

# SPORT



Bangladesh batsman Sabbir Rahman (C), batting on 66, lost his balance while trying to sweep a leg-side delivery from Nathan Lyon as Australia wicketkeeper Mathew Wade (R) dislodged the balls in a flash to wreck back the visitors' initiative in the final session of the first day of the second Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

## Sabbir finds his niche

SPORTS REPORTER

There had been curiosity about Sabbir Rahman's role in the Test side ever since he made his debut against

England in October last year at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury in Chittagong. The right-hander started his Test career batting at number eight in the first innings against England to allow a nightwatchman to go before him and batted at number seven in the second innings to score an unbeaten 64 and share in an 87-run with Mushfiqur Rahim.

In between he batted at number seven, five, six and four and yesterday, on the first day of the second Test against Australia at Chittagong Sabbir hit his highest score of 66 - an innings that gave some indication of his role. Similar to the Test debut, he shared a valuable 105-run partnership with his skipper Mushfiqur Rahim yesterday to help Bangladesh bounce back from an inauspicious start.

Sabbir's batting was in high contrast to the determined straight-batted patience of Mushfiqur, as he attacked the bowlers to seize back the initiative from the Aussies who were on top having reduced the home side to 117 for five an hour after tea.

"I practiced a lot. I am yet to play many Test matches, so I don't have that much experience in Test cricket. The important thing for me is to play my own game on each and every Test. Scoring runs is important... I may get out if I try to stay, so my focus was to increase the total score. It is my role in the

team," Sabbir explained after making a 113-ball 66 that contained six fours and a six. "In our 100th Test match (in Sri Lanka), I batted at number four and scored 40 zero runs in both innings. Whether I am on zero or a hundred, batting at number four doesn't matter; the most important thing is how I can set my mindset. It's not as if I was demoted to seven because of a bad score; it's because of team combination," he continued.

The 25-year-old right-hander was glad to have provided support to his captain. "Mindset is important. My intention was very clear before going to the middle and I batted accordingly and became successful, though the score could have been much better. I am however happy that I could contribute something for my team and tried to support my captain," he said, adding that he enjoyed the sledging of the Australian team.

"I enjoyed my batting while they were sledging. I also didn't miss the opportunity to give them a proper reply," he said. Sabbir was also not unhappy with the first day's outcome as Bangladesh scored 253 for six at stumps. "Overall we played good cricket and scored 253 runs. Yes, it could have been much better had we lost fewer wickets but we played good cricket on the first day which made us happy."

He however said that the pitch became a mystery to him during his innings. "I cannot say what the behaviour of the pitch will be on the second and third days. Here, the most important thing for us is to play good cricket," he said.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Advertisement for 'খুলো ময়লার দিন শেষ!' (The end of the mud days!) featuring Berger Trend Workable paint.

### BD-AUS SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh	First innings	RUN	WICKETS
Tamim Iqbal	9/14	0/0	
Souravmalya Roy	33/83	2/1	
Moumita Roy	4/17	0/0	
Mominul Haque	33/67	2/0	
Shakib Al Hasan	24/52	3/0	
Mushfiqur Rahim	21/49	0/0	
Sabbir Rahman	66/113	6/11	
Nasir Hossain	19/33	3/0	
Extras (b/f)	1	1	
Total (for wickets in overs)	253		
Fall of wickets:	1-13, 2-21, 3-76, 4-85, 5-117, 6-215		

## Pitch still a mystery

MAZHAR UDDIN

Even before the start of the two-match Test series between Bangladesh and Australia, the pitches in Dhaka and Chittagong had been the centre of discussion among players and team managements of both teams.

In the first Test, Bangladesh managed to utilise home condition and the pitch to great effect in a dramatic 20-run win in Dhaka, so the curiosity was just heightened over the wicket at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

Expecting a lot of turn and purchase for the spinners, both teams opted to go with just one pacer in the line-up, indicating yet another spinning paradise but after the first day things look a bit different.

There was hardly any turn since Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim elected to bat again after winning the second toss of the series. The wicket,

which looked dry despite being under covers for long periods in the rainy port city, was a decent batting track on the first day with the odd ball kicking every now and then, but it was still hard to score runs initially.

There are four more days to go, and this pitch may still have a lot to offer. It was learned that the pitch will start to change its nature and offer more turn from the latter half of the second day if there is enough sunshine to dry things up further.

Off-spinner Nathan Lyon adapted to the pitch very quickly, and latched on to the fact that the ball tends to skid on if there was more pace behind it.

The top four Bangladesh batsmen were dismissed in similar fashion, playing for the turn which was non-existent and therefore missing the line of the delivery to be trapped in front.

An on-song Lyon may have picked up five wickets but said that it was a docile pitch and that he had to persevere to get the wickets.

From opener Tamim Iqbal to num-

ber four Mominul Haque, all departed without being able to adapt to the pitch properly, which may prove the interest of spinners in the Tigers camp, but then again it will be a daunting task for the bowlers to execute their plan.

However, according to Sabbir Rahman the highest scorer for the home side after the first day, it is still not sure what will be an ideal total in the first innings and that could well keep the Aussie batsmen in a bit of doubt as to how to approach the innings when they come out to bat.

It will be crucial for Bangladesh to post a score near or above 350 and at the same time the bowlers need to bowl in the right areas, as Lyon did, when there was no help from the deck.

Heading into the second day the pitch remains a mystery for both sides, but at least the home side will feel slightly optimistic as the visitors may have to face the music if the wicket starts to deteriorate and favour the home spinners.



Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim sweeps forcefully through square leg during a resolute, unbeaten 62 on the first day of the second Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

### Star India bags IPL rights for \$2.55 billion

Star India will pay a staggering 163.48 billion rupees (\$2.55 billion) for the television and digital rights of the Indian Premier League (IPL) for the next five years, the country's cricket board announced on Monday.

Sony, the only other bidder for the television rights of the world's richest domestic Twenty20 competition, offered 110.5 billion rupees but lost out to Star's consolidated offer from 2018 to 2022.

Bidders for digital rights included Supersport, Facebook, Airtel, Bamech and Jio. Of the 24 companies that bought the tender document, 14 made bids.

"We believe the IPL is a very powerful property, and we believe there is lots more value that can be created for fans of cricket on digital and TV," Star India's chief executive Iqbal Jaffer said.

"India, cricket and IPL have changed dramatically since 2008, and this bid is a reflection of that," he said of the mammoth bid.

## Kohli's eyes on 2019 WC

PTI, Colombo

Virat Kohli has his eyes firmly fixed on the World Cup in England and the Indian captain wants to "address" the selection issue in a transparent manner selecting "a bunch of 20-25 players", who will form the core group going into the marquee event in 2019.

Kohli will be facing some happy selection dilemmas with senior bowlers Umesh Yadav, Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Shami all available for selection for the upcoming limited overs segment in India.

On the other hand, the junior spinners like Axar Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav have done more than decem in India's 5-0 whitewash against Sri Lanka.

"The best thing is transparency. We will address it and tell them that this is a bunch of 20-25 people, who will make the proba-

ble-list for the World Cup and everyone has an equal opportunity to be tested at different stages," Kohli said at the end of the ODI series against Sri Lanka.

Kohli reminded that it will be a challenge for all spinners, who are in contention for Cup berth.

"It's going to be a challenge among all the bowlers and the spinners that are going to be in the part of the bigger group to make it to the 2019 World Cup. As I said, we don't want to be predictable in any way and we want to have an X factor if possible with the bowling attack as well," he added.

"We will find the core group for World Cup quickly only if the guys perform in the next couple of big series coming up because then the mindset becomes different of taking anyone anywhere in the world. So I think those series will be very important for us to find the right balance as a team," Kohli said referring to the upcoming Australia and New Zealand series.

### PERFORMER OF THE DAY NATHAN LYON

Australia off-spinner Nathan Lyon set a unique record yesterday, the first day of the Chittagong Test, as he became the only bowler in history of Test cricket to get the first four batsmen of the opposition team dismissed leg-before. The 29-year-old quickly realised, as soon as Australia lost the toss and were asked to bowl, that there was not much on offer on the docile first-

day surface at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium. So the wily off-spinner kept persisting with his immaculate line and length and varied his pace, getting the top four batsmen dismissed with straighter, slightly quicker deliveries at that, as the Bangladesh batsmen met their downfall either by being pinned back or downed during the wrong line. Lyon was a bit fortunate with his fifth wicket, that of Sabbir Rahman, but after the hard work he put in that bit of fortune was well-earned.

## I had to curb my ego: Lyon

SPORTS REPORTER

Nathan Lyon has not had the best of time on the subcontinent before 2017. For long a reluctant strike bowler in Australia's ranks, Lyon had failed to impress in the spin-friendly conditions of Sri Lanka and India, averaging an ordinary 42.57 for his 42 wickets from 11 matches ending in their 3-0 drubbing in Sri Lanka last August. But since this year's four-Test series in India, Lyon's Asian fortunes has seen a sharp turnaround, and after picking up his second fire for on the two-Test tour of Bangladesh, Lyon credited the change to learning to curb his ego and adapting to subcontinental conditions while also keeping a bit of his Australian methods intact.

"I've watched a lot of footage of [Ravichandran] Ashwin, who in my book is probably the No. 1 spinner in the world. So in these conditions it's all about adapting and learning and probably putting your ego aside, and what works for me in Australia probably doesn't really work here in the subcontinent," said Lyon after the first day's play in the second Test in Chittagong yesterday. "Saying that it's also my strength, so I can't go too far from that. I have to put my ego away and really bowl with confidence, in my terms yielded 13 wickets."

His six Tests so far in the subcontinent this year have yielded 33 wickets at the vastly improved average of 21.75. It will no doubt please him that his third five-wicket haul in a row in as many Tests - also taking him to seventh in the list

of Australian wicket-takers with 261 - came on an unresponsive wicket. He realised the docility of the pitch and cleverly mixed his pace, hurling in some quicker ones that skidded off the surface and getting the first four Bangladesh batsmen trapped in the crease. It was the first time in Test history that the top four batsmen in a Test innings were out leg-before to the same bowler.

"That [bowling ugly] might be round-arm for me, trying to smother the ball a little bit more but using my stock ball as a variation," said Lyon, who operates as a class off-spinner at home, fighting the ball and inviting loop and turn. "I think I've learnt a lot in the subcontinent and I'm embracing the challenge."

"The pitch was pretty good, to be fair, there's not much spin there at all. I think I bowled four straight ones early and all hit the pads."

Lyon said that yesterday's heat and humidity was one of the toughest of his cricketing life and had words of praise for Australia's lone pacer Pat Cummins, who looked on the verge of collapse by the time stumps were drawn on the first day.

It speaks to how cautious Australia are in the aftermath of an unexpected defeat that on a day that they lost the toss and still kept the opposition to 253 for six on a good pitch, Lyon though honours were even.

"It's pretty even. They played well. Sabbir [Rahman] and the skipper [Mushfiqur Rahim] batted really well. But at the end of the day I was pretty proud of our bowlers' efforts to go out there and keep fighting all the way through to the 90th over."



First four batsmen of the opposition team dismissed leg-before. The 29-year-old quickly realised, as soon as Australia lost the toss and were asked to bowl, that there was not much on offer on the docile first-



With five of the six wickets to have fallen so far, Australia off-spinner Nathan Lyon was the star of the first day of the second Test in Chittagong yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR