesterday. Batting first after winning the toss in the lone two-day practice match against India A, the Tigers limped to 224 for eight. More baffling was the declaration at that point when they were still left with 23 overs in their allotted quota of 90. The second-string Indian side raced to 91 for one in 21 overs when stumps were drawn for the day at the Gymkhana Ground in Hyderabad.

The team management can better explain the surprise decision to declare. But from a layman's point of view that declaration neither salvaged a battered image nor did it help in any way to hide their inability to bat for long periods. Bangladesh batted exactly 67 overs and their 200-plus total was built around two half centuries of stark contrast and an 81-run sixth wicket stand after they were reduced to 113 for five.

Batting at number three, left-handed batsman Soumya Sarkar struck a fluent 52 off 73 balls that contained nine fours and a six. Skipper Mushfiqur Rahim on the other hand grafted his way to 58 off 106 balls that featured eight fours and a six.

With Soumya carrying his good form from New Zealand, the left-hander has certainly provided the team think-tank ample food for thought for his inclusion in the Test starting at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium on February 9.

Mushfiqur, who missed most of the New Zealand tour due to injuries, once again showed why he is considered the most assured batsman in the team. He was actually responsible for taking the score past the 200-mark with yet another solid batting performance on a wicket that bounced a lot and assisted the pacers.

The good news is that not a single Bangladesh batsman threw his wicket away except for opener Imrul Kayes who hooked his way out after scoring four runs. Tamim Iqbal got a start but played on for 13 against a good delivery from Aniket Choudhary.

The left-arm pace bowler from Rajasthan extracted good bounce from the wicket and troubled the Bangladesh batsmen. He also dismissed Mominul Haque (5), Mushfiqur and Mehedi Hasan Miraz for a first-ball duck to finish with fantastic figures of 12-2-26-4.

Mahmudullah Riyad was playing well on 23 but was undone while playing inside the line of the ball. Sabbir Rahman, who featured in the 81-run sixth-wicket stand with Mushfiqur, was also dismissed in the same fashion after scoring a solid 33.

Although the game has been designed as 90 overs per innings, Bangladesh still has a chance to bat again subject to how long the home team bat on the second and final day.



Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and Soumya Sarkar, in their contrasting ways, were the only two batsmen to make an impression on the first day of the two-day warm-up game against India A at the Gymkhana Ground in Hyderabad yesterday.



PHOTOS: AFP

Soumya stakes his claim

SPORTS REPORTER

It was around four months ago when Imrul Kayes hammered a century in a warm-up game against England in Fatullah and in the process replaced a struggling Soumya Sarkar in the ODI outfit. He ended up scoring a century in the first ODI against England as well and many at that point believed that it would take Soumya, who had previously been given a number of chances to improve his form, a very long time to find a place back in the eleven.

However, as fate would have it, Imrul was injured in the first Test of the recently concluded New Zealand tour and that is when Soumya stepped up and scored a good-looking 86 in the

first innings of the second Test. He had also played well in the preceding T20I series.

As Bangladesh stands on the brink of a historic Test series against India, Imrul seems fit. However, after yesterday's practice match, it will not be unreasonable to say that Soumya has a better chance of partnering Tamim Iqbal than Imrul when the first Test at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad starts on Thursday.

While most of the batsmen failed, Soumya scored 52 in the first innings of the warm-up game against India A yesterday, and seemed to dominate the attack with nine fours and one six.

The left-hander was understandably not too keen on speaking on this particular issue. "I am not thinking about that and I didn't play my innings keeping Imrul bhai in mind. Imrul bhai will play in his way and I will play in mine. There's no confu-

sion here. I am not competing with anyone except myself. I need to improve," said Soumya.

He felt that he had adjusted well to an uneven wicket at the Gymkhana Ground in Hyderabad and expects the main Test to be played on a much better wicket.

"We just tried to adjust to the wicket. It would have been better had I played a slightly longer innings. The wicket was a bit two-paced and initially I faced some trouble. The deliveries of the spinners were up and down. I think the main surface will be better," said Soumya.

"Actually, no matter how the wicket behaves, we have to play well and as per the merit of the wicket. I really want to do well since this is the first Test that Bangladesh is playing here. I want to make it memorable. If we do well here, we will get more chances to come here," he added.

BD-IND A SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH	R/B	4s/6s
Tamim b Aniket	13/23	3/0
Imrul c Pandya b Millind	4/12	1/0
Soumya lbw b Nadeem	52/73	9/1
Mominul c Ishan b Aniket	5/20	1/0
Mahmudullah c Panchal		
b Kuldeep	23/49	4/0
Mushfiqur c Pant		
b Aniket	58/106	8/1
Sabbir lbw b Shankar	33/68	5/1
Liton not out	23/35	2/1
Mehedi lbw b Aniket	0/1	0/0
Tajjul not out	4/19	0/0
Extras: (w-5, nb-4)	9	
Total: (For 8 wickets dec in 67 overs)	224	
Did not bat: Kamrul, Subashis, Taskin, Shaiful.		
Fall of wickets: 1-22, 2-44, 3-72, 4-89, 5-113, 6-184, 7-206, 8-206.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Millind	12	3	26	1
Pandya	3	0	29	0
Aniket	12	2	26	4
Shankar	5	0	32	1
Yadav	9	2	41	0
Nadeem	16	5	38	1
Kuldeep	10	1	32	1

INDIA A	R/B	4s/6s
Panchal not out	40/62	6/0
Mukund c Imrul b Subashis	16/31	3/0
Iyer not out	29/35	4/1
Extras: (lb-4, nb-2)	6	
Total: (For 1 wicket in 21 overs)	91	
To bat: Jaggi, Pant, Ishan, Shankar, Pandya, Nadeem, Yadav, Kuldeep, Aniket, Millind, Saini.		
Fall of wickets: 1-41.		

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The Bangladesh blind cricket team's five-game win streak came to an end yesterday as they were defeated by five wickets by their English counterparts in the 2nd T20 World Cup Cricket Tournament for the Blind in New Delhi.

Sent in to bat, Bangladesh were off the pace, scoring at 10.70 runs an over. Opener Abdul Malek scored a 26-ball 51 featuring nine fours, while Tanzjilur Rahman top-scored with a 36-ball 56 as Bangladesh reached 214 for the loss of five wickets.

After the exchange, England put their foot on the gas and overcame the target with two overs to spare. Peter Blueitt scored a 32-ball 68, while Matthew James Page scored 31-ball 54.

Bangladesh remain third in the standings on 15 points, three behind leaders India and equal with Pakistan, who have two games in hand.

With 12 points each, Sri Lanka are in fourth and Australia in fifth, but both have a game in hand and could overtake Bangladesh if they win their next game.

The top four teams will advance to the semifinals.



Mustafizur Rahman (R) was wanted for Bangladesh's India tour but could not go while Rubel Hossain (L) wanted to go and was not selected, but it was the latter who outshone his fellow national pacer with a five-wicket haul for South Zone against East Zone in their BCL match in Sylhet yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Rubel sizzles in Sylhet

SPORTS REPORTER



While almost all eyes were glued on Bangladesh pace bowling sensation Mustafizur

Rahman at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, his senior colleague Rubel Hossain stole the show.

Not selected for the Test tour of India due to a lack of game time, Mustafizur was asked to take part in the Bangladesh Cricket League, the country's premier four-day cricket competition.

After Prime Bank South Zone managed to add 27 runs to their overnight score and got bundled out for 403 in 96.5 overs, in came Mustafizur to open the innings against Islami Bank East Zone. He began with a bang. His very first ball uprooted Irfan Sukkur's stumps.

After that, Rubel scalped three quick wickets and ended the day with a five-for. Rubel removed the other opener Mehedi Maruf in the fourth over and then trapped Tasamul Haque in front two overs later. The young Zakir Hasan was trapped in front by Shohag Gazi in the 13th over. Three balls later, Rubel came back to dismiss the East Zone

SCORES IN BRIEF

PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE V ISLAMI BANK EAST ZONE
PRIME BANK SOUTH ZONE: 403 all out in 96.5 overs (Anamul 89, Ziaur 72, Tushar 62; Ebadat 3-85, Abul 2-84, Khaled 2-86)
ISLAMI BANK EAST ZONE: 144 all out in 43 overs (Abul 48, Yasir 42; Rubel 5-22, Mustafizur 2-32, Gazi 2-39) and 74 for 5 (Irfan 27; Razzak 2-8, Rubel 1-23, Gazi 1-24)
BCB NORTH ZONE V WALTON CENTRAL ZONE
BCB NORTH ZONE: 502 all out in 141.1 overs (Junaid 181, Dhiman 61, Nasir 55, Ariful 50; Shahidul 3-114, Taibur 3-33, Shahadat 2-112)
WALTON CENTRAL ZONE: 120 for 3 (Saif 52 not out, Marshall 27; Yasin 2-33,

skipper, Alok Kapali.

Mustafizur came back to dismiss Shahnur Rahman and finished with figures of two for 32. At that point East Zone were struggling at 66 for six. A 61-run stand for the seventh wicket between Abul Hasan and Yasir Ali

provided brief resistance before Abul was dismissed by Gazi for 48. The senior spin partner, Abdur Razzak, got rid of Yasir before Rubel came on towards the end to finish off the tail.

He finished with figures of five for 22 in 10 overs.

His job did not end there. East Zone were asked to follow on and they crumbled to 74 for five in the span of just 37 overs. Rubel, once again picked a wicket, while the remaining three were taken by Gazi and Razzak.

With two more days to go in the second round of the BCL, East Zone are staring at a defeat.

Meanwhile, Junaid Siddique, who had an overnight score of 172 for North Zone, managed to add just nine runs to his score before being dismissed at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong. Some brilliant resistance from the tail, which saw scores of 50, 46 and 34 from Ariful Haque, Suhrawadi Shuvo and Forhad Reza respectively, helped them score 502 all out.

In reply, Central were reduced to 120 for three with Yasin Arafat dismissing Shamsur Rahman and Abdul Mazid.

'Want to be ready for nat'l call-up'

SPORTS REPORTER



Rubel Hossain must be feeling a bit hard done by. He was the highest wicket-taker in the three-match T20I series in New Zealand. He played the second Test and although he did not grab any wickets, he seemed quite fierce and also boasted a better economy rate than the other pacers in the team.

It is not uncommon for players to lose their motivation after being dropped from the national team despite putting in a decent performance. However, yesterday's performance for South Zone in the Bangladesh Cricket League suggests that Rubel still has plenty of fire. He took a five-wicket haul and overshadowed his more sought-after partner, Mustafizur Rahman.

Speaking to reporters after the day's play yesterday, Rubel said that he was delighted to finish with figures of five for 22 in East Zone's first innings.

"I don't play the Bangladesh Cricket League regularly. So in that context it feels really good to take a five-wicket haul after such a long time. The wicket here helped the pacers a bit and I tried to utilise it. I just tried to bowl as per the coach's plan," said Rubel.

"I want to keep myself ready for the national team at all times. I didn't get a chance to go to India and that's why I am here. I am trying to perform well here. I will try to continue bowling well in the rest of the games and the rest will depend upon the selectors," he added.

His partner Mustafizur Rahman, who scalped a two-wicket haul yesterday, hopes that playing in the BCL can help him recover his confidence.

"I wanted to play in the BCL in order to gain confidence. I felt good today. Hope we can complete a big win. I had no problem bowling today. But there is a bit of a pain in my hip. That will go away steadily," said Mustafizur.

Not underestimating Bangladesh: Saha

PTI, Kolkata



Resounding success against England and New Zealand notwithstanding, Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha said Sunday his team will not take Bangladesh lightly in the one-off Test beginning February 9 in Hyderabad.

"Ranking-wise one may think they will be easier opponents on paper. But we cannot underestimate them before taking the field. It all depends on the situation on a given day. We have to approach the situation accordingly," Saha told reporters before flying out to join the team in Hyderabad.

In their last Test series, India defeated England 4-0 after a 3-0 whitewash against New Zealand but Saha said it would be about starting afresh against Bangladesh.

"Everyone wants to do well on the field. You may not do



what you think. It's about converting your thoughts into a good performance."

Bangladesh's first-ever Test in India will be a prelude to Australia's four-Test series against India beginning February 23 in Pune.

"I don't know when the Aussies are coming but as of now the focus is on the Bangladesh Test. After they're here we will think about it," he said.

Fresh from a career-best 203 not out in first-class cricket for Rest of India in the Irani Trophy, Saha guided Bengal to the top of East Zone in the Twenty20 league for the Syed

Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

"It's difficult to be consistent in Twenty20 format. But we have done well in all the three -- bowling, batting and fielding -- departments of the game. It's an outstanding show," he said of Bengal who won all their four East Zone league matches.

With the Test in four days' time, it's time to switch style but Saha said it would not be an issue for him.

YOUTH HOCKEY Dhaka finish third

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka District finished third in the Agrani Bank 26th National Youth Hockey Championship with a massive 10-4 win over Dinajpur at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Though Dinajpur gave a run for the money to their illustrious opponents after pulling back two goals in the first half, but they could not eventually resist Dhaka, who added six more goals in the second half.

Dhaka dominated the first half with a comfortable 4-2 lead.

Mahub scored four goals followed by Belal's three and Shihab's brace while Tanjim added one to complete the rout. Rasel struck three goals while Likhon netted one goal for Dinajpur.

The final between Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan and Dhaka Educational Board will be held today at the same venue.