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Mixing calm with aggression

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chittagong



"Whenever I face any difficulties in my batting or find it tough to face any

bowler, I walk up to Mominul Haque for help," Tamim Iqbal had told The Daily Star before the Test series.

The aggressive left-hander, who has emerged as the most consistent and prolific run-scorer for the Tigers over the past three years may have a few other questions to ask Mominul after witnessing his junior teammate's flawless batting display.

Mominul's innings yesterday was not just about proving a point or releasing pent-up frustration; it was also about the mental strength he showed in maintaining the same mentality from the time he walked out to bat till the moment he walked with the help of 17 fours and a six.

When Mominul struck a majestic cover drive off pacer Lahiru Kumara for his first boundary of the innings he seemed to have sent a strong message to himself -- do not let go of this opportunity.

There was aggression but he did not allow it to dominate common sense and despite hitting boundaries in almost every over, the lefthander remained careful while leaving the ball and watching it till the last minute, or while stretching forward to show respect to good deliveries.

Just after lunch, the 26-year-old struck consecutive boundaries off chinaman bowler Lakshan Sandakan -- the first one was a handsome lofted off drive, the second one was the sign of a man on a mission - moving back seamlessly and muscling it over midwicket.

The pocket dynamite started to gressed and started to dominate the entered the 90s, it seemed that a fire room will do well to take a cue.

'wily old fox' Rangana Herath Mominul, playing an elegant chip over mid-on to reach his fifty off 59 balls.

From the roll of his wrist over the ball to get on top of the bounce, to flashes onto his back foot to go the aerial route, it was all about a display of champion batsmanship that may have impressed even Chandika Hathurusingha who, during his tenure as the Tigers' coach, would have noted that the batsman struggles against spin and especially offspin. Apart from the spinners, the way he dealt with bouncers brushed aside another perceived weakness.

The innings was also about building a partnership with Mushfiqur Rahim, who provided good support from the other end to

take the home side to a big total. Mominul started to pace his innings with more aggression as he

ignited inside him as he took no : enceyesterday. more than eight balls to reach his: fifth Test hundred, hitting Sandakan second one a lofted extra-cover drive fastest Test century off 96 balls.

Those who are familiar with · meaning more to him than others.

emotion from him, as he actually: Although Dilruwan took two wickets, Mushfigur and Liton Das and Conceded 100 runs. further glory today.

Liked the way he celebrated: Tamim

Your Healthy Secret!

SPORTS REPORTER from Chittagong



It was a day of a few milestones. The Tigers posted 347-4, their highest score on a single day in a Test match. Mominul Haque registered

his fifth hundred, his first after three years. And on his way to an unbeaten 175, the lefthander also became the fastest to cross the 2,000-run mark among the Bangladesh players. It looked like a satisfying opening day for Bangladesh against Sri Lanka at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, where the Tigers, with a positive intent, hardly put a foot wrong after stand-in captain Mahmudullah Riyad opted to bat on a pitch that was nowhere near a 'dustbowl'.

Apart from the two blows in the last hour, when the Tigers lost Mushfigur Rahim and Liton Das off successive deliveries, the day belonged to the home side. Mushfiqur missed out on a hundred by just eight runs after being part of a record 236-run stand for the third wicket with Mominul. Liton paid the price for shouldering his arms to a Suranga Lakmal delivery that nipped back to rattle his off-stump.

"It would have been a complete performance if the second wicket stand finished the day. We were a little anxious to avoid the · collapse which we often have after a big . partnership. It was unfortunate for Liton to get out just after Mushfiqur. I still believe it · was a fantastic day for us, " Tamim Iqbal told reporters during the post day media confer-

It was Tamim's positive start that put the · Sri Lankan bowlers under immense presfor two successive boundaries - the · sure from the word go. The left-hander : reached his 25th fifty off just 46 balls before -- to bring up Bangladesh's second-; being dismissed by a quicker delivery from · off-spinner Dilruwan Perera.

"My plan to put them under pressure Mominul's usually subdued century: clicked. I was trying to attack their main celebrations will know that his bowlers from ball one and put them in animated celebration, running · the situation where we wanted them. towards the boundary and leaping. They have two world-class spinners but at with a fist-pump before raising his : one point they didn't know where to bat, hinted at this particular ton bowl. We knew their past record, so to · successfully attack them makes us But that was the only show of . happy," he said.

settled in after that and brought up : Bangladesh's ploy worked perfectly his 150 off 170 balls. He then held · against a vintage Rangana Herath, who firm through the dismissals of bowled 20 overs without success and

remains Bangladesh's big hope for . The day well and truly belonged to · Mominul, who not only punched the air in It is an innings from which, like: a wild celebration but also ran quite a disback, unbeaten on a 203-ball 175 get into the groove as the day pro- reached his fifty and when he Tamim, the rest of the dressing; tance before pointing his bat to the dressing · room after completing his hundred. It was

certainly a celebration quite unlike Mominul, who hardly shows any emotion after an achievement. It was unclear whether he wanted to prove a point to his former coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who was at the oppositions dug-out.

"He had a point to prove and I liked what he did. I understood what he meant," Tamim said without elaborating.

"Mominul was amazing throughout the day. He kept on playing the shots. He had a 103 strike-rate when he reached his 100. We knew it was a nice wicket to bat on, on Day One. So it was most important for us not to throw away our wickets. It is normal for a batsman to get overexcited on such a wicket, and play a risky shot. He knew how important his wicket was for us. We needed their big partnership. They were sensitive and positive. If there was a ball to hit, they did it very well. Mominul is still not out so I am sure he will go a long way," he added.

MAGNIFICENT MOMINUL

When he reached 160 on the first day yesterday, Mominul Haque became the fastest Bangladesh batsman to reach 2,000 Test runs in terms of innings. He reached the mark in 47 innings, ahead of Tamim Iqbal (53), Habibul Bashar (58), Shakib Al Hasan (58), Mushfigur Rahim (67) and Mohammad Ashraful (91). Mahmudullah Riyad needs another 60 runs today to bring up the mark in his 67th innings.

It was Mominul's fifth Test century and his fourth at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong in his seventh match at the venue where he currently averages 95.37. His highest Test score is 181 against New Zealand in 2013.

Mominul reached his century in 96 deliveries, the second-fastest by a Bangladesh batsman after Tamim Iqbal's 94-ball ton against England at Lord's in May 2010.

The 236-run third-wicket partnership between Mominul and Mushfigur Rahim is Bangladesh's highest for that wicket against any opposition.

It was also their second-highest for any wicket against Sri Lanka, behind the 267-run fifthwicket stand between Mushfigur and Ashraful (March 2013, Galle).

Afif shines in a mixed campaign

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh wrapped up their ICC WORLD CUP Under-19 World Cup campaign in NEW ZEALAND 2018 sixth position following an eightwicket defeat against South Africa in Queenstown yesterday, with highly-rated all-rounder Afif Hossain living up to his reputation amid an otherwise mixed bag of performances from his teammates.

Following a five-wicket victory over England, the Saif Hossain-led side were expected to put up another good show. But they failed to do so, apparently due to opting to bat first on winning the toss.

Having lost the top half with just 33 runs on the board, two valiant half-centuries from Afif and wicketkeeperbatsman Shakil Hossain lifted them to a modest 178 all out in 41.4 overs. The young Proteas raced to the victory target in 38.3 overs, with eight wickets in hand.

Pace bowler Fraser Jones, who finished with a five-wicket haul, made most of the early damage by dismissing Mohammad Naim (2), Aminul Islam (7), Towhid Hridoy (1) and Mohammad Rakib (2). Bangladesh's saving grace, Afif, who had scored a match-

winning 71 against England in the previous match, struck a fluent 63 off 59 balls. He shared 97 runs for the sixth wicket with Shakil, who made 61 off 89 balls.

This was Afif's fourth half-century in six innings as he scored an aggregate of 276 runs apart from taking eight wickets including a five-for against Canada.

The defeat completed a campaign that can be best described as a mixed bag for Bangladesh in difficult New Zealand conditions. They won their first two group games against Canada and Namibia convincingly before suffering a heavy defeat against England. They also lost their quarterfinal against India badly before salvaging some pride against their group-stage tormentors England.



One down, four to go

SAKEB SUBHAN



A continued focus on handika Hathurusingha's presence in the Sri Lanka camp may discomfit

those who want to leave his time with Bangladesh in the past, but it will be hard to escape the role the former Bangladesh coach plays, wittingly and unwittingly, in the current series between the two sides. Hathurusingha's history with Bangladesh -- a successful three-year tenure which ended in a sudden pre-contract-expiry resignation midway through a disastrous South Africa tour in October 2017 -- has had and will continue to have a bearing but if the preceding tri-series is considered, Bangladesh will do well to limit that

374 for four by Bangladesh there are Hathurusingha's tactics -- namely the echoes of their first tri-series meeting with Sri Lanka, when they romped to their largest ODI victory in terms of runs and it seemed that they had overcome the challenge of having someone with intimate knowledge of their abilities and tactical wherewithal in the opposition camp. In that match, they seemed

BANGLADESH: First innings		R	В	4s	6s
Tamim b Perera		52	53	6	1
Imrul Ibw b Sandakan		40	75	4	0
Mominul not out		175	203	16	1
Mushfigur c Dickwella b Lakmal		92	192	10	0
Liton b Lakmal		0	1	0	0
Mahmudullah not out		9	20	2	0
Extras: (nb-4, w-2)		6			
Total: (For 4 wkts in 90 overs)		374			
To bat: Mosaddek, I	Mehedi, Taijul	, Sunzan	rul, Mus	stafizur.	
Fall of wickets: 1-72	2,2-120,3-35	6,4-356	g=1/41/10051 } }		
Bowler	0	1	M.	R	W
Lakmal	17		3	43	2
Kumara	12		1	64	0
Perera	24	3	4	98	1
Herath	20		1	100	0
Sandakan	13		1	58	1
De Silva	4	33	0	11	0



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (C) watches the game alongside BCB president Nazmul Hassan (R) and BCB director Akram Khan at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

bouncer strategy -- and came out on top. After the first day of the first Test

Bangladesh are well and truly on top. Mominul Haque's resplendent unbeaten 175 promises more riches today. So far they have done their homework and have thwarted Sri Lanka's plans by playing positively against the spinners and taking their bete noir Rangana Herath for 100 runs in 20 wicketless overs.

that first match the Tigers seemed to go against ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's pre-series words of playing 'smart cricket, but not being oversmart' as they lost the next two matches against Sri Lanka, including the final, by embarrassing margins.

In those defeats, particularly in the final when they collapsed in a heap in chase of a moderate 222 when experienced campaigners like Tamim Iqbal and Mushfigur Rahim were out playing unnecessary shots, Bangladesh had moved away from their smart-cricket mantra and seemed intent on twisting the knife into the wound when a clean

In yesterday's end-of-day score of to have anticipated some of kill would have sufficed. A bit of emotion seemed to have crept in and . instead of playing the opposition like : they did in the first match, it appeared ' that they were trying to make a statement aimed at their former coach.

There is doubtlessly a bit of needle: between the Tigers and their former · coach, evidenced by Hathurusingha's wry smile when asked before the first Test : about the six spinners in the Bangladesh . Test squad and in the usually reserved : Mominul's fierce and pointed celebra- Bangladesh batsman Liton Das (L) reflects on his first-ball-Going back to the tri-series, after tion upon reaching his century yesterday.

The following four days will not just . without the talismanic Shakib Al: by winning the tournament, but it will : good effort." also test if they learned their lessons · While everyone was expecting a raging turner, the pitch from the tri-series debacle.

opposition and not their coach.

'Have to keep it under 500'

SPORTS REPORTER



Having conceded 374 for four after losing the toss on the first day of the first Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong yesterday, Sri Lanka now have to prepare to bat long and deep to come back into the match and maintain their

dominance over the hosts in the longer version. That is a matter for batting consultant Thilan Samaraweera to hammer out with his charges, but in the post-day press conference he was aware of the need to get the remaining six Bangladesh wickets as quickly as possible today. It could have been worse for the tourists because at one stage Bangladesh were 356 for two, but pacer Suranga · Lakmal then dismissed Mushfigur Rahim and Liton Das off

successive deliveries. "I think the last two wickets were big," said Samaraweera,



duck after shouldering arms to an inswinger from Sri Lanka be a test of how the home side fare : pacer Suranga Lakmal in Chittagong yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Hasan, whose injury in the tri-series · who was Bangladesh's batting coach till mid-2017. "We final handed Sri Lanka even more : have to put more pressure on Bangladesh in the first session momentum than they had mustered : tomorrow, and keep them under 500. I think that'll be a

: was a docile one on the first day.

Unlike in the ODIs where: "I feel till day three this is a good pitch. It will turn but Bangladesh were the higher-ranked slowly from then on," said Samaraweera before heaping team, Sri Lanka are the better side in the · praise on Bangladesh number three Mominul Haque, who Tests, which means Bangladesh have to : was unbeaten on 175 at stumps. "Mini [Mominul] batted be on guard even more and, having laid : really well. He used his feet and the crease very well. We the foundation, continue playing the · should have bowled better than that. It [374] is 40 runs too : many for our part."