

Lessons from the South African test series

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

As they say, in the hard world of competitive cricket, "You are as good or bad as your last performance". By the same token, the deciding

match at Bloemfontein in the South Africa-Bangladesh test series became the mini Waterloo in Bangladesh's test campaign against the Proteas.

Actually, in both Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein encounters, Bangladesh suffered their worst two defeats in the 22 test matches it had played since 2014. In that year, Bangladesh had lost to Sri Lanka by an innings and 248 runs, that too on its home ground in Mirpur. Exactly 12 years before that in 2002 we had suffered the biggest test debacle against West Indies in Dhaka by an innings and 310 runs.

Capitulating to an overseas team both at home and abroad within a space of three or two and a half days had fallen into a pattern. We would scale down our cricketing objective to playing against a test team for as long as we could, or at best play for a draw treating it as a win, or indeed rely on the weather to end a match to a tame draw!

But we thought we had come a long way from those bleak times. And we were not supposed to be meekly submitting to South Africa as we did. Shaun Pollock, the greatest ever pace bowler of his country, thus reckoned, "The way they (Bangladeshis) played against Australia, it was really competitive. I saw them have a good Test match against New Zealand in New Zealand. They played really well there. I have been a little disappointed by their performance here."



Mushfiqur Rahim holds his head as he is attended by umpires, medics and team members after he was hit on the head by a ball delivered by South African bowler Duanne Olivier.

PHOTO: AFP

South African commentators, including Shaun Pollock, harped on the point that Bangladeshi batsmen being shorter in stature end up trying to play deliveries tossed up by tall bowlers that bounces away on landing. "That's what causes them trouble."

To my mind, it is more a matter of skill than height. This should have been instilled in them before the series kicked in. They just had one practice match; maybe they should have had more before the test series.

One tactical point seems to have been missed. Prior to the New Zealand series, the Tigers had a long training session for a few weeks in Sydney before they flew off to New Zealand. It helped them acclimatise with the conditions in the host country. And,

with what results, everybody knows!

On the issue of height, it needn't be stressed too far before you come across iconic cricketers who were/are not tall men at all: Sunil Gavaskar, Sachin Tendulkar, Javed Miandad, Don Bradman, to name the obvious few. They faced up to giant fast bowlers of their times scoring runs freely.

The great batters relied on a wide repertoire of shots to play top class fast bowlers. The lesser ones better heed Pollock's practical suggestion: "You have to learn the art of dropping the hands, and leaving the ball."

One new find is Subashis Roy, a tall well-built bowler who claimed three wickets. Mustafizur Rahman, the other successful bowler could have captured three wickets had two catches not been

dropped off his bowling.

Another find as batsman is Liton Das, who merits to bat up the order. Some tail-enders batted exceedingly well.

Bangladesh was playing at a disadvantage, one may add, with a crippling sense of inadequacy. Shakib, our ace bowler capable of breaking partnerships before they could grow threateningly long, as they indeed did, was out on leave. Tamim was not at his best; in fact, he didn't play the second test match because of injury. If they had played, and let their chemistry work with the rest of the team's, at least a wholesale defeat could have been averted.

The South African skipper expressed surprise over Bangladesh not offering any competition in any of the session of the test matches.

All this brings into a sharp focus the critical reliance on a select number of high performing cricketers. If anyone or two among Shakib, Mushfiq, Tamim, Mashrafe, Mahmudullah, Kayes, Mominul and Sabbir would be unavailable due to injury or some other reason, team Bangladesh wouldn't be a coherent fighting unit.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance to keep handy a strong band of high performance cricketers ready to be fielded at short notice. Kumar Sangakkara, the veteran Sri Lankan cricketer who has played in BPL spoke highly of an emerging torrent of young talents in the pipeline. In his words, "We only get to hear about the likes of Mushfiq, Mashrafe, Tamim, Shakib but there are lots of others waiting in the wings to be picked and groomed. Indeed, that is Bangladesh's potential to be a power house in world cricket."

First class tournaments of four days' duration would have to be regularly organised in important divisional cities. These will have to be held on pitches prepared in line with what are being used and played on overseas.

On the sideline, Mominul had been declared out, leg before by the umpire, although ball tracking showed that it wouldn't have hit the stumps. Mominul went up to Imrul Kayes, the batter at the other end for consultation, but was apparently dissuaded from asking for an umpire's decision review, which might have reversed the decision. On a final note, in-field picking or stopping of the ball has been rather clumsy. Neat picking is part of efficient and delectable fielding.

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Now Everyone Can Fly

HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

At the check-in counter of Air Asia at Taipei Airport, I notice two things. One, the 7kg carry-on limit is for the TOTAL weight of

take this on board. But please, do not buy anything from the duty-free shops as that will make your bags heavier."

"Of course, ma'am!" And of course I'm not going to buy anything from the duty-free shops anyway—remember, I'm a cheapskate flying a discount airline.

almost rip my pants (yes, both) as I bend down to take my shoes off.

Anyway, all done. I painstakingly put everything back into the six pockets.

I'm at the gate. Mission accomplished.

Or so I think. The paging system announces: "Passenger Naveed

queue and board the plane and settle down in my seat.

"Passenger Naveed Mahbub on seat 31K, please identify yourself."

It's not really the proudest moment to be singled out in a flight.

The flight attendant comes to me. This sure isn't my idea of a pretty flight attendant asking me to strip to

embarrassing storm.

"What seems to be the problem ma'am?"

"Sir, your address at your final destination [Dhaka] is not on our system. We apologise for not taking that information during check-in. We'll take just 10 minutes. Again, we're so sorry!"

stage rocket in a restroom barely big enough for a five-year-old.

And now, I have to step out of the restroom, walk all the way to my seat (just great, I HAD to pick a seat so far from the restroom) undetected with two t-shirts, four undies (do the math, I'm still wearing the one essential one) and one dress trouser under my armpits. I have to keep my outward look the same—the shirt, the cargo pants with its five-tonne cargo.

The coast is clear. I dash to my seat, open the overhead compartment bin, stash the booty into my bags and settle down into my seat.

Just then, the flight attendant returns with my passport and new boarding passes, profusely apologising for the inconvenience (not to mention the flight being delayed just for this incident). I would have asked for a complimentary meal (to be paid for otherwise), but decide against it—Naveed, don't push it...Air Asia. Thank you. I save not only a pretty penny, I go through one hell of a great adventure to write this column. Sure, you can send me a complimentary ticket for the free publicity here.

Well, now everyone can fly. And when it comes to Las Vegas, now everyone can not only fly into it for cheap (LA to Las Vegas for just USD 30 wearing five undies), but now everyone there, even total nuts, can buy automatic weapons and a thousand rounds of ammo...

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A still from the TV series Friends.

At the security checkpoint, I draw a small crowd of inquisitive onlookers thinking I'm David Copperfield as I go through the endless ritual of disgorging my six, deep pockets of items that are never found in the pockets of a normal person in the first place. The items take up two trays. I

Mahbub, please identify yourself."

This could be a discount airline, but they sure have some sophisticated mechanism of flagging down a man wearing five pairs of underwear.

I don't report to the attendant, but blend in with the passengers in

see what's underneath my clothes...

"Sir, I need to see your..."

Oh Lord!

"Passport and boarding pass!"

Don't tell me boarding passes now carry clues on the number of undies one is wearing?

But I remain calm...before the

I feel like an astronaut, or the Michelin Man, whatever you may say, as I slowly walk back to the check-in counter. I dare take no selfies as that could be used as evidence later on for violating the airline's strict carry-on policy.

Never have I been this close to getting a heart attack... She rapidly walks towards the front of the aircraft with my passport and boarding pass as I rapidly space-walk towards the restroom at the back of the plane with my five undies, two pants, two t-shirts, one shirt and six pockets full of courier cargo. And it's no easy job to shed off all these items like a five-

QUOTABLE Quote



NAPOLEON HILL
AMERICAN AUTHOR

One must marry one's feelings to one's beliefs and ideas. That is probably the only way to achieve a measure of harmony in one's life.

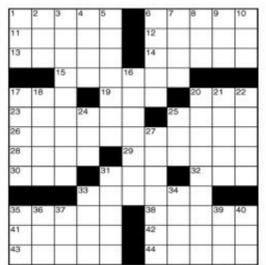
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Clownish fellow
- 6 Fragrant wood
- 11 Old market
- 12 Rust, for one
- 13 Gorillas
- 14 Gala affair
- 15 Snappy answer
- 17 Implore
- 19 Memorable time
- 20 Do a checkout job
- 23 One of a smart phone pair
- 25 Comics possum
- 26 Bit of teamwork
- 28 Burden
- 29 Tennis need
- 30 Recipe amt.
- 31 Take the gold
- 32 Earthy prefix

- 33 Trusted teacher
- 35 Vatican-based
- 38 Cheering wildly
- 41 Wrong
- 42 Diving gear
- 43 Last inning, usually
- 44 Like some athletes' ankles
- 1 Manx, for one
- 2 "Gross!"
- 3 Bunch of sightseers
- 4 Spur on
- 5 Old newspaper work
- 6 Hooded snake
- 7 Way to go
- 8 Really enjoy

- 9 Say further
- 10 Old roadster
- 16 Have dinner delivered
- 17 Sired
- 18 Brings in
- 20 Literary circle
- 21 Concur
- 22 Affected
- 24 Do café work
- 25 Corp's underling
- 27 Dreamer
- 31 Like Dylan Thomas
- 33 Schooner part
- 34 Killer whale
- 35 Mythical piper
- 36 Paris pal
- 37 Wrestling win
- 39 Homer's dad
- 40 "Way Cool!"



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

SCENE SUCK
HOMELY ALPHA
AMBLE PITON
REAL ARMORY
ESS ALI NEE
DISTRACT
NYET OAFS
DISTRICT
ASPS SOS GOO
SHIFTY TURF
HONOR SERIF
ENTRY IRENE
NEST RIDGE

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

