

SPORT



The anticipation for relief is almost palpable as Bangladesh skipper Mahmudullah Riyad (C) stares intently at Liton Das (R) while the wicketkeeper-batsman grips a shot off Zimbabwe's Donald Tiripano during the final day of their second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday. (Inset) Captains Mahmudullah and Hamilton Masakadza share the trophy for the Test series, which ended in a 1-1 draw. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

An important moral victory

SPORTS REPORTER

It may be uncomfortable for a Bangladesh fan to admit it, but at the end of a two-Test series that was shared 1-1 by Zimbabwe and Bangladesh in Bangladesh, the visitors will have walked away with the moral victory.

Zimbabwean cricket fans, however, should take much heart from the result that came on the back of a 3-0 ODI series whitewash. It was not just a show of fight or spirit -- words that can often be received by the underdog as a damnation by faint praise -- but an exhibition of ability and competence against the odds.

Zimbabwe -- a team that was on the rise in the late 1990s and early 2000s but have since been ravaged by waves of



Although Zimbabwe lost their second Test against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday, Brendan Taylor (L) had reason to rejoice as he struck his second ton of the match. PHOTO: STAR

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From a 151-run loss to a 218-run win: joy or relief?

SAKEB SUBHAN

It was hoped that October 2016 would be a watershed moment in Bangladesh's Test career. They beat England in the second Test in Mirpur to share a two-Test series. It was the first time that they walked away with a share of a fully played out -- in other words not affected by rain interruptions -- series of more than one Test against an opponent other than Zimbabwe or West Indies.

Two years and 15 Tests -- of which six were at home -- later, a shared series is the best Bangladesh have been able to do. They won three of those 15 Tests, each scoring the point in drawn series against Sri Lanka in Sri Lanka and against Australia (August 2017) and Zimbabwe at home. That last result was achieved at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday through a 218-run win after they lost the first Test by 151 runs in Sylhet last week.

A drawn home series against a side who had not played a Test all year before the one in Sylhet and are still the lowest-ranked Test

side drives home the point that while the Tigers have improved greatly in ODI cricket, their Test fortunes and ability remain more or less static -- a trend of home series shared 1-1 is a prime example of that.

"Everyone wanted Bangladesh to win against Zimbabwe," Bangladesh skipper Mahmudullah Riyad said in the post-match press conference. "I think you also have to give Zimbabwe credit because they played good cricket. We lacked discipline in the first Test, which is important in Test cricket."

He seemed to take a bit of offence when asked whether the feeling was of joy or relief after squaring a series with Zimbabwe.

"If you win a match, then of course you should feel happy. A win gives you the right to express joy. When we lose, we are the ones who feel more pain -- no one sees our tears and neither do we speak of our pain aloud."

That, however, may be at the centre of the problem. There have been instances of Bangladesh cricketers' emotions spilling over, with both negative and positive effects on results. The 2016 win against England came at the back of a heartbreaking loss in Chattogram, but that was a false dawn of

playing well in two successive Tests.

Their home record since reads thus: a win in the first Test against Australia in Dhaka preceded a heavy loss in the second in Chattogram (August-September 2017) and a bat-dominated draw in Chattogram against Sri Lanka that was followed by a hammering in Dhaka (February 2018).

The recent trend in Test series at home seems to be that the team become complacent after a win or creditable draw, or are fired into action when they lose.

The consensus, not just in Bangladesh but around the world, seems to be that Bangladesh are now a force in home Tests. As far as the rest of the world goes, that may just be a reflection of the fact that Test teams can no longer come to Bangladesh and walk away with Test whitewashes, weather permitting. That much was established in 2016.

However, becoming a force in Tests -- whether home or abroad -- means series wins and that requires consistency not just over five days of a match but over the 10, 15, 20 or 25 days that constitute a series.

"If we play like we did in the first Test, then of course there is no meaning [in playing

If you win a match, then of course you should feel happy. A win gives you the right to express joy. When we lose, we are the ones who feel more pain -- no one sees our tears and neither do we speak of it aloud.

BANGLADESH CAPTAIN MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD

Tests]. But if we play like we did in this Test, then of course there is meaning," Mahmudullah said when reminded that he said, after the first Test, that it was meaningless to play Test cricket in the way that they did.

Joy after a Test win is of course warranted as are tears in the dressing room after humiliating losses. However, if they lost a home series which they started as clear favourites, that would have been a step back. Therefore, after drawing the series on the last day, relief is probably the feeling -- the relief of at least remaining static.

PERFORMER OF THE DAY

Homes are not only made of walls
But a reflection of boundless dream

Holcim Strong Structures

Masterful Mehedi

Young Mehedi Hasan Miraz's performance with both the bat and ball in the second and final Test against Zimbabwe does arguably have some significance in context of the Bangladesh team.

Following his three wickets in the first innings, Mehedi provided valuable support with the bat in both the innings. En route to his second Test fifty, Mehedi paired with Mushfiqur Rahim, who went on to smash his second double ton. Later, Mehedi teamed up with skipper Mahmudullah Riyad as the latter reached his second Test hundred.

Mehedi was more focused on the final day, where his main job was to exploit the Mirpur pitch, give the ball air and ask the Zimbabwean batters difficult questions.

After providing a breakthrough late in the fourth day, removing Zimbabwe skipper Hamilton Masakadza, the off spinner had Peter Moor undone by a length delivery on the final day.

Despite Brendan Taylor's lone stand, Mehedi managed to pick wickets from the other end, taking the last three wickets in quick succession. By scalping the final wicket of Kyle Jarvis, Mehedi not only ensured a commanding victory but also registered his fifth five-wicket haul in the process.



Mash uncertain for WI ODIs?

SPORTS REPORTER

Will Mashrafe Bin Mortaza be available for the upcoming three-match ODI home series against West Indies? This question was a hard one to answer even for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan.

"This is a hard question but there is no doubt that he will be available for World Cup," Hassan said when asked whether the Bangladesh ODI skipper would be available for the West Indies series while talking to reporters in Mirpur after Bangladesh's 218-run victory against Zimbabwe in the second Test.

The question was raised because everybody was curious to know how Mashrafe would juggle his preparations for the series starting from December 9 and campaigning for the upcoming general elections, which is set to be held on December 30. Mashrafe collected a nomination form from the Awami League to contest the upcoming general election from his home district of Narail.

The last day for filing nomination papers is November 28. The scrutiny of the nomination papers by the returning officers is scheduled to be done on December 2 and the deadline for withdrawing candidacy is December 9.

The ODI series will end on December 14 but Mashrafe will understandably be busy with the election campaign if he ultimately gets the nod.

Mashrafe was yet to comment on the issue and BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The



Daily Star yesterday that they did not receive any communication from him about a leave.

"There is a date for submitting the form and I don't know for sure when he will submit it and am not aware of his programmes. I am supposed to meet with him today and hopefully I will know the details today. If there is an opportunity, then definitely he will play. Even if he has the opportunity to spare one day, then he will. Playing should be his priority," said Hassan.

He also added that there was not going to be any conflict of interest between Mashrafe's career as a politician and his cricket career.

"In Mashrafe's case, we are not sure how long he will play. It is quite a lot for us that he is still playing

with all his injuries. He is more important as a captain than as a player in our team. I don't think we can find a captain like him. Maybe he will want to retire after the World Cup [in summer 2019] and then it is a matter of months when he retires. So, if that is the case then there is no problem in him participating in the elections now," observed the BCB boss.

Stand-in Bangladesh Test skipper Mahmudullah Riyad however expressed his optimism over getting Mashrafe in the West Indies series.

"InshAllah we will get Mashrafe Bhai... he is our ODI captain and if he is fit then we will definitely get him," said Riyad during a post-match briefing yesterday.

As the next World Cup is not far away, the West Indies series is important for preparation because the Tigers will get only another ODI series in New Zealand in February next year before the global showpiece event.

Silva secures 46-run lead

AFP, Kandy

Sri Lanka's Roshen Silva held the fort with a stubborn 85 to secure a 46-run first innings lead over England on the second day of the second Test on Thursday.

Shortly before stumps in Kandy the hosts, down 1-0 in the three-match series, were bowled out for 336 in reply to England's 290 with stand-in skipper Suranga Lakmal not out 15.

The visitors were yet to open their account after nightwatchman Jack Leach faced six balls from Dilruwan Perera in the final over of the day. Rory Burns was accompanying Leach at close of play.

Adil Rashid had struck twice after lunch to raise the tourists' hopes of securing a crucial first innings lead.

But Silva built crucial partnerships including a 56-run ninth wicket stand with Akila Dananjaya as the hosts edged past England's total.

Perera made 15 before falling leg before to Leach while Dananjaya frustrated England before falling to Moeen Ali, also leg before for 31.

England's first innings total was 285 but Sri Lanka were docked five runs after the umpires deemed that Silva did not ground his bat properly while taking a run.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: First innings 290
SRI LANKA: First innings 336 all out (Karunaratne 63, Silva 85; Leach 3-70, Rashid 3-76)
ENGLAND: 2nd innings 0 for 0.



Mushfiqur Rahim (L), Tamim Iqbal (R) and Shakib Al Hasan added another accolade to their cabinets after joining the '10k Club'. The BCB honoured the three cricketers for reaching 10,000 runs in international cricket, presenting them with white blazers and commemorative crests. However, Shakib was not present at the ceremony.

PHOTO: STAR

BD-ZIM SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH: First innings 522-7 dcd
ZIMBABWE: First innings 304
BANGLADESH: Second innings 224-6 dcd (Mahmudullah 101 not out, Mithun 67, Mehedi 27 not out; Jarvis 2-27, Tiripano 2-31)
ZIMBABWE: Second innings (overnight 76-2) R/B 4s/6s

Player	Runs	Balls	Wickets	
H Masakadza c Mominul	13/33	1/0		
b Mehedi	25/68	1/0		
Charlton b Tajjul	43/82	3/1		
Taylor not out	106/167	10/0		
Williams b Mustafizur	13/33	1/0		
Raza c b Tajjul	12/33	1/0		
Moor c Imrul b Mehedi	13/79	1/0		
Chakabara run out	2/8	0/0		
Tiripano c Liton b Mehedi	0/9	0/0		
Mavuta c Tajjul b Mehedi	0/11	0/0		
Jarvis c Khaleel b Mehedi	1/9	0/0		
Chatara absent hurt				
Extras: (b-1, lb-3, w-5)	9			
Total: (All out in 83.1 overs)	224			
Fall of wickets: 1-68, 2-70, 3-99, 4-120, 5-186, 6-199, 7-201, 8-213, 9-224.				
BOWLER	O	M	R	W
Mustafizur	10	2	19	1
Tajjul	37	5	93	2
Khaleel	12	4	45	0
Mehedi	18.1	5	38	5
Ariful	3	1	7	0
Mahmudullah	1	0	1	0
Mominul	2	0	17	0
Result: Bangladesh won by 218 runs and 2-match series drawn 1-1.				
Player-of-the-match: Mushfiqur Rahim				
Player-of-the-series: Tajjul Islam				