



The one-off Test against India has so far been marked by fielding bloopers from Bangladesh, and on the second day yesterday skipper Mushfiqur Rahim committed perhaps the worst one when he missed a stumping chance to dismiss centurion Wriddhiman Saha.

The ball now in Tigers' court

NAIMUL KARIM from Hyderabad



After being dominated for two whole days, the ball is finally in Bangladesh's court. They have nine wickets in hand and the pitch still seems really good for batting. But the question remains as to whether the Bangladeshis actually believe that they can post a big enough total that can ensure a draw for them.

No matter how good the Indian bowlers are, the fact is that the wicket remains flat. The 14 overs that India bowled right before stumps yesterday saw no turn or swing. Yes, a couple of the deliveries stayed low, but that was as bad as it got.

Bangladesh have batted in more trying conditions in the recent past and they have managed to do well. If they want to be encouraged, all they need to do is look at the games against England and New Zealand.

They successfully played on vicious turners against England back home and then managed to score their second-highest total in Test cricket against New Zealand on a wicket that had immense pace and bounce.

The real battle for Bangladesh, as far as Day Three is concerned, is whether they can play to the merit of the ball and not the name of the bowler.

Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja's names popped up in nearly every press conference leading up to this series. The common question was: "How do you plan to tackle the number one bowler in the world?"

While Ashwin is no doubt a great bowler

and Jadeja a fine ally, they will need to work twice as hard to do well on this pitch and this is where Bangladesh's batsmen will need to step up. They need to surpass their mental barriers and play their own game when they take the field today.

The young Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who was sent to the post-day press conference yesterday, said that he believes his batsmen can do a good job.

In the first Test against New Zealand we scored close to 600 runs. Our batsmen are confident. They had scored well back then. We believe that if we can score well there, we can come back here as well.

"I believe that our senior players, Tamim [Iqbal] bhai, Mushfiqur [Rahim] bhai, and [Mahmudullah] Riyad bhai, can do well. We need two-three players to score big knocks. Only then will it be possible," said Mehedi.

The problem with Mehedi's hope, however, is that the statistics are against him. Bangladesh's highest total against India is 400, a score they posted in 2000 in the first innings of their first ever Test.

In other words, for Bangladesh to stay alive in this game, they will need to break a number of records.

On a personal note, Mehedi -- who took two for 165 in India's first innings -- was content with his performance. He said that the tour has been a great learning experience for him so far.

"I debuted against England on turning tracks and here it is flat. I have realised that there's very little room for error when you play on tracks like these over here," said Mehedi.



TEST TRIVIA

Virat Kohli is the first batsman in Test history to score double-centuries in four successive Test series. He goes past Donald Bradman and Rahul Dravid who have three each.

With their first-innings score of 687 for six, India becomes the first team to score more than 600 in three successive innings.

It was the first time that five Bangladesh bowlers conceded more than 100 runs in a Test innings. It has happened only six times before in Tests.

It was only the third time that Shakib Al Hasan has bowled more than 20 overs (24) and went wicketless, with the last instance being in November 2012 against West Indies.

Kohli special sparks Sanga flashback

NAIMUL KARIM from Hyderabad



In terms of batting styles, Virat Kohli and Kumar Sangakkara are quite different. For starters, the Sri Lankan is someone who absolutely loved to play exquisite drives through cover whenever possible. Kohli on the other hand, seems like someone who would bring out the on-drives whenever possible.

While Kohli is a lot more aggressive no matter what format he plays in, Sangakkara is more selective and preferred to be a lot more cautious during his playing days.

And yet, these two players share plenty in common as far as their training patterns are concerned.

Back in 2014, Sri Lanka had arrived in Dhaka to play a full series. Watching Sangakkara bat in the nets right before the Tests was an eye-opener. He would spend hours at the Mirpur Indoor Stadium and on the outfield pitches in Chittagong defending the ball. After a certain point, observing him got a little boring. After all, how long can someone enjoy watching a batsman carefully practise his front-foot defence?

The Sri Lankan eventually dominated that series, scoring a triple hundred and absolutely drove the Bangladeshi fielders to distraction.

Kohli's preparation for this series seemed quite similar to that of Sangakkara's. Day after day, he batted for hours at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium's nets and he did not mind playing the same shot again and again.

When Kohli was batting against Bangladesh yesterday, it seemed he was all set to score his first triple hundred. He was just that fluent. He rarely played a false shot, he was hitting and placing the ball as per his will and he was also accelerating at a good pace.

It was only once the ball started turning a bit that he slowed down. He was beaten a couple of times, but Kohli was adamant that he would not change his style of batting. He would continue attacking and that is what eventually led to his downfall as he tried to cut Taijul Islam, but was trapped in front instead.

He may not have scored a triple hundred, but the accolades that he achieved with his double century are phenomenal.

He became the first person ever to score four double hundreds in four consecutive series, surpassing legends like Don Bradman and Rahul Dravid. It does not matter that he did not get 300 because it is quite clear that the Kohli show has just begun.

Taijul shows the way

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad



Going into the India Test, the Bangladesh team management had just two options in hand as far as their team combination was concerned.

With Liton Das in the side, they could have gone with an extra batsman in order to remove the wicket-keeping burden from Mushfiqur Rahim and also further strengthen their batting order.

But that would mean that the Tigers would have to go into the game with one bowler less and in that case, Taijul Islam would have been cut. After all, he is not as sought-after as a Mehedi Hasan Miraz or a Taskin Ahmed.

Instead, they decided to field five bowlers, including Shakib Al Hasan, and as a result Taijul got his first game since the second Test against England in Mirpur.

While Mushfiqur did miss an easy stumping, the management will be glad that they selected the underrated slow left-arm bowler as he was easily Bangladesh's best bowler in the first innings of the Test.

None of the bowlers were as consistent as Taijul. Shakib bowled full-tosses and deliveries down the leg-side, Kamrul Islam Rabbi kept bowling short, Taskin Ahmed was off-line on a number of occasions and Mehedi was not as consistent either.

Taijul, on the other hand, bowled the right line to the batsmen for most parts of the innings. That is the reason why he bowled a 17-over spell yesterday morning and grabbed three wickets in his 47 overs.

In essence, Taijul did what the rest of the bowlers could not. On a flat wicket, which did not really have much on it, he consistently bowled in one area. That compelled batsmen to take risks against him and that is how he got them out.

Murali Vijay was bowled while trying to sweep the left-arm bowler for a boundary, Ajinkya Rahane was caught while trying to force the ball through cover and Virat Kohli was trapped in front while trying to cut.

Bangladesh's plan, on this flat wicket, was always to stem the flow of runs. Unfortunately, Taijul was the only bowler who seemed to be implementing that plan successfully for most parts of the innings. This was something that Mehedi pointed out after stumps yesterday.

"Taijul bhai bowled very well. This is his first game since the England series. He did not play the last two Tests. Considering that, he needed a very strong mentality to [do well on his] return."

"He bowled a tight length and turned the ball as well. He bowled a number of wicket-taking balls and he was really good," said Mehedi during the post-match press conference.

How costly have the missed opportunities been for Bangladesh? Now, numbers don't always give you the exact picture. But if you were to go by the exact number of runs that all the Indian batsmen scored after being gifted opportunities by the Bangladeshi fielders, then that would come up to a mammoth 214.

Murali Vijay was on 35 when Bangladesh failed to run him out and he scored 107. Wriddhiman Saha -- who scored an unbeaten 106 -- was on four, when Mushfiqur Rahim missed an easy stumping. Ajinkya Rahane and Ravindra Jadeja scored 20 more runs each after being dropped in the deep.

Of course, this does not mean that India would have posted a total 215 runs less than their current total, but it does show how costly Bangladesh's fielding lapses turned out to be.

It also shows how desperate the Indian batsmen are to score runs. Almost all the batsmen who were dropped made the Tigers pay. Vijay and Saha scored centuries, while Jadeja raced his way to an unbeaten 60.

When Saha was asked about Mushfiqur's missed stumping he could not stop smiling.

"I would say that I was a bit lucky. He tried but he

couldn't hit the stump. By the time he got it right the second time, I was inside the crease. Maybe I was just destined to get a 100 and that's why he couldn't complete the stumping," laughed Saha.

Mushfiqur however congratulated Saha: "I didn't have any word about the stumping with him, but he said, 'well played Saha' after I scored my hundred."

Apart from scoring a century Saha was also partly responsible for Virat Kohli's double hundred.

After Mehedi Hasan Miraz's turner rapped onto Kohli's pad -- when he was on 180 -- the umpire adjudged him out. Saha though advised Kohli to review the decision.

"Virat thought he was out. But I told him that you have probably stretched your front foot more. Hopefully the impact may be outside and the ball had spun sharply, it might be missing the leg stump. So he took a call and was saved," said Saha.

Saha however could not help him on the second occasion, when Kohli eventually walked off after being adjudged leg-before. Replays suggested that Taijul's straighter delivery had hit him outside the off stump.

"He seemed quite sure about that delivery. And you know how the DRS is, even if there is a bit of it on the wicket, the umpire's call would have gone for the bowler. So he saved a review for the team," explained Saha.

Clean sweep takes SA to top spot

REUTERS, Centurion

Hashim Amla made a sparkling 154 and his opening partner Quinton de Kock a rapid 109 in a batting blitz that earned South Africa an 88-run victory over Sri Lanka at Centurion on Friday and a 5-0 whitewash in their one-day international series.

South Africa, who have now won 11 successive ODIs to go top of the world rankings, set their visitors an imposing target after being sent into bat by racking up 384 for six in their 50 overs. Sri Lanka fell well short in reply, finishing on 296-8.

Amla and De Kock shared a partnership of 187 as the South African openers got stuck into some mediocre bowling.

Faf du Plessis made 41 and captain AB de Villiers teased the crowd with some unorthodox strokeplay but lasted only 11 balls.

Sri Lanka lost early wickets but opener Niroshan

Dickwella offered the touring side, at the end of a three-month tour, hope of an unlikely victory as he bludgeoned 39 runs off 19 balls before holing out to De Villiers at mid-off from the bowling of Wayne Parnell.

A 93-run partnership for the fifth wicket steadied the innings and Satchith Pathirana made 56.

But with Sri Lanka falling well behind the required rate and the match heading towards a tame finish, 31-year-old Asela Gunaratne brought up his maiden ODI century and finished unbeaten on 114.

Chris Morris was the pick of the hosts' bowlers, finishing with 4-31 in his 10 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 384 for 6 (De Kock 109, Amla 154, Du Plessis 41, Behardien 32, Lakmal 3-71, Madushanka 2-70)

SRI LANKA: 296 for 8 (Gunaratne 114 not out, Pathirana 56, Dickwella 39; Morris 4-31, Parnell 2-51)

Result: South Africa won by 88 runs



Taijul Islam (R) was comfortably the best Bangladesh bowler on display, scalping three wickets on the second day of the one-off Test.

PHOTO: AFP