

# SPORT



Burying the ghost of Thursday evening, Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan batted with great composure and responsibility yesterday to bring up his fifth Test century and guide Bangladesh towards a 129-run lead in the first innings of the second Test against Sri Lanka at the P Sara Oval in Colombo.

PHOTO: AFP

## Shakib's constant fluctuations

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo



Shakib Al Hasan is a cricketer who invites extreme emotions, with the only certainty being

that the emotions he brings out in fans and critics alike will change from day to day. Perhaps it is because he is the most influential player for Bangladesh that the team itself follows those fluctuations, but whatever the connection, it is fitting that Shakib was the man to score a century in Bangladesh's 100th Test and bring them to a position of dominance when all seemed bleak just the day before.

Shakib was at the forefront of the bleakness too. On Thursday night, although he was unbeaten, he was the player reviled for showing not even a shred of responsibility when it was sorely needed, scoring 18 runs off eight torrid balls, one of which was a dropped catch and another that almost carried. In January in Wellington he was dropped off a hook on four on the first day before going on to add 213 runs of the highest class the following day, displaying masterful judgement of which bouncer to duck under and which to play. Yesterday, when one would have thought that nothing good could come off Shakib's presence at the crease -- such was the recklessness of his batting the previous evening -- he confounded expectations yet again.

"Yesterday as I was not out, there was time at night to think about it," said Shakib to a room full of media people awestruck by the change. "And in that time I thought about what approach would be good, especially the way [Dinesh] Chandimal batted in the first innings. I think there was a lot to learn from that with regards to how to bat in this innings."

Shakib has a way of not really taking these briefings too seriously, or maybe it is just a cultivated insouciance, but there was reason to believe what he said about following Chandimal's example. The left-hander had hit the fifth ball of the day by Lakshan Sandakan for four through point, but it was a shot played to the merit of the ball which was short and wide instead of the mad rush to hit anything in sight. Since then, Shakib did not hit a boundary for 53 balls while scoring 23.

The ability to change style of play and the will to learn and apply so quickly hints at a virtuosity that, save perhaps Tamim Iqbal, few in the Bangladesh camp can lay claim to.

It was not a perfect innings and was not of the quality seen in Wellington, but it was what was needed. Shakib had two further lives yesterday, on 40 when he could have been run-out after a mix-up with Mushfiqur Rahim but for a wild throw by Chandimal and on 67 when wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella dropped a tough low chance off a bottom edge. None of those were examples of recklessness but, like Chandimal's few chances, reward that cricket sometimes hands out for having done the hard work.

"It's a special one for me because I had to work really hard to get those runs," said Shakib. "So really happy with the way I played. Since there was a big need to score runs here and I could do that, I am very happy."

Shakib thought that the wicket had some



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## A batsman cut out for Test cricket

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Shakib Al Hasan may have grabbed all the headlines yesterday, but there was a debutant without whom

Bangladesh would probably not have been able to accumulate the 129-run lead that placed the visitors ahead in the match. When Mushfiqur Rahim was dismissed for a well-played 52, Bangladesh were six down for 290 and still 48 runs adrift of Sri Lanka's first innings score of 338. Things could easily have gone south from there, given Bangladesh's penchant for collapses.

But unlike many who had walked onto the field in the Bangladesh helmet for the first time in Test cricket, Mosaddek Hossain came with serious first-class pedigree. Although he has played just 21 matches for Dhaka Division in the National Cricket League and East Zone in the Bangladesh Cricket League, he has scored seven centuries and five of them each -- 282, 250, 200 not out, 153 and 152 -- have been big ones, hinting at a propensity to bat long that has given

him an average of 68.87 in 33 innings.

That facility for longer-version batting was evident during his innings of 75 off 155 balls with seven fours and two sixes. Apart from a few plays and misses off pacer Suranga Lakmal early on, he appeared completely untroubled. Unlike Shakib, Mosaddek did not offer any chances as he first put on 131 with Shakib -- a record for the seventh wicket for Bangladesh against Sri Lanka -- and then 33 for the eighth wicket with Mehedi Hasan Miraz

পদ্মা সেতু গর্বিত অংশীদার

together we are very comfortable, we don't even have to call when taking a run. It is not because we have played together long but there is a good understanding. His approach is very good and appropriate for international cricket," said Shakib when asked about his young partner.

Mosaddek's nous in how to pace a Test innings was at times uncanny. As things slowed down before the lunch break after Mushfiqur's departure, aware of the need to stay on top of Sri Lanka, he stepped out to no less a bowler than Rangana Herath and hit a six off his 21st delivery, then continued batting according to the merit of the delivery.

His handling of Suranga Lakmal, Sri Lanka's solitary pacer who hit a good rhythm either side of lunch, was indicative of his awareness and talent. It is thought that Mosaddek is vulnerable against pace, and apart from the first over he played from the seamer when he played and missed twice, he proceeded to play the next three overs quietly and was eager to hand the strike over to his senior partner, before later unfurling a classy cover drive and an immaculately timed jab through midwicket when he had become used to the pace.

which took Bangladesh's lead past 100.

"I think that he has a big future in Bangladesh cricket. If you talk about his one-day career, or his international career -- he has made a very good start. And since I have batted with him in domestic cricket, it is not as if we were batting together for the first time today. So whenever we bat

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PERFORMER OF THE DAY SHAKIB AL HASAN

What difference a day can make on a cricketer's mindset and on the complexion of a whole game! On Thursday, Shakib Al Hasan, Bangladesh's most illustrious cricketer, looked like a man at odds with everyone. He ruffled feathers of the opposition, looked extremely peeved while sitting at the dressing room and played every shot in anger while at the crease. Extremely lucky to have survived a madcap first eight deliveries, the all-rounder walked half-way towards the dressing room without even waiting for his partner. Yesterday, however, Shakib turned up a completely different man, mindful of his responsibilities as a senior statesman. He batted with extreme caution, in the process notching up his fifth Test century and more importantly guiding the team towards a healthy first-innings lead.

BD-SL SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First innings 338 (Chandimal 138, De Silva 34, Dickwella 34, Lakmal 35; Mehedi 3-90, Mustafizur 2-50, Subashis 2-53, Shakib 2-80)

BANGLADESH: First innings (overnight 214 for 5)

Tamim lbw b Herath	49/91	6/0
Soumya b Sandakan	61/121	6/0
Imrul lbw b Sandakan	34/78	4/0
Sabbir c De Silva b Lakmal	42/54	5/0
Tajjul lbw b Sandakan	0/1	0/0
Shakib c Chandimal b Sandakan	116/159	10/0
Mushfiqur b Lakmal	52/81	6/0
Mosaddek st Dickwella b Herath	75/155	7/2
Mehedi lbw b Herath	24/50	2/0
Mustafizur lbw b Herath	0/1	0/0
Subashis not out	0/14	0/0
Extras: (b-4, lb-8, w-2)	14	
Total: (All out in 134.1 overs)	467	
Fall of wickets: 1-95, 2-130, 3-192, 4-192, 5-198, 6-290, 7-421, 8-454, 9-454, 10-467.		

Bowler O M R W

Lakmal	25	3	90	2
Perera	33	5	100	0
Herath	34.1	6	82	4
Gunaratne	7	0	38	0
Sandakan	33	2	140	4
De Silva	2	0	5	0

SRI LANKA: Second innings

Karunaratne not out	25/43	3/0
Tharanga not out	25/35	3/0
Extras: (b-4)	4	
Total: (For 0 wickets in 13 overs)	54	

To bat: Mendis, Chandimal, Gunaratne, De Silva, Dickwella, Perera, Herath, Lakmal, Sandakan.

Bowler O M R W

Subashis	5	1	13	0
Mehedi	4	0	20	0
Mustafizur	1	0	6	0
Shakib	2	0	6	0
Mosaddek	1	0	5	0



If the future of Bangladesh's Test cricket is anything like Mosaddek Hossain (C), there is ample reason to be optimistic about.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Have to keep the ball new'

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Of the three days of the second Test at the P Sara Oval in Colombo so far, the home side have ended two at a disadvantage. The second of those came about on the third day yesterday with Bangladesh leading by 75 runs in the first innings on a pitch that is expected to help the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Tajjul Islam the longer the match goes.

But it will also help chinaman bowler Lakshan Sandaka, the man who gave Sri Lanka their only day so far in the Test with three wickets in the evening session of Day Two, including two off successive balls. He added the wicket of centurion Shakib Al Hasan yesterday to finish with figures of four

for 140, continuing to be a thorn in the side of Bangladesh's batsmen, all of whom have struggled to read his wrong'un out of the hand.

"It depends on the batsman. If you don't have much experience facing a left-arm chinaman, it's a bit difficult for you, I think," Sandakan said when asked if the rarity of his style of bowling was an advantage.

"I think they batted really well today," said Sandakan after Bangladesh had piled on 467 in response to Sri Lanka's first-innings score of 338. "The wicket got slow -- but they batted well. Shakib and the debutant batsman [Mosaddek, who scored 75] capitalised with big scores."

"The wicket became a bit slow, and when the newness of the ball goes, there's nothing much from the pitch. You have to toil a bit here and work hard. If you keep the ball as new as

possible, I think the spinners have a good chance here."

Bangladesh also benefited from Sri Lanka's profligacy when fielding on the boundary and also three dropped chances -- one off Imrul and two off Shakib, the first of which was off Sandakan's bowling late on Thursday when Shakib was on eight.

"It's not a new thing for a bowler. Whether you play club cricket or school cricket, catches can be missed. Maybe the catch goes up because it's a very good ball, so I try to look at the positives and keep trying to bowl good balls."

Despite the 129-run first-innings deficit, Sandakan was confident that Sri Lanka's batsmen could turn things around.

"We'll have to bat really well tomorrow. We have a big opportunity and I'm sure our batsmen will turn the match in our favour."

## MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

### HOOK-HAPPY SHAKIB

Shakib Al Hasan batted beautifully yesterday, but there was one remnant of his madness on the previous day -- the compulsive hook. Suranga Lakmal was bowling and square leg was a few metres in from the boundary, perhaps because Shakib had escaped dismissal the previous evening with a shot that dropped just short of the fielder in that position. In the 86th over however, Shakib hooked in the air and the ball sailed over the retreating square leg fielder and went for a one-bounce four.

### LAKMAL'S FRUSTRATION

Being a fast bowler on this pitch, and that too the only one in the side, is a thankless task. Numerous times Lakmal must have thought that he had Shakib, but his first sign of frustration -- a yell at the fielder -- came in the 92nd over, when Mosaddek Hossain pulled one in the air and it bounced centimetres short of the diving fine leg fielder.

### THE REVERSE BLOCK

Sri Lanka batsman Dinesh Chandimal had gotten a lot of runs with the reverse sweep on the second day. With only number eleven for company, Mosaddek decided to give the shot a try and changed his mind at the last second in the 133rd over from Dilruwan Perera. The result was a rare reverse block, that too one which missed its mark. Fortunately for him, the impact was outside leg.

## AFC U-23 C'SHIP QUALIFIERS Bangladesh in tough group

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh were placed in Group E of the AFC U-23 Championship Qualifiers when the draw for the 40-nation event was held at the AFC Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday.

Jordan, Tajikistan, Palestine are the other group mates of Bangladesh, who finished bottom of the four-team group in the last edition in Dhaka after having suffered 0-4

defeats against Syria and Uzbekistan while playing out a goalless draw against India.

The 40 teams, split into 10 groups, will play in qualifying rounds, which are scheduled to take place in 10 different venues from July 19 to 23. The group champions and five best runners-up teams will advance to the final stage which is scheduled to be held in China in January, 2018. Bangladesh will begin their campaign on July 19 with their fixture against Jordan while on the same day hosts Palestine are set to lock horns with Tajikistan.