

SPORT

'We lost the mental battle'

NAIMUL KARIM from Hyderabad

Despite the defeat, Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, who hopes to play another Test in India before he retires, believes that they can take plenty of lessons from the lone Test.

"Look you can never defend and save a game because of the fifth-day wicket. Shakib [Al Hasan] did not go to hit, but still got out. Me, I didn't hit many balls in the first innings but I still got out, so you need balance. And many may say that okay we shouldn't have hit that ball, but if you don't that doesn't give you the guarantee that you will stay on the wicket.

"When a bowler knows that this batsman won't hit at all and will only defend all day, then it becomes very difficult. So there are many options but maybe we lost wickets at the wrong time," said Mushfiqur during the post-match press conference.

"I don't know when the last time was that we played on the fifth day in such a situation. It's very rare, so if you expect [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz to score a hundred in such conditions, it will be very difficult. It's a learning curve for him and even for me. Even though I have played many games like this, I don't get to play in such situations, we have generally finished games in three or four days. Yes, it feels bad to lose, but we can carry plenty of belief as a team from

this game," added the skipper.

Bangladesh's top order failed to perform in this Test and their bowlers also were not up to the mark. The fielding was not too encouraging either. Despite that, the skipper believes that they are improving as a Test team.

"We are progressing. Four to five years ago we would play one good Test and then play the next good Test eight to nine months later. While we lost four out of our last five Tests, we have competed well against England, New Zealand and even here.

"To a certain extent we are consistent. But we have to focus more on our bowling and fielding. We have seven batsmen who are performing in different conditions in at least one innings. If we can get a better bowling unit, we can hopefully become a much better Test team in one or two years' time," said the captain.

Mushfiqur felt that the players failed the mental game in this Test.

"There was not too much turn but there was a bit of a mental battle in the game because when you can't score and can't rotate then you have to find other ways of scoring and that did not happen in the second innings.

"The ball was also a factor. This is our first overseas tour with the SG Test ball. We had used it in the South Africa and Zimbabwe series at home, but in India in these conditions, it's a different game. We need to know how to use it well," said Mushfiqur.



Spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja might have evenly shared eight Bangladesh second-innings wickets between them but it was tall pace bowler Ishant Sharma's (R) double strike after lunch on the fifth day of the one-off Test that effectively dashed Bangladesh's hopes to fight out a draw at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim (2nd from R) is reveres as the most responsible batsman in the team. But he can also have brain-freeze moments which was evident on the final day of the one-off Test against India when he played a shot a la Shakib much to the horror of his followers.

PHOTO: AFP

A win for better basics

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

Throughout the Test, there was plenty of talk regarding the Hyderabad wicket. That was the case because this did not behave like a typical Indian wicket and started to turn towards the end of the fourth day as opposed to Day 3.

And this was also a reason why there was still a bit of hope left for Bangladesh to draw the game on the fifth day, because the wicket had not seen any vicious turners. At the end of it all though, a disciplined Indian bowling attack came out on top against Bangladesh.

India skipper Virat Kohli at the end of the match yesterday said that the batsmen just needed to stick to

their basics on such a surface.

When asked if he was surprised that Bangladesh had managed to stretch the game till the fifth day, he said: "No, as I said it was a good wicket to bat on and if you play basic cricket, you can score runs on this kind of wicket. I didn't expect them to get out for 200, 250 runs.

"They do have good batsmen in their ranks. They scored 580 [596 for eight declared] in New Zealand, so you know this was a good wicket to bat on and they would have some confidence coming into the series. That's what they showed and our persistence as a bowling unit came out on top, which has been the case in the past few games. They surely put up a fight in the first innings of the game."

"The wicket was really good to bat on, and I didn't expect myself to get 200 off 240 balls. Usually, I take more time. The wicket allowed me to play my shots. I played percentage cricket, so it was good to get into that rhythm, after playing few shorter format games ahead of the big series against Australia," he added.

Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, however, had a slightly different opinion.

"If your basic is like Virat Kohli's then you would have scored at an average of 50 and you wouldn't have needed so many batsmen. You probably wouldn't have required seven wickets, four of them would have done the job and drawn the game, but unfortunately, we don't have anyone like Virat

Kohli in our team.

"Look, Shakib [Al Hasan] got out to a huge turner, [Mahmudullah] Riyad bhai edged one while pulling and [Sabbir Rahman] Rumman missed the line. You can't blame anyone. But the one that can be said is that we should have been mentally stronger for the challenge," said Mushfiqur.

"We couldn't play long enough and we need to work on this area. You can work on such areas only when you get more of such opportunities to play so that you can understand how to play in these scenarios. If we do that then we can say, 'Okay, I have made a mistake and maybe next time I will be successful'. I will try to make my basic stronger and draw the next Test," Mushfiqur added.

'I was trying to spread the field'

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

Despite Shakib Al Hasan's fall in as early as the third over of the final day, things were looking decent for Bangladesh in the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad.

The ball was turning a bit, but the wicket was slow and the duo of Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim did not really have anything much to panic about. However, in the 53rd over of the game, Mushfiqur got out in the most unexpected fashion. It was something that Shakib Al Hasan had done previously and the result was the loss of a wicket against the run of play.

After hitting Ravichandran Ashwin for a four in the third ball of the over, he went down the track and tried to clear mid-off once again. He did not time it as well and got caught. That wicket took away whatever momentum Bangladesh had in the game.

Speaking after the match, Mushfiqur explained that he played that shot because he wanted the fielders to spread out.

"Although this was not a typical fifth-day wicket, there were plenty of rough patches and there was a bit of difficulty because Ashwin was bowling on the same line and length every time.

"I don't think it was a bad shot, but the execution wasn't there. Had I successfully hit that, they would have put a fielder back and it would have been easier for me to take a single. I should have probably played that three or four overs later, after getting set against Ashwin. Hopefully I will learn from this in the future," said Mushfiqur.

Mushfiqur happy with triple role

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

This might have been just a one-off Test, but there is no doubt that a number of Bangladesh's weaknesses were exposed in the process.

Their top order failed to perform in both innings, there were a number of moments in the game when their bowlers lacked consistency and hence did not seem threatening and they also lost the little mental battles on the pitch because of which they had to pay dearly.

One of the other aspects that the team management will definitely be talking about is Mushfiqur Rahim's keeping. There were doubts as to whether he would be keeping in this Test as well, since he had sustained a finger injury during the New Zealand series.

As a result, Liton Das was fast-tracked into the team following a double-hundred in the Bangladesh Cricket League as backup for

Mushfiqur.

Eventually though, the captain seemed fit and the team combination also demanded that he don the gloves behind the stumps.

His keeping, however, was below par. He missed an easy stumping, which eventually cost a hundred runs and he was also late in reacting to a couple of edges.

Speaking to reporters after the match yesterday, Mushfiqur said that he felt that it was a privilege to do all the three duties for his country and that he is enjoying it. He however said that if the board wanted him to quit any one of the disciplines, he would.

"My average is not more than 34 or 33, how can I be the number one batsman for Bangladesh team? So, if you are doing two or three jobs that probably means that the board or the management trusts you to do that.

"As of now, I need to deliver in all three departments really well. If I am not doing that, then the board can take the decision. But at the

moment, I am really enjoying what I am doing. I love to spend time in the middle. I love the job.

"If something happens, then there are a couple of guys outside who can take the decision. But if you ask me, personally, I am happy to do all three jobs," said Mushfiqur.

He was also asked if he was willing to quit captaincy in order to not take too much burden.

To that he replied: "Look, the captaincy is not in my hands. It's up to the board. They can analyse the whole thing and then they can come up with a decision."

Despite an average performance behind the stumps, Mushfiqur was Bangladesh's best performer with the bat, scoring a brilliant century in the first innings.

When asked if there was extra pressure on him to perform with the bat because of the missed chances on the field, he said: "This is not some random cricket match. This is Test cricket and there will always be pressure."

Kohli a 'calmer' captain now

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

On the face of it, Virat Kohli may seem to be one of the busiest skippers on the field. He keeps changing his field positions and bowlers and he rarely lets the batsman get set. His aggressive mindset has led India to glory on a number of occasions.

After 23 Tests though, Kohli admits that he has become calmer on the field and has learnt to deal with certain things that he could not do before.

"You know sometimes I stand in the field and think the wicket is not falling, you literally cannot do anything as a captain. You just have to accept that the game is going; probably look to be more consistent with the ball and the fields that you set.

"To be very honest anyone knows how to set fields in the ground; it's just that you know and make sure you have the responsibility of keeping the energy of the team up. I look to push myself, throw myself so guys know that they have to push for a wicket. Especially with fielders inside the ring, the bowlers know what they need to do, but the fielders within the ring need to support the bowlers as well. I need to do that first for the guys to show that energy," explained Kohli.

"Earlier I used to be a bit relentless with fields but now, I understand, when a pair is going for runs, I immediately go for in-out fields. No point giving them 4-5 boundaries. You know when you are bowling good balls, one ball does something you are back into the game. That's something I have learnt and hopefully we will take it forward," he added.

BD-INDIA SCOREBOARD

INDIA: First innings 687 for 6 dec.
BANGLADESH: First innings 388 (Tamim 24, Mahmudullah 28, Shakib 82, Mushfiqur 127, Mehedi 51; Yadav 3-84, Ashwin 2-98, Jadeja 2-70)

INDIA: Second innings 159 for 4 dec (Pujara 54 not out, Kohli 38, Rahane 28; Taskin 2-43, Shakib 2-50)

BANGLADESH: Second innings R/B 4s/6s (overnight 103 for 3)

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Kumar	8	4	15	0
Ashwin	30.3	10	73	4
Sharma	13	3	40	2
Yadav	12	2	33	0
Jadeja	37	15	78	4

Pace engine powered by spin

SPORTS REPORTER from Hyderabad

The 208-run win over Bangladesh has extended India's unbeaten Test run to 19 matches. While the margin of the win is substantial, India's bowlers had to toil hard to get 20 wickets on a Hyderabad wicket that seemed to be a batting paradise for most of the game.

As such, India skipper Virat Kohli reserved generous praise for his bowlers after the match yesterday.

"It was a very good toss to win for us, getting big runs on the board. First innings took a bit of patience for us to get wickets. I thought Umesh [Yadav], Bhuvni [Bhuvneshwar Kumar] and Ishant [Sharma] were brilliant but Umesh stood out.

"In the second innings all three bowled really well and Ishant stood out. The quality of our spinners allows our fast bowlers to attack because of the way the spinners bowl and contain runs. The pacers can really attack as soon as it starts reverse swinging. I thought today Ishant's spell was really good, bowled with pace and had to put in effort to take wickets and he took both the set batsmen out," said Kohli.

Kohli is often seen as the main reason behind

India's brilliant run. He has done very well in the last year, but he does not think it has been a one-man show.

"I don't think it's because of me; I mean everyone at international level wants to do well. We are playing as a team and that's been the difference. You can say probably say that in 2016 I scored a lot of runs but before that in 2015 as well we won a lot of matches. I didn't score many runs but the other guys stepped up and scored runs.

"There are quite a few instances where all the members of the team have stepped up at some stage or the other. And that's why we stand where we are and having that streak is not down to two-three people; it is a combined effort of all the guys," said Kohli.

The only aspect that the skipper was not happy about in this Test was the way the bowlers performed towards the end of the game.

"I think there was a bit of a lapse in body language when they were eight down. We should have taken these chances and finished off the game early, 45 minutes before we actually did. Closing off games is important," he said.



India captain Virat Kohli (2nd from R) is the epitome of a modern day leader; loves to dominate the opponent bowlers with an array of stroke-play; watches every delivery like a programmed computer when his bowlers are operating; stands in the most demanding position on the field and his athleticism is a treat to watch. He also showed his uncanny ability to be a good umpire in the future with his precise calling for a review of a decision.

PHOTO: AFP