

SPORT

Afternoon delight for Bangladesh

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo

Shakib Al Hasan had said after the third day that the first session on the fourth day would be the most important of the whole Test, and perhaps he said that with knowledge that if they could not prise out a few Sri Lankan wickets in the morning session when the batsmen would have to start anew, the bowlers may pay the price in the following session, which over the first three days had been the most fruitful time for batting.

Over the first three days, the afternoon sessions have produced just three wickets while 286 runs were scored in 81.3 overs. So when Bangladesh managed to take just one wicket in the morning yesterday as Sri Lanka put on 83 runs, it would have been a difficult lunch to swallow.

"When we came to the break the most important thing was a breakthrough," said debutant Mosaddek Hossain after the day's play yesterday. "That was what we were thinking about -- if a settled team loses one wicket they can lose two or three wickets. So that was the plan, and once we got a wicket you saw what happened."

What happened was Shakib's left-arm spin and Mustafizur Rahman's left-arm swing cutting a swathe through the Sri Lankan middle order, with the home side stuttering for their tea having lost five crucial wickets and added just 63 runs.

Something seems to have awoken in Shakib since his near suicidal batting on the second evening. He scored a match-altering century on the third day and yesterday employed all his tricks -- the drift, the indiscernible changes of pace, the arm-ball and even the big-spinning off break.

However it all started with Mustafizur and perhaps a bit of fortune as well, but Bangladesh will feel they were owed that after some of the reversals that they endured. Mustafizur, bowling from around the wicket, got one to shape in

and seam away and Mendis seemed to edge it. Upon their appeal being negated, the third umpire decided after long inspection that there was a sound and a slight deviation, and although there was no Snicko or Ultra Edge, overturned the on-field decision.

In the fourth over of his spell, a wide ball from over the wicket had Chandimal chasing without much feet movement and a thick edge was taken well by Mushfiqur diving to his right. Three overs later, Shakib's drift tricked Gunaratne into padding up to a straight delivery and getting trapped leg-before.

Mushfiqur then did some astute thinking by giving Mustafizur a sixth over. The rookie pacesman had only bowled a six-over spell once on tour -- when he was fresh on the first morning on this Test. Mushfiqur's gamble paid off as, off the sixth ball of the 55th over,



Dhananjaya de Silva pushed forward and the slight swing Mustafizur got did enough to take the edge through to a delighted captain.

The captain and Shakib then produced a moment of inspiration to get the fifth wicket of the session. Having noticed Niroshan Dickwella's penchant for the sweep, Mushfiqur was at the ready to react, and when he saw Dickwella go down on one knee, he moved to his right and grabbed a stunner, bringing up Mushfiqur's 100th dismissal.

"There is the matter of them coming back tomorrow and starting anew. So that is a big advantage for us in the endeavour to get them all out as soon as possible," said Mosaddek about their chances tomorrow.

If they replicate the discipline they showed throughout the day and especially in the afternoon yesterday, they probably will not have to wait long.



The fourth day of Bangladesh's 100th Test was the making of something extraordinary against Sri Lanka at the P Sara in Colombo yesterday, when the home side were only 139 runs ahead with two wickets standing. Can the Tigers turn it into a momentous occasion on the fifth and final day today? PHOTO: AFP

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MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo

THE REDRESS

The lack of Hot Spot and Ultra Edge had cost Bangladesh once in Sri Lanka's first innings when centurion Dinesh Chandimal was batting. Yesterday, Kusal Mendis was given out by the umpire off a thin edge to Mustafizur Rahman in the 45th over. Mendis, perhaps knowing that there was not much in the production suite to back the umpire's decision and emboldened by the overturn on the first day that benefitted his teammates, called for the review, but this time, curiously, conclusive evidence did not seem to be needed and Mendis was sent on his way.

SHAKIB 0, DAR 3

Shakib Al Hasan was bowling beautifully before and after tea and had the batsmen in his web, but he could not quite manage umpire Aleem Dar. In the 58th over, he struck Dickwella seemingly in front but Dar was unmoved. A review showed that slightly over half of the ball was hitting in line and so the call stood. In the 76th over he did the same to Dilruwan Perera and Dar was similarly unmoved. They went for the review because there were four more overs till the reviews would be topped up, but it showed that the ball would have missed the stumps. However, they paid for that in Shakib's next over when he had Perera plumb in front and Dar was again unimpressed. This time there was no review but replays showed that it would have hit middle stump full on.

'Mustafizur took the game away from us'

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Sri Lanka opener Dimuth Karunaratne had averaged 11.6 in his last 10 Test innings since his last century at home, and it was on 11 that he was dropped on the third evening by Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim off a difficult deflection down the leg side. The left-hander made the most of his luck and struck 126 off 244 balls with 10 fours and a six on the fourth day yesterday, the only innings from Sri Lanka that blocked Bangladesh's way to a first Test win over Sri Lanka in the country's 100th Test.

"I am glad I got 126 here. I was trying to occupy one end more than scoring runs. Had I stayed for a bit longer, it would have been vital. Their mindset would have been down then," said Karunaratne after the day's play ended with Sri Lanka 139 runs ahead with two wickets -- both non-specialist batsmen in Suranga Lakmal and Dilruwan Perera -- in hand.

"We have close to a 140 lead. If we can get closer to 200, so much the better. We can't ask the tail to get us 200 plus. If

they some way or the other get it we will be happy."

Sri Lanka's back was broken in the afternoon session, with Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman -- who got some reverse swing in a spell of 24 for three in seven overs -- combining to take five wickets in that session.

"Shakib bowled well, bowling to the pitch and it's not easy to bat against him," said Karunaratne. "Mustafizur took the game away from us. He reverse swung the ball well. He was bowling around the wicket for right-handers and the angle he was creating was difficult for the batsmen. We knew what he was doing and we had a plan to play the ball that was coming in and leave the ball that was going away. He bowls a maximum of five overs in a spell and we should have played that out. We panicked."

He thought that the way Perera and Lakmal were batting indicated that the pitch would still be good for batting today. And he did not mince words when asked whether a defeat will be embarrassing.

"In Sri Lanka we have won our last six Tests. We have never lost a Test to Bangladesh. It will be a big embarrassment. We are at fault and we need to own up to the mistake."



Young pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman (C) not only gave the crucial breakthrough after lunch on the fourth day of the second Test against Sri Lanka yesterday, but his three wicket-burst swung the pendulum Bangladesh's way. PHOTO: AFP

BD-SL SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA: First Innings 338 (Chandimal 138, De Silva 34, Dickwella 34, Lakmal 35, Mustafizur 2-50, Subhashis 2-53, Mehedi 3-90, Shakib 2-80)				
BD-SL: First Innings 467 (Tamim 49, Soumya 61, Sabbir 42, Shakib 116, Mushfiq 52, Mosaddek 75; Herath 4-82, Sandakan 4-140)				
SRI LANKA: Second Innings R/B 45/66 (overnight 54 for 0)				
Karunaratne c Soumya b Shakib	126/244	10/1		
Tharanga b Mehedi	26/40	3/0		
Mendis c Mushfiqur b Mustafizur	36/91	2/0		
Chandimal c Mushfiqur b Mustafizur	5/13	1/0		
Gunaratne lbw b Shakib	7/15	1/0		
De Silva c Mushfiqur b Mustafizur	0/7	0/0		
Dickwella c Mushfiqur b Shakib	5/15	0/0		
Perera not out	26/126	2/0		
Herath lbw b Tajjul	9/32	0/0		
Lakmal not out	16/17	2/0		
Extras: (b-4, lb-7, w-1)	12			
Total: (for 8 wickets in 100 overs)	268			
To bat: Sandakan				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Subhashis	16	4	36	0
Mehedi	22	0	67	1
Mustafizur	19	3	52	3
Shakib	30	8	61	3
Mosaddek	3	0	10	0
Tajjul	10	1	31	1

Review wasted

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



The umpiring in the Colombo Test has not always been straightforward, but the last ball yesterday and umpire Aleem Dar's reaction to it resulted in some confusion and

could be said to have cost Bangladesh a review. Suranga Lakmal was facing up to Mosaddek Hossain and the ball reared up, went past his bat with or without taking a thin edge onto the thigh and into Sabbir Rahman's hands at short leg.

As soon as the appeal for a catch, Lakmal seemed to be walking off and Dar nodded his head. Lakmal stopped and stared at the umpire and the finger never came up. Bangladesh asked for a review, but as has happened quite a few times in this Test already, without Hot Spot or Ultra Edge a conclusion could not be reached and the decision stood.

If one were to hazard a guess, Aleem Dar's nod of the head probably had more to do with Lakmal's walk, a common practice of umpires giving batsmen out when they might not have after he begins walking. Mosaddek said after the match that they went for the review after seeing the umpire's reaction while Dimuth Karunaratne said that Lakmal only walked towards the dressing room because it was the end of the day.

So what has been an exciting Test match continued to be marred by the lack of technology, and in this incident Dar's indecision.

Azmir powers BCB Green

SPORTS REPORTER

Azmir Ahmed slammed an unbeaten hundred as BCB Green defeated BCB Red by 43 runs following the D/L method in the side's second practice match for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Azmir, who made headlines when he plundered a double-century in the 50-over Dhaka First Division Cricket League this season, led his side in their reply of BCB Red's total of 246.

Azmir hit 103 off 117 balls with 12 fours and a six as Green reached 181 for 2 in 36 overs before rain stopped the match. Mehedi Maruf provided support with a 59-ball 38.

The two teams will travel to Cox's Bazar on March 21 to play two more practice matches on March 22 and 23 before their group B matches against Hong Kong, Pakistan and Nepal.

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PERFORMER OF THE DAY

DIMUTH KARUNARATNE



With wickets falling cheaply all around him, Dimuth Karunaratne stood tall and scored a crucial century in Sri Lanka's second essay. Although the Bangladesh bowlers kept a tight noose around the hosts, the left-hander got himself to be part of seven partnerships -- the

biggest being 86 runs for the second wicket with Kusal Mendis, and thanks to his obdurate knock of 126, the hosts are still alive in this game. The 28-year-old came into this Test under severe pressure, having scored only one fifty in his previous nine innings. So his team needed a knock of substance from him, and he delivered at the right time, smashing 10 fours and a six in his 244-ball stay at the crease before falling to a sharp catch at slip off Shakib Al Hasan.