

SPORT



Bangladesh were behind the eight-ball after losing three early wickets and their chase of Sri Lanka's 280 in the third and final one-dayer at the SSC Ground in Colombo suffered the decisive blow when Shakib Al Hasan (R) departed for 54.

PHOTO: AP

Tigers repay Tharanga

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



It is generally thought that unless there are extenuating circumstances, it is always better to win the toss and bat first. The Sinhalese Sports Club ground is a venue where the toss does not matter, but it was a lucky one to lose yesterday. Before the third ODI between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the winner of the toss had lost the match 28 out of 52 times.

It became 29 out of 53 after Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza won the toss and elected to field, which according to Sri Lanka skipper Upul Tharanga would have been the home team's choice. Both captains had thought the grass on the pitch would favour their three seamers early on and the rain forecast for the evening may have swayed the decision too.

In the end, it neither seamed nor rained, and on a belt of a wicket Bangladesh were all out for 210 to lose the match by 70 runs. Sri Lanka avoided the unwanted distinction of being the first team in a decade to go through a home ODI series winless and shared the series 1-1.

"The ball does something here in the first hour or so. We wanted to bowl first as well," said Sri Lanka skipper Upul Tharanga at the post-match press conference yesterday. "It was a good toss to lose in the end. We made the same mistake in Dambulla and this time Bangladesh made the same mistake here."

That gives the series a nice symmetry, reflecting the closeness of the two sides in terms of quality. Bangladesh won the first match by 90 runs and the second was washed out. While Sri Lanka did Bangladesh a favour in the first ODI after winning the toss, in hindsight Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza returned it yesterday.

Even though the series was drawn 1-1, the hosts should feel that they held the edge as they scored 311 before the second ODI was washed out. "[It was] Unfortunate that the second game was rained off. We could have won the series as chasing 300 runs in

Sri Lanka is not easy."

A lot of the credit for yesterday's game should go to Bangladesh's perennial thorn, player-of-the-match Thisara Perera, who hit his second 50 of the series to propel Sri Lanka to 280 after Bangladesh had rained things in from 76 without loss in the first 10 overs to 203 for five after 40.

"We had a very good start and the momentum was lost after the two run outs. But I thought Thisara Perera was exceptional today. He showed a lot of maturity during his knock. He took his time and finished the innings well."

MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Dambulla

THE RUN-OUT ANOMALY

Dinesh Chandimal may count himself very unlucky to have his innings cut short at 21 in the 26th over. In an attempt to take a single, Chandimal had comfortably beaten a good throw from Taskin Ahmed from deep point. But after having plonked his bat in, Chandimal was inside the crease with both feet in the air mid-stride. Just as the bat left the turf Mushfiqur Rahim took off the bails, and Chandimal's carelessness claimed another victim.

ALMOST WAUGH/TAMIM'S DUAL FORTUNE

With 280 to chase down, Tamim Iqbal was the man Bangladesh were looking to. But off the third ball of the innings, Tamim edged Nuwan Kulasekara and what should have been an easy catch for keeper Dinesh Chandimal was allowed to go through the gap between him and first slip for four. Bangladeshis the world over breathed a sigh of relief. Then, off the fifth ball, a leading edge flew to the bowler. The leaping catch was seemingly spilled much in the way that South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs dropped Australia skipper Steve Waugh in the crucial 1999 World Cup Super Six match. This time however, the umpires upon consultation with the TV umpire ruled it out, judging that Kulasekara had the ball in control long enough.

THE PROPHETIC CELEBRATION

Sri Lanka's fielding has been a source of much ire among locals for most of the tour so far, so the players were determined to prove that they had gotten over the hump in yesterday's match. In the 24th over, Shakib Al Hasan, on 54, was batting untroubled. Off the first ball bowled by Dilruwan Perera, Shakib tried to hit to the left of Danushka Gunathilaka at short cover, who made a fabulous diving stop. Five Sri Lankan fielders rushed to congratulate him and if you didn't know the rules you would have thought a wicket had fallen. It turned out that they were not celebrating unnecessarily; just early. Shakib decided that Gunathilaka was too much of a nuisance and tried to hit the next ball over his head, but could only hit it straight to the fielder, who then celebrated a second time.

'First 10 overs went wrong'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Colombo



Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza cut a despondent figure at the post-match press conference after the series-levelling 70-run loss at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground yesterday. The loss of the opportunity to win a first-ever series against Sri Lanka and a rare away series was disappointing enough, but it must have been doubly disappointing to have lost the match after feeling at the halfway point that they had done what he said before the match was required to get across the line. But the score at the halfway stage was pretty much all that went to plan.

The day before the match, on Friday, Mashrafe had said that the key would be keeping Sri Lanka below 300, and restrict them to 270 or 280. That is exactly what they did; Sri Lanka scored 280 for nine in 50 overs on a good pitch after being 76 for no loss in the first 10 overs.

But in the chase, Bangladesh were reduced to 11 for three with returning swing specialist Nuwan Kulasekara getting rid of Tamim Iqbal and Sabbir Rahman while Suranga Lakmal dispatched Mushfiqur Rahim for a first-ball duck.

"If you had asked me before the match, I'd have said I was more than happy to chase 260-

270 on this sort of wicket. They changed their game with the two fast bowlers," Mashrafe said. "It was hard to come back from 11 for three but I think Shakib [Al Hasan] and Soumya [Sarkar] had a chance after getting set. I think Shakib got tired. He was cramping. We didn't get any partnerships after their stand broke."

Mashrafe had also said before the match that executing their plans would be crucial.

"I think our batting and bowling in the first 10 overs went wrong," Mashrafe said. "We were-

n't successful with our plan in the first 10 overs but overall, I think we left a gap of 20 runs which cost us. But I still feel we should have chased down 280."

Mashrafe won the toss for the first time since the New Zealand series in January, but it may have been a toss he would have preferred losing in hindsight. Seeing the grass on the pitch, and with rain forecast, Mashrafe chose to field, but whatever advantage the pitch may have provided was negated by wayward bowling.

"You can say both," Mashrafe said when asked whether it was the grass on the pitch or the possibility of rain that made him want to field first. "When we played the practice match, we understood that in Colombo the wicket becomes flatter in the second half. They perhaps made 20 runs too much, but if you followed [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz's batting you could see clearly that the wicket didn't have anything. Perhaps the new balls swung from both ends but if Soumya and Shakib could have dragged on their partnership a bit further and if the next two batsmen could have made bigger contributions, we could have won the game."

"I don't know if it was nervousness [in the first ten overs]," Mashrafe said when asked about the run haemorrhage in the first 10. "We used five bowlers during that period. We were not as disciplined as we were in the first two games. I think we tried a few more things because we weren't getting what we wanted early on. We didn't judge the wicket properly in regards to our areas."

An ODI series draw in Sri Lanka is still a good result, but what will rankle a team that has started to take pride in their execution of plans is that yesterday, they failed to execute most of them.

"The whole team is disappointed. It is true that it doesn't end here. We have a lot of cricket coming up in Ireland and then we have the Champions Trophy."

Saifuddin in T20 squad

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Saifuddin was the fresh inclusion in the national side as the uncapped pace bowler all-rounder was included in the 16-member squad for the two-match T20I series against Sri Lanka.

The selectors made two changes from the ODI team, dropping Shuvagata Hom and Rubel Hossain.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said: "We have been looking for a pace bowling all-rounder and we want to develop Saifuddin as he has got potential."

The first T20I is scheduled for April 4 while the second and final T20I will be held on April 6. Both matches will be in Colombo.

SQUAD: Tamim Iqbal, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (capt), Soumya Sarkar, Imrul Kayes, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Sabbir Rahman, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mosaddek Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, Shubhashis Roy, Sanjamul Islam, Nurul Hasan and Mohammad Saifuddin.

Fernando hatricket ends hosts' dream

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh surrendered to Sri Lanka both in Colombo and Chittagong yesterday and the reason was all the same as top order collapses shattered their dreams.

While the Tigers suffered a heavy defeat in the third ODI owing to an early collapse, Bangladesh Under-23s could not recover from the early blows of pacer Asitha Fernando, who took a hatricket in the seventh over of the first semifinal at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium to ensure his team's comfortable eight-wicket victory.

Now the hosts will be mere spectators in tomorrow's Emerging Teams Asia Cup final when Sri Lanka face-off against Pakistan, who demolished Afghanistan by 123 runs in the second semifinal at the MA Aziz Stadium yesterday.

Elected to bat first, Bangladesh made a cautious start before Fernando's seventh over blitz, which reduced Bangladesh to 20 for three. He picked up the wickets of Afif Hossain, Mominul Haque and Nazmul Hossain off consecutive deliveries.

The hosts could not recover from the hiccup and small contributions from Saif Hasan (32), Nasir Hossain (39) and Mohammad Saifuddin were not good enough as they were bundled out for 179 runs. Abul Hasan retired after making 23 as

he suffered from migraine.

Sri Lanka Under-23s skipper Angelo Perera made it clear after the match that the hatricket was the turning point. "I'm very happy to go into the final. It's been a very good team effort. I think the hatricket was the turning point because Bangladesh had scored a lot of runs from their top-order. So we knew we were in the game when we got those three wickets," he said, before keenly asking for updates of third ODI in Colombo.

Home side skipper Mominul Haque echoed his counterparts' sentiment. "Yes, I think so, losing three wickets in one over and on such a good wicket made the difference. On that wicket, 180 was very low. I think those wickets were vital."

"It's very disappointing. I have told you from the first day that I was dreaming of becoming a champion. However, I could not do that and for that I am sorry. Perhaps as a captain I am to blame, and I will shoulder that blame," he added.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: 179 all out in 49.3 overs (Nasir 39, Saif 37, Hassan 32; Fernando 4/32)
SRI LANKA: 180/2 after 38.5 overs (Samarawickrama 88*, Asalanka 83 not out, Nayeem 1/28, Shaif 1/45, Mominul 0/7)
Result: Sri Lanka won by eight wickets.
PAKISTAN: 267-5 in 50 overs (Sohail 68, Rizwan 105 not out; Naib 3-51)
AFGHANISTAN: 144 all out in 31.4 overs (Zadran 31; Asif 5-40)

Hassan prescribes 10-day rest for Fizz before IPL

SPORTS REPORTER from Colombo



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan told reporters at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo yesterday that Mustafizur Rahman would be able to play in the Indian Premier League 'if he wants to' but that it will only be after 10 days' rest at home after the tour of Sri Lanka ends.

Speculation over Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur's participation in the IPL was drummed up on Thursday by Indian online news outlet Sportstar, who quoted Mustafizur as saying: "I don't think I will be able to make it for the tournament this time around."

Mustafizur himself told Bangladesh reporters during team practice on Monday that he was called by an Indian reporter at his hotel room through the hotel intercom on the evening of March 30, and that all he said was that he was not able to say either way if or when he would be playing in the IPL as it was the board's decision, and he could not say anything before the current tour ends.

"If Mustafizur is really eager, then of course, he will be allowed to play the IPL," said Hassan. "You have seen that he still has not regained full effectiveness after returning from injury. And he has been bowling non-stop on this tour, first in the Tests and then in the ODIs."

BD-SL SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA		R/B	A/6		
Gunathilaka c Riyad b Mehedi	34/38	3/1			
Tharanga b Taskin	35/35	5/1			
Mendis c Mushfiqur b Mustafizur	54/76	4/0			
Chandimal run out	21/35	2/0			
Siriwardana run out	12/16	1/0			
Gumaratne c Riyad b Mashrafe	34/44	3/0			
Perera c Taskin b Mashrafe	52/40	4/1			
Prasanna c Riyad b Mustafizur	1/3	0/0			
Perera c Tamim b Mashrafe	15/11	2/0			
Kulasekara not out	1/1	0/0			
Lakmal not out	2/1	0/0			
Extras: (lb-2, w-17)	19				
Total: (For nine wickets in 50 overs)	280				
Fall of wickets: 1-76, 2-87, 3-136, 4-161, 5-194, 6-216, 7-230, 8-275, 9-277.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Mortaza	10	0	65	3	
Mustafizur	10	0	55	2	
Mehedi	10	1	49	1	
Taskin	8	1	50	1	
Mahmudullah	1	0	5	0	
Shakib	8	0	41	0	
Mosaddek	3	0	13	0	
BANGLADESH		R/B	A/6		
Tamim c b Kulasekara	4/6	1/0			
Soumya c Chandimal b Perera	38/44	3/1			
Sabbir c Chandimal b Kulasekara	0/3	0/0			
Mushfiqur lbw b Lakmal	0/1	0/0			
Shakib c Gunathilaka b Perera	54/62	7/0			
Mosaddek b Prasanna	9/20	0/0			
Riyad c Chandimal b Lakmal	7/9	1/0			
Mehedi c Tharanga b Kulasekara	51/71	6/0			
Mashrafe c b Prasanna	16/23	2/0			
Taskin c Gumaratne b Kulasekara	14/27	1/0			
Mustafizur not out	1/1	0/0			
Extras: (lb-2, w-14)	16				
Total: (All out in 44.3 overs)	210				
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-10, 3-11, 4-88, 5-111, 6-118, 7-127, 8-155, 9-209, 10-210.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Kulasekara	7.3	0	37	4	
Lakmal	8	0	38	2	
Perera	10	1	47	2	
Perera	2	0	14	0	
Gumaratne	2	0	16	0	
Prasanna	10	1	33	2	
Siriwardana	5	1	23	0	
Result: Sri Lanka won the match by 70 runs					