

SPORT



Pacer Kagiso Rabada (4th from R), who took three crucial wickets including that of Bangladesh skipper Mushfiqur Rahim, powered South Africa to a 333-run victory on the fifth day of the first Test in Potchefstroom yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mushy apologises for debacle

SAKEB SUBHAN from Potchefstroom

The match lasted for just 83 minutes on the fifth day and the two press conferences by captains Mushfiqur Rahim, Faf du Plessis and player-of-the-match Dean Elgar took 35 minutes. Mushfiqur's alone was around 17 minutes and it was appropriate because after the Bangladesh pressers of the previous four days, not to mention their performances on the field, there was much to be explained. With time, the first Test against South Africa in Potchefstroom -- which Bangladesh lost by 333 runs yesterday -- will likely be remembered as much for the Tigers' play as their verbal responses after each day's play, which ranged from the flippant to the absurd. After the Test was lost, for the first time a member of the leadership group in Mushfiqur faced the music. Also for the first time, there was genuine regret and contrition as Mushfiqur delved upon what a loss during which he said Bangladesh lacked character. "It is disappointing. I don't remember the last time we batted like this or were out for under a hundred," said the downcast skipper. "I knew it wouldn't have been easy to face their bowlers on the fifth day although the wicket was good. I thought we would at least bat

for two sessions today. There are ways to lose or draw a game but we didn't show our skill and character. I am really hurt. I apologise to our nation." As he had done before the Test, he stressed upon the need for his players to show more courage and guts, which begged the question about whether that courage was being exhausted in press conferences. "I don't think it is a matter of over-confidence. Some of them were not even in the Test team, like Mominul [Haque] and Mahmudullah [Riyad], who had to establish themselves. To be honest if we could have been gutsier, we could have handled it better. It wasn't an unplayable wicket. You don't get these wickets in South Africa so this was a very good opportunity for us. We should have fought better in the second innings. I think after a long time I saw our batting team being defeated before the defeat itself." The decision at the toss was so surprising that both South African and Bangladeshi journalists wanted some light to be shed on the issue. "All of us took the decision. None of us knew about this sort of wicket in South Africa," said Mushfiqur, although he had said before the match that the pitch looked dry and would take spin as the days wore on, a pretty accurate reading in hindsight. "It was hard for us to predict such a wicket. We prac-

tised on a totally different wicket. On any flat wicket, the help for the bowlers come within the first two hours. If you think about what will happen in the fourth innings and then get bowled out for 100 in the first innings, it becomes difficult. "I think the second innings was the best time to bat but we still didn't score 400-500 runs. So you can't say that had we batted first, we would have scored 500 runs. But yes, had we applied ourselves better on the second or third day, we could have scored more runs." "You can say that we should have batted first on a flat wicket but I don't believe our bowlers can't bowl in a flat wicket. At least they could have bowled in the right areas, if not take wickets. This skill gets you to play for the national team. Even I could have bowled two balls out of six in the right place. The bowlers disappointed me a lot in the first innings. A team benefits if you can at least contain the runs when you can't take the wickets." Such was the abject nature of Bangladesh's cricket, a South African journalist asked if Shikib Al Hasan -- sitting out the Test leg of the tour -- would be back for the second Test. "So far I don't think there is any chance but we will have a look. Our chief selector is here, he will know more about it. Hopefully we will have a look and decide then."

We played spotless cricket: Du Plessis

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom

There could hardly have been a win more comprehensive than the one South Africa completed by 333 runs over Bangladesh on the fifth day of the first Test in Potchefstroom yesterday. However, it is a measure of South Africa's ambition and their desire for perfection that even after what he called a 'spotless' performance, skipper Faf du Plessis seemed dissatisfied with one aspect of the Test. "Conditions-wise, when you play countries like Bangladesh, it is important that you get whatever you get from the wicket," said Du Plessis after the match when asked if he was happy with the wicket, which in its flat and slow nature was not the typical South African surface. "There wasn't much advantage for any team. The groundsman said the wicket won't spin and for three-and-a-half days, it didn't. We got that right. In terms of what we were looking for with pace and bounce it was really slow. Even some of the tail-enders were comfortable." But otherwise, Du Plessis was delighted with the performance of his team. "It was an all-round, spotless performance. All the things we wanted to work on, the amount of runs," the skipper said. "Over four days, we had Bangladesh under so much pressure, we knew that if we got one or two early wickets [on the fifth day], we expected

the pressure would be too much and they would fall over. That's how it works with Test cricket and you do the hard graft for a while without results and then all of a sudden you get them." One of the more aggressive captains in world cricket Du Plessis also said that counterpart Mushfiqur Rahim's defensive field placements in the second innings, when South Africa scored 248 for seven in just 56 overs virtually risk-free, eased the pressure. "They were so far behind the game. What he will try and do is stop the bleeding. Obviously he tried to attack but when he saw the batsmen were scoring runs he went very defensive trying to make sure that we don't get away. There was a period when I came in to bat and felt that it was a little bit of pressure and you need to do something to put the pressure back on them. But we got through that easily as the field was spread and it was easier to get runs on the board. So that helped us to score 4.7 runs per over, which gave us the opportunity to declare the innings a little bit earlier." South Africa have an injury worry as Morne Morkel, who blasted out Tamim Iqbal and Mominul Haque in the first over of Bangladesh's second innings suffered a side strain, did not take part on the fifth day and will miss the second Test. "It's difficult to talk about all the domestic bowlers," Du Plessis said when asked if there were replacements. "I know the guys that are with us. We've got a few guys in and around the squad."

New constitution outlined

SPORTS REPORTER

With the legality of its functioning pending on a court ruling, the present executive committee of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday approved a newly drafted constitution in the much talked-about Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday. The only major change to the constitution in what was the first AGM and EGM under the present committee which was elected in 2013 under a questioned 2012 constitution that the highest court declared illegal, is that the quota for directors from the National Sports Council (NSC) is decreased from three to two. Besides which, the councillors that included a couple of notable absentees including former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury, who questioned the legality of holding the AGM following the court ruling, also passed all the financial statements for seven fiscal years (From 2010-11 to 2016-17). The constitution was passed in presence of the 135 councillors out of a total 170 without any debate. The BCB expects to get the NSC's approval within the next few days. "We did not make that much of changes in the constitution as we have followed the guideline of the ICC for some changes. The only major change we made is to cut down the NSC's director quota from three to two after the court ordered to decrease the authority of the NSC. In future there might be no quota for the NSC but that does not mean we have any dis-

pute with them or we are facing any problem to work with the NSC," Nazmul told reporters at a press briefing yesterday. The BCB president said that the reason behind not making drastic changes in the constitution was to avoid any controversy at the moment. "We did not make many changes in the constitution as few people might try to look for the gaps in it. And if we would have made many changes then they might have asked why we have created a new constitution rather than just approving the previous one. This is the reason we have kept almost the same constitution," he said. However despite holding the AGM and EGM the BCB president was unable to announce the election date as the term for the current committee will expire on October 13. "Whether we will continue or a new

committee will be formed or even an ad hoc committee will be made there are no such guideline in the constitution. NSC can help us in this matter as in the constitution the newly elected committee will take over the responsibility after 15 days from the election," he said. On the other hand, the quota for cricketers in the constitution remained the same. Earlier on September 24 former BCB director Mobasher Hossain filed a writ petition to the High Court seeking a directive to restrain the BCB's executive committee from holding the then upcoming AGM and EGM. The High Court later issued a rule upon the government and the NSC to explain why it should not be directed to restrain the current executive committee from discharging its activities. However, it did not pass any order on the plea.



BCB president Nazmul Hasan (R) speaks during the board's annual general meeting at a city hotel yesterday.

Don't tinker with Tests: Elgar

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom

Dean Elgar was the main architect of South Africa's massive 333-run win over Bangladesh in the first Test as his 199 in the first innings was the backbone of South Africa's first innings 496 for three. He is an old-style batsman who places great value on his wicket, and believes in spending time at the crease to score his runs. Which may be why all the recent talk of reducing Test cricket to four days irked him during the post-match press conference at Senwes Park yesterday. "Five-day Test specialist. It must stay like that," he said when asked about the four-day phenomenon. "I don't think you should tinker with something that's not broken. It shouldn't be tinkered with. There're other formats that are being experimented with. I don't see why Test cricket should suffer. I am a purist." His captain Faf Du Plessis echoed his views, although slightly more diplomatically. "I am a fan of five day cricket. I believe the great matches go to Day Five," said Du Plessis. "In four-day cricket or first-class cricket, it does feel easier because there are only four days. For five days you have to grind it out. Day five was needed today. You will have creative captaincy, more aggressive game plans, sporty declarations, the way Test cricket is at the moment is about how long you can go and maintain your skill levels."

BD-SA SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 496 for 3 declared.

BANGLADESH: First innings 320

SOUTH AFRICA: Second innings 247 for 6 declared (Amla 28, Bavuma 71, Du Plessis 81, Maharaj 19 not out; Shaiful 1-46, Mustafizur 2-30, Mominul 3-27)

BANGLADESH: Second innings R/B 46/66 (overnight 49 for 3)

| Bowler | O | M | R | W |
|-------------|------|---|----|---|
| Morkel | 5.2 | 2 | 19 | 2 |
| Rabada | 10 | 3 | 33 | 3 |
| Olivier | 5.4 | 1 | 12 | 0 |
| Maharaj | 10.4 | 1 | 25 | 4 |
| Phehlukwayo | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Result: South Africa won by 333 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Dean Elgar.

ON TOP DOWN UNDER

Trespassers will be eaten

SPORTS REPORTER from Potchefstroom

As difficult and fearsome as Morne Morkel and Kagiso Rabada may have been, and as violent the proverbial mauling may have been during South Africa's 333-run win in the first Test, just a chain-link fence and some electrical wires separated a group of touring journalists from the real thing about 35 kilometres outside Potchefstroom. If you thought that the sticker with the words 'Trespassers will be eaten' on the front door of the small building at a corner of the 1,050-acre compound that makes up the Kohra Lion Park was a joke, a sight of its main occupants will tell you that it is only half in jest. 23 lions and a cub populate those wide acres. A 12-foot high fence that bulges and creaks when these massive kings of the jungle stand up on hind legs and lean on them are what stop visitors from becoming dinner. The owner of the private land, Jaco, guided the group of nervous



A mere chain-link fence separates the naturally aggressive and awe-inspiring lions from visitors at the Kohra Lion Park just outside Potchefstroom.

PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN

journalists as he fed the lions and lionesses whole chickens, skinned. The majestic creatures rushed to the fence -- a sight that if you have not seen in the flesh, you will not know the primal terror it engenders, fence be damned -- when they catch sight of Jaco with his huge bucket. Each lion eats seven to 10 kilograms of chicken a day. On Saturdays the lions have a special feast. Last Saturday they were fed 500 kgs of beef, after which they did not eat for two days till the morning we visited. That information did not help us breathe any easier. There was not the feeling of safety you get in zoos, where animals have become accustomed to thousands of visitors each day. Jaco warned us not to turn our backs on the creatures, even

though they were on the other side of the fence. When one of us forgot that instruction, a lion appropriately named Goliath leapt up onto the fence. He did not let us know if his stomach turned at that point, but that is a fair assumption. Once back inside the building, we played with a cub called Koning, Afrikaans for king, the two-month old cub of Goliath. I thought Koning took a special liking to me, until it started biting. Let us not mince words here -- you are reading the words of one who was bitten by a lion and lived to tell the tale. Among us was a journalist who confessed to a fear of dogs and was nervous when the canines barked and leapt up on the gates of houses the previous night. After the visit to Kohra's lions, he was seen walking around with Jaco's dogs with nary a concern; dogs are after all man's best friend, especially after you were made to feel like a chicken.

PERFORMER OF THE DAY

KAGISO RABADA



Morne Morkel had initiated the early collapse in Bangladesh's second innings in the final session of the fourth day but he did not return to the field on the final day of the first Test due to a side strain. However, 22-year-old paceman Kagiso Rabada took over the role of lead fast bowler in absence of Morkel and struck three times in his first four overs of the day to remove Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Liton Das. His spell actually wrote the Tigers fate on the wall as the visitors lost their remaining seven wickets within 83 minutes of the morning session.