

SPORT



PHOTO: AFP

India skipper Rohit Sharma leaps in the air after completing his double century against Sri Lanka during the second ODI in Mohali yesterday.

Sharma slams 3rd double ton

India crush Sri Lanka by 141 runs

AFP, Mohali
 Skipper Rohit Sharma on Wednesday became the first batsman to hit three double centuries in one-day internationals as he powered India to a 141-run win over Sri Lanka in the second match on Wednesday.
 Sharma's unbeaten 208 steered the hosts to an imposing 392 for 4 and then restricted Sri Lanka to 251 for 8 to level the three-match series at 1-1 in Mohali.
 His epic knock, laced with 12 sixes and 13 fours in 153-ball stay, led the Indian charge after they were invited to bat first in overcast conditions.
 Sharma reached 200 in the 50th over, bowled by opposition skipper Thisara Perera. His first hundred came off 115 balls, and his second off just 38 balls.

"It was a great day. Winning the game was important for me and the team after that loss in Dharamsala," Sharma said after his first win as Indian captain.
 "In the first two 200s as well I got the century in the 38th over and I kept telling myself to hold my shape and hit through the line.
 "I did pretty similar things in the earlier ones too - getting 50 off 70 balls. This wicket was superb to start off, the longer I stayed the easier it became to bat on," said Sharma.
 The right-hander scored 209 against Australia in Bangalore in 2013, and followed that double-hundred with his highest score of 264 against Sri Lanka a year later in Kolkata.
 Martin Guptill (New Zealand), Virender Sehwag (India), Chris Gayle (West Indies) and Sachin Tendulkar (India) have recorded a double century each in ODI cricket.
 Sharma made a bright start with

his opening partner Shikhar Dhawan (68) after the Indian batsmen's horror showing in the opening ODI, when they were skittled out for just 112.
 "All three came at crucial times. 264 is obviously very close to me. I've said it many times, but I honestly cannot pick one," Sharma said of his three double tons.
 "The Australia one was a decider, the Sri Lanka 264 - I came back after a three-month layoff after a big injury, and this one also - after a humiliating loss, we wanted to come back as a team, as a batting unit especially."
 Sharma's 213-run stand for the second wicket with Shreyas Iyer, who scored 88, also stood out on a hazy day in Mohali.
 Perera got three wickets with his medium-pace bowling but was still hit around the park by Sharma.
 Sri Lanka were never in the chase after losing their openers for just 30

runs as Angelo Mathews top-scored with an unbeaten 111. Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal claimed three wickets.
 "We had a plan A, B and C but none of that clicked for us which was the most important thing," said Perera.
 "If you want to chase a score as big as this, you need starts and scores in the middle order as well. But none of it clicked for us."
 "Angelo did really well for us, but it wasn't enough. We'll come back hard in the decider," he said.
SCORES IN BRIEF
INDIA: 392 for 4 in 50 overs (Sharma 208 not out, Dhawan 68, Iyer 88; Perera 3-80)
SRI LANKA: 251 for 8 in 50 overs (Thirimanne 21, Mathews 111 not out, Dickwella 22, Gunaratne 34; Bumrah 2-43, Chahal 3-60)
Result: India won by 141 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Rohit Sharma.

More Tests for Tigers

STAR SPORT DESK
 In the four-year cricket cycle from May 2019 to May 2023, Bangladesh will be playing the most Tests after the Big Three of India, England and Australia. This and other mulled changes emerged from a tentative calendar that the International Cricket Council's next chief executives' meeting in February 2018 will refine before being presented to the ICC board for ratification in June. These revelations come from a copy of the Future Tours Programme that ESPNcricinfo obtained from a workshop held in Singapore earlier this month where representatives from various boards met to iron out final details.
 By the end of the current five-year cycle, Bangladesh will have played 33 Test matches, which works out to an average of 6.6 Tests per year. In the proposed 2019-2023 calendar, Bangladesh are scheduled to play 35 Tests or 8.75 Tests per year.
 The other takeaways from the proposed calendar are that the Indian Premier League will now officially have a window, a reduction in the number of Tests and ODIs while T20Is will double in number, a commencement of a Test league and an ODI league.
 The earlier mooted Test league to be played in two-year blocks between the top nine Test nations is fleshed out, with each side in the top nine playing six home and away series over a two-year period, with the top two teams contesting a one-off final -- set tentatively for mid-2021. However, the league is inherently problematic as, while the teams will play six series each, the number of matches will vary and since India and Pakistan are not currently playing each other, the league will not have each side playing against all others. The point system therefore will be a complicated one and is still being worked out, but sides will likely get points for series results first and individual matches second. A minimum of two Tests will constitute a series.
 Zimbabwe and the two new Test nations, Afghanistan and Ireland, will not be part of the league. Instead they will have to count on the nine other members making time to play one-off Tests against them.
 As far as ODIs are concerned, there will be a 13-team ODI league played over a two-year period slated to start in May 2020. At the end of the two-year block, during which each side will play eight out of the 12 other sides in series, the prize will be qualification to the 2023 World Cup. Unlike the Test League, each series will contain three matches, meaning 24 matches for every side.
 T20Is will however increase in number. Apart from matches in the World T20, the current five-year FTP contains a total of 162 T20Is and this number will increase to 260 in the proposed four-year FTP. There will also be a regional qualification event in each of the five ICC regions between January and August 2021, from which sides will qualify to the World T20.

Shakib off to T-10, Fizz denied NOC

SPORTS REPORTER
 With the T20 party named Bangladesh Premier League now a thing of the past, Bangladesh's newly appointed Test captain Shakib Al Hasan set off for new frontiers yesterday when he left for the UAE to take part in the T10 Cricket League. Shakib will obtain a no-objection-certificate (NOC) from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the tournament scheduled to begin today with Shakib's team Kerala Kings playing against Bengal Tigers.
 Mustafizur Rahman was supposed to turn up for the Bengal Tigers, but the left-arm pacer was not granted an NOC.
 The third player from Bangladesh to feature in the league, Tamim Iqbal, has been granted an NOC to play for Pakhtoon, but will not leave till after his hearing today, in which he will answer a show-cause notice for criticising the wicket at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur after the match between Comilla Victorians and Rangpur Riders on December 2.
 It is thought that Mustafizur was denied an NOC because the board want to be careful about the injury-prone bowler who has suffered two injury breaks during his two-year career, the latest setback seeing him miss the ODI leg of the South Africa tour in September-October with a twisted ankle which also had him missing the first two legs of the BPL.
 On November 13, the BCB had also decided to grant contracted players a maximum of two NOCs to play in overseas leagues.
 The T10 Cricket League will feature six franchises and run till December 17.

'It's time to stand up'

Crucial third Ashes Test starts today

AFP, Perth
 Captain Joe Root has challenged his England team to stand up and keep the Ashes series alive in Thursday's crucial third Test against Australia in Perth.
 Root, who admits he is "fed up" talking about off-field issues, said it was time for his teammates to prove why they have been chosen to play.
 The tourists are on the precipice, trailing Australia 2-0 in the five-Test series, battling to avoid another heavy defeat that would hand back the Ashes urn to Steve Smith's team.
 To keep the series alive Root's men must not lose at the WACA Ground where England last won in 1978.
 "It's time to stand up," Root said Wednesday. "These are the games that when you get them right, they really hit home with people.
 "And that's what people want to see -- in the face of adversity, people stand up and really put in those big performances and prove why they have been selected to play for England.
 "That's the opportunity that's in front of this group, to go and win here at the WACA

for the first time in a long time, by playing well for longer. If we get that right, there is no reason we can't be sat here at 2-1 next week."
 England are facing the spectre of repeating the 5-0 series humiliation on their last tour to Australia where Jonathan Trott returned home after the first Test, Graeme Swann retired and following the tour coach Andy Flower resigned.
 Root admitted he was sick and tired with the team's off-field alcohol-related incidents, which began before the tour when Ben Stokes was banned from international cricket while authorities probe his alleged involvement in a fight outside a nightclub.
 Scandals involving Jonny Bairstow and Ben Duckett have further harmed the touring team's reputation.
 "I'm fed up talking about stuff that's not cricket," Root told travelling English media earlier in the day.
 "We have to make sure we perform well this week and win. Get people talking about the cricket."
 "This is a very professional group of players that goes about things in the right way. But we've had two incidents that have been blown up and made a big deal of. They could have been avoided."

Progress, but not for locals

SPORTS REPORTER
 There is not much else to say about Chris Gayle when it comes to talking about how special the West Indian is in T20 cricket. And the same applies to Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's leadership qualities as well as his ability as a bowler. However his admirers also wept due to the wastage of his batting calibre, which was on full display as the Rangpur Riders skipper's scintillating hard-hitting displays led his team to wins in a few crucial matches and set the platform for Gayle to do the rest in the just-concluded fifth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).
 It also came as no surprise that star all-rounder and Dhaka Dynamites captain Shakib Al Hasan finished as the leading wicket-taker with 22 scalps.
 But what about the rest of the local players?
 Despite the chaos in the second Qualifier and the controversy over the Mirpur wickets, the BPL made good progress with the presence of a number of quality foreign players. But in the end we need to know whether our players have moved forward in the shortest format of the game.
 The entertainment value of the tournament will not be enough when the selectors try to spot suitable T20 cricketers who can make a mark in the shortest format on the international stage.
 Zakir Hasan, Ariful Haque, Abu Jayed, Nazmul Islam, Qazi Onik and Afif Hossain made headlines on a few occasions during the month-long journey but as selector Habibul Bashar said, there is nobody who can be singled out as a new find from the tournament.
 Moreover the performance of three icon players in Mushfiqur Rahim, Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar was frustrating.
 Apart from Mashrafe and Shakib, the way Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad led their teams from the front was an encouraging sign for Bangladesh cricket, but the



MUSHFIQUR: 12 matches, 185 runs



SABBIR: 11 matches, 211 runs



SOUMYA: 11 matches, 169 runs

HIGHEST RUN-GETTERS						
Player	Mat	Inns	Runs	HS	Ave	100 50
Chris Gayle (Rangpur)	11	11	485	146*	53.88	2 2
Evin Lewis (Dhaka)	12	12	396	75	36.00	0 3
Ravi Bopara (Rangpur)	15	13	365	59	40.55	0 2
Tamim Iqbal (Comilla)	10	10	332	64*	36.88	0 2
Mohammad Mithun (Rangpur)	15	13	329	50*	29.90	0 1
Marlon Samuels (Comilla)	12	10	321	60	53.50	0 2
Luke Ronchi (Chittagong)	11	11	321	78	29.18	0 2
Andre Fletcher (Sylhet)	10	10	317	71	35.22	0 2
Mahmudullah Riyad (Khulna)	12	12	312	59	28.36	0 2
Imrul Kayes (Comilla)	14	14	299	47	27.18	0 0

HIGHEST WICKET-TAKERS					
Player	Mat	Inns	Runs	Wkts	BBi
Shakib Al Hasan (Dhaka)	13	13	291	22	5/16
Abu Jayed (Khulna)	12	12	367	18	4/35
Hasan Ali (Comilla)	9	9	245	16	5/20
Mohammad Saifuddin (Comilla)	13	13	343	16	3/22
Shahid Afridi (Dhaka)	8	8	210	15	4/12
Abu Hider (Dhaka)	13	13	299	15	3/11
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (Rangpur)	14	14	371	15	3/24
Rubel Hossain (Rangpur)	11	11	374	15	3/34
Taskin Ahmed (Chittagong)	11	10	335	14	3/31
Nazmul Islam (Rangpur)	10	10	196	12	3/18

local players' overall performance left the same old problem; we still lack a player with the ability to change a game single-handedly.
 "The performance of Mushy [Mushfiqur Rahim], Sabbir and Soumya was really frustrating. The presence of quality foreign players had increased the competitiveness but our players could not take the opportunity. Actually power-hitting is still a problem in our cricket. We are capable of hitting boundaries but not sixes. We lack game-changers," opined Bashar.
 Mohammad Salahuddin, coach of semifinalists Comilla Victorians, believed that the increasing of the foreign players' quota denied the local players of chances to hone their skills.
 "The presence of renowned T20 specialists from all over the world, the inclusion of Sylhet as new venue,

good wickets except for a few matches in Mirpur and good arrangements helped the tournament make good progress. But I must say the five foreign players' quota deprived our local players and it will ultimately hinder our progress in this format. I think four foreign players will be good," Salahuddin said.
 While Bashar was also in favour of having four foreigners, he was not ready to blame the quota for the local players' poor showings. And Salahuddin also conceded that local players did lack the hard-hitting ability.
 "Our players have the technique, but I felt that you need some power-hitting. You know I also realised that I needed to add something to my coaching manual to guide the players in T20 cricket," Salahuddin said.
 Former chief selector Faruque Ahmed echoed Bashar and

Salahuddin's sentiments.
 "It's really encouraging that a record number of foreign players took part in the competition. The introduction of Sylhet as new venue was fantastic. As far as I know there was no problem with the financial deals. Overall the standard of the tournament has improved, but if we want to be equal to the Indian Premier League and [Australia's] Big Bash League then the BCB and BPL governing council must limit the foreign players' quota to four and stop unlimited registration of foreign players," observed Faruque.
 "Yes, our players are still trying to improve in this format and I am sure they will get their feet after the next two tournaments but we cannot limit their chances in a local tournament. I think it's a good idea if another local T20 tournament could be arranged for them," he concluded.



PHOTO: REUTERS

England captain Joe Root inspects the WACA pitch before the team's training session yesterday ahead of the third Ashes Test which starts today.