



From the bottom of a broken heart

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

All of Bangladesh is rejoicing in the heroism displayed by the country's highest run-scorer to come out to bat at number 11 with a broken wrist just so that the team could reach a total that would give them a fighting chance in their Asia Cup Opener against Sri Lanka in Dubai on Saturday.

But Tamim Iqbal, the man who risked bodily harm for some runs on the board, was the picture of despondency the next day in the Tigers' team hotel.

"I am not enjoying it a bit. I am extremely disappointed," said Tamim yesterday when asked how he felt about all the hero worship flowing his way in social media and the real world. "I don't think I have been this disappointed, this heartbroken in 10 years of my international career. I had very high hopes when coming to the Asia Cup. But unfortunately, leaving the scene because of injury is very unfortunate."

Tamim suffered the injury from a Suranga Lakmal bouncer in the second over of the match and was rushed to a hospital for a scan almost immediately. Less than two hours later, it was revealed that he would not take further part in the match. That was, until, he strode out to the shock and demoralisation of the Sri Lankans in the 47th over and played the one ball from Lakmal himself that allowed Mushfiqur Rahim to explode over the next 15 deliveries.

"I have been extremely downcast since last night. Yesterday, after what happened, I had the realisation that I won't play a part in this Asia Cup. So, I did however much was possible for me to do. I thought that if I was destined to play just one more ball in the Asia Cup, I thought 'why not that ball?'. After that there was an important partnership because of that one ball, those are important issues, but at the end of the day I am very heartbroken."

Tamim risked real danger as even running could prove damaging with a fracture.

"I was not even thinking of those things. For the 15-20 seconds my mindset was on another level. It was killing me that probably it would be the last ball I will face in this Asia Cup. That was a very emotional thing and I very much wanted to do something for the nation."

"I never planned for this. Now people are talking about this a lot, but I thought about none of that. It just came from my heart. I just wanted to do something from my heart."

Behind the scenes of Tamim's bravery

SAKEB SUBHAN from Dubai

Tamim Iqbal's heavily bandaged left hand stuck out of a blue sling as he sat on the dressing room balcony staring off into space. The international match unfolding in front of him -- one that he was at the centre of just an hour and a half ago in hot sunshine before being reduced to a spectator as the Dubai sun was setting-- probably did not register.

He had just returned from the hospital, with the diagnosis being a broken wrist. In other words, his Asia Cup was over.

"When I was in hospital [Mohammad] Mithun and Mushfiqur [Rahim] were having a good partnership, but by the time I had returned Bangladesh had lost two-three quick wickets," Tamim said yesterday, the day after the Asia Cup opener against Sri Lanka.

In the middle, Mushfiqur had built a 131-run third-wicket partnership with a young player coming back to the side in Mithun after Bangladesh lost two wickets in the first over and Tamim had been put out of commission in the second.

Mithun's departure at 132 for two sparked a collapse. Roughly around the time Tamim had gotten back, Bangladesh had slumped to 142 for five. After his return, team manager Khaled Mahmud had informed the media that Tamim would definitely not bat again in the match -- hardly a revelation for those who saw the left-hander sitting in the balcony.

With around 20 overs to go Mashrafe -- who would later add a small but crucial eighth wicket stand of 20 with Mushfiqur -- came up to Tamim and said: "If Mushfiqur is still there [in the last over], go out to bat."

"I thought at first that he was joking with me," Tamim said with a smile. "Then when he repeated it once or twice, I gave it some thought and realised that if it is the last over and I am not on strike, I may as well go because I wouldn't have to do anything. The last over was 20 overs away, so it was an unlikely scenario because we lost a lot of wickets by then."

"Then in the last three overs, when Rubel was batting, I padded up. When Mustafizur got out there was one ball left in the 47th over. The plan was that if Mushfiqur was on strike, I would go. The physio [Thihan Chandramohan] told me that I couldn't

run, he was in fact not giving me permission to even go out onto the field. But at the end of the day the call is on the individual. It was my call, and it was Mashrafe bhai's idea -- plus the way he was talking to me about it pumped me up."

On the pitch Mushfiqur had no idea that this was brewing inside the dressing room. He was nearing a high-class hundred when Rubel was eighth man out (and Tamim began padding up). Number 11 Mustafizur Rahman came to the crease, with a message relaying the plan -- Tamim will come out if Mushfiqur was on strike.

It did not exactly go according to plan. It wasn't the last over when Mustafizur got out -- it was the penultimate ball of the 47th over -- and Mushfiqur was not on strike.

"The coach [Steve Rhodes] told me 'you don't need to go out there,'" Tamim recalled. "I said 'no, I can play that one ball'. He said 'think again, it's your call'. The frame of mind I was in for those 15-20 seconds, I think I would have tried to the utmost of my ability to play that ball against any bowler in the world."

His preparations to go out to the middle will certainly be the stuff of comic dressing room tales for years to come. Mahmud

insisted that he should wear a glove on his left hand, because it would look odd otherwise.

"He [Mashrafe] cut my gloves, and put on my pads... no, Mominul [Haque] put on the pads but Mashrafe bhai put on my guard," laughed Tamim. "It was possibly the first time in history that a player inserted the guard for another player."

"Mashrafe cut the palm of the gloves and I cut the wristband," said Mahmud with a smile.

But the fun was over when he went out there. He would need to play the ball with one hand when he had been programmed to go at balls with two hands.

"Even running was bad for me at that time. When I played the ball, you have seen me tuck my left hand behind my hip," Tamim said. "But at the point of impact that hand came forward. If I missed the ball, it could have struck the injured hand. All I was focusing on after playing that ball was running to the other end in the last ball of the over."

"When Tamim came at No 11, we were on a sub-par total. I felt that I should do something for him," added Mushfiqur.

And that is exactly what he did.



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal walks out of the team hotel in Dubai yesterday, with his left hand on a sling from the fracture he suffered during the Asia Cup opening match against Sri Lanka on Saturday. PHOTO: STAR

SOCIAL MEDIA LAUDS TAMIM HEROIC

STAR SPORT DESK

The Bangladesh versus Sri Lanka opener in the Asia Cup was billed as a mouth-watering contest, not just because of how closely fought the encounters between these two teams have been in recent times, but also due to the unsavoury incidents that took place in the Nidahas Trophy. However, by the time the first innings ended, all the talk on social media turned to the bravery of Tamim Iqbal, who showed tremendous courage by coming back to bat with a broken finger and a ripped-up glove that just about kept his injured finger in check. Here are a few eulogies collected from the twitterati.

- Brave @TamimOfficial28 you are a True hero of your Nation.
- Afghanistan batsman Gulbadin naib
- Batted with a broken wrist! Unbelievable courage showed by Tamim Iqbal!! Real act of bravery & dedication!!
- Syeda Nain Abidi, Pakistan women's cricketer
- How to not love a batsman coming back out to bat when his hand has already been broken?
- Andrew Fidel Fernando, Sri Lankan journalist
- What a courageous act by our very own @TamimOfficial28. Truly shows the spirit of the game in him when he came out to support Rahim despite a broken hand. Truly a warrior!! #DerAlaTamim
- PSL franchise Peshawar Zalmi
- Tamim Iqbal has come out to support Rahim despite a broken hand. It takes courage to put the team and the nation ahead of oneself and this is what we truly call #CricketMeriJaan
- IPL franchise Mumbai Indians

'Just reward for the hard yards'

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

If there is one thing that permeates every facet of Mushfiqur Rahim's identity as a cricketer and, as proved once again in the Asia Cup opener on Saturday, his status as Bangladesh's best all-round batsman it is his monk-like dedication to prepare as well as humanly possible.

He drew on the Zen-like calm that exhaustive levels of honing inevitably brings while authoring a sublime 150-ball 144 that started in 40-plus degree Celsius heat and went through the travails of a misfiring batting line-up. While a top order collapse and a middle order flurry of wickets is part and parcel of Bangladesh cricket, the Dubai heat in September is not something that any of the team had experienced.

"This is why we train. We don't have experience of batting in such conditions in the past but nobody really notices the hard work we put in at training," Mushfiqur said yesterday at the team's Dubai hotel. "We don't see you when we go for the running sessions at 8:00am. You come after 10:00am or 11:00am. The whole team dedicates itself to such training and this is the just result. [Mohammad] Mithun could have played such an innings because he too prepares himself really well."

He scored his first 10 runs off 31 deliveries, making sure there were no further damages



Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim (R) shares a light moment with spinner Nazmul Islam on Sunday, the day after his heroic 144 helped the Tigers to a 137-run victory against Sri Lanka. PHOTO: STAR

after Bangladesh lost two wickets in the first over and Tamim Iqbal through injury in the second, talking Mohammad Mithun -- making a comeback to the side -- through the tough phase and some false shots. He hit the side's first boundary in the last ball of the eighth over, which in these boundary-filled times shows how tough those first 10 overs were.

Having shown his skill of endurance, the multi-layered Mushfiqur then set about

taking the attack apart, bringing up his 50 off 67 balls.

"Mithun really helped me with his positive intent, he made things easier for me. I thought if we could build a partnership -- it was a very good batting wicket -- we would be back on track," said Mushfiqur. "But he got out at a bad time because a set batsman should not have gotten out at that time."

Mithun faltered in the 26th over, playing

across the line to Malinga and getting out, precipitating a collapse of three wickets for 10 runs. Mushfiqur returned to endurance mode and continued to inch Bangladesh towards a competitive total with a string of small partnerships with the lower order.

When Tamim made his heroic appearance on 229 for nine, when all 13 players on the ground had thought the innings over, Mushfiqur went up a gear that probably he alone has in Bangladesh. At his best, his arsenal of shots is so varied that no delivery, even yorkers, escape punishment. There was the scoop that turned into a ramp at the last second, inside-out cover drives for a four and a six and a pulled six that would have been expected of a batsman twice his size.

It speaks to the scale of his ambition and his ability that, while the rest of the world raves about the innings, Mushfiqur would not say that it was his best innings.

"All things considered, many may say that," Mushfiqur said. "But I think in the future there may be better innings. But till now, it is one of the best; not the best."

About Tamim coming out to bat with a broken wrist, Mushfiqur -- nursing an injured rib himself -- said: "It was unbelievable. It was different from mine because he could not grip the bat at all. All of us have the dedication for the team and country. Of course the focus is on the two of us because the team won because of us, but even when we lose the dedication is the same."