

SPORT

We have to stay calm: Samaraweera

NAIMUL KARIM from Hyderabad

The morning session has been the most helpful for bowlers in this Test so far. Once the first hour is negotiated, the wicket at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium tends to become slower which makes it easier for batsmen to play.

While the fifth day is likely to see a lot more turn, the slowness of the wicket could allow the batters to negate that factor.

And that is the phase that Bangladesh's batting coach Thilan Samaraweera has his eyes on. According to him, for Bangladesh to have any chance of drawing this Test, they will need the batsmen to get past the morning session in one piece.

"I think you have to occupy the crease for as long as possible. If you get a good ball, then you can't help it, because everyone knows how good they [India] are on the fourth and fifth days.

"Luckily this is a better pitch. For me, you have to get through that first hour, because if you give them momentum at that point of time then we are in trouble," said Samaraweera at the end of the day yesterday.

Bangladesh's record in the second innings of a Test is not great. They hammered 595 in the first innings against New Zealand and amazingly enough, went on to lose that game due to a poor display in the second. They put in a similarly bad performance in the second Test.

Their record in the fourth innings of a Test is not that great either. Only on three occasions

did they manage to bat more than 90 overs in the fourth innings of a Test so far and those took place back in 2005, 2008 and 2010 against Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and England respectively.

"I think the biggest concern for me is our second innings batting. Honestly, we blow away quickly. Hopefully the boys will have learnt their lesson [from the New Zealand series] and do better here," said Samaraweera.

"When they play more Tests, they will be more mentally aware. For instance, when I spoke to a few batters during the England series, some of them told me that they never faced reverse swing bowling in domestic cricket. So it's hard for them to face that in international cricket straight away.

"I can tell them to look for the shiny side and give them more information. But they have to feel it to do it successfully. I think they will get more mentally strong, if they play more Test cricket because they can go through different situations and then improve," he added.

He also commented on Shakib Al Hasan's reckless shot in the first innings, albeit with long pauses.

"I think you have to see that that's the way he plays. Sometimes he does some silly mistakes due to pressure, but hopefully he will learn from those mistakes and do some good work tomorrow," he said.

Most importantly, Samaraweera believes that the challenge for the Tigers on the fifth day will be more mental than technical.

"I think it's more a mental thing. We have to stay calm in the dressing room," he concluded.



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim hit a magnificent 127 on the fourth day of the one-off Test against India in Hyderabad yesterday. His resolute century under pressure was responsible for Bangladesh taking the game into the fifth and final day.

PHOTO: AFP

Joshi to join Tigers in SL?

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

Former India spinner Sunil Joshi is likely to join the Bangladesh team as a spin bowling consultant for the series against Sri Lanka in March.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board is likely to use the Sri Lanka series as a testing phase for Joshi. If he does well, he may be considered for a full-time position.

Chairman of Bangladesh's cricket operations wing Akram Khan, told reporters at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium yesterday that the BCB had a meeting with Joshi.

"We had a meeting with him [Joshi] and we want to keep him for the Sri Lanka series. We may offer him a long-term contract after observing him on the Sri Lanka tour," Akram told reporters yesterday.

Bangladesh's last spin-bowling coach was Ruwan Kalpage, who was also the assistant coach. The Sri Lankan's contract however was terminated in August 2016 after negotiations between the two parties failed.

Taylor left out

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand senior batsman Ross Taylor has again been kept out of the New Zealand Twenty20 squad named Sunday to play South Africa later in the week.

New Zealand Cricket announced its Twenty20 and one-day international squads, with Corey Anderson and Tom Bruce preferred over Taylor to prop up the middle order in the game's shortest form.

Time to step up for Mahmudullah

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

Mahmudullah Riyad is one of the two batsmen who will have to negotiate the most crucial phase of the Test's fifth day today.

He will have to be rock steady when he faces India's pacers and spinners in the morning session, a period during which India's bowlers have been exceptionally dangerous.

Mahmudullah is also a batsman who has been going through a lean patch lately. In the last 17 innings, he has crossed the 50-run mark just once. While he has gotten starts, he just has not been able to convert them to big scores.

When he takes the crease today, it will be important that he does well. He has to do well not just so that Bangladesh can salvage an unlikely draw during their inaugural Test in India, but he will also need to bat for himself.

There is every chance of a change taking place in Bangladesh's upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka in March. One of the aspects that the team management must be looking into is that of the role of a wicketkeeper. While Mushfiqur Rahim

has been doing very well with the bat lately, his keeping has been below par even by his own standards.

Keeping has also had a toll on his fingers and the team management is concerned that that might eventually affect his batting in the long run. On another note, they also believe that if Mushfiqur concentrates solely on his batting and saves more energy by not keeping for more than 100 overs every innings, it could do him a world of good. It is a different issue that the Bangladesh skipper is not ready to leave the role yet.

If that happens, Bangladesh will be looking to get a wicketkeeper-batsman into the team and at the moment Liton Das is leading that race. He is in the squad. It will not be a surprise if Liton is selected for the Sri Lanka series.

However, who can Liton replace in the set batting order? The answer to that would be the weakest link.

And Mahmudullah, who according to batting coach Thilan Samaraweera is under a little pressure due to the lack of scores, will definitely not want to be nominated for that position. One thing is for certain, if he manages to put in a match-saving performance today, he will be nowhere near the elimination list.



A lot will depend on Shakib Al Hasan (L) and Mahmudullah if Bangladesh are to conjure something memorable on the fifth and final day of the one-off Test against India today.

PHOTO: AFP

Mushy's guts bring glory

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

You have got to hand it to Mushfiqur Rahim. The way he has sustained all the pressure on him in this series and still managed to focus on his batting has been magnificent.

One often notices that when a player tends to do badly in one department, it goes on to affect his other duties in the team. In the case of Mushfiqur, that never seemed to happen in this game.

His captaincy decisions were questioned, he missed an easy stumping and yet he went on to score a game-changing century yesterday. It was the fifth of his career and the fifth country that he has scored a ton in.

He now has centuries in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, West Indies, New Zealand and India. He is also the only wicketkeeper-batsman who has scored four centuries away from home while being the designated skipper.

The fact that he has scored all his

hundreds in different countries just reiterates the fact that he is the most technically correct batsman Bangladesh has ever produced.

While he just needed 19 runs to reach the three-figure mark yesterday, it was not an easy task. His partner Mehedi Hasan Miraz was bowled off the fourth ball of the day.

Mushfiqur had to bat with the tail to reach his century and to further cut the first-innings deficit. But once again, he did not seem under pressure at all and batted wonderfully on a good batting track. He pulled Ishant Sharma for a six after the bowler repeatedly peppered him with bouncers.

And then he flicked Umesh Yadav for a boundary to reach his fifth hundred. After that he took the attack to Ravichandran Ashwin and the other bowlers and cleanly hit them for boundaries.

If Bangladesh's batsmen are a bit confused about the kind of approach that they should have to save the Test today, they just need to have a look at Mushfiqur's near-perfect innings again. Bangladesh batting coach Thilan

Samaraweera hailed Mushfiqur as the best batsman of the team.

"I think he is the best batter at the moment from what I have been seeing since September. He is in very good form. I think I can first go to the Chittagong game [England series] when we almost chased down their total. We were almost there when he got an unbelievable delivery from Gareth Batty.

"He is one of the best Test batters for our team because he has a solid game plan and he has guts and he has led from the front. That's the key as a captain," said Samaraweera.

"I am not worried about whether he is under pressure or not because he has been batting well under me for the last six months," he added.

When asked if the coach feels that Mushfiqur should bat up the order, the Sri Lankan pointed towards Mushfiqur's wicketkeeping duty.

"That's the biggest concern because we know how hot it is in the subcontinent. If he is keeping 120 overs and then bats up there, it will be difficult. We will see what happens in the future," he said.

BD-INDIA SCOREBOARD

INDIA: First innings 687 for 6 decl.				
BANGLADESH: First innings R/B 4s/6s (overnight 322 for 6)				
Tamim run out	24/53	3/0		
Sourmya c Saha b Yadav	15/31	3/0		
Mominal lbw b Yadav	12/36	1/0		
Mahmudullah lbw b Sharma	28/57	4/0		
Shakib c Yadav b Ashwin	82/103	14/0		
Mushfiqur c Saha b Ashwin	127/262	16/2		
Sabbir lbw b Jadeja	16/35	2/0		
Mehedi b Kumar	51/107	10/0		
Tajjul c Saha b Yadav	10/38	2/0		
Taskin c Rahane b Jadeja	8/35	1/0		
Kamrul not out	0/10	0/0		
Extras: (lb-15)	15			
Total: (All out in 127.5 overs)	388			
Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-44, 3-64, 4-109, 5-216, 6-235, 7-322, 8-339, 9-378, 10-388.				
INDIA: Second innings R/B 4s/6s				
Rahul c Mushfiqur b Taskin	7/14	1/0		
Vijay c Mushfiqur b Taskin	10/17	1/0		
Pujara not out	54/58	6/1		
Kohli c Mahmudullah b Shakib	38/40	2/1		
Rahane b Shakib	28/35	2/1		
Jadeja not out	16/10	1/1		
Extras: (lb-5, w-1)	6			
Total: (For 4 wickets in 29 overs)	159			
Did not bat: Saha, Ashwin, Kumar, Yadav, Sharma.				
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-23, 3-90, 4-128.				
Bangladesh: Second innings R/B 4s/6s				
Tamim c Kohli b Ashwin	3/11	0/0		
Sourmya c Rahane b Jadeja	42/66	7/0		
Mominal c Rahane b Ashwin	27/63	3/0		
Mahmudullah not out	9/29	0/0		
Shakib not out	21/42	4/0		
Extras: (nb-1)	1			
Total: (For 3 wickets in 35 overs)	103			
To bat: Mushfiqur Rahim, Sabbir Rahman, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Tajjul Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Kamrul Islam Rabbil.				
Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-71, 3-75.				
INDIA: First innings R/B 4s/6s				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Tajjul	6	1	29	0
Taskin	7	0	43	2
Shakib	9	0	50	2
Mehedi	7	0	32	0
Bangladesh: Second innings R/B 4s/6s				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Kumar	5	2	14	0

'Wicket has opened up to spin'

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

With seven more wickets to go, India are in the driving seat in this Test. Had Bangladesh been able to negotiate India's spinners after tea, they would have been in a much better position going into the final day. However, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja got the better of the Bangladeshis too order.

And according to Cheteshwar Pujara, it's going to get a lot more difficult on day five.

"I think ball has started turning now. Probably the wicket is slightly on

the slower side but it has opened up; there will be more assistance for the spinners tomorrow.

"We expected the ball to turn from Day Three but it started turning from Day Four. We bowled as a good bowling unit because it wasn't an easy wicket, we bowled with a lot of patience, and we had to work hard to get them out," said Pujara during the post-day press conference at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium yesterday.

Despite getting a 299-run lead in the first innings, India decided against enforcing the follow-on and batted for a session. Explaining the reason behind that decision, Pujara said: "Because the bowlers had bowled

more than 100 overs and we had fielded for more than 100 overs, we wanted to give them a little break for the session so that they could recover."

"When I went in to bat the idea was to score as many runs as possible. We were looking forward to putting 150 to 200 runs on the board. I was just batting freely and we just wanted to express ourselves," he added.

With one more day to go, he is confident that the hosts will be able to gobble up the final seven wickets.

"We are hopeful of getting those seven wickets as early as possible. They [Bangladesh] batted well in the first innings, but these are difficult conditions."

'Ashwin thinks like a batsman'

SPORTS REPORTER



India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin received plenty of acclaim after breaking becoming the fastest bowler to take 250 wickets in Test cricket. The 30-year-old reached the mark in his 45th Test. Lillee had reached the mark 36 years ago in his 48th Test.

Ashwin's teammate Cheteshwar Pujara described him as the 'toughest spinner' for any opposition to face.

"Many teams plan on how they are going to face Ashwin, but he is the toughest. I would like to congratulate him for reaching 250 wickets. The way I look at him, the kind of brain he has, he thinks as a batsman. He knows the weaknesses and what are the

areas to bowl in. He is the most experienced bowler we have," said Pujara.

"I don't think he is very desperate for wickets. He understands that there are some situations where he has to bowl tightly. If you look at the first innings, he tried his best and bowled to a plan. He may not get wickets on some occasions, but we bowl as a unit and we have a partnership.

"Most of the time, Ashwin takes the wickets and [Ravindra] Jadeja holds the batsmen, but sometimes Ashwin has to hold the batsman. He did that in the first innings," he added.

Bangladesh batting coach and former Sri Lankan cricketer Thilan Samaraweera reckons Ashwin will break many more records in the coming years.

"I think if he plays for seven to eight more years, he will be able to take 600 to 800 wickets," said Samaraweera.



Imposing Indian off-spinner Ravchandran Ashwin (C) celebrates one of his two second-innings wickets of Bangladesh, the first of which made him the fastest to 250 Test wickets yesterday. Ashwin will be licking his lips for more on a deteriorating fifth-day pitch in Hyderabad today.

PHOTO: AFP