

# SPORT



South Africa batsman Hashim Amla plays a cover drive on way to scoring 137 on the second day of the first Test against Bangladesh in Potchefstroom yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Pretty happy with how we bowled'

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom

The second day ended with Bangladesh recovering from 36 for two and reaching stumps on 127 for three in response to South Africa's mammoth 496 for three declared, but the talk at the post-day press conference still surrounded the decision at the toss that put the visitors in that position in the first place.

After the first day Sabir Rahman came to the presser with a lot of confidence, declaring that any captain would have won the toss and opted to field when playing in South Africa, even though the facts disagree vehemently.

Fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, who bowled 26 luckless overs for 88 runs in South Africa's run fest, was more measured in towing the team's party line of the decision being down to misreading the pitch.

"We expected more bounce in the pitch because on the adjacent wicket there was some bounce and it was skiddy. We didn't expect it to be such a slow and flat track," said Taskin. "The captain and coach took the team's opinion. So this decision was the team's, not any individual's."

There can however be only so much blame on the fickle whims of a coin, because as Proteas skipper Faf du Plessis said, South Africa would have batted had they called correctly and Bangladesh would still have been in this position, which was largely down to their insipid and haphazard bowling performance on the first day, which continued on to the second morning when there was no attempt to create pressure and part-time off-spinner Mahmudullah Riyad

was used while the ball was still new.

There was however a change after lunch, when after the wicket of Hashim Amla -- which itself was down to the positioning of a point fielder largely absent in the morning -- in the first over tighter fields and more purposeful bowling resulted in a session of just 85 runs in 29 overs for two wickets. Taskin was however not forthcoming about whether the change was due to fresh plans during lunch.

"We had different plans for each batsman, and tried to stick to those."

"We were disappointed at not getting enough wickets. We didn't bowl too badly. If we did, it would have been around 600 runs. Still, we are pretty happy; we bowled really well."

"Definitely," he asserted when asked whether he thought it was still possible to avoid defeat. "We are not thinking about losing at all. We will go for a draw if we can't win."

South Africa's declaration at tea was also a cause for speculation yesterday, with many wondering if Du Plessis had declared knowing that Tamim Iqbal -- off the field for 49 minutes before tea -- would not be able to immediately open, a tactic similar to that employed by Du Plessis against David Warner in Adelaide in November 2016.

"They declared suddenly. Tamim bhai was probably treating a niggler. It happened so suddenly that he couldn't open the batting unfortunately."

Dean Elgar, who scored 199 in South Africa's innings, however denied the declaration being a Tamim-centred one. "I don't think we thought about that. We were thinking about the declaration from lunch, but scoring became tough. We would have liked to get more on the board. But it's still a very good position."

## Killing 'em softly

SAKEB SUBHAN from Potchefstroom



How does one even get angry at Hashim Amla? He toyed with the Bangladesh bowling for just over two sessions to score 137, ever-so-natural runs. He graduated South Africa's position of dominance overnight into one of impregnability by adding 69 more runs on the second morning off just 97 balls. If that sounds aggressive, it was anything but. Amla does not do aggression. That is why, when he was out in the first over after tea when through some glitch in the matrix he edged Shaiful Islam to a smartly positioned backward point, the Bangladesh players nearly went up to shake his hand because they too, like those lucky enough to be at the ground, were happy to have been part of the clinic.

Even the lofted shots he hit off the spinners were lifted rather than bludgeoned. All this talk of serenity and natural stroke-play may indicate that it is all lazy elegance that imbues Amla with his greatness, but that could not be further from the truth.

Yesterday, it was a treat to see the method behind the genius and the outlandish grasp Amla has on the field of play -- a lesson for cricketers and cricket fans alike. Lots of batsmen look around the field of play before facing the next delivery. They sometimes put out their hands and count the fielders. They then take strike and hit the ball straight to the fielder they just counted.

Amla leans on his bat and glances around, no outward show -- just observation. He then does what only the highest class of batsmen have been able to do. He internalises the field and bats on. In the

93rd over of the innings, and the fourth of the morning yesterday, Mustafizur Rahman bowled a shortish ball outside off stump and it reared up off a length. There was no third man, but a deep point. Even with the higher than average bounce that would have forced lesser mortals to hurry to get bat to ball, Amla waited and played it over gully to the third man fence.

The same happened in Mustafizur's next over, only this time to a ball pitched full outside off stump. Amla bent low and opened the face of the bat to steer it past gully for a boundary to the same region, this time all along the ground.

If those were examples of the discernible methods behind Amla's genius, there were plentiful instances of the intangible qualities of his genius, namely in the varieties of the one shot that makes cricket lovers wax lyrical -- the cover drive. While early on with two slips in place, he left balls alone outside off, when Mushfiqur Rahim inevitably reverted to defence Amla cashed in with an exhibition of arguably cricket's most elegant shot. In the 109th over he smashed one through the covers off Mustafizur West Indian style -- feet rooted and blade flashing. In the next over off Taskin Ahmed, he took his feet to the pitch of the ball and caressed it past the two fielders in front of square on the off side.

A third fielder was brought inside the circle while a deep point waited on the fence. Amla did not need the blueprint in his head then, he hit two more past all of them.

Small wonder then that no one can get angry at Amla; it was an education for all and sundry at Potchefstroom and they were all grateful for it.

## LOOKING UP DOWN SOUTH

### The weight-loss city

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom

The drive from Johannesburg airport to Potchefstroom is sufficient for the visiting Bangladeshi to cotton on to the fact that it is a different world. Potch, as they call it here because whatever your tongue it is likely to be twisted when trying to pronounce the name in full, is 120 kilometres away from South Africa's largest city, and a distance of that magnitude would take a minimum of three hours to traverse in Bangladesh, if you were lucky.

In South Africa, across expansive eight-lane highways flanked by sprawling landscapes of open fields dotted with trees that same distance takes just 80 minutes. Halfway through the journey, which for us was blessed by the setting of a sun that seemed bigger when viewed across African plains, you will realise that personal automobiles are the way to go here, especially outside the big cities. That feeling turned into a full-on realisation a day into our stay in sleepy, laid-back Potchefstroom. With no public transportation to speak of, we asked the owner of the guesthouse to fix us up with a taxi service. She graciously gave us the number of...let's call him Charlie.

With the weekend before the first Test being a long holiday extending into Monday's Heritage Day, Charlie informed us that he was not working that weekend. Are there other drivers? No.

So we walked the 2.5 kilometres to the 'Tigers' hotel, the NWE Puk Sports Village adjoining Senwes Park. Before starting off we looked up another number online, and having gotten one were

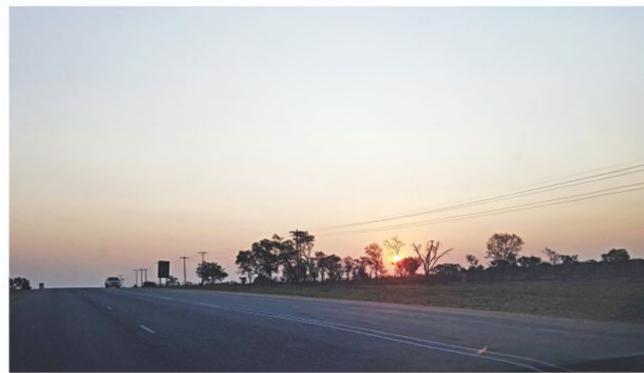


PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN

The sun sets on the Johannesburg-Potchefstroom highway.

feeling proud that we had trumped local knowledge with our data packages. Until, that is, we found out that the other driver was not working in the weekend either. Surely, there must be numbers for taxi services at a high-level establishment like the Sports Village.

"Sure," said the receptionist when we asked, and returned with the number we had looked up. Upon being informed that we already had that number, she paused and said: "Do you have Charlie's number?"

There are just two taxis in Potchefstroom. Not an exaggeration, not an underestimation. Two taxis in the whole city.

So we walked more than 15 kilometres over those two days and was greatly grateful when Aasif, the other driver that we intrepidly Googled,

picked us up from the Village on Sunday afternoon. He confirmed that there are two taxis in Potch and has thankfully since become our guide to all things Potchefstroom.

A side effect of the paucity of taxis was that two days before the Test, this reporter went out on an errand along with Aasif, and halfway through the job there was a call on his mobile and a Bangladeshi cricketer asked to be picked up from a restaurant where two of them had gone to eat. There was hesitant agreement on the other side of the line after Aasif told him that there was a Bangladeshi journalist in the car. Since they were in a hurry there was no choice. It was a quiet ride from the restaurant to the Village.

Looks like business may pick up for Charlie.

## BD-SA SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings		R/B	4s/6s	
(overnight 298 for 1)				
Elgar c Mominul b Mustafizur	199/388	15/3		
Markram run out	97/152	13/0		
Amla c Mehedi b Shaiful	137/200	17/1		
Bavuma not out	31/87	2/1		
Du Plessis not out	26/49	4/0		
Extras: (lb-4, w-2)		6		
Total: (For 3 wks ded in 146 overs)	496			
Did not bat: De Kock, Phehlukwayo, Maharaj, Rabada, Morkel, Olivier.				
Fall of wickets: 1-196, 2-411, 3-445.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mustafizur	27	2	98	1
Shaiful	25	5	74	1
Mehedi	56	4	178	0
Taskin	26	5	88	0
Mahmudullah	5	0	24	0
Mominul	2	0	15	0
Sabbir	5	1	15	0
<b>BANGLADESH: First innings</b>				
Liton c Amla b Morkel	25/29	4/0		
Imrul c Markram b Rabada	7/20	0/0		
Mominul not out	28/64	4/0		
Mushfiqur c Markram b Maharaj	44/57	7/1		
Tamim not out	22/34	3/1		
Extras: (lb-1)		1		
Total: (For 3 wks in 34 overs)	127			
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-36, 3-103.				
To bat: Mahmudullah, Sabbir Rahman, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, Shaiful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Morkel	7	1	34	1
Rabada	9	2	23	1
Maharaj	11	3	38	1
Olivier	5	1	27	0
Phehlukwayo	2.0	1	4	0

## WI 288 for 6

AFP, Southampton

West Indies scored 288 for six in their 50 overs against England after losing the toss in the fifth and final one-day international in Southampton on Friday.

Shai Hope top-scored with 72 runs from 95 balls while Chris Gayle smashed 40 off 29 balls early in the innings, including 34 runs off six Jake Ball deliveries. Spinners Adil Rashid, with 1-42, and Moeen Ali, with 1-36, were the pick of the England bowlers.

England lead the five-match series 3-0. The second match was a rain-marred no-result.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**WEST INDIES:** 288 for 6 in 50 overs (Gayle 40, K Hope 33, S Hope 72, Samuels 32, Ambris 38 not out; Plunkett 2-54)

## Teams struggle as rain ruins day

SPORTS REPORTER



The depressions that loom over the nation have turned into a big headache for cricketers in the ongoing 19th National Cricket League as rain once again halted all the third-round matches across the country yesterday.

However the two fixtures which were able to briefly hit the field, Khulna against Dhaka and Rajshahi against Dhaka Metro, became stop start games in Chittagong and Khulna respectively.

In the Tier-1 encounter, after electing to bat Dhaka ended the first day on 132-4 in 39 overs where rain forced two interruptions after a delayed start. Dhaka made a poor start and struggled on 71 for 4 after losing the wickets of Abdul Mazid (0), Rony Talukdar (11), Zahiduzzaman (30) and Rakibul Hasan (21) cheaply in quick succession. However, after Khulna's Pacer Al Amin Hossain and off-spinner Mahedi

Hasan picked up two wickets each, Shuvagata Hom and Taibur Parvez consolidated the innings.

During their fifth wicket stand, the pair added an unbeaten 61 runs as bad lighting called off the opening day where Shuvagata remained not out on 41 off 67 balls which included six fours while left-hander Taibur was unbeaten on 25.

The Tier-2 game was practically the

same case with only 41.1 overs being played due to inclement weather. After being asked to bat first Rajshahi added 114 for 4 before poor lighting ended the day's play.

Rajshahi were in a spot of bother early on as the score read 12 for 2 after opener Myshukur Rahman and Nazmul Hossain fell victim to Dhaka Metro's pacer Dollar Mahmud following just a single run.

However fellow opening batsman Mizanur Rahman reached a half century, before becoming the third casualty under Dollar after scoring 56 off 90 deliveries, with the help of ten boundaries. Dhaka Metro's Abu Haydar picked up the fourth wicket in Farhad Hossain on 15 while Zunaid Siddique remained unbeaten on 29 alongside Forhad Reza (7).

Meanwhile the other two fixtures, Barisal-Rangpur and Sylhet-Chittagong, were abandoned without a single ball being bowled due to inclement weather and a wet out-field.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

<b>KHULNA VS DHAKA DIV</b>
DHAKA: 132 for 4 in 39 overs (Shuvagata 41 not out, Zahiduzzaman 30; Al Amin 2-38, Mahedi 2-39)
<b>RAJSHAHI VS DHAKA METRO</b>
RAJSHAHI: 114 for 4 in 41.1 overs (Mizanur 56, Zunaid 25 not out; Dollar 3-30)
<b>CHITTAGONG VS SYLHET</b>
Day-1 called off due to wet-out-field.
<b>BARISAL VS RANGPUR</b>
Day-1 called off due to wet-out-field.

## PERFORMER OF THE DAY

DEAN ELGAR



Before being heartbreakingly sent off one run shy of his maiden double hundred to become the first South African to be dismissed on 199, Dean Elgar did display his class.

The left-hander has been the backbone of the Proteas batting lineup of late and paired up to add fruitful partnerships with debutant Aiden Markram and Hashim Amla to post a considerable total on the board. The thirty-year-old smashed his ninth Test hundred as he gave no quarters to the Bangladeshi bowlers throughout his 388 ball 199 run knock, which featured 13 fours, before he was undone by a Mustafizur Rahman short delivery.

## Chandimal puts SL on top

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Captain Dinesh Chandimal made an unbeaten 155 as Sri Lanka put the pressure on Pakistan on the second day of the first Test in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

Openers Sami Aslam (31 not out) and Shan Masood (30 not out) negotiated 23 overs to take Pakistan to 64-0, still trailing Sri Lanka's first-innings total of 419 by 355 runs.

They need another 156 to avoid the follow-on, a task which should be simple on a flat Sheikh Zayed Stadium pitch.

Both Masood and Aslam, opening for the first time together, looked assured as Sri Lanka attacked through all their three spinners and two seamers in short spells.

But it was a memorable day for Sri Lankan skipper Chandimal, whose marathon knock of over nine hours in hot conditions propelled his team to a strong total.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**  
**SRI LANKA:** First innings 419 (Karunaratne 93, Chandimal 155 not out, Dickwella 83, Perera 33; Abbas 3-75, Yasir 3-120, Hasan 2-88)  
**PAKISTAN:** First innings 64 for no loss (Masood 30 not out, Aslam 31 not out)