

SPORT



Australia captain Steve Smith (L) and his deputy David Warner shake hands in delight after taking their team to within 156 runs of victory against Bangladesh at the end of the third day of the Dhaka Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Anything can happen any time'

MAZHAR UDDIN

Confidence was the buzz word in the lead-up to the first Test against Australia, and because of the way the first two days panned out the Bangladesh players came to the post-day press conference with smiles on their faces and confidence in their words. Yesterday after the third day's play, however, Tamim Iqbal -- who had reason to smile after a fantastic 78 in Bangladesh's second innings -- came to the media room of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium with a downbeat air, and his subsequent words explained why that was so.

The situation after the end of the third day could so easily have been similar to what it was after the first day, but the home side were unable to seize the momentum.

"A day ago we would have been happy with setting a target of 260-270 but we had the opportunity to take the lead to 300 or more today. So from that point, obviously we are disappointed and it would have been helpful if we scored 300 or more than that," Tamim told reporters.

After a lower-order collapse of the last five wickets for just 35 runs, despite a fighting start to the second innings, Bangladesh eventually managed to post the target of 265 runs just after the tea break.

At stumps, the visitors looked in control with two of the most experienced campaigners in the Aussie side, opener David Warner (75 not out) and skipper Steve Smith (25 not out) set to resume the fourth day on 109 for two, needing another 156 runs to win.

Unlike the first innings, Bangladesh's bowlers were unable to bowl in the right channel and were unable to keep things

tight despite picking up two early wickets. Warner looked comfortable with his back foot punches or coming down the track to hit Shakib Al Hasan for a six without any fear in the last hour of the day.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz conceded 51 runs from 14 overs where he bowled few long hops while Shakib gave away 28 runs from his eight overs, but was unlucky after Soumya missed a chance at slip when Warner was on 14 while Smith survived a tough chance at short leg. Tamim did not hesitate to point out the flaws of the bowlers and also said that it would have been better if Shakib had tried to bat longer.

"I would say the wicket is unpredictable and anything can happen at any time -- we need to be patient. This is the type of pitch where even after two or three innings you have noticed that if a wicket falls it is followed by two or three more. We need to bowl in good areas and I think we could have bowled better today after getting two quick wickets, if we could bowl tighter I think we may have picked up another wicket. If we picked up another wicket it would have been a good day for us," Tamim added.

Interestingly, Bangladesh is in a position pretty similar to the one they were in against England in last year's Mirpur Test where the visitors at one point were 100 without loss chasing 273 before being bundled out for 164. A pragmatic Tamim, however, was not willing to look back on past glories but was intent on talking about what they need to do today.

"There are some similarities with the England game but the wicket is unpredictable. A wicket will come if we can create pressure with tight lines and lengths. If we can remove one of these two batsmen, things can change quickly."

Warner changes the track

SAKEB SUBHAN

David Warner has 18 hundreds from 64 matches. He averages 47.42 as a Test opener and scores an electric 78 runs per 100 balls, usually playing in conditions where the new ball is a major factor. He is a fearsome presence at home in Australia, England and South Africa. All that ferocity, however, seemingly evaporates when he plays in the subcontinent. In India, he averages 24.25 from eight matches with a top score of 71, and in Sri Lanka he scored at 27.16 per innings with a best of 68. Warner was not seen as a big threat by Bangladesh because of those figures, and because in Mirpur he has been confronted with a pitch that he may not have encountered during previous visits to the subcontinent.

That ferocity, however, came rushing back in full force in the evening session yesterday when the pugnacious opener raced to an unbeaten 75

off 96 balls, for the moment making a mockery of a treacherous chase of 265 on a treacherous pitch. He had his slice of fortune -- Soumya Sarkar dropped a sharp chance at slip when Warner was on 14 -- but what came afterwards showcased the strength of a powerful cricketer as he completely upended the suppositions built up over the eight sessions that came before.

In doing so, he has breathed new life into an Australian team which had begun to bear a victimised air after the events of the first two days.

"I think he's amazing. He's such a big player for us, you can just see it in his eyes when he is out there," Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins said after the day's play. "He is so focused; we always say 'be the ball' and he looked like he was the ball out there. Focused, taking the game on. He got his 50 rapidly. I think it just changes the momentum and also the mindset of the other batsmen. He just came in and took the game on, it's great."

Warner began by hitting two boundaries off the very first over from Mehedi Hasan Miraz,

sending a message to the opposition that they will have no leeway. He seemed to be fed up with trying to survive on subcontinent wickets -- his strike rate suggests that that is not the way he plays. That seemed to simplify matters. He was decisive in defence and attack. If the two boundaries in the first over sent a message to the opposition, a six over wide long on off the best bowler in the match, Shakib Al Hasan, told his teammates in the dressing room that the pitch was not the demon the scoreboard had made it out to be.

"I think the pitch seems to have mellowed out a little bit compared to day one," Cummins said. "I mean, I think keeping our target to 260 really kept us in the game and to finish off tonight like we did, if we have a good first hour tomorrow it should really set the game up. So I think we're in a great position."

Tamim Iqbal did not share the view that the pitch has mellowed out, but that does not matter because the Australians believe that it has. And that, more than the runs, may be Warner's biggest impact on this Test.



Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim wears a bemused look after being run out in unfortunate fashion on the third day of the first Test against Australia in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

BD-AUS SCOREBOARD				
BANGLADESH: First innings 260				
AUSTRALIA: First innings 217 (Renshaw 45, Handscomb 33, Maxwell 23, Agar 41 not out, Cummins 25; Shakib 5-68, Mehedi 3-62)				
BANGLADESH: Second innings R/B 4s/6s (overnight 45 for 1)				
Tamim c/Wade b Cummins	78/155	8/0		
Soumya c/Khawaja b Agar	15/53	3/0		
Tajjul lbw b Lyon	4/22	1/0		
Imrul c/Warner b Lyon	2/18	0/0		
Mushfiqur run out	41/114	1/1		
Shakib c/Cummins b Lyon	5/11	1/0		
Sabbir c/Handscomb b Lyon	22/36	2/1		
Nasir c/Wade b Agar	0/4	0/0		
Mehedi c/Khawaja b Lyon	26/35	4/0		
Shafiqul c/Handscomb b Lyon	9/28	0/1		
Mustafizur not out	0/1	0/0		
Extras: (b-15, lb-3, w-1)	19			
Total: (All out in 79.3 overs)	221			
Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-61, 3-67, 4-135, 5-143, 6-186, 7-186, 8-186, 9-214, 10-221.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hazlewood	4.1	2	3	0
Cummins	14	3	38	1
Lyon	34.3	10	82	6
Maxwell	5	0	24	0
Agar	20.5	2	55	2
Khawaja	1	0	1	0
AUSTRALIA: Second innings	R/B	4s/6s		
Warner not out	75/96	11/1		
Renshaw lbw b Mehedi	5/20	0/0		
Khawaja c/Tajjul b Shakib	1/6	0/0		
Smith not out	25/58	1/0		
Extras: (b-3)	3			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 30 overs)	109			
Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-28.				
To bat: Lyon, Handscomb, Maxwell, Wade, Agar, Cummins, Hazlewood.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mehedi	14	2	51	1
Nasir	3	2	2	0

Windies stun England

APP, Leeds



Shai Hope led the West Indies to an astonishing five-wicket win over England in the second Test on Tuesday as he became the first batsman to score hundreds in both innings of a first-class match at Headingley.

The West Indies, set 322 to win, finished on 322 for five with Hope making 118 not out -- his second hundred of the match after his first-innings 147.

Victory gave West Indies their first Test match win in England since 2000 and saw them level the three-match series at 1-1 after they suffered a humiliating innings and 209-run defeat inside three days in the first Test at Edgbaston.

There seemed little danger of a West Indies win when England captain Joe Root declared his side's second innings on 490 for eight late on Monday's fourth day.

But after resuming on five without loss, the West Indies scored more than 300 runs on the last day at Root's Yorkshire home ground.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: First innings 258
WEST INDIES: First innings 427
ENGLAND: Second innings 490 for 8 decl
WEST INDIES: Second innings 199 for 3 (Brathwaite 95, Powell 23, Hope 118 not out, Chase 30, Blackwood 41; Moeen 2-78)
Result: West Indies won by 5 wickets and levelled three-match series 1-1.
Player-of-the-match: Shai Hope.



West Indies' Shai Hope (L), who became the first batsman to score hundreds in both innings, celebrates their stunning five-wicket victory against England on the fifth and final day of the second Test at Headingley yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Need pitches like this in domestic cricket'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal expressed dissatisfaction over the difference in the wickets that Bangladesh have played their recent home Tests on and the ones the players ply their trade on in domestic cricket.

Before the Test series against Australia, much of the talk about Bangladesh's chances of pulling off an upset centred round the wicket. After all, the Tigers had nearly won a series against England last year -- falling agonisingly short on a Chittagong dustbowl before winning handsomely on a Mirpur crumbler.

So it was all too easy to think that those kinds of wickets will provide the same advantage over touring sides. For Tamim, who scored 78 runs of attrition in Bangladesh's second innings and helped set up a target of 265, the pitch advantage was not as clear cut as many believe.

"My question is, how many times do we get to play on these wickets in domestic cricket?" an animated Tamim asked the pressmen at the post-day ceremony in Mirpur. "We only play on these wickets in international matches, because it gives us an advantage over the foreign side. We are busy with grassy wickets in domestic cricket, although we never play on those in international matches at home."

These comments are grounded in reality, because even though Bangladesh

dominated England in the two-Test series last October and bossed the game in the first two days of the current Test, the advantage has only been comparative, rather than absolute. That is because Bangladesh's batsmen, with the notable exception of Tamim himself as he has three half-centuries and a century in the last three home Tests, are almost as vulnerable to the conditions as the tourists.



TAMIM IQBAL

On the third day, they went from 186 for five to 221 all out as Australia off-spinner Nathan Lyon picked up six wickets. In the first innings on Sunday, Ashton Agar and Lyon picked up three apiece as Bangladesh collapsed from 188 for four to 260 all out.

There has been a clamouring for more grassy wickets to better prepare the Bangladesh side for when they tour beyond the subcontinent, but not much of a focus on playing on wickets that will maximise the home advantage.

"This thinking has to change. We tour once in two years in places where we confront grassy wickets. I feel that if we want to play international matches in these surfaces, we should do the same in domestic cricket. So that those who are new will enter the side already habituated to the surface. And also for the spinners, it's not as if a spinner will come on here and automatically start getting batsmen out. He has to have some experience of playing on such surfaces. At least one or two grounds should have these wickets so that it creates a habit," Tamim added.

Hazlewood to fly home

SPORTS REPORTER



Pacer Josh Hazlewood will travel back to Australia from Bangladesh at the end of the first Test, it was revealed during the post-day press conference after the third day of the Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Hazlewood hobbled off the field on the morning of the third day, and the problem was later revealed to be a left side injury. He will also miss the ODI series in India that will follow Australia's two-Test stop in Bangladesh. With Australia chasing 265 to win the match and currently sitting pretty on 109 for two, Hazlewood will however bat if needed.

One of only two fast bowlers picked by Australia for the first match on a raging turner, Hazlewood's pace partner had to carry the pace burden on his own.

"He's going to be really hard to replace. I think he's played all but one of the last 30 Tests," said Cummins after the day's play. "He said it's going to be pretty weird sitting at home and watching the games. He hasn't done that for three or four years. He is a big man around the group. I will miss having dinner with him every night."

But we've got Jackson Bird waiting in the wings, which is great. He's been bowling beautifully. He's had some great performances in the past. It's not great about Joshy but we're lucky that we've got such a strong squad over here."

Victoria down Kawranbazar

SPORTS REPORTER

Victoria SC notched a 2-0 win over Kawranbazar PS in the 10-team table with the Marcel Bangladesh Championship League in Kamalapur yesterday.

Farhad and Nayeem scored for Victoria, who moved to third position in the 10-team table with nine points while Kawranbazar stayed at the bottom with one point from six matches.

PERFORMER OF THE DAY

DAVID WARNER



If Australia were to win against hosts Bangladesh in the Dhaka Test, one would have expected David Warner to play a key role. And when set a fourth innings target of 265 runs, it was kind of obvious that Australia were looking to the left-arm opener to get them a good start. That is exactly what Warner did. He did not only negotiate the early threat from the spinners, but counter-attacked, racing to 75 off just 96 deliveries, with 11 fours and a six, as Australia took the driving seat at the end of a thrilling third day. After having struggled in India earlier in the summer, this performance will surely give the southpaw a lot of confidence and cause a lot of