

# SPORT

## A lesson begging to be learnt

SAKEB SUBHAN from Galle

Perhaps a more articulate speaker than Soumya Sarkar was needed after a day on which one batsman -- skipper Mushfiqur Rahim -- showed immense strength of character before the infirmity of his teammates finally wore him down.

Mushfiqur's innings of 85 off 161 balls was the blueprint of how to bat on the Galle International Stadium wicket on the third day of the first Test yesterday, and it may have amounted to much more if he was not running out of partners before eventually perishing in an attempt to farm the strike with number 10 batsman Subashis Roy at the other end. The result was that Bangladesh were all out for 312, 182 runs behind Sri Lanka, before rain prevented any play after tea.

Soumya himself had resumed the day on 66 with his skipper but he played a hesitant pull shot to the first ball he faced from a

survived a simple chance at nine after having hit his second and third balls for four.

Mushfiqur, meanwhile, did not hit a boundary for his first 88 balls during which he scored 22 at a strike rate of 25, before making 63 off the next 73 balls at a strike rate of 86.

When asked about the difference in approach between captain and players, Soumya simultaneously hit the nail on the head and missed the point completely.

"Mushfiqur bhai played proper Test cricket today. He took his time at the beginning. Although many of us hit a boundary at first, he survived for a long time and then hit a four [six]," he said, before going on to illustrate his, and perhaps the rest of his teammates', inability to adapt to the situation.

"Maybe some of us got a bad ball at the start and we hit a boundary, and maybe they bowled better at Mushfiqur bhai. In Tests you have to wait for the bad ball but maybe he got fewer bad balls. There was no plan [to attack while Mushfiqur defended]."

The point which he missed and perhaps which a more senior player could have been pressed on was that it was not as if the bowlers turned into wizards while Mushfiqur was batting and became ordinary for the rest.

Like Kusal Mendis in Sri Lanka's first innings, Mushfiqur paid due respect to the pitch, which is slow and at the hands of skilled operators like Herath, Sandakan and Dilruwan Perera and demands that time be spent in the middle before runs can be scored.

Unlike Mushfiqur, Mendis's innings was backed up by a lot of supporting roles.

Instead of these considerations, there were excuses -- Shakib was supposedly unlucky -- and promises to try better.

"Of course there is a lot to learn from him," said Soumya about his captain. "He is an experienced player and he is our captain. We are trying; how much we are succeeding is for others to judge."

One has to wonder how Mushfiqur would judge it.



Mahmudullah Riyad's performance is going from bad to worse. Here he watches his off-stump cart-wheeling on the third day of the opening Test against Sri Lanka yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



## Riyad: A batsman hunted

SAKEB SUBHAN from Galle

There was a time when the elegant Mahmudullah Riyad was one

of the surest bets in Bangladesh cricket but yesterday, after he once again remained rooted to the crease against Lahiru Kumara and lost his off-stump, he cut the most forlorn of figures as he trudged back to the dressing room at an Inzamam-esque pace.

His twin centuries in the 2015 World Cup against England and New Zealand, following a promotion to the top order in unfriendly conditions for a subcontinent batsman not known for good footwork, showed that he was one of those players whose mind can rule over matter.

But all has not been well in Test cricket since. In the 10 Tests and 17 innings since then, Riyad has had only two 50-plus scores -- 67 against South Africa at home in July 2015 and 64 in his last Test innings before this one in Hyderabad last month. But the temporal proximity of that last innings is scant consolation.

A batsman who through his early-2016 reinvention as a T20 finisher and

his earlier exploits in Tests and ODIs (think 2011 World Cup match against England) had in the national consciousness become someone to take the team home, this Test season he has become one who is easy prey to certain modes of attack and also one who seems to let the team down when respite is in sight.

Yesterday, perhaps by design or chance, Sri Lanka skipper Rangana Herath brought on his out-and-out quickie Kumara when Riyad came out to bat. If the Sri Lankans had done their homework they would have known that going back to the Dhaka Test against England last October, through the tours of New Zealand and India, Riyad has displayed marked vulnerability to pace and movement.

The common thread of these dismissals -- variously to Ben Stokes, Neil Wagner and Ishant Sharma -- is a lack of feet movement. But whereas in that World Cup innings against New Zealand in seaming conditions Riyad would compensate for slow feet with late hands -- hinting at a batsman with time -- now he seems to be pushing at deliveries that are rushing him, hinting at a struggle to guess the bowler's intentions instead of playing the ball.

This restlessness seems to have affected his calm play, perhaps because he wants to score as many as he can while he survives. Four times in 11 innings since October 2016, Riyad has departed with the end of session in sight. A waft to Adil Rashid signalled tea with Bangladesh worse off in Chittagong, an ill-advised sweep off Zafar Ansari closed the second day of the Dhaka Test, a strangle down the leg side set Bangladesh back two overs before close on the fourth day in Wellington and a loose drive did the same in Christchurch minutes before tea on the third day.

He is a batsman currently fighting for form and place, and may have avoided the chop by dint of his 64 in India with Sabbir Rahman -- who incidentally has a better average this season than Riyad's 27.64 -- missing this Test.

Only Mominul Haque with 25.22 averages worse in the same period. But along with Mushfiqur Rahim, Mominul is the one batsman who almost always makes the bowlers earn his wicket and, more importantly, does not have a glaring technical issue that can be exploited. The same, unfortunately for Bangladesh's batting, cannot be said of Riyad.



pacers, Suranga Lakmal, to offer a catch to fine leg; a shot that the left-hander admitted was a mistake.

Shakib Al Hasan seemed to misread a googly from chinaman bowler Lakshan Sandakan but his eagerness to put bat to ball -- he had flashed his way to a 17-ball 23 while Mushfiqur was on nine off 48 -- saw him chasing it down the leg side and getting a feather-edge through to the keeper.

Liton Das hit a four off the sixth ball he faced but off the 13th played a leaden-footed, airy shot to Rangana Herath to be caught at slip.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz was part of a 106-run stand that averted the follow-on, but he

### MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Galle

#### SEVEN WICKETKEEPERS

If you think wicketkeeping is an issue in Bangladesh with Mushfiqur Rahim giving up the gloves to Liton Das for this tour, have a gander at Sri Lanka. When Liton joined Mushfiqur at the crease yesterday, there were a total of seven keepers on the field. Dimuth Karunaratne has a first-class stumping, Upul Tharanga, Kusal Mendis and Dinesh Chandimal have kept at first-class level and Niroshan Dickwella is the regular keeper. Dickwella must be an insecure keeper, given the competition right in front of his eyes.

The situation may also explain the daft stroke Liton played to get out; maybe having more than six keepers on the field for a length of time causes a rip in the space-time fabric. Or maybe that is what brought on the rain, in which case Liton should have batted longer for Bangladesh's sake.

#### THE FALL OF THE WARRIOR MONK

Mushfiqur Rahim batted with monk-like abstinence for the first half of the innings, before he became warrior after conquering the elements. But what was controlled aggression soon became a shootout against overwhelming odds after his teammates displayed neither his austerity nor appetite for war. Left with Subashis Roy, Mushfiqur hit one boundary and attempted to farm the strike. But with the wily Rangana Herath operating and a cover boundary unmanned, Mushfiqur tried one blow too many as the arm-ball sneaked through to bring an end to the warrior monk's vigil.

#### A NEEDLESS RETURN AND A FREAK CATCH

With bad light under the formidable clouds causing a premature tea to be taken, Bangladesh with one wicket left must have been thinking of reducing the deficit as much as possible. 20 minutes passed after tea before Mustafizur Rahman and Subashis strode out. Mustafizur knocked the first ball to the off side and off the second, flicked hard to the on side. But while eyes wandered to the boundary, the Lankans were celebrating. The ball had stuck in the arms of an evading Kusal Mendis at short leg. 10 minutes for the change of innings followed, then bad light ended the day. Bangladesh may as well have declared at tea and saved face.

### BD-SL SCOREBOARD

<b>SRI LANKA:</b> First innings 494 (Mendis 194, Gunaratne 85, Dickwella 75, Perera 51; Mehedi 4-113, Mustafizur 2-68)				
<b>BANGLADESH:</b> First innings R/B 4s/6s (overnight 133 for 4)				
Tamim run out	57/112	6/0		
Soumya c Kumara b Lakmal	71/137	8/1		
Mominul lbw b Perera	7/17	1/0		
Mushfiqur b Herath	85/161	8/1		
Shakib c Dickwella				
b Sandakan	23/19	1/1		
Mahmudullah b Kumara	8/26	1/0		
Liton c Gunaratne b Herath	5/13	1/0		
Mehedi lbw b Perera	41/77	5/0		
Taskin lbw b Perera	0/1	0/0		
Subashis not out	0/14	0/0		
Mustafizur c Mendis b Herath	4/9	0/0		
Extras: (lb-6, w-3, nb-2)	11			
Total: (All out in 97.2 overs)	312			
Fall of wickets: 1-118, 2-127, 3-142, 4-170, 5-184, 6-192, 7-298, 8-298, 9-308, 10-312.				
<b>Bowler</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>W</b>
Lakmal	14	0	42	1
Kumara	16	1	70	1
Perera	19	4	53	3

## 'Dictate, then declare'

SPORTS REPORTER from Galle

Being the Sri Lanka coach at the end of the day yesterday was a good place to be. With two days left and with a 182-run first innings lead they are in prime position, weather permitting, to go one-up in the two-match series by winning the first Test against Bangladesh in Galle.

While in the other camp questions will likely be asked about the way the batsmen surrendered their wickets as they were bundled out for 312 two balls after play had resumed 20 minutes late after tea due to rain, Graham Ford was more eager to credit his bowlers for wrapping up Bangladesh's innings cheaply.

"There were some pretty sound

performances from the Bangladesh batsmen but our boys stuck to it extremely well and came out this morning with the determination to try and win that first session, when they did well," said Ford at the post-day press conference. "Gladly they stuck to the task and ended up finishing it quite well. It's hard to comment on the opposition's batting."

They could have had Bangladesh for less, but three dropped chances that let off Tamim Iqbal on 28 (eventual score 57), Soumya Sarkar on four (71) and Mehedi Hasan Miraz on nine (41) cost them.

"We want to try and have a clean sheet every time we go out. There were a couple of chances that we missed out on, although they were not that easy, but if you want to be the top side in world cricket you need to try and take as many of those as you can," Ford

said. On the match situation, Ford thought that the rain that wiped out almost the entire last session made things a little tricky.

"Unfortunately this rain came and we should make up eight overs each day, so in total we may lose about 20 overs out of the match which is quite a lot when you are pressing for a result on what seems to be a pretty good batting wicket.

"It is going to make it harder for us and we haven't really done our maths as far as where we need to be and how we need to get to the course of tomorrow and how much time we need to bowl them out. We'll have a chat about that tonight and in the morning. What is important is to show some urgency when we go out to bat and get a partnership early on so that we can dictate and then declare."



### PERFORMER OF THE DAY

#### MUSHFIQUR RAHIM



Mushfiqur Rahim missed out on a record consecutive third century by a Bangladeshi batsman but this little man's 85-run innings once again showed why he is considered the best batsman in the team. The right-hander's composed knock and 106-run seventh wicket stand with Mehedi Hasan Miraz not only saved his side from conceding the follow-on but also made a small record as he is now involved in the most number of century partnerships (15) among Bangladesh players. Mushfiqur's purple patch this year and the love affair with Galle continued and more importantly he applied himself brilliantly when most of his colleagues failed to capitalise on a good batting pitch.



Bangladesh forward Moinul Islam (C) tries to skip past two Egyptian players during their Hockey World League Round-2 quarterfinal at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The hosts suffered a massive 1-5 defeat.

## Hosts' semifinal dream shattered

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's dreams of reaching the semifinal of the Hockey World League Round-2 were shattered after the hosts suffered a massive 1-5 defeat to Egypt in the quarterfinal at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

The defeat means that Bangladesh have lost the opportunity to advance to the Hockey World League Round-3, a stage for which they have never qualified before, and they will now be competing for the fifth to eighth positions in the group in Dhaka.

The group champions and runners-up will advance to the 20-team Round-3, while the two best third-placed finishers among the three groups will also get tickets to Round-3 to play alongside the automatically qualified top 11 ranked sides.

The quarterfinal against 20th ranked Egypt had become a make-or-break fixture for the 32nd ranked hosts after a loss to Oman in their last match and the home team needed to put up a much-improved performance to cross the hurdle. However, Bangladesh were not up to the mark against their African opponents, who surpassed them in every aspect and came out with a win.

While German coach Oliver Kurtz's charges played better compared to their previous two outings, their performance was not good enough to challenge Egypt, who took the lead four minutes into the match as Mahmoud converted the first penalty corner of the match.

Bangladesh pressed hard for the equaliser, but lost possession and their opponents doubled the lead from a counter attack with Sayed Amr hitting the board from a difficult angle in the 17th minute.

The hosts pulled one goal back through Moinul Islam Koushik, but conceded soon after as Gamal Ahmed faced no resistance from defenders on way to widening the lead in the 22nd minute.

After resumption, Bangladesh failed to keep up their tempo and were unable to stop counter attacks from Egypt, who scored two more goals in the 49th and 54th minutes.

"Of course, the coach has to take the responsibility for the failure but I think we have improved although we missed a lot of scoring chances. It is a very young team which lacks match experience," said Kurtz after the match.

"I am not blaming the players who tried their best, but we lacked an international camp which I demanded last December," said Kurtz, who set his new target as finishing fifth in the group.