

## SPORT



Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim cuts a pensive figure as the hosts find themselves looking down the barrel at the end of the second day of the second Test against Australia at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

## Time to stop waiting for the pitch

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chittagong

Peter Handscomb felt the heat and was down on the ground suffering from dehydration with six overs remaining in the day, but stood firm again after a short water break to end the day's play as the Aussies completed their dominance on the second day.

That was the only incident from the visitors which might indicate they are away from home but apart from that it seemed like Australia adapted better to the pitch and conditions than the home side.

It was highly anticipated after the first Test in Mirpur that the pitch at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong will once again be a spin bowler's joy, but that has not been the case on the first two days.

However, despite there not being much purchase for the spinners Australian off-spinner Nathan Lyon adapted quickly to the pitch's demands. The 29-year-old did not wait for the pitch to change its nature but decided to bowl on the stumps with more pace behind the ball in order to skid it on to the Bangladesh batsmen with greater effect.

The top four of the Tigers' batsmen fell to the trap in pretty similar fashion, unable to play the line of the delivery as they waited for the turn, a big change for the side who utilised the Mirpur pitch in the first Test quite confidently.

Lyon ended up picking seven wickets. His third five-wicket haul in as many matches and second ton will surely serve as a lesson to the Bangladeshi spinners -- when there is not much to get from the pitch, look for other options.

Perhaps Bangladesh were hoping things

would change on the second day when they came out to bowl with a plan to hit the rough areas of the pitch from the Ispahani end. The plan failed and even off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz's plan to attack Aussie skipper Steve Smith from around the wicket back-fired with Smith managing to score frequently through the fine leg region.

Mehedi bowled 20 overs, while left-arm spinners Shaheen and Md. Saifuddin added 15 overs each and the latter did manage to threaten the batsmen on a few occasions.

Still, there were no signs of shifting the plan to create some chances by bowling with the stumps and forcing the Australian batsmen to make mistakes.

There were hardly any close-in fields,

even in the final 10 overs of the day with the Australians exhausted from the heat. Four fielders patrolling the boundary was surely not what the visitors would have expected despite the fact that there were two set batsmen in the form of David Warner and Handscomb at the crease.

Additionally, there did not seem to be much of an attacking mindset even after the two wickets that did fall, allowing the visiting side to take charge.

It was indeed a tough day at the office for the home side and for the first time this series their body language, instead of the pitch, deteriorated. There is much that captain Mashfiqur Rahim and coach Chandika Hathurusingha have to think about.

But with three more days in the Test match and an overall lead of 80 runs, there is still time for Bangladesh to limit the lead that Australia look almost certain to accumulate today if the hosts can discover a way to make the pitch work for them instead of waiting for it to do all the work.

PHOTO: FIRDOUSS AHMED  
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## Australia turn the heat around

SPORTS REPORTER

At the end of the second day of the second Test, in all respects except one Australia looked nothing like the unfamiliar visitors to Bangladesh that they actually were.

The only foreign condition they dodged in their restoration was the heat and humidity, because Peter Handscomb had to have ice packs brought out to the middle as play was briefly stopped in the last session to bring the dazed Handscomb's temperature down.

The heat may not have been mastered yet, but David Warner and Handscomb did display the well-documented Aussie toughness to take the team through to the close with the score on a formidable 225 for two, 80 behind Bangladesh's first-innings 305.

"Really gutsy. Obviously it was very hot out there, we saw that yesterday. You have to work very hard for your runs, so

to get through and the way they played was excellent," said a satisfied Australia coach Darren Lehmann. "They are in the ice bath now, I'll leave it to the medical team to get them right for tomorrow. Very special day and hopefully tomorrow [Wednesday] they can kick on."

Lehmann, a former Australian batsman who played nine Tests in the subcontinent, said there was nothing much to do in such a situation other than to try to get through it.

"It's really just focusing on each ball and trying to get through. I thought that used to feel really well when they played from the back, made good decisions. And tomorrow the heat of the day when you're like that and under stress it's about just getting through each ball, taking your time."

He believed that the pitch was much different to the Dhaka wicket. "It's a little bit different. Hasn't done as much as the first Test. Pretty good wicket, more traditional sort of subcontinent wicket. It will start to

spin as the game goes on. We played well, tomorrow's another day."

He reserved special praise for David Warner, whose 88 not out and the partnerships he built with Steve Smith and Handscomb formed the backbone of Australia's sturdy position.

"Especially in the last two weeks, I

would think more so than anything else," he said when asked about Warner finally cracking the code to batting in the subcontinent. "The way he has adapted and actually gone on board in a different way in the last couple of innings has been spectacular."

Warner's 88 was his 10th century in 10 Tests for Australia, his 11th for his home country. "It's a little bit different, which is unusual for him. Obviously they spread the field quite a lot so it's hard to hit boundaries."

Even though with Steve and him, after the early loss of opener Matt Renshaw to get us going and into the innings and then, to control Pete at the back end is what you want from your leaders. And now, he's [Warner is] that talented, he's probably going to now (snaps fingers), so I figure he'll really play well over here for us."

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"We are still 80 runs ahead. Cricket is a game that you cannot say anything for sure. We are a little on the back foot but in cricket the whole scenario can change within an hour or an hour and a half," said the optimistic Nasir while speaking at the post-day press conference yesterday.

Australia finished the day on 225 with two and many had questions about the intent and plans of the Tigers, but Nasir praised the bowlers' effort and need the batting effort.

"You see, Warner (David) hardly batted as slowly as he did today. That indicated that our bowlers did well. It's just that they did not get the wickets. The scenario can change at any time. The match will go to the fifth day, so we are not thinking about the result, we are thinking about what we have at this moment, he said."

"Bowlers got help from the Mirpur wicket but here our bowlers are not getting the bounce. On the other hand, the ball was not turning after pitching on a stumps stump line," he added.

"It is my personal opinion that if you consider the wicket, we were 100 to 150 runs short in our first innings total. We should have scored at least 400 to 450 runs on such a good wicket," he opined.

When asked whether their approach was negative, Nasir said: "We were defensive as well as attacking. If you see Shahid [Al Hasan] pitched the ball on the sixth to seventh stumps against Warner as it was difficult for Warner who hardly plays the sweep shot. If you talk about fielding, yes there were more fielders on the boundary as both batsmen were set."

"Warner and Smith always try to score runs and that's why we tried to block them. We were looking for their mistakes," he added. He also said that the day could have been much better for them if they could hold onto the catch off Warner dropped by Monimul Haque at short leg, or complete the stumping after Warner, late in the day.

"The day could have been different if we capitalised on those two chances. But the catch was fifty-fifty and it's tough to take this kind of catch. On the other hand, the stumping was difficult as the ball kept low," he said.

## '100-150 runs short'

SPORTS REPORTER

Home fans demoralised following Australia's dominant showing on the second day of the second Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong can take heart from the words of all-rounder Nasir Hossain.

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PHOTO: FIRDOUSS AHMED



The scorching heat and sapping humidity in Chittagong hardly made the work for Australia any easier, but they battled it manfully to take a stranglehold of the second Test by the end of the second day's play yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## BD-AUS SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH vs Australia (Second Test, Day 2)

Overnight: 251-2 (2 overs)

Target: 350 (10 overs)

Score: 293-2 (29.1 overs)

Wickets: 5 (4-4-10)

Umpires: Md. Sajid, Md. Sajid

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