



Mushfiqur Rahim (L) and Mohammad Mithun forged the rescue act once again with a 144-run fourth-wicket partnership as Bangladesh recovered from 12 for three to post 239 against Pakistan in their Asia Cup Super Four fixture at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. Bangladesh won the match by 37 runs to seal a place in the final. PHOTO: AFP

A needless crisis

Shakib ruled out of Asia Cup, Set to undergo surgery

SAKEB SUBHAN from Abu Dhabi

ASIA CUP UAE 2018 An already unlucky Asia Cup went from bad to worse for Bangladesh as before the most important match, yesterday's virtual semifinal against Pakistan, trump card Shakib Al Hasan was ruled out of the tournament. That meant that Bangladesh, already without Tamim Iqbal because of a left-hand fracture sustained in the first game, were in crisis mode. However, this crisis could have been avoided and that it was not is the equivalent of a man beneath a window watching a falling safe and hoping that gravity will suddenly change its laws.

Shakib's injury to his left little finger, which saw him return to Dhaka yesterday and likely to fly off for either Melbourne or New York for surgery, was sustained in the tri-series final against Sri Lanka at home on January 27. He was ruled out of the subsequent Test and T20I series and was only brought back in March for the crunch Nidahas Trophy game against Sri Lanka in Colombo.

He then played the three-match T20I series against Afghanistan in June and starred on the full tour of West Indies with the bat. But upon returning from the tour, Shakib expressed a desire to have the surgery as soon as possible.

"I think it [surgery] should be done because I don't want to play without being fully fit. So, if I think along those lines then having surgery before the Asia Cup is normal. Most probably it will take place before the Asia Cup," said Shakib at the airport on August 9.

However, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president

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CRYSTAL REFLECTIVE TECHNOLOGY

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Mushfiqur keeps Tigers afloat

SPORTS REPORTER from Abu Dhabi

ASIA CUP UAE 2018 The Bangladesh innings of 239 all out against Pakistan yesterday, leaving 10 overs unused for the fourth time in five matches of the ongoing Asia Cup, revealed much of what is ailing Bangladesh batting. Mushfiqur Rahim was once again brilliant and extremely unlucky to be the first Bangladesh batsman to be out on 99 in international cricket. While he responded to the terrible setback of losing Shakib Al Hasan before the match by absorbing all the pressure, the performance of the rest of the top order raised serious concerns about Bangladesh's bench strength and also the willingness of those outside the experienced batsmen to respond to a match situation.

On a pitch that had a bit of grass, none of the Pakistan pacers bowled an unplayable ball except a Shaheen Shah Afridi delivery to Mohammad Mithun in the sixth over, when the left-arm pacer's delivery pitched outside leg and jagged away outside off, completely opening the batsmen up. Yet Bangladesh were three wickets down for 12 runs by the end of the fifth over. With Shakib out of the tournament one may have thought that the openers would try to preserve wickets to compensate for the hole in the middle order. However, Soumya Sarkar -- playing his first ODI in almost a year -- went for the hook

the first opportunity he got when Junaid Khan bounced him in the third over, perishing because he was too late on the shot.

If Soumya's error revealed thoughtlessness, Mominul Haque's dismissal exposed the lack of bench strength. After hitting a boundary off Shaheen Shah, he was beaten by pace in the next ball by a bowler who, while nippy, is not the fastest going around. In the next over Liton was foiled by a tactic as elementary as Junaid coming around the wicket. To a straight ball that was homing in on off and middle, the opener tried to play towards mid on and had his stumps disturbed.

Like he did in the first match against Sri Lanka on September 15, Mushfiqur stitched together a face-saving 144-run partnership with Mohammad Mithun. With his team seriously hurt by the new absence of Shakib and the old one of opener Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur refrained from any of the brain fides that saw him get out reverse-sweeping against India and run out in suicidal fashion against Afghanistan. The same could not be said for Mithun, who repeated his error from the Sri Lanka match by playing a rash shot just when the bowling was at their mercy.

The remaining six wickets could add just 83 runs. As has been happening in every match that Bangladesh have not completely lost the plot in, one of the senior pros have stood up and made up for the rest.

MOMENTS

SPORTS REPORTER from Abu Dhabi

SOUMYA'S PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Soumya Sarkar was batting in the ICC Academy nets the day before yesterday's match. He was facing up to some local net bowlers. One of them, just about bowling at medium pace, bowled a bouncer and Soumya, who has faced much faster bowlers, went for the hook. It was astonishing to see that he was late on the ball, making the shot an ungainly one that resulted in the ball going straight up into the net. On match day, he was facing the considerably faster Junaid Khan. The Pakistan left-arm pacer bounced one at him and the exact same thing happened. Soumya was eons late on the pull, the ball went higher than long, and he was caught at square leg inside the circle. Given the practice, Soumya might count himself unlucky that he got bat on ball at all.

CAN'T WALK, CAN FLY

It is always a source of wonder that Mashrafe Bin Mortaza still plays cricket. A survivor and sufferer of seven knee operations, it is a com-

mon sight to see him limping on the field. That is, until the ball is in play. But even by his inspirational standards, yesterday was special. In the 21st over, Rubel Hossain bowled on Shoaib Malik's stumps and he played early and uppishly towards midwicket. Mashrafe, as if his boots were spring-loaded, leapt to his left and, completely airborne, plucked the ball two-handed clean out of its intended trajectory. He had a reaction time of 0.84 seconds and took the ball 2.54 metres above ground, proving that you don't need to walk to be able to fly.

FIVE BALLS WITHOUT THE BIG FIVE

Those watching the match on TV may not have noticed, and they would probably have had a panic attack if they did, but for five balls during Pakistan's chase Bangladesh faced a situation they have not ever faced in the last decade. Shakib Al Hasan had gone home before the match started because of injury, Tamim Iqbal left more than a week before. After the 15th over Mushfiqur Rahim went off as he was struggling with the heat and his lingering rib injury. Mahmudullah Riyad left the field a little later and, after Mashrafe caught Malik spectacularly, he left the field clutching his hand. For the remaining five balls of that over, Bangladesh were without the five cricketers who have been the beginning and end of Bangladesh cricket for the last decade. Mahmudullah came back out at the end of the over and, let alone the fans, the cricketers themselves probably breathed a sigh of relief.



Nazmul Hassan said on that very day that he could not imagine playing the Asia Cup without Shakib, even though new coach Steve Rhodes was also of the opinion that Shakib should go under the knife before the Asia Cup.

"I said it would be better to do it before the Zimbabwe series," Hassan said. "The Asia Cup this time is already tough and it will be a psychological disadvantage if Shakib is not there. We will sit with Shakib and discuss everything soon."

After discussion, Hassan had said it was up to Shakib the BCB boss already having made his preference known perhaps put Shakib in a false position. He still said that he was finding it difficult to bat. And that showed in scores of 0, 17, 32 and 0 in the first four matches of the Asia Cup. Shakib never looked comfortable with bat in hand and the continued exposure of the finger led to him not even being able to grip the bat before the Pakistan match.

"Let's see when I go there -- if things don't look good I might go straight for surgery from there," Shakib said with a chuckle in an interview with The Daily Star on September 5. It does not seem so funny now.

If the BCB had taken the word of a player of Shakib's calibre and allowed him to do what his body needed, then Bangladesh could have planned for the Asia Cup without Shakib. Instead, at the most important juncture of a tournament, they are basically in a state of emergency. It has to be wondered what psychological effect that has had.

Afghans issue WC warning

AGENCIES, Dubai

ASIA CUP UAE 2018 Before the start of the Asia Cup Afghanistan captain Asghar Afghan had warned his team would not only compete but would achieve something special.

Despite not qualifying for Friday's final the team from the warm-torn nation achieved enough to sound warning bells for World Cup 2019 teams.

Afghanistan finished the tournament on a high when on Tuesday they pulled off a sensational last over tie against world number two India in Dubai, proving they are a team on the rise.

It was akin to a win for Afghanistan, according to their captain, and the fact that India had their head in their hands while the Afghans did all the celebrating was telling.

"Yeah, when you tie with a team like India, it's like winning," said Afghan. "They usually chase easily. It is good for the fans as well."

"On this type of (spinning) track, Shahzad played very positive cricket. What we saw today was the real Shahzad, unfortunately it came in the last match."

Afghanistan upset Sri Lanka by 91 runs before thumping Bangladesh by a big 136-run margin to enter the Super Four Stage, where they narrowly lost to Pakistan by three wickets and to Bangladesh by three runs -- both in last over finishes.

Their heroics, Asghar believes, have sent warnings to major nations for the World Cup 2019, to be held in England from May 30 to July 14 next year.

"We can hold our heads high and this performance gives us pride," said Asghar after the India game in Dubai. "Remember, this is a warning for the World Cup teams."

BD-PAK SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH		R/B	4s/6s		
Liton b Junaid	6/16	0/0			
Soumya c Zaman b Junaid	0/5	0/0			
Mominul b Shaheen	5/4	1/0			
Mushfiqur c Sarfraz b Shaheen	99/116	9/0			
Mithun c & b Hasan	60/84	4/0			
Imrul b Shadab	9/10	1/0			
Mahmudullah b Junaid	25/31	1/0			
Mehedy c sub (Masood) b Junaid	12/11	1/0			
Mashrafe c Zaman b Hasan	13/13	0/1			
Rubel run out	1/3	0/0			
Mustafizur not out	0/0	0/0			
Extras: (lb-8, w-1)	9				
Total: (All out in 48.5 overs)	239				
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-12, 3-12, 4-156, 5-167, 6-197, 7-221, 8-230, 9-239, 10-239.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Junaid	9	1	19	4	
Shaheen	10	1	47	2	
Hasan	9.5	0	60	2	
Nawaz	8	0	39	0	
Malik	2	0	14	0	
Shadab	10	0	52	1	
PAKISTAN:		R/B	4s/6s		
Fakhar c Rubel b Mehidy	1/4	0/0			
Imam-ul-Haq st Das					
b Mahmudullah	83/105	2/1			
Babar Azam b Mustafiz	1/3	0/0			
Sarfraz Ahmed c Rahim b Mustafiz	10/7	2/0			
Shoaib Malik c Mortaza b Rubel	30/51	2/0			
Shadab Khan c Das b Sarkar	4/24	0/0			
Asif Ali st Das b Mehidy	31/47	3/0			
Mohammad Nawaz c sub (Nazim)					
b Mustafiz	8/19	0/0			
Hasan Ali c Mortaza b Mustafiz	8/11	1/0			
Shaheen Shah not out	14/20	0/1			
Junaid Khan not out	3/10	0/0			
Extras: (lb-1, nb-2, nb-1, w-5)	9				
Total (for nine wks in 50 overs)	202				
Fall of wickets: 1-2, 2-3, 3-18, 4-85, 5-94, 6-165, 7-167, 8-186, 9-186					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Mehidy	10	1	28	2	
Mustafiz	10	2	43	4	
Mortaza	7	1	33	0	
Rubel	8	0	38	1	
Riyad	10	0	38	1	
Sarkar	5	0	19	1	
Result: Bangladesh won by 37 runs					
Player-of-the-match: Mushfiqur Rahim					

MUSHFIQ'S 90S AGONY

Yesterday was the third time that Mushfiqur Rahim was dismissed in the nineties in his career. The 31-year-old was out on 99 for the first time when he was caught behind off left-arm seamer Shaheen Shah Afridi during Bangladesh's Asia Cup encounter against Pakistan yesterday. It was also the first time any Bangladeshi was dismissed on 99.

- 98 against Zimbabwe in 2009 at Bulawayo
- 90 against New Zealand in 2013 at Dhaka
- 99 against Pakistan in 2018 at Abu Dhabi



Mathews axed from ODI, T20I squads

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's sacked skipper Angelo Mathews was dropped Wednesday from the ODI and T20 squads against England after he accused the board of making him a scapegoat for the team's Asia Cup debacle.

The 31-year-old all-rounder was not included in the 15-man squad for the five one-day internationals and the one-off T20 against England beginning on October 10.

Cricket officials said fitness concerns forced them to drop Mathews. However, he was retained in the Test squad, officials said.



Left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (R) celebrates one of his four wickets with off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who took two wickets himself, on way to Bangladesh's 37-run victory against Pakistan in Abu Dhabi yesterday. PHOTO: AFP