



Mominul Haque top-scored with 77 as Bangladesh produced a bit of a fightback with a total of 320 against South Africa in their first innings of the first Test in Potchefstroom yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers make Proteas better

SAKEB SUBHAN from Potchefstroom



After the first day, which started with the minor debacle of Bangladesh skipper installing South Africa on a flat wicket, batsman Sabbir Rahman called the pitch a flat one repeatedly, even likening it to a Chittagong wicket. After the second day when South Africa declared their innings closed on 496 for three, fast bowler Taskin Ahmed reiterated his teammate's statement, adding that they would look to draw if they could not win.

On the third day, they were bundled out for 320 by Protea pacers Morne Morkel, Kagiso Rabada and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj on the same, flat wicket. If one were to seriously gauge the huge difference between two sides playing on the same pitch, not just ability, but attitude too has to be considered.

It's not that South Africa's bowlers are miles better in quality than Bangladesh's -- mere quality does not seem to be the deciding factor. Yes, they are better, but they are made even more so by the attitude of Bangladesh's batsmen. South Africa occupied 146 overs to score 496 for three. Bangladesh scored 176 fewer runs having played 56.5 overs fewer. South Africa scored their runs at 3.37 per over, Bangladesh at 3.6. If that does not seem much of a difference, consider that Bangladesh lost 10 wickets and South Africa three.

South Africa had partnerships of 196 and 215 in their innings, which were broken by a run-out and a loose shot. Bangladesh's partnerships of note were 67, 55, 69 and 65. Dean Elgar hit 199, Hashim Amla caressed 137, and debutant Aiden Markram scored 97. Mominul Haque top-scored with 77 and Mahmudullah Riyad managed 66. All of the aforementioned South African batsmen played the ball on merit and did not try to manufacture runs. Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim came out on the second evening and played a one-day innings of 44, which was fun while it lasted -- 57 balls.

On the third morning, Mahmudullah survived a chance on 26 when he slashed hard at a Maharaj delivery and keeper Quinton de Kock dropped the edge. It was not that, after Morkel and Rabada bowled superb morning spells, South Africa's third and fourth seamers matched that quality. While Tamim Iqbal was a touch unlucky to be caught down the leg side off a bad ball from Andile Phehlukwayo, Mominul Haque suffered a loss in concentration in nudging a Maharaj delivery straight into the palms of short leg. At least the pattern of Mominul's innings was different from his end, because the diminutive left-hander was patient during his 150-ball knock.

Mahmudullah was restless from the start, as was Sabbir Rahman. Both were gliding balls down to third man, and soon enough, both chopped on to their stumps.

There is as big a gulf in captaincy as there is in the batting and bowling departments. Again, Mushfiqur's captaincy makes Faf du Plessis's look even better than it has been. Yesterday evening, he opened the bowling with off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz although Rabada, Morkel and Olivier showed that pace can still be dangerous on this wicket. Not only did he start with the spinner however, he positioned a sweeper cover and a sweeper on the leg side from the first ball. In the second over bowled by Shaiful, there was a deep square leg, deaf fine leg and a deep backward point. During the entirety of Bangladesh's innings there was rarely, if at all, more than two fielders in the deep. Even when Riyad was started off with a few boundaries through the off side, the response was to position three men side by side at short cover to create doubt, not just to stop the runs. But on that front, maybe the batsmen made Du Plessis's tactics look better as well.

The day ended with South Africa 230 ahead with eight wickets in the bank. Neither Bangladesh's attitude nor their ability, as displayed in this Test, warrant anything better.

'Pitch better than thought'

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



Not many would have thought that after Bangladesh's first innings on their current tour of South Africa, it would be a left-arm spinner in possession of the best bowling figures.

But Keshav Maharaj took three wickets for 90 as Bangladesh were bundled out for 320 on Day Three of the first Test match yesterday.

With 16 overs remaining when bad light ended the day early Maharaj said that South Africa, currently leading by 230 runs with eight wickets in hand, will reassess declaration plans in the morning today.

It hasn't deteriorated as much as most people expected to, so we'll just have to see how things pan out tomorrow and see if there's some overnight rain and how it affects the pitch for tomorrow.

"Obviously the batsmen give us the best feedback as to the conditions out there," said Maharaj.

"We know that the Bangladesh side are quite an attacking side," he said when asked about Bangladesh batsmen's aggressive mindset.

"At times we were a bit surprised at some of the shots played but we do know that they like to take the game away from the opposition."

'Should've scored at least 400'

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom



For the third day in a row South Africa have dominated, and

for the third day in a row Bangladesh's post-day press conference left a lot unanswered. Questions, asked by South African and Bangladeshi journalists alike, still lingered about the decision to field first but there was not a satisfactory answer as the players trotted out by the team management -- Sabbir Rahman on the first day, Taskin Ahmed the next and Mominul Haque yesterday -- are not part of the leadership group.

The party line in the first two days was that the wicket was misread, which flies in the face of what skipper Mushfiqur Rahim said before the match -- that the wicket did not look difficult, was dry and likely to take turn as the match wore on.

Mominul, who top-scored with 77 in Bangladesh's 320 all out, however seemed tired of the dead horse being beaten and preferred to look ahead, despite South Africa leading by 230

runs with eight wickets in when an early close with 16 overs remaining in the day was called because of bad light at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom.

"Wicket is getting better by the day, so I think it will play better tomorrow," said Mominul when asked if he thought the decision was a good one. In other words, as it would improve day by day according to him, the decision was good, a view he later reiterated.

Mominul, who played 150 balls for his 77, was the only Bangladesh batsman who seemed to take his time. It was a comeback innings of sorts -- he was dropped for Bangladesh's 100th Test in Colombo in March and the first Test against Australia in September. His fellow returnee Mahmudullah Riyad who missed one more Test than Mominul -- the second against Australia -- also hit a half-century, his first away from the subcontinent since his 53 in Gros Islet in September 2014.

"I don't think I changed my batting style. I changed my mentality," he said when commenting on his success after

returning to the side. "In these situations if you get stuck in your mentality, you will suffer. I just worked on my mentality. If you have to survive at this level, you have to be mentally strong."

But Mahmudullah (66 off 124) was not as collected as Mominul, nor was Sabbir (30 off 46), Tamim (39 off 67) or Mushfiqur Rahim (44 off 57). All the aforementioned batsmen participated in four consecutive 50-plus stands, but Mominul admitted that the fact that the highest among them was 69 is something they will have to correct in the next innings.

"I think our batsmen made some small mistakes," said the soft-spoken batsman. "Most of us were getting out after settling in. We have to overcome this in the second innings."

"I don't think we are happy scoring just 300 runs on this type of wicket. They got almost 500 runs so we should have scored at least 400, or even closer to their total. I don't think anyone is happy with this score."

After two days of blatant and blind denial, that last sentence in itself was refreshing.

YOUTH ODIs Second game washed out

SPORTS REPORTER

The second game of the five match Youth ODI series between Bangladesh Under-19 and Afghanistan Under-19 was abandoned due to rain at the Sylhet Divisional Stadium yesterday.

The stop-start game was reduced to 45 overs before finally being called-off.

However it was not the best of starts for the hosts, who were 182 for nine in 43 overs after being sent to bat.

The youths kept losing wickets at regularly before Md. Rakib and Mahidul Islam Bhuyan stitched together a 75-runs partnership for the fifth wicket.

Rakib (46) and Mahidul's dismissals in the forties sparked another collapse before Kazi Anik added a quick-fire 32 off 25 balls in the latter stages of the innings.

The third match will be held in Sylhet tomorrow.

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH U-19 : 182 for 9 in 43 overs (Rakib 46, Mahidul 44, Kazi Anik 32; Yousof 4-50)

Dhakas' contrasting fortunes

SPORTS REPORTER



Dhaka Division staged a comeback against Khulna on the second day of their third round encounter in the 19th National Cricket League yesterday.

Nadif Chowdhury scored a career-best 166 runs against the defending champions as Dhaka headed toward a huge total after posting 484 for seven at stumps.

Dhaka had resumed on 132 for four following a pair of fifties from overnight batsman Shuvagata Hom and Taibur Parvez, who added 110 for the fifth wicket before Shuvagata was dismissed on 66 runs off 101 balls laced with nine fours. Nadif then joined Taibur and the duo added 69 runs before the latter departed on 79 off 170 deliveries featuring seven fours.

Nadif, who played Bangladesh's maiden T20I against Zimbabwe in 2006, has not been able to utilise his talent and has been inconsistent despite being marked as a bright prospect early in his career. However, the tall right-hander looked determined on Saturday and smashed his sixth first class hundred off 173 balls.

The-30 year-old accelerated after reaching his century and went on to score the next 50 off just 46 balls. He

SCORES IN BRIEF	
KHULNA VS DHAKA	
DHAKA : 484 for 7 in 140 overs (Nadif 166, Mosharraf 98 not out; Mahedi 3-103, Al Amin 2-44)	
RAJSHAHI VS DHAKA METRO	
RAJSHAHI : 220 all out in 77.1 overs (Zunaid 85, Mizanur 56; Dollar 3-35, Sharif 3-57)	
DHAKA METRO : 10 for 2	
CHITTAGONG VS SYLHET	
Day 2 called off due to wet-outfield	
BARISAL VS RANGPUR	
Day 2 called off due to wet-outfield	



NADIF CHOWDHURY ... 166

and Mosharraf Hossain added 227 for the sixth wicket before Nadif was finally sent back by Tushar Imran on 166 off 239 deliveries, having smashed 17 fours and six sixes.

Mosharraf, who is just two runs

away from his second first class ton after 218 balls with eight fours, will resume alongside skipper Mohammad Sharif (5). Khulna off-spinner Mahedi Hasan was the pick of the bowlers, bagging three wickets while pacer Al Amin Hossain took two.

In the Tier 2 fixture, Rajshahi suffered a batting collapse against Dhaka Metro after resuming the second day on 114 for four and were bundled out on 220 by lunch.

Overnight batsman Zunaid Siddique was the only notable performer for Rajshahi. The left-hander scored 85 off 173 balls with nine fours. Off-spinner Sharif Ullah proved instrumental for Dhaka Metro as he picked up three wickets alongside pacer Dollar Mahmud, who took three scalps on the first day, while left-arm seamer Abu Hayder bagged two.

In reply, Dhaka Metro lost two wickets early on in the form of opener Mehedi Maruf (1) and Jabit Hossain (0) and were struggling on 10 for 2 at stumps with Shadman Islam (8 not out) and skipper Marshall Ayub set to resume the third day trailing by 210 runs.

Meanwhile just like on the opening day, the other two fixtures -- between Barisal-Rangpur and Chittagong-Sylhet -- were abandoned for the second consecutive day due to inclement weather.

BD-SA SCOREBOARD				
SOUTH AFRICA : First innings 496 for 3 decl (Elgar 199, Markram 97, Amla 137; Shaiful 1-74)				
BANGLADESH : First innings R/B 45/65				
Liton c Amla b Morkel	25/29	4/0		
Imrul c Markram b Rabada	7/20	0/0		
Mominul c Markram				
b Maharaj	77/150	12/0		
Mushfiqur c Markram				
b Maharaj	44/57	7/1		
Tamim c de Kock				
b Phehlukwayo	39/67	6/1		
Mahmudullah b Morkel	66/124	11/1		
Sabbir b Olivier	30/46	4/1		
Mehedi c Elgar b Rabada	8/16	0/0		
Taskin run out (Bavuma/Markram)	1/2	0/0		
Shaiful c Amla b Maharaj	2/13	0/0		
Mustafizur not out	10/12	2/0		
Extras: (nb-1)	11			
Total: (All out in 89.1 overs)	320			
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-36, 3-103, 4-158, 5-227, 6-292, 7-304, 8-305, 9-308, 10-320.				
BOWLER				
	O	M	R	W
Morkel	19	7	51	2
Rabada	24	5	84	2
Maharaj	27.1	8	92	3
Olivier	11	1	52	1
Phehlukwayo	6	2	18	1
Markram	2	0	13	0
SOUTH AFRICA: 2nd innings R/B 45/65				
Markram c Liton b Mustafizur	15/26	2/0		
Elgar lbw b Shaiful	18/25	2/0		
Amla not out	17/32	1/0		
Bavuma not out	3/13	0/0		
Extras: (nb-1)	1			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 15.5 overs)	54			
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-38.				
To bat: du Plessis, de Kock, Phehlukwayo, Maharaj, Rabada, Morkel, Olivier				
BOWLER				
	O	M	R	W
Mehedi Hasan	4	1	15	0
Shaiful Islam	5	1	18	1
Mustafizur Rahman	4	1	7	1
Taskin Ahmed	2.5	0	14	0



PERFORMER OF THE DAY

MOMINUL HAQUE

Bangladesh batsman Mominul Haque has had a lot to prove ever since the Tigers reached South Africa for a month-long tour. The-26 year-old showed his class as he registered his 12th fifty in Test cricket after the Proteas declared their first innings on 496 for three.

Mominul scored 77 runs off 150 balls, featuring 13 fours, during the vital innings where he tackled South Africa's pacers Morne Morkel and Kagiso Rabada along with left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj pretty well.

Mominul went on to add fifty-run partnerships with skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah for the third, fourth and fifth wickets respectively as the visitors posted 320 in their first innings.