

SPORT



Bangladesh off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz (L) is ecstatic after getting rid of Sri Lanka batsman Kusal Mendis (C) cheaply during the first day of the second Test at the P Sara Oval in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Plan was to bowl dot balls: Sabbir

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo



There were just three days between the debacle in the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle that Bangladesh lost by 259 runs and the start of their 100th Test at the P Sara Oval in Colombo, but judging by their performance on the first day yesterday, that seemed time enough to transform the team.

Whereas on the first day in Galle there was an inability to sustain standards throughout the day, dropped catches and a wicket off a no-ball, the first day in Colombo was the scene of a team finally getting their act together on the field. To have Sri Lanka on 238 for seven, on a pitch without demons after the hosts had won the toss in a venue where Bangladesh only have innings defeats to look back upon, counts as a decisive advantage for the tourists.

After the day Sabbir Rahman, who came back into the side following an injury to wicketkeeper Liton Das, did not think that the home side lost wickets because they played badly.

"The wicket is good. We bowled in the right areas," said the young batsman when asked whether it would be difficult, judging by the current state of the home side, for the tourists to bat when it is their turn. "They got out because we created dot-ball pressure."

"Our plan was to cut out the runs, bowl dot balls. They bowled really well. We created opportunities and then we held on to them."

The dot balls were certainly a feature of Bangladesh's play. While in Galle, especially after the first half of the first day, most of the wickets fell because Sri Lanka were trying to drive home the advantage with quick runs, yesterday wickets seemed

to fall because the home batsmen wanted to wrest back the initiative.

The situation could have been even better for Bangladesh if certain decisions against Dinesh Chandimal, who was unbeaten on 86 at stumps, had gone their way. In the 39th over, umpire S Ravi appeared to have given Chandimal caught at slip after first denying a leg-before appeal before Soumya Sarkar at first slip appealed for a caught behind. Chandimal's subsequent review was inconclusive because there was no Hot Spot or Ultra Edge, but the decision was overturned nonetheless.

A few overs later a catch off a top-edged sweep to fine leg was disallowed after a soft not-out decision on the field when replays suggested that the ball may have



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ANWAR CEMENT

bounced inches in front of a diving Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

"It was a 50/50 chance, and it is likely that he didn't understand that he took it on the first bounce," said Sabbir about Miraz's disallowed catch, but he seemed pretty sure about the earlier chance. "We were quite sure of the Chandimal wicket but it wasn't given unfortunately. I think we got these chances because we created a lot of pressure on the batsmen."

Creating and sustaining pressure seemed to be the theme of the day, and Sabbir hoped that they can continue in the same vein by getting Sri Lanka all out in the first hour today. If they do that, they will hope that the turnaround from their Galle nightmare extends to the batting as well.

MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

NON-APPEAL FOLLOWED BY A SHOCKER

In the 11th over of the innings Mustafizur Rahman appeared to beat Upul Tharanga's slash outside off stump and the ball sailed through to keeper and captain Mushfiqur Rahim. There was a click sound as the ball passed the bat, but there was no appeal, unusual for a team who are generally pretty optimistic while reviewing, let alone appealing. Four balls later there was a loud appeal as a Mustafizur in-ducker had Tharanga overbalancing and the ball thudded into the pads. Umpire S Ravi's fingers shot up, and so did Tharanga's fist into his bat, signalling a review. The ball would not only have missed an imaginary fifth stump, it would have also gone over it. And so began S Ravi's troubles...

RUBS OF THE GREEN

Shakib Al Hasan can count himself unlucky not to have had Dinesh Chandimal on 38 in the afternoon session when a leg-before shout to an arm-ball from around the wicket was first turned down before being upheld when Soumya Sarkar caught the deflection, indicating that the umpire, Ravi again, thought that there was an inside edge. Chandimal reviewed and since there was no Hot Spot or Ultra Edge, an inside edge could not be conclusively proven, which means that the on-field umpire's decision should stand. However, Ravi was soon signalling an overturn and Chandimal was allowed to continue. While the figurative rub of the green went against Bangladesh in this case, a few overs later in the 46th a literal rub of the green denied Bangladesh Chandimal's wicket once more. The right-hander top-edged a sweep off Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz ran in and dove forward to complete what looked like a superb catch in real time. The batsmen and umpires were unconvinced, and the soft signal was not out. Replays showed that the ball may have bounced an inch or two in front of Miraz's hands, and this time the decision stayed with the on-field umpires.

Tigers to play tri-series in Sri Lanka next year

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



The first day of Bangladesh's 100th Test yesterday was a big day in more ways than one, as some big players of international cricket were present at the P Sara Oval in Colombo, namely Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) president Thilanga Sumathipala and Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) CEO Rahul Johri.

A meeting around noon among the three cricket bosses gave birth to a tri-nation T20 tournament, ostensibly to celebrate Sri Lanka's 70 years of independence and 70 years since SLC's establishment, to be held from March 15, 2018 in Bangladesh.

Elsewhere, International Cricket Council (ICC) president Shashank Manohar, a man instrumental in the effort to dismantle the Big Three (India, Australia and England cricket boards) stranglehold on the ICC, resigned due to 'personal reasons.' Manohar was at the helm when a new constitution and financial model that significantly reduced the BCCI's share of the ICC revenues was put to a vote at an ICC Board meeting in February 2017. Seven Full Members voted in favour of the new constitution and model; the Indian and Sri Lankan boards voted against it, while Zimbabwe's board abstained.

In a press conference following the meeting in Colombo, Papon expressed his opposition to some parts of the constitution that he, as the head of one of the boards that, voted in favour of. Part of the proposed changes to the existing constitutions was that Full Membership will no longer be guaranteed, with a clear path for Associates to be promoted in a two-tier system.

"There were constitutional and financial changes being discussed for reforms. We didn't oppose the financial reforms

but there were parts of the constitutional changes that we had opposed. I was also a part of that committee. When these came up in the last meeting, there were things that didn't go with us. In the next meeting [in April], these will come up item-wise, and we will vote on them item-wise too. A lot of those present had told me to refuse the whole thing but I said that if Bangladesh is getting more money, why should I refuse that? I have to look at BCB's interest.

"Three days before we came here [to Colombo], we informed the ICC that we do not agree with two specific things. One of them is relegation; we said that we don't agree with a Full Member going down," said Papon. "The second is voting rights -- we said that we don't agree with it as it is 75/25 now. They are taking new independent directors, increasing the number of Associate members, weightage distribution is being changed. We have to understand this better, so we cannot approve this so quickly. We want to know Bangladesh's position in this regard."

Turning his attention back to the two-match Test series currently underway when asked whether coach Chandika Hathurusingha was behind the decision to drop Mahmudullah Riyad and send him back, Papon rubbished the notion and said that every decision was his.

He had said the previous day that he was unaware of Riyad being sent back home. He also revealed that it was Riyad himself who was given the option to go back and wanted to spend time with his family, a request that Papon said he denied on Tuesday.

Papon was stern when the question of emotions was raised with regards to a senior player being dropped.

"Anyone can be dropped from any match, and that player may feel sad, that is natural. But if it affects the team, then there is no question of that player continuing in Bangladesh cricket, let alone a series."



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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN



After having seemingly struggled over the last three months to get back to his rhythm since his return from a shoulder surgery, sensational seamer Mustafizur Rahman finally looked like getting back to his best on the opening day of the Colombo Test against Sri Lanka yesterday.

The 21-year-old left-armed bowler bowled a nagging line and length throughout the 15 overs he bowled, conceding only 32 runs and taking two wickets. Mustafizur got the first wicket of the day, inducing Dimuth Karunaratne to poke at a widest delivery outside off-stump before taking the last one of the day, that off Dilruwan Perera, inducing a slash way outside the line. Those weren't the best deliveries bowled by Mustafizur, but the constant pressure built by clever variation of pace and control over his line and length eventually forced the batsmen to play those false strokes.

Ford rues batsmen's decision-making

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



From the Sri Lankan perspective, having seven batsmen back in the hut for 238 runs at the end of a day on which they won the toss will probably be a disappointment. Coach Graham Ford, while admitting that things had not gone to plan, was still confident that Sri Lanka were still very much in the match.

Bangladesh dried up the runs -- Sri Lanka's end-of-day run rate was 2.7 -- leading to some Sri Lankans surrendering their wickets to rash shots, and Ford credited the visitors' bowling.

"Bangladesh bowled very well in the first two sessions down in Galle and perhaps didn't get the reward they deserved with the no ball [Subashis Roy's no-ball that ruined a first-ball dismissal of Kusal Mendis]," Ford said. "They came out and bowled here with discipline; maybe one or two decisions could have been made better by us in terms of shot options, so one or two dismissals which [if they had not happened] would have given us the upper hand."

He was uncertain about how difficult or easy the pitch was for batting, and also sent out

a gentle reminder that Bangladesh's advantage after the first day may be diminished by the fact that they will be batting last on a surface that has produced results in 11 straight matches dating back to September 2005.

"Not sure exactly how tough it is batting on that surface; we'll find out more when we come around to bowl but the general view from the batters is it's not that easy. It's quite hard to score freely. I think it will get tough as the match goes on. It's not a great day but we are still very much in the Test match."

He however had high praise for Dinesh Chandimal, who came in at 24 for two and held the innings together to be unbeaten on a 210-ball 86 at stumps and eyeing his fourth Test hundred against Bangladesh.

"It was brilliant to see how Chandimal took on the challenge of holding the innings together and he showed how mature a player he's become," said Ford. "It was a fine example of Test match batting; having to recover from a tough situation shows just the character he's got."

"It's hard to really put a number on it, having won the toss and batting first," Ford said when asked how much he would like in the first innings. "If we are somewhere near 300 it puts us in a pretty good place if there is a bit of deterioration of the surface."

BD-SL SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First innings		R/B	4s/6s	
Karunaratne c Mehedi				
b Mustafizur	7/32	1/0		
Tharanga c Soumya b Mehedi	11/40	1/0		
Mendis st Mushfiqur b Mehedi	5/6	1/0		
Chandimal not out	86/210	4/0		
Gunaratne lbw b Subashis	13/39	1/0		
De Silva b Taijul	34/54	5/0		
Dickwella b Shakib	34/37	4/0		
Perera c Soumya b Mustafizur	9/20	0/1		
Herath not out	18/63	2/0		
Extras: (b-1, lb-12, w-6, nb-2)	21			
Total: (For 7 wts in 83.1 overs)	238			
To bat: Lakmal, Sandakan.				
Fall of wickets: 1-13, 2-24, 3-35, 4-70, 5-136, 6-180, 7-195.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mustafizur	15	5	32	2
Subashis	15	2	47	1
Mehedi	15	2	58	2
Taijul	14	2	34	1
Shakib	20.1	3	43	1
Mosaddek	4	0	11	0

BANGLADESH: Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim*, Sabbir Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain.

SL succumb to bowlers' pressure

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Courtney Walsh may just be the coach of Bangladesh's fast bowlers, but his words when speaking to the press two days before Bangladesh's 100th Test seems to have been taken to heart by the whole bowling group judging by their performance on the first day at the P Sara Oval yesterday.

"More consistency, patience and control is what is required," he had said on Monday. Before that, coach Chandika Hathurusingha had said that bowling just 10 good balls to a batsman was not enough in Test cricket, implying that to take Test wickets greater pressure is required.

Bangladesh's bowlers applied those words in practice to the field of play. Bangladesh had bowled 17 maidens in 129 overs of bowling in the first innings at Galle. In Colombo yesterday, they bowled 14 maidens in 83.1 overs, including five maidens in the first eight overs. That is the pressure that set off a Sri Lankan wicket rush that saw four wickets fall for 70 runs in the morning session.

Mustafizur Rahman delivered 26 balls before conceding

পদ্মা সেতু
গর্বিত অংশীদার

a run off the bat. And the pressure told when Dimuth Karunaratne played an airy shot two balls later to give a catch to gully. Mehedi Hasan Miraz, whose economy rate was growing into a concern after his debut series heroics, was keeping things tight and Kusal Mendis, who found a release in Miraz's second over with a swept four, paid for his anxiety to score runs when Miraz's drift beat the bat and Mushfiqur Rahim did the rest with his gloves.

If Miraz, Taijul Islam, Mustafizur and Shakib Al Hasan provided the discipline, Subashis -- constantly encouraged by his teammates to go all out -- provided the aggression. He worked up good pace and used the crease well in changing the angles of attack, and all but bullied Asela Gunaratne out leg-before after dealing him a painful blow on the toe the ball before.

Walsh had also said that Bangladesh's bowling in the third session -- they had let the Sri Lankans off the hook after bowling well in the first two sessions on the first day in Galle -- was a matter of concern. The Tigers aced that challenge too by taking two wickets and, despite the 43-run unbeaten partnership between Dinesh Chandimal and Rangana Herath, keeping a check on the run-rate in the last session.

Having done so well, Bangladesh will know that they need just a little more of the same this morning to be the dominant side in this Test.