

SPORT

Tamim lights the way

SAKEB SUBHAN

The 2005 Ashes series is popularly remembered as Flintoff's Ashes because of the rousing performances of the former England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff. Although the recently concluded tour of West Indies by Bangladesh does not elicit the same fanfare from neutrals as the Ashes series does, nor does it have a catchy name, it will be fitting to unofficially name the month-long tour as Tamim Iqbal's series.

Although the left-handed opener did not fire in the Test series -- and it was hardly surprising that the team fell to two heavy defeats at the start of the tour -- in the ODI and T20I series that followed he was comfortably the best batsman on either side, which is saying something when the opposition included names like Chris Gayle and Marlon Samuels. The numbers brook no argument.

He hit his 10th and 11th ODI tons in the first and third ODIs, and sandwiched in between was a fifty in the second ODI. The player-of-the-series in the ODIs, Tamim scored 287 high-quality runs at an average of 143.5. In the second T20I, he set Bangladesh on the winning path with a blistering 44-ball 77, rolling back the years with a trio of sixes in an over from fast bowler Andre Russell.

There were missteps however -- he lost his wicket in the second ODI by charging down the wicket to Devendra Bishoo, and inexplicably repeated the shot off the first ball of the first T20I from Ashley Nurse with the same outcome. In both matches, his wicket was the preface to losses. But even in his missteps Tamim ensured that his recovery would remain as a shining beacon for the rest of his teammates. In the third ODI he buckled down and scored 103 to set up what proved to be a match-winning total. In the second T20I he started slowly as wickets tumbled around him, before exploding during a partnership with Shakib Al Hasan in a chanceless innings.

It is also true that when Tamim departs to poor shots, it draws criticism that is arguably more intense than for any other batsman. It may seem unfair, but that is perhaps

because over the past three years of consistent self-improvement and evolution, the left-hander has become -- next to the beloved Mashrafe Bin Mortaza -- the symbol of responsibility within the team. If one thinks back to how he started as a madcap opener capable of flaying attacks but not on a consistent basis, the extent of his transformation looks all the more impressive.

He scored just 64 runs in the four innings in the Test series, but he was also the only one among the specialist batsmen to not give his wicket away with a shot that was not on. That did not happen by accident -- Tamim has for some time been a batsman who values his practice immensely, and one who practises with a purpose. That is probably why he trusts that in the longer version,

he can last long enough to score runs without looking for the release shots that have become a scourge of the Test team.

Of course, there are improvements to be made in Test cricket, but given his record of self-improvement the odds are in favour of Tamim not just being the best batsman in Bangladesh, but in the top few in world cricket.



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal not only reached another level of consistency during the limited-overs leg of the tour of West Indies and USA, but also set a great example of learning from mistakes.

PHOTO: AFP FILE



Shakib loses his cool

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Test and T20I captain Shakib Al Hasan failed to keep his cool and engaged in a verbal altercation with a fan in the lobby of the team's Florida hotel after the T20I series win against West Indies on Sunday. The altercation was captured on camera and the video subsequently went viral on social media.

However, contrary to the rumour doing the rounds, Shakib was not reacting to a question relating to the road safety movement but lost his cool after the fan, according to a source close to the team, directed foul language at the all-rounder after Shakib denied his irritatingly incessant requests for a video. Shakib had reportedly given him an autograph and posed for a selfie, but as he was walking away after denying the request, the fan abused him verbally.

That was when Shakib turned back and approached the man, dishing out a few expletives of his own. The captain had to be held back and led away by teammates and members of team management.

While the tour of West Indies and the United States of America has been a vastly successful one for the skipper, who was named player-of-the-series in the T20Is, he has had moments of controversy.

On Friday, he endured severe backlash after posting a message on his verified Facebook page asking the students to abandon the movement for safe roads and go back to their studies. The deluge of negative comments eventually forced him to take down the message and post a video message where he entreated his followers not to misunderstand him and that he too had a family to think of just like them.

Shakib has a history of lashing out against fans, most notably when he was handed a six-month ban by the Bangladesh Cricket Board for going into the crowd and physically assaulting a spectator in 2014.

Tampering harms cricket's DNA: Richardson

AFP, London

Global cricket boss David Richardson declared that ball tampering and bad behaviour threatened "cricket's DNA" and would not be tolerated by fans in the wake of the Australia cheating scandal.

The International Cricket Council chief executive said the "public has spoken" on bad behaviour in the game as he delivered the annual MCC Spirit of Cricket Cowdrey Lecture at Lord's on Monday night.

Richardson referred to events during the ill-tempered South Africa-Australia Test series earlier this year when Australia captain Steve Smith, vice-captain David Warner and batsman Cameron Bancroft were slapped with lengthy bans for their roles in a plan to change the condition of the

ball using sandpaper.

"Cricket's DNA is based on integrity, but we have seen too much behaviour of late that puts that in jeopardy and this has to stop," Richardson said.

"Sledging that amounts to no more than personal abuse, fielders giving send-offs to batsmen who have been dismissed, unnecessary physical contact, players threatening not to play in protest against an umpire's decision and ball tampering.

"This isn't the version of our sport that we want to project to the world."

He said: "The public reaction around the world to the incidents in the recent Australia-South Africa series was an eye-opener.

"The message was loud and clear, cheating is cheating and it's not what we signed up for."

Richardson said he found it a "little

disingenuous" for players to say that rules were unclear about how the condition of the ball could be altered legally.

"They have asked if they can chew gum, wear sunscreen or drink a sugary drink.

"To be brutally honest I find this a little disingenuous. The laws are simple and straightforward: do not change the condition of the ball using an artificial substance.

"If you are wearing sunscreen, sucking a mint or chewing gum with the intent of using the cream or the sugary saliva on the ball you are ball-tampering.

"You may not always get caught -- and we are not going to stop players from chewing gum or wearing sunscreen -- but if you are, then don't complain.

"Taking the attitude that it's always been there to some extent is a mistake. The public have spoken."

'Stokes mocked gay men'

AFP, London

Ben Stokes made "stupid noises" and "camp gestures" to mimic two gay men outside a nightclub, a doorman said Tuesday at the England cricketer's trial for alleged affray. Stokes mimicked the "high-pitched" voices of William O'Connor and Kai Barry, two "quite effeminate" regulars at Mbargo nightclub in Bristol, southwest England, said doorman Andrew Cunningham.

On Monday's opening day of the trial at Bristol Crown Court, jurors saw footage of Stokes, 27, brawling with 27-year-old Ryan Ali and Ryan Hale, 28, outside Mbargo in the early hours of September 25 last year.

Stokes, Ali and Hale each deny a charge of affray. The prosecution told the jury how Stokes told police he decided to intervene with Ali and Hale because he overheard "nasty homophobic language", then told police he acted in self-defence when he thought he was about to be hit with a bottle.

The prosecution said Stokes first knocked Hale unconscious, then Ali. Cunningham, appearing as a witness, said he knew the "flamboyant and camp" O'Connor and Barry as regulars.

He said Stokes, whom he described as the

"ginger one", and his England team-mate Alex Hales had returned to the club but were not allowed back in as it was after 2:00am.

"The ginger one offered me £60 (\$78, 67 euros) and asked me if that would get them in," Cunningham said. He had a conversation with his friend and he said '£300, get us in', and I still told them no.

"He got a bit verbally abusive," mocking Cunningham's gold teeth and tattoos, in a "spiteful" and "angry tone", he said.

The doorman said Barry and O'Connor had left the nightclub and were stood outside talking.

"The ginger guy picked up on this and started to take the mick out of them. He started to mimic their actions. He didn't speak, he just made noises to sound like them because if you hear them speak they are quite high-pitched guys.

"He made noises to try to copy them, not saying anything just making stupid noises. Just like hand gestures... camp gestures."

He said Barry and O'Connor did not appear angry. A cigarette butt was then flicked at them and Cunningham stepping in, saying "If you are going to start on someone, start on me".

He explained what had happened to Hales, who turned to his friend and said, "Stokes, don't do that", Cunningham recounted.

Du Plessis ruled out

REUTERS, Kandy

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis will miss the remainder of his side's limited overs tour to Sri Lanka after injuring his shoulder in Sunday's 78-run victory that clinched the one-day international series.

Du Plessis hurt his shoulder while diving for a catch and played no further part in the match.

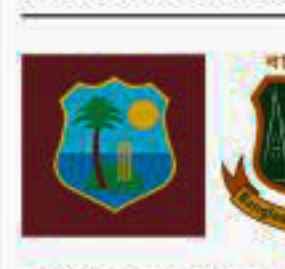
"Faf sustained an injury to one of the rotator cuff tendons in his right shoulder and will unfortunately be unavailable for the rest of the tour," team manager Mohammed Moosajee said in a media release from Cricket South Africa on Monday.

"He will need a rehabilitation period of up to six weeks to make a full recovery."

South Africa's next assignment will be a home limited overs tour by Zimbabwe starting in late September.

'Counselling for Sabbir, break for Soumya'

SPORTS REPORTER



Things could have been much better for Bangladesh cricket at this moment had two talented cricketers -- Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarker -- delivered as per their potentials.

It was a story of the Big Five as the Tigers celebrated the recent ODI and T20I series successes against the West Indies, despite the fact that young pacer Mustafizur Rahman started to rediscover his form and Liton Das, Nazmul Islam and Abu Hider showed some glimpses of hope.

However, among all those positives the biggest disappointment was associated with the failures of Sabbir and Soumya, who were expected to take leading roles in the team after spending the most time in international cricket



SABBIR RAHMAN

cricketers of their calibre," he added.

It was an unpleasant sight for Fahim to see the 26-year old Sabbir -- who has so far played 11 Tests, 54 ODIs and 41 T20Is since making his international debut in February 2014 -- still struggling to understand what it means to play with responsibility.

"I don't think Sabbir has any big problem with his technique. His problem lies with his tactics. He is not organised either on or off the field as he lives with a false aggression. He is such a good player who has got the ability to quickly change gears while batting but he was far away from implementing it. See, cricket is such a game where off the field affairs will also reflect in your performance, so he should work with tactical issues if he wants to overcome this situation," advised Fahim.

"If you think about Bangladesh's perfect opening pair then it



SOUMYA SARKER

is the duo of Tamim and Soumya who can give it to you. If you expect long innings from Tamim then you need someone, a good stroke-maker, on the other end. Tell me who can be a better choice than Soumya? What was expected was that in five innings, Tamim would deliver in three and Soumya in two but things went wrong because of Soumya's failure.

"Soumya had a brilliant start to international cricket but suddenly he lost everything and failed to perform at any level. He actually lost his balance in his batting because he confused his style of batting. The good connection of bat with ball was his strength but after failing in few matches where his weakness was exposed by opponents, he tried many things which ultimately did not work. He should go back to his strength and he can only do it by taking a break," explained Fahim.

In the end Fahim also believed that there was a big role for the people who are working behind the scenes.

"The people around them must give them the right advice and guidelines otherwise you will not get a good outcome."