

SPORT

Five pillars standing strong

SPORTS REPORTER

There were grave concerns about the Tigers' ability to put their dismal performances in the Test series, part of which was being bowled out for their lowest ever score of 43 in the first Test, behind them and stage a comeback in the ODI series against West Indies.

It was a tough ask for inspirational ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza to regroup the demoralised cricketers and start afresh in their favoured format.

And it was once again the five pillars of Bangladesh -- Mashrafe, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad -- who took charge for the Tigers and registered their first ODI series win abroad since 2009.

Among other records, Bangladesh also registered their highest team score in the West Indies

when they scored 301 for six in the third ODI, which they won by 18 runs to clinch the series.

Tamim has been in terrific form and became the first Bangladeshi to score two hundreds in a series twice with scores of 130 not out, 54 and 103. He also became the highest visiting run-scorer against the West Indies in an ODI series, surpassing Australian Darren Lehman's 205 runs.

Shakib also played his part throughout the series, coming in at the crucial number three spot and providing a lot of assurance while scoring 190 runs in three games at an average of 63.33, which included two fifties.

The champion all-rounder was a part of the record 207-run second-wicket partnership with Tamim in the first ODI in Guyana, where he missed out on his eighth ODI ton by just three runs.

Skipper Mashrafe once again lead the side with great confidence and also showed why he is

chasing 272, which the Tigers went on to lose by just three runs, the 31-year-old was on top of his game throughout the series.

Last but not least, Mahmudullah played his part in the third ODI, scoring an unbeaten 67 off 49 balls to help the Tigers go past the 300-run mark.

The stylish right-hander also added an important 87-run partnership with Mushfiqur in the second ODI and almost took the side to the finish line before being run out on 39.

In a largely positive series the disappointments were neither surprising nor new. The junior members of the side, especially in the batting lineup, continued their inability to step up. Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz was perhaps the only younger member who played a crucial part in the series win as he was outstanding with the new ball in every match.



Captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza gives the thumbs up to his teammates following Bangladesh's 2-1 ODI series victory against West Indies in St. Kitts on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP



Bangladesh players celebrate their 18-run victory in the third and final ODI, which ensured a first series win outside home since 2009 for the Tigers, against West Indies in St. Kitts on Saturday.

PHOTO: CWI

Can Tigers step up in absence of Mashrafe?

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the humiliating Test series defeat against West Indies, Bangladesh needed a boost of confidence ahead of the series-ending three-match T20I series. And it duly came in the form of a 2-1 series win in the ODIs, the format which the Tigers are most comfortable in.

The one undeniable factor that contributed greatly to Tigers' success in the fifty-over format in recent years is the leadership of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, which was yet again evident in abundance in the Caribbean. It is not easy to lift a team shattered by such humbling defeats within a matter of days, which is what Mashrafe was able to do.

And what better way to motivate a team short of confidence than through leading by example? The 34-year-old got the early breakthroughs and kept things quiet with a tight line and length and intelligent variation of pace. He was rewarded for his guile and experience by becoming the top wicket-taker of the series (7) while averaging only 20.57. While he also proved his credentials with the bat, pushing himself up the order in the series decider to blast a 25-ball 36, it was his intelligent bowling changes, and ability to instil confidence in the players that paid the biggest dividends.

Bringing on Rubel Hossain for the penultimate over was a difficult choice, given the history of the bowler's lack of control in death overs in recent times. Mashrafe was shorthanded for options, but he knew all the same that if Rubel could get his deliveries close to the block hole, he would be hard to get away.

"If you look at today's match, Rubel [Hossain] did exactly what the team needed. We are improving in certain facets like this but now we have to ensure that we do it consistently," Mashrafe said.

While the skipper did not dwell on his

decisions or on his own performance, he pointed out the lackings of the team, especially the failure of the youngsters to step up.

"Boys are in good touch so the juniors need to step up too," he said in the post-match presentation, referring to the youngsters' failure to shoulder some responsibility, before moving on to other areas of concern. "Overall, I think the fielding has to improve. At the same time there were things to improve in the batting and bowling departments as well."

Mashrafe might have been referring to ODIs in particular, but the same things apply to the shortest format as well. The Tigers showed signs of coming of age in the shortest format when they beat Sri Lanka twice in the Nidahas Trophy in March, only to lose the final against India in heart-breaking fashion. However, they soon proved that those performances were not signs of consistent improvement as they suffered a 3-0 series defeat against Afghanistan in India in June.

Whether this boost of confidence from the ODIs will transform to good showings in the T20I series is not a certainty though. Firstly because the Tigers will have to make do without Mashrafe and secondly because T20s are the West Indies' strongest suit.

There will be obvious changes in the Tigers' line-up for the T20s, some predetermined while some might happen in the aftermath of individual performances in the ODI series. More telling will be the changes in the opposition team, with impact players such as Samuel Badree, Andre Fletcher, Carlos Brathwaite and Denesh Ramdin likely to get in. It will certainly be a much tougher challenge than the one that was posed before the Tigers over the past week.

The onus now rests on Shakib Al Hasan to fill in the large boots of Mashrafe and on the youngsters to finally take more responsibility.

NUMBERS GAME

207 runs partnership between Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal in the first ODI is the highest second wicket partnership for the Tigers and also the second highest partnership for Bangladesh in any wicket.

287 runs scored by Tamim Iqbal in the series is the highest by a visiting batsman in a three match ODI series against West Indies. The previous record was held by Australian Darren Lehman who scored 205 runs. Tamim also became the only Bangladeshi batsman to struck two centuries in two different series.

301 runs posted by Bangladesh in the third ODI is the highest ever team total for the Tigers in West Indies.

TOP THREE RUN SCORERS

Player	Mat	Runs	Avg	HS
Tamim Iqbal	3	287	143.50	130*
Shimron Hetmyer	3	207	69.00	125
Shakib Al Hasan	3	190	63.33	97

TOP THREE WICKET-TAKERS

Player	Mat	Wkts	Avg	BB
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza	3	7	20.57	4/37
Mustafizur Rahman	3	5	28.40	2/35
Rubel Hossain	3	5	29.40	3/61

still the best pace bowler in the team. He not only provided breakthroughs at crucial junctures but also managed to keep things tight when required.

Mashrafe's leadership ability often overshadows his bowling, but this time his skills with the ball came to the fore as the 'Narail Express' ended the series as the leading wicket taker with seven scalps.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur showed why he is rated as one of the best batsman in the Tigers line-up as he displayed his ability to score quick runs while being reliable.

Whether it was his 11-ball 30 in the first ODI or the courageous 67-ball 68 in the second while

The biggest disappointment for the Tigers was undoubtedly Anamul Haque, who was given the license to play freely by skipper Mashrafe before the series.

But the right hander was unable to utilise the opportunity in all three games scoring 0,23 and 10 and more importantly, Anamul showed no situational awareness and was unable to adapt to conditions in any of the matches.

Sabbir Rahman and Mosaddek Hossain were the other two cricketers who will need to rethink their approaches as their impact on the series was also minimal.

Rabada, Shamsi star in SA win

AFP, Dambulla

Bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Tabraiz Shamsi starred on Sunday in South Africa's five-wicket hammering of Sri Lanka in the first one-day international, some consolation for a disappointing tour.

They claimed four wickets each to help bowl out Sri Lanka for 193, a total the visitors passed in just 31 overs to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

South Africa's chase depended on an 86-run third-wicket stand between Quinton de Kock and skipper Faf du Plessis, who both hit 47. Off-spinner Akila Dananjaya struck at crucial moments to get three wickets but Jean-Paul Duminy ensured a swift chase with his 32-ball unbeaten 53.

But it was a superb opening pace spell from Rabada and Shamsi's career-best figures of 4-33 with his left-arm wrist spin that led South Africa to their first victory of the tour after being swept aside in a two-Test series.

"Feels much better to be chatting as a winning captain," du Plessis said afterwards.

"In the Test series we didn't play well. There is a new group of players for the ODIs. I also thought we've learnt lessons, had good discussions and put pressure on their spinners by taking a few risks."

After the recent defeats, du Plessis said South Africa were now looking forward to the rest of the tour.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka: 193 all out in 34.3 overs (K Perera 81, T Perera 49; Rabada 4-41, Shamsi 4-33)

South Africa: 196 for 5 in 31 overs (De Kock 47, Du Plessis 47, Duminy 53 not out; Dananjaya 3-50)

Result: South Africa won by five wickets.

'A reflection of hard work'

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal has lifted his game to new heights over the past few years and has become one of the most prolific run-scorers for the Tigers, playing pivotal roles in most of the matches which Bangladesh won.

It was yet again a Tamim Iqbal series in the ODIs against the West Indies, which Bangladesh won 2-1 to clinch their first away series win since 2009. The left-hander hit two hundreds and a fifty to become the highest run-getter with a combined 287 runs.

Bangladesh won both the games where Tamim hit his 10th and 11th ODI tons, a feat that saw him become the first Bangladeshi to score two centuries in two different series. He also became the highest run-scorer among visiting team players in a three-match series in the Caribbean, surpassing Darren Lehman's 205 runs.

Tamim's purple patch also saw him climb four places to a career-high 13th place in the ICC ODI Batsman Rankings.

However, the task was not easy for Tamim, who had plenty of pressure on his shoulder after coming into the ODI series on the back of a humiliating two-match Test series defeat, where the Chittagong native failed to fire.

Tamim scored his 10th ODI century in the first ODI on a slow and turning Guyana pitch off 146



Opener Tamim Iqbal thanks the heavens after scoring a century -- his second of the three-match series -- during the third and final ODI against West Indies in St. Kitts on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

balls, smashing seven fours and a six. It may have been the slowest century by a Bangladeshi batsman, but the seasoned left-hander played catch up after that. He remained unbeaten on 130 off 160 balls, scoring his final 30 runs off 14 balls, hitting three fours and a couple of sixes.

"What I wanted to do and my team asked me to do was bat long and this was the plan and I did it successfully. The wicket in Guyana wasn't easy as it was spinning and in the first ODI it was seaming as well so you need to spend a lot of time in the middle. Patience is the key and I think that is the reason I got the big runs," Tamim said on Saturday.

He also added a record 207-run second-wicket stand with Shakib Al Hasan which laid the foundation for the Tigers to charge later in the innings to post 279 for 4.

The dashing southpaw however had a tough time in the second ODI where he scored 54 off 85 balls and at one point was unable to rotate the strike.

However, he managed to come back in the third ODI and showed his immense ability to register his 11th ODI hundred. He smote 103 off 124 balls, helping the Tigers post 301 -- the highest total by Bangladesh in the West Indies -- and eventually win the series by 18 runs.

"As I always said: when you score runs and your team wins that's the best thing you can ask for. What I can say is that the amount of patience in all the three matches is a reflection of my hard work, which paid off," he concluded.

BD-WI SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH		R/B	4s/6s		
Tamim c Powell b Bishoo	103/124	7/2			
Anamul c Powell b Holder	10/31	1/0			
Shakib c Paul b Nurse	37/44	3/0			
Mushfiqur b Nurse	12/14	0/1			
Mahmudullah not out	67/49	5/3			
Mashrafe c Gayle b Holder	36/25	5/1			
Sabbir c Lewis b Cottrell	12/9	2/0			
Mosaddek not out	11/5	1/0			
Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-11)	13				
Total: (For 6 wks in 50 overs)	301				
Did not bat: Mehedi, Rubel, Mustafizur.					
Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-116, 3-152, 4-200, 5-253, 6-279.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Cottrell	9	0	59	1	
Holder	10	0	55	2	
Bishoo	10	1	42	1	
Paul	9	0	77	0	
Nurse	10	1	53	2	
Gayle	2	0	14	0	
WEST INDIES		R/B	4s/6s		
Gayle c Mehedy b Rubel	73/66	6/5			
Lewis c Mushfiqur b Mashrafe	13/33	1/0			
Hope c Shakib b Mashrafe	64/94	5/0			
Hetmyer b Mehedy	30/42	2/0			
K Powell run out	4/7	0/0			
R Powell not out	74/41	5/4			
Holder c Rubel b Mustafizur	9/10	0/0			
Nurse not out	5/7	0/0			
Extras: (lb-3, w-8)	11				
Total: (For 6 wks in 50 overs)	283				
Did not bat: Paul, Bishoo, Cottrell.					
Fall of wickets: 1-53, 2-105, 3-172, 4-179, 5-224, 6-262.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	10	0	63	2	
Mehedy	10	0	45	1	
Mustafizur	10	0	65	1	
Mosaddek	1	0	10	0	
Mahmudullah	2	0	20	0	
Rubel	7	0	34	1	
Shakib	10	0	45	0	
Result: Bangladesh won by 18 runs and clinched the 3-match series 2-1.					
Player-of-the-match: Tamim Iqbal.					
Player-of-the-series: Tamim Iqbal.					