



Opener Tamim Iqbal could only fend off a rising delivery from Suranga Lakmal to point, where Danushka Gunathilaka took a stunning diving catch. It summed up a forgettable outing for Bangladesh as they were bowled out for 82 against Sri Lanka in the final league game of the tri-series at Mirpur yesterday.



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Shakib, Tamim all-important?

SAKEB SUBHAN



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

It is to Bangladesh's credit that they worked themselves into a position in the ongoing tri-series from where they can afford to lose a game, and there is some merit in saying that if they were to have a terrible game it is better to get it out of the way before the final. Yesterday's debacle against Sri Lanka, however, should not be brushed aside as an anomaly -- the capitulation to 82 all out once Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal failed, and the shots played to bring about that sorry total bring back some sinister memories of the South Africa tour that the Tigers will do well to learn from before tomorrow's final.

In South Africa last September-October, Bangladesh lost all seven matches across formats without much fight. Shakib missed the Test leg and Tamim played just two matches -- the first Test and the second

Africa matches and, if they then scored big runs in all those games, that the result would have been different. It instead illustrates the point that in recent times, Bangladesh's middle order -- populated by the experienced Mushfiquir Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad and the inexperienced Sabbir Rahman and Nasir Hossain -- do not seem to have the appetite for a fight or to bat ugly, which was required yesterday on a pitch with dual bounce and pace.

Tamim has embodied that quality of late, as his patient and match-winning 105-ball 76 on a similar wicket against Zimbabwe proved. Shakib's promotion to number three also seems to have had that effect, as illustrated by his 80-ball 51 in the last match. But the middle four failed to realise and execute what Shakib and Tamim have been doing. It was obvious that yesterday's wicket was not a 250-plus one and, once they were cut down to 16 for

'A lack of application'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was left wondering whether to look at the glass as half empty or half full after a 10-wicket thrashing at the hands of Sri Lanka. On the one hand, Bangladesh won the first three matches of the tri-series handsomely and booked a place in tomorrow's final without breaking sweat and yesterday's 82-all-out debacle could be seen as just one of those days. On the other, it could be seen as a reversion to the middle-order batsmen's inability to grind themselves back into the match when the going gets tough. In the post-match press conference after the last league game, Mashrafe seemed to settle on a glass half empty. "We played very poor cricket," said Mashrafe. "We can say that we had a bad day, but I will say we played bad cricket." Although the wicket was a slow one and offered variable pace and bounce, Mashrafe did not resort to using it as an excuse, and instead focused on the failure of the middle order. "Since we had lost early wickets, the focus could have been on rebuilding the innings rather than looking for runs. We had the ability to

score 180-200 even after losing four early wickets. There was a lack of application." Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, who had formed the basis of Bangladesh's batting in the last three games, had both fallen in the fifth over and that left the middle order exposed. Before that, recalled opener Anamul Haque started the rot by leaving a well-known gap between bat and pad, and after the stalwarts' dismissals the middle order of Mushfiquir Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Sabbir Rahman and Nasir Hossain scored 43 runs. "I am not going to complain about them since they have been working hard. They had a good opportunity today," said Mashrafe about Anamul, Mahmudullah, Sabbir and Nasir. "We got bowled out in 24 overs. They could have spent some time in the middle, even batting with a lower strike-rate. They are trying hard. Two of these batsmen have been playing for a long time and they know how to get out of difficult situations." Mashrafe was not buying the line of thinking that with Shakib and Tamim going great guns at the top of the order, those lower down the order were untested in the ongoing tri-series. "I don't think they were untested. They had a chance against Zimbabwe. We failed on

both occasions now. After putting Shakib in the top-order, they have been doing what we expect of them. Now the middle-order has to take the responsibility." When talking about Sabbir and Nasir, Mashrafe identified a problem in the domestic cricket culture that is not necessarily conducive to playing patient innings when in trouble. "Possibly they are not able to absorb the pressure. Maybe they like to score runs quickly rather than spend time in the middle. In our first-class cricket, they have 100 strike-rates after early wickets. It is possibly beyond our nature to slow down after the fall of few wickets. I think they are feeling guilty, probably more than me. I want them to think about it before the final, but they should also remain positive." With opener Imrul Kayes added to the squad for the final, Anamul's position after failing in two successive matches was something to think about. "We will have to think about it. There has been a lot of talk about Bijoy [Anamul], that he is scoring runs in all levels -- in BPL and first-class cricket. I think more than us, you have exposed him, which is true. We have full faith in him, which is why he is still playing continuously. There's certainly a gap between our first-class level and international cricket."

BD-SL SCOREBOARD					
BANGLADESH		R	B	4s	6s
Tamim c Gunathilaka b Lakmal		5	14	0	0
Anamul b Lakmal		0	6	0	0
Shakib run out		8	8	2	0
Mushfiquir c Mendis					
b Chameera		26	56	1	0
Mahmudullah c Chameera					
b Lakmal		7	20	1	0
Sabbir c sub (Madushanka)					
b Perera		10	12	2	0
Abul c Dickwella b Perera		7	7	1	0
Nasir c Dickwella b Chameera		3	13	0	0
Mashrafe b Sandakan		1	4	0	0
Rubel c Tharanga b Sandakan		0	2	0	0
Mustafizur not out		1	2	0	0
Extras: (lb-4, w-10)		14			
Total: (All out in 24 overs)		82			
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-15, 3-16, 4-34, 5-57, 6-71, 7-79, 8-80, 9-81, 10-82.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Lakmal		7	1	21	3
Chameera		5	1	6	2
T Perera		6	0	27	2
Sandakan		6	0	24	2
SRI LANKA		R	B	4s	6s
Gunathilaka not out		35	35	3	2
Tharanga not out		39	37	1	3
Extras: (nb-1, w-8)		9			
Total: (For no loss in 11.5 overs)		83			
Did not bat: Mendis, Chandimal, Gunaratne, Dickwella, T Perera, Lakmal, Sandakan, Dananjaya, Chameera.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Mashrafe		2	0	15	0
Abul		4	0	25	0
Nasir		3	0	19	0
Mustafizur		1.5	0	14	0
Shakib		1	0	10	0
Result: Sri Lanka won by 10 wickets.					
Player-of-the-match: Suranga Lakmal.					

MOMENTS

GAME AND SET IN THE FIFTH OVER

The common thread in Bangladesh's first three matches of the tri-series was the partnerships built by opener Tamim Iqbal and number three Shakib Al Hasan, with the duo putting on stands of 78, 99 and 106 runs for the second wicket. Yesterday in the last league match against Sri Lanka, a repeat was on the cards when Anamul Haque fell cheaply, but then the partners in crime wronged each other. In the fifth over, with the partnership on a nascent five, Tamim pushed Suranga Lakmal towards point and called for a run. There was a bit of hesitation as Dushmantha Gunathilaka shot into action in a flash, picked up the ball and hit the one stump he had to aim at to run out Shakib, who had given up by the end. Just one ball later, Lakmal got a ball to rear up sharply and Tamim fended it in the air to point, where it was Gunathilaka again who completed a spectacular diving catch. It was game and set then, and match less than three hours later.

ABUL'S HOWLER

The decision review system is designed to eliminate howlers from umpires, but it failed to take into

account howlers from blindly optimistic batsmen. Abul Hasan, he of the unexpected debut Test hundred from number 10 in 2013, came in ahead of the nominally more capable Nasir Hossain and his only real contribution in his first match back into the side in nearly three years was a wasted review. In the 19th over, Thisara Perera cut one back to the left-hander and it caught the inside edge on way to the keeper. The umpire gave it out but Abul talked to non-striker Mushfiquir Rahim and reviewed. It is never a good sign when a batsman has to ask the non-striker whether or not he hit the ball and, as sure as day follows night, there was a spike on the Ultra Edge and Abul had to walk back.

FIZZ MISSES OUT ON 50TH

Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said after the match that he did not want to use his best bowlers before the final in the futile defence of 82, but he used Mustafizur Rahman because he was on 49 wickets and the bowler wanted to bowl. The hunt for an individual milestone backfired as instead of his wickets increasing, it was Fizz's economy rate that rose as he conceded 14 runs in 1.5 overs, including the winning runs.

Imrul back for final

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Left-handed batsman Imrul Kayes made his return to the Bangladesh squad for the tri-series final against Sri Lanka tomorrow.

Imrul Kayes was part of the 16-man squad for the first two matches of the tri-nation series but could not feature due to injury, before being left out of the third and fourth matches of the series.

Concern over opener Anamul Haque's form could be one of the possible reasons for Imrul's inclusion in the squad ahead of the all-important encounter. Anamul has scored 19, 39, 1 and 0 in his four appearances in the tri-series while Imrul has perhaps found form with striking his 16th first-class hundred -- a 131-ball 118 BCB North Zone in a Bangladesh Cricket League match.

Imrul has not played for Bangladesh since the South Africa debacle. In his last match, a T20I against the Proteas, he scored six runs off eight balls, while his last ODI match against the same opposition yielded just one run.

BANGLADESH SQUAD: Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (C), Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mustafizur Rahman, Anamul Haque, Mushfiquir Rahim, Nasir Hossain, Sabbir Rahman, Mohammad Mithun, Rubel Hossain, Abul Hasan, Mohammad Saifuddin, Sunzamul Islam.



In a rare act to bring domestic cricket to the forefront, the entire Bangladesh team got together to fete Abdur Razzak and Tushar Imran, who recently became the first Bangladeshis to reach 500 first-class wickets and 10,000 first-class runs, before the toss yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

PHOTO: STAR

We executed well: Dickwella

SPORTS REPORTER



The bowling unit deserves credit when an opponent is dismissed for 82 runs, especially when just six days ago the same unit conceded 320 against the same team at the same venue. Undoubtedly there was a good plan when a team possesses a coach like Chandika Hathurusingha, but the question remains about whether the players can execute the good plan and Sri Lanka bowlers, led by Suranga Lakmal, bowled according to the plan to secure a 10-wicket victory against the home side yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Sri Lanka stand-in captain Dinesh Chandimal gave full credit to his players. "Before the game, we had game plans, [but] credit goes to the players. We had the energy in the bowling - especially Suranga. Upul [Tharanga] and Danushka [Gunathilaka] finished it off well. Credit to them also" said Chandimal during the presentation ceremony.

"After a long time, we played out a game. We just stuck to our plan and executed it well," wicketkeeper batsman Niroshan Dickwella echoed the sentiment.

On the other hand, Danushka Gunathilaka, who

attended the post-match briefing, admitted that Shakib Al Hasan's run out was the turning point of the match but he said that they were not surprised with the outcome of the game.

"We were not surprised because we know that if we play to our strengths we can beat any team in the world. We got back to a good performance and I think we need to continue," he said.



Sri Lankan players celebrate the fall of another Bangladesh wicket at Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



THE BEGINNING OF THE ROT: Shakib Al Hasan looks at his shattered stumps after he was undone by a sensational Gunathilaka direct hit at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR