

Star

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SPORT

KEEP GOING: Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad is all smiles as Taijul Islam -- who bowled 27 overs on the opening day of the first Test against Zimbabwe -- jokingly grabs his knees to complain about his workload. The left-armer picked up two wickets as the inaugural Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium began yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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Local lad Abu Jayed picked up the coveted maiden wicket at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Reporters caught up with Jayed after the first day's play and below are some of the things he had to say about his achievement.

Q: What are your feelings after having picked up a wicket in the maiden Test in your home town?

AJ: Obviously it feels good. I made my T20 debut here, which was also Sylhet's maiden T20 game, and it also happened today [Saturday] so I am happy. I am happier that I got a wicket as it will be written in the records.

Q: Were your family members present at the ground today?

AJ: My mother came during the Bangladesh Premier League and she said that she would watch my game on TV. As she is able to see me on TV she said she wouldn't come to the stadium. So nobody from my family was present at the stadium.

Q: How disappointing is it to have just one seamer in the playing eleven?

AJ: Actually it's not disappointing as the management knew that the pacers wouldn't get much out of the pitch.

Q: What was Mushfiqur Rahim's reaction when the young fan ran onto the field?

AJ: He didn't say much. He just said to me: 'I got really scared'. When the boy was running onto the field I couldn't understand where he was actually heading, whether it was [towards] Mushfiqur bhai or Mehedi Hasan Miraz.

Q: Do you have any target within which you want to restrict Zimbabwe in the first innings?

AJ: We are trying to bundle them out inside 300-320 as it [the pitch] will start to turn in the latter stages [of the match]. If we can take a healthy lead then they won't be able to score much in the second innings.

MAZHAR UDDIN from Sylhet

UCC

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"Hopefully it will spin. Also [hoping there will be] something that gives our seamers a chance. We want to see how good they are. When we play away from home, they are forced into Test cricket having not played much at all. It's all about getting exposure and experience," Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes said about the pitch for the first Test against Zimbabwe at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

He went on to add: "We have a lot of work to do to become a good Test team. We need to produce some bowlers who can bowl well on those wickets."

However, it was directly in contrast to the head coach's statement when the Tigers opted for just one seamer -- local boy Abu Jayed -- along

with three spinners -- Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam and debutant Nazmul Islam -- for the first Test against Zimbabwe yesterday.

There seemed to be plenty of positive intent from the team management when the selectors included four seamers in the squad for the two-match Test series. That intent was backed by Rhodes, who praised local boy and newcomer Khaled Ahmed for his pace and consistency to bowl long spells.

But interestingly, it was a totally defensive mindset and game plan from the hosts, who seemingly wanted to get a favourable result with the type of tailor-made pitch that saw them win Test matches against top-ranked sides like Australia and England.

That is of course their prerogative as hosts, but when that strategy is being adopted against even the lowest-ranked side like Zimbabwe, it begs the question whether the team management have confidence in

the tools at their disposal.

When it comes to improving in Test cricket, especially in terms of preparing to play well abroad, practice has to start at home. Teams must provide enough opportunities for fast bowlers to gain experience. That is something India did over the past few years and now they are reaping the rewards, both at home and abroad.

Bangladesh bowling coach Courtney Walsh also seemed to agree with that in a recent interview with The Daily Star, saying that it was important to provide seamers with enough of a platform to gain confidence. He added that he was overjoyed by the board's decision to prepare seam-friendly pitches for the National Cricket League.

The lack of experience on seam-friendly pitches has often proven costly for the Tigers, with skipper Mushfiqur Rahim blasting his pacers during the Test series in South

Africa last year.

It was later learned that Rhodes had wanted to include two seamers -- preferring Khaled -- but that did not happen as another part of the team were keen on picking three spinners.

Although debutant Ariful Haque can provide a seaming option, he is expected to score quick runs in the late middle order. In any case, it would be more than ambitious for the team management to use the 25-year-old as a second pacer in tandem with Jayed, who needs strong support from the other end.

The only pacer, Jayed, did manage to trouble the Zimbabwe batsmen with tight line and length, also picking up the crucial wicket of skipper Hamilton Masakadza.

But in the face of the playing eleven, the question remains whether the Tigers' think-tank really want to improve their fortunes in Test cricket, or if short-term glories are still the main goal.

Local boy Abu Jayed had the honour of scalping the first Test wicket in Sylhet when he dismissed Hamilton Masakadza yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BD-ZIM SCOREBOARD

ZIMBABWE: First Innings

R/B

4s/6s

H Masakadza lbw b Jayed

52/105

4/2

Charis b Taijul

13/31

2/0

Taylor c Nazmul b Taijul

6/15

0/0

Williams c

Mehedi b Mahmudullah

88/173

9/0

Raza b Nazmul

19/52

2/0

Moor not out

37/122

4/0

Chakabva not out

20/48

2/0

Extras (lb-1)

1

Total (For 5 wickets in 91 overs)

236

Yet to bat: Mavuta, Jarvis, Chatara, W Masakadza.

Fall of wickets: 1-35, 2-47, 3-85, 4-129, 5-201.

Bowler

O

M

R

W

Jayed

18

3

61

1

Taijul

27

3

86

2

Ariful

4

1

7

0

Mehedi

21

6

37

0

Nazmul

19

5

42

1

Mahmudullah

2

0

2

1

BANGLADESH: Mahmudullah Riyad (capt), Liton Das, Imrul Kayes, Nazmul Hossain, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mominul Haque, Ariful Haque, Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam, Nazmul Islam and Abu Jayed.

PERFORMER OF THE DAY

RESOLUTE WILLIAMS

Zimbabwe's top-order batsman Sean Williams put on a Test batting clinic against Bangladesh on the opening day of the inaugural Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. He displayed an immense show of patience as he scored 88 off 173 balls with just nine boundaries. The backbone of the visitors' 236 for five on the first day, the left-hander frustrated Bangladesh's array of spinners but he failed to find a partner. A 38-run stand with Hamilton Masakadza and a 44-run partnership with Sikandar Raza preceded the 72 runs he added in tandem with Peter Moor. By then however, he had perhaps begun to tire. He fell after having stood vigil for 60 overs, caught off part-timer and Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad, but with a job well done.

I have had a good tour so far but I want to continue to take advantage of my good form. I enjoy playing spin. It is one of my strengths. Obviously today I had a lapse of concentration on 88 which let me down in getting a three-figure score.

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MOMENTS

PINT-SIZED PITCH INVADER CATCHES MUSHY OFF GUARD

The sight of fans running onto the field in the middle of a game to get close to their idols has become a common feature nowadays and the same was true as the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium hosted its inaugural Test.

The incident took place in the 48th over of Zimbabwe's innings. A child eluded the security's attention and ran onto the field before hugging Mushfiqur Rahim from behind. The former skipper, unaware of what was happening, wore a look of surprise on his face, startled by the occurrence.

Once he turned around, he became aware that it was a young fan that was hugging him. His surprise gave way to delight as a smile spread across his face and the player proceeded to hug his young fan back.

The security personnel, by this time aware that an intruder had entered the

pitch, went up to the duo to escort the child back and received strict instructions from Mushfiqur to handle him with care.

AKRAM RINGS THE TRADITIONAL FIVE-MINUTE BELL

It was a historic moment at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday as the venue hosted its inaugural Test match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Sylhet became the eighth Test venue in Bangladesh and the start of the match was marked in a traditional way -- by ringing the bell five minutes before the start of the game.

The tradition started in 2007 at England's historic Lord's Cricket Ground. Former Bangladesh captain and the chairman of the Cricket Operations Committee Akram Khan rang the bell to signal the start of the game in the presence of former national players from Sylhet. A beginning of a new era for Sylhet indeed!

Every Sylhet cricketer's dream comes true

"I always had a dream that Sylhet would host Test matches and finally my dream has come true. It is a great feeling to witness Test cricket in my hometown and the presence of two local boys in the squad -- Abu Jayed and Khaled Ahmed -- is more pleasing. I am also feeling good that the authorities have given us the honour of marking the occasion. It's a proud moment for me. I would also like to announce my retirement from cricket. The next National Cricket League game on November 5 will be my last. I am happy to conclude my 18-year journey on the field."

-- Rajin Saleh

"I always harboured the dream of playing Test cricket in Sylhet and I still dream of playing at least one Test match here. I am still fit and if the Almighty wishes, I will continue to chase that dream. It is a special occasion for the people in Sylhet and you can witness the enthusiasm all over the city. When Taijul Islam was bowling today [Saturday] I felt like it was me there. I hope Sylhet will play a vital role in Bangladesh cricket and this beautiful stadium will prove lucky on its maiden Test match to make it even more memorable."

-- Enamul Haque Jr

"Obviously it is a great feeling to be honoured by the board on a special occasion like this. It's good to see Test cricket finally taking place in my hometown. I always wanted to play the longest format of the game in my backyard. Although that did not happen, I am still happy. I hope that Sylhet will continue to host Test matches regularly and won't face the same fate as Khulna or Bogura. Another positive thing is to see the local boy, Abu Jayed, playing this game. I hope many more players from Sylhet will represent Bangladesh in the future."

--Hasibul Hossain Shanto

SL U-19s make it 1-1

SPORTS REPORTER

Rain continued to play foul as Sri Lanka Under-19s posted an eight-wicket victory over Bangladesh Under-19s by Duckworth-Lewis (D/L) method in the third Youth ODI to level the series 1-1 at Dambulla yesterday.

Bangladesh scored 114 for three in 26.4 overs before rain halted the match. When play resumed, a target of 161 runs in 25 overs was set for the home side. Si Lanka then duly reached it in 13.4 overs with eight wickets in hand.

16-year-old Navod Paranavithana hit 62 off 39 balls, featuring ten boundaries, while 18-year-old Nipun Perera added an unbeaten 15-ball 38 that included three fours and as many sixes.

The fourth Youth ODI will be held on November 6 at Katunayake.