

SPORT



Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha is certainly a worried man after that fifth day capitulation of his charges in the opening Test against Sri Lanka at Galle.

PHOTO: STAR

Focus poor at the start of the day: Hathurusingha

Sakib Subhan from Colombo



It was a weary bunch of Bangladesh cricketers who journeyed to Colombo by bus on Saturday evening hours after a chastening 259-run defeat at the hands of Sri Lanka in the first Test in Galle. Even if not their spirits, their collective stamina would have been sapped by their four-and-a-half-day exertion under the draining Galle sun, which travelled with them undimmed to Colombo. So it was no surprise that at noon yesterday, it was the six members of the squad not on the playing eleven who underwent a full training session at the P Sara Oval, the venue for Bangladesh's 100th Test starting on March 15.

The six players -- Rubel Hossain, Kamrul Islam Rabbi, Taijul Islam, Mosaddek Hossain, Sabbir Rahman and newly fit and recently arrived opener Imrul Kayes -- may not be smarting from the scars of the fifth-day collapse in Galle, but head coach Chandika Hathurusingha was in attendance, and he identified the way Bangladesh start their days after having batted comfortably the previous evening as a problem the coaching staff are trying to solve.

"I can't find any evidence that the confusion carried through but it is a concern," Hathurusingha said when

asked whether Soumya's confusion in requesting a review after being bowled on the fifth morning had a lasting effect. "We started poorly on the second day, but I don't want to only blame Soumya. Our focus has been very poor at the start of the day, lately. We need to find out why -- the players and coaching staff are working hard on it."

"When you say defending and attacking, it comes down to decision making," Hathuru replied when his attention was drawn to Shakib Al Hasan saying on the fourth evening that there needs to be a balance between attack and defence. "It is what we need to improve -- which ball to attack, which ball to defend. Whether you want to go either way, you have to make good decisions. To make decisions, you need to assess the condition, the opposition's game plan and have the awareness. You can't say, you go and attack and that's my game."

Another theme in the Test was the leg-side dismissals of Shakib in the first innings and Mushfiqur Rahim in the second, both chasing deliveries bowled by chinaman bowler Lakshan Sandakan down the leg side to get an edge through to the keeper. Mushfiqur said after the match that those were scoring opportunities and they were right to go for those. The coach agreed, but added another dimension.

"Those two dismissals have a lot to

do with reading the spin from the pitch. If you read it from the hand, you get into better positions," the Sri Lankan said. "This guy [Sandakan] was bowling variations -- wrong'uns and chinamans. I think our guys read the ball from the pitch, which gives them very little reaction time. I agree with Mushfiqur -- it is your natural reaction to score runs when it is on leg-stump."

Hathurusingha was also concerned about the bowlers' inexperience. "Take Shakib out of the bowling attack -- and Shakib is not the same bowler from 2010 who used to run through teams in helpful conditions -- the other four bowlers have combined for just 15 Tests. You have to set up the batsmen to take wickets, so that intelligence comes with playing in the middle."

He also said resting Taijul was the right thing to do because the three pacers gave them control and because Taijul bowls differently with the Kookaburra ball used in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka than when he uses the SG ball that brought him success in India, while also saying that the team may change according to the conditions for the next match.

"We are doing the right thing; that's why we have been competitive in all these games. The problem is we need to find a way to take 20 wickets," Hathuru said, and finished with this: "Why have you raised your expectations? Because we are doing well, am I right? That's

BGMEA Cup Bando, Comfit in final

Sports Reporter

Bando Design and Comfit Composite Knit reached the final of the 2nd BGMEA Cup after winning their respective semifinals yesterday.

Defending champions Bando edged Versatile Group 1-0 while Comfit beat Apparel Industry 2-0.

Meanwhile in the bowl category, Babylon Group beat Majumder Group 3-0 to make it to the final.

The finals and third place deciding matches of the plate and bowl categories will be played on Thursday while the mega cup final will be contested at the Bangladesh Army Stadium on March 24.

U-18 national football

Sports Reporter

Rubel slammed four goals to power Gazipur to an emphatic 5-1 win over Jamalpur in the U-18 National Football Championship at Netrokona yesterday.

In the day's other match at the same venue, Tangail beat Manikganj 2-1.

Away at Rajshahi, Jian Hossain slotted a hat-trick to guide Joypurhat to a 4-0 win over Chapainawabganj while Borguna defeated Pabna 4-2 at the same venue.

Jheniadah beat Jessore 2-0 and Gopalganj played a 1-1 draw with Bagerhat at Gopalganj while Pirojpur and Patuakhali played a goalless draw at Madaripur.

Sylhet beat Chandpur 1-0, Maulvibazar beat Habiganj 2-1, Gazipur beat Rangpur 2-0, Thakurgaon thrashed Panchagarh 3-0, Rajbari outplayed Narayanganj 3-0 and Laximpur beat Khagrachari 2-1 while Feni drew 1-1 with Rangamati at different venues.

Broom in for Taylor

Reuters, Wellington

Neil Broom has been called into New Zealand's squad for the second Test against South Africa after Ross Taylor was ruled out due to a torn calf muscle, New Zealand Cricket said on Sunday.

Taylor retired hurt in New Zealand's first innings of the first Test while on eight, but returned at number 11 to support Neil Wagner.

POSTCARD FROM THE ISLAND

Sports Reporter from Colombo

GALLE FAREWELL

With a heavy heart and a last backward glance at the majestic ramparts of the Galle Fort and the blue expanse of the Indian Ocean beyond, the Bangladesh media contingent in Sri Lanka bade farewell to the capital of Sri Lanka's Southern Province. Heavy of heart because, as you may have read on these pages a few days back, Galle and especially the fort area is like a time capsule and leaving the seaside town, you are reminded that you are travelling back to the harsher world.

The sea is a constant companion in Galle. Whether you are dining (unexpectedly cheap for the quality of ambience) at the Old Dutch Hospital's 'Minute by Tuk Tuk' restaurant -- where you can see and hear the waves crashing on the rocky shores -- or walking along Rampart Street to take in the sunset. Cox's Bazar's untamed beauty is special in its own way, but the sealine in Sri Lanka is an eye-pleasing blue as the rocky shoreline allows the water it to retain its clarity.

You can almost imagine the Dutch building, the formidable ramparts and, to go to a darker place, the suffering of the workers who toiled under the whip of colonial oppression. But even that, perhaps because of how far removed in time we are, did not take away from the pleasures of Galle.

FROM MARINE DRIVE, WITH THE SUNSET



If you are in Sri Lanka you are always close to the sea.

PHOTO: SAKIB SUBHAN

The melancholy, however, cannot last long when you are travelling along Sri Lanka's coast. Even though it may jar you a bit to see the man standing in front of the bus at the Galle Bus fluently communicate with you in English, you will get used to it after a ridiculously cheap near-Green Line standard journey to Colombo where even the Tuk Tuk drivers at the Maharagama bus stand -- Sri Lanka's equivalent of the Arambagh bus stand -- understand everything you say and take you to your destination.

Before that, the expressway -- with regular exits and flyovers eliminating highway traffic jams -- that got you in Colombo in just one-and-a-half hours will make you wonder why this is not possible in Bangladesh.

The sea is also here in Colombo, but it is a city, whereas Galle was a small, seaside town. While cars slowed to a stop whenever you stepped on a zebra crossing (Dhakaite look it up, motorists and pedestrians alike) in Galle, pedestrians have to wait in front of one till a car decides to stop in Colombo. They still wait.

And Marine Drive. Even from a hotel that is a few blocks inland from the long stretch of road that runs along the western coast, the immensity of the ocean is visible from the rooftop in such a way that you can actually discern the Earth's curvature. As this report is filed the sun has half sunk into the sea on the horizon -- the distractions a touring sports journal-

'We'll beat them on skill'

PII, Ranchi



Australia wicketkeeper Matthew Wade Sunday said his side will look to beat India in the third cricket Test "on skill".

"India always go quite hard, if you give them a sniff they'll run with it. Our job is to make sure they can't get in the game so they can't get aggressive with us, and then really take the momentum away from us. But it's not really our issue. We've got to play good cricket, and beat them on skill," Wade said.

He said he was shocked by a distinct change in India's approach between the first and second cricket Test in the ongoing series.



WADE

"The change from the first Test to the second Test was probably the initial shock. They certainly came out a little harder on day three (at Bangalore), but we expect them to come hard," Wade said of the Test that was marked by controversy over skipper Steve Smith's dismissal.

"When you've got a caged lion you expect them to come out pretty hard, to get away. Indian team are always quite aggressive. Dhoni was a different captain to Kohli, but that's just personality."

About his own approach to the game, Wade said, "I feel like I play my best cricket when I get in the contest. When you're back against the wall you've got to find a way to get up and about, so I still feel like that's a big part of my game."



While the regular members of the Bangladesh team enjoyed a day-off yesterday, the reserves took to the P Sara Oval in Colombo for training ahead of the Tigers' landmark 100th Test starting at that very ground from March 15.

PHOTO: STAR

Captains content after washout

AFP, Dunedin



South Africa and New Zealand's captains both claimed to have gained a psychological edge after rain washed out the final day of the first Test in Dunedin on Sunday.

Despite New Zealand suffering the loss of batsman Ross Taylor for the second Test, captain Kane Williamson felt buoyed by his side being able to establish a 33-run first innings lead.

"To put partnerships together

against the very good attack they have was a good effort," he said after play was abandoned without a ball bowled Sunday, leaving South Africa on 224 for six in their second innings, a lead of 191 runs.

"You always want more, which never goes away no matter how many you get, but it was nice to get a little lead going into that second innings."

South African captain Faf du Plessis felt the rain had ruined a potential victory, with the Proteas set to capitalise on New Zealand's injury woes.

"When a Test match finishes on a day like today it's very frustrating," he said.

"If today was a full day of cricket, we felt with (New Zealand) one seamer down and one of their main batters out of the team we fancied our chances. It's very disappointing from that point of view."

"We were 190 ahead on a wicket that was spinning quite a bit, purely on the match position if we got 50-60 more runs, a 250 lead and set them that in 50-60 overs, we'd fancy our chances."

Gregarious, Greggs notch victories

Sports Reporter

The Greggs Club and The Gregarious Club notched victories in the Unimed Unihealth Premier Division Basketball League yesterday. The Greggs beat Flame Boys by 70-56 points in the day's first match at the Dhanmondi Indoor Basketball Stadium. Oliver scored the highest with 25 points for the winning side.

In the second match, The Gregarious beat Rangers by 80-53 points, with Mithun scoring 26 points.



The winners of the Nilsagor Group Cup Golf Tournament pose with the chief guest, Major General Md. Moshfequr Rahman, General Officer Commanding of Bogra, at the Bogra Golf Club on Saturday. Chairman of Nilsagor Group Engineer Md. Ahsan Habib Lelin was also present alongside high-ranking Army officers.

PHOTO: STAR