

SPORT



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan scored a workmanlike unbeaten 55 yesterday and the hosts will be hoping that he continues in the same vein on the second day of the second Test against West Indies in Mirpur today.

The right kind of natural game

SAKEB SUBHAN

On November 20, a day after Shadman Islam got his maiden call-up to the national side before the first Test against West Indies in Chattogram, Bangladesh head coach Steve Rhodes was hard at work with the youngster in an optional net session.

"Don't think about it; just play the ball," he kept telling the left-handed opener, who was fine-tuning his batting against the off-spin of fellow uncapped player Nayeem Hasan.

Nayeem made his debut two days later, but Shadman had to wait till yesterday to earn the cherished cap and walk out to open the innings with Soumya Sarkar.

During the course of his 199-ball stay, he put on a 64-run stand with Mohammad Mithun, who could be heard on the stump microphone telling Shadman "to just keep playing your normal game".

footwork and the clear choice of which balls to play and which to leave, both of which have been lacking in the three openers tried this year -- Imrul Kayes, Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar.

"The ball will come... [I thought] I will play the same way I do in first-class cricket. I didn't think about anything else," Shadman said after the day's play.

His 76 -- the seventh-highest score by a Bangladeshi on debut -- should be a shot in the arm of domestic cricket in Bangladesh. It has long been bemoaned that domestic cricket was of too low a standard to feed the national team, but the 23-year-old is through and through a product of the first-class system.

He finished as the top run-scorer this season in the National Cricket League, and the two centuries he scored -- 157 in five hours and 52 minutes and 189 in seven hours and 41 minutes -- for Dhaka Metro served as a blueprint of how he batted yesterday.

Perhaps that was why Rhodes had insisted Shadman not think too much about what he was doing; he was already doing it correctly.

It proved that even if domestic standards leave a lot to be desired, there is no replacement for honing one's approach over hours and hours in match situations.

"There is no disappointment. Everyone wishes to score a century on debut. I tried to do my utmost for the team and bat accordingly. Maybe I couldn't do it all... couldn't finish the way I needed to," he said of missing out on becoming the fourth Bangladeshi to score a century on debut.

He actually did not seem too disappointed, perhaps because he knew, as the rest of the team will too, that if he continues in this vein there will be many more opportunities.



This shot from debutant Shadman Islam brings to mind star opener Tamim Iqbal, and the rookie's batting yesterday raised hopes that the stalwart may finally have found a viable partner.

Fizz-less lineup a defensive one

SPORTS REPORTER

In the 62nd over of the first day of the second Test, West Indies pacer Kemar Roach nearly caught Shakib Al Hasan off his own bowling as the Bangladesh skipper played early to a cutter that stopped a touch off the pitch.

On a slow Mirpur wicket, there was enough to interest the two pacers that West Indies had picked as Roach and Sherman Lewis combined to bowl 27 overs of the 90 bowled in the day, conceding 73 runs for two wickets -- hardly figures that hint at a pacers' graveyard.

On the contrary, a Mirpur pitch on which the batsmen are not sure of the pace at which the ball will come at them brings to mind a bowler named Mustafizur Rahman, whose well-disguised cutters are tailor-made for such conditions.

Not in this Test, however, as Mustafizur will be cooling his heels in the dressing room after bowling just four overs in the first Test in Chattogram. Yesterday, Bangladesh picked a Test eleven without a single specialist pace bowler in the line-up for the first time in their Test history. With no seamer in the side, Shakib's words on the eve of the Test that they would be



Frontline pacer Mustafizur Rahman (C) was relegated to the sidelines while his teammates were playing on a wicket that he would have relished. PHOTO: STAR

looking to win the Test in order to earn a 2-0 whitewash rings hollow.

Mustafizur was not dropped to accommodate another spinner; instead, Liton Das came in as a wicketkeeper-batsman at number eight. Picking an eighth batsman in place of the one bowler who would have lent the attack a measure of variety does not reflect an attacking mindset, but a draw-at-all-costs outlook of a side that has not won a Test series since 2014.

In itself, a defensive approach when the team are 1-0 up is nothing remarkable and may even be called practical, but the execution of that intent raises

questions about how much faith the cricketers and the team management have in their abilities.

To the first point, it is safe to say that if a team needs an eighth batsman to fish them out of trouble then they are in no position to bat the opposition out of the game, which is presumably how they would get to the safety-first target of not losing the game.

A number eight batsman can only be of real value in the event of adding a few runs after a batting collapse. Budgeting for failure is the more likely thought process of a side that bats its best batsman, Mushfiqur

Rahim, at number six and one that, in ending the first day on 259 for five yesterday, crossed 200 for just the fifth time in 15 innings this year.

The bigger concern over the longer term is whether the decision makers have a proper understanding of the value a pacer, and especially one of Mustafizur's multidimensional abilities, brings to the side.

In the event that West Indies build a partnership in the middle of the innings and they get the measure of the spin attack on a pitch where the turn is slower and more forgiving than it was in Chattogram, a bowler who can bowl reverse swing will be missed. In this Test, Shakib will have to settle for the gentle part-time medium pace of Soumya Sarkar.

Even if Bangladesh bowl well when West Indies eventually bat, the larger point is that they have foregone a wicket-taking option for the ultra-safe measure of an extra batsman against a side missing their main strike force in Shannon Gabriel.

Bangladesh have a pace legend in Courtney Walsh as a bowling coach, and before the toss yesterday he told TV cameras that it was unlikely that he would have much to do in this Test. With the pacers' lack of match practice, however, it is likely that he will have too much to do when the Tigers head to New Zealand.

'Should have taken two more wickets'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan had previously emphasised on how scoring over 300 runs in the first innings would prove vital if they are to win the second Test against West Indies in Dhaka. The home side were en route to doing exactly that yesterday, ending the first day's play on 259 for five at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The Tigers should ideally be looking to post a total around the 370 to 400-run mark. Meanwhile, their four spinners are surely waiting in the wings to play their part on a Mirpur pitch which remained on the slower side on the first day.

There was a bit of turn as the pitch has already started to break, but according to West Indies leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo, it was an even day for both sides but it would have been better for his team had they picked two more wickets.

"The pitch is better than the previous one [in Chattogram]. It is just a bit slow. It is good for batting. Let's see how long it lasts. At the end of the day, we should have taken two more wickets but 259-5 I think is an honest day's work. We just have to take the two wickets early

The wicket will hold up a bit for the first three days. It will play well. But we have to see how it goes from the third afternoon onwards. No matter how the wicket plays, we have to find a way to bat against the spinners properly.

DEVENDRA BISHOO
WEST INDIES BOWLER

tomorrow and get into the tail," Bishoo told reporters yesterday.

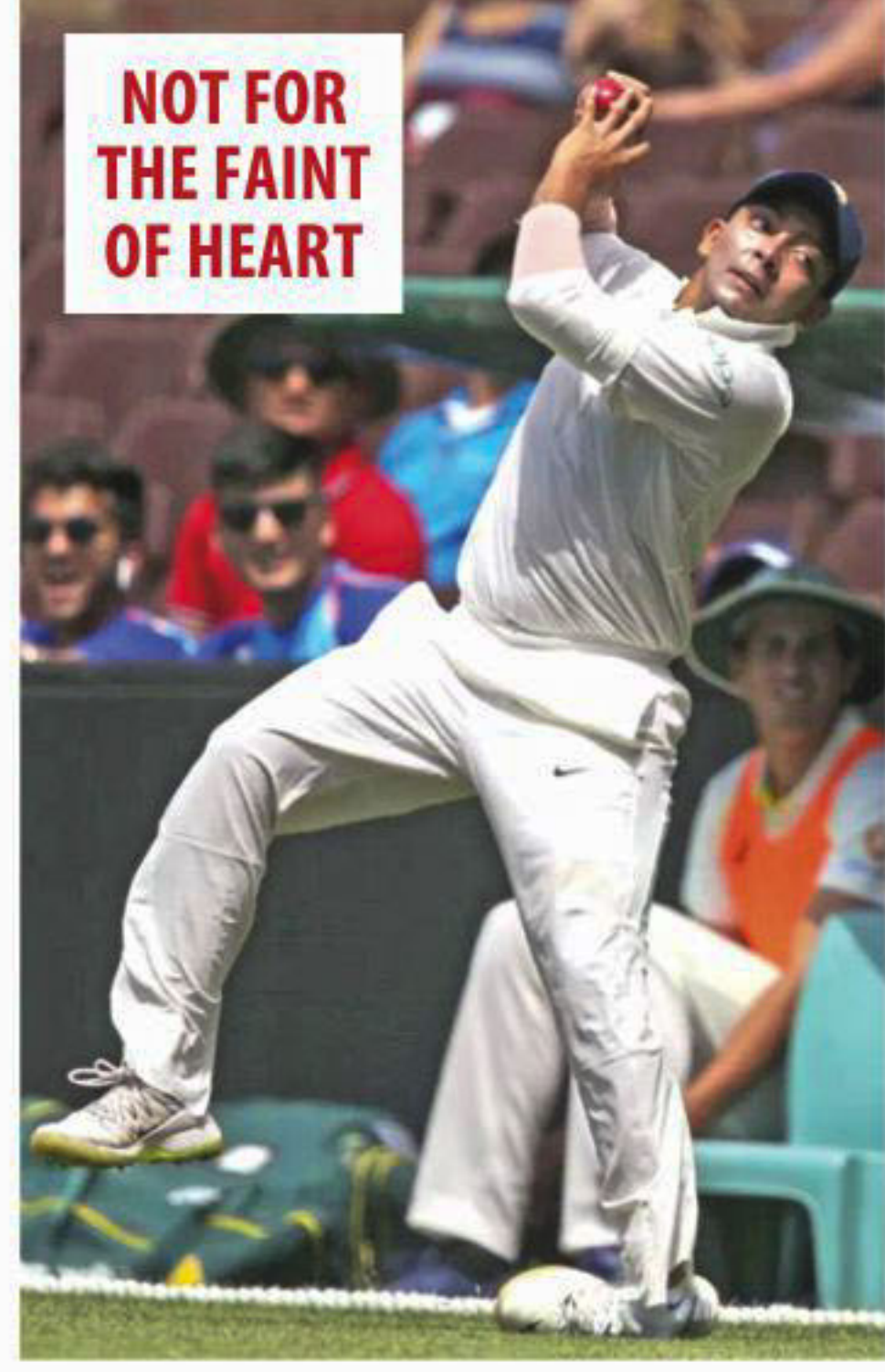
The 33-year-old, who picked two wickets including that of top-scorer Shadman Islam, who he trapped leg-before for 76, also informed that the visitors will have to perform better with the bat to remain in the hunt.

"The wicket will hold up a bit for the first three days. It will play well. But we have to see how it goes from the third afternoon onwards. No matter how the wicket plays, we have to bat properly. We have to find a way to bat against the spinners properly," he said.

BD-WI SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH: First Innings R/B 4s/6s				
Shadman Islam	b Bishoo	76/199	6/0	
Soumya Sarkar	c Hope b Chase	19/42	0/0	
Mominul Haque	c Chase b Roach	29/46	2/0	
Mithun Das	b Bishoo	29/61	0/0	
Shakib Al Hasan	not out	55/113	1/0	
Mushfiqur Rahman	b Lewis	14/24	0/0	
Mahmudullah	not out	31/59	1/0	
Extras: (lb 2, nb 4)		6		
Total: (For 5 wickets in 90 overs)		259		
Yet to bat:	Liton Das, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan.			
Fall of wickets:	1-42, 2-87, 3-151, 4-161, 5-190.			
WEST INDIES TEAM				
Kraigg Brathwaite				
Kieran Powell				
Shai Hope				
Shimron Hetmyer				
Sunil Ambris				
Roston Chase				
Shane Dowrich				
Devendra Bishoo				
Kemar Roach				
Jomel Warrican				
Sherman Lewis				
Toss: Bangladesh elected to bat first				
Umpires: Aleem Dar, Ruchira Palliyaguruge				
TV Umpires: Richard Illingworth				
Reserve Umpire: Sharfudoula				
Match Referee: Andy Pycroft				

INJURED SHAW out of first Test



Young India batsman Prithvi Shaw twisted his ankle badly during India's tour match against Cricket Australia XI on Friday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

India suffered a big blow Friday with young batting phenomenon Prithvi Shaw ruled out of the opening Test against Australia after injuring his ankle trying to take a catch.

The 19-year-old, who scored a sparkling debut century against the West Indies in October, landed awkwardly near the Sydney Cricket Ground boundary in attempting to grab a big hit from Cricket Australia XI opener Max Bryant.

Pictures showed his left ankle bending 90 degrees inward underneath him as he tumbled to the ground. Medical staff rushed to help him off the field, before he was taken to hospital for checks. He later returned to the ground on crutches.

"Shaw underwent scans this morning and the reports revealed a lateral ligament injury," Indian cricket's governing body, the BCCI, said in a statement.

"Shaw will be unavailable for the first Test against Australia in Adelaide. He will undergo an intensive rehabilitation program to hasten the recovery and be available for selection at the earliest."

Mushy second Tiger to reach 4k mark

SPORTS REPORTER

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahman became the second Bangladeshi player to reach the 4,000-run milestone in Tests during the first day of the second Test against West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Mushfiqur was eight runs shy of the landmark when he stepped onto the pitch after the departure of debutant Shahidul Islam. The right-hander reached the milestone in the 65th over of the match when he hopped on his back foot to cut a back-of-a-length Devendra Bishoo delivery through point for a single.

Tamim Iqbal, who was excluded from the Test series against the Windies due to injury, was the first Bangladeshi batsman to reach the mark.

However, Mushfiqur could only notch 14 off 24 balls on the day as he fell prey to Sherman Lewis after completing the record.