

# SPORT



## Poor batsmanship costs Tigers

MAZHAR UDDIN from Napier



"Mushy [Mushfiqur Rahim] I know you are able to get boundaries with this stroke but what you need to realise is that here in New Zealand you cannot close the face of the bat early. You need to continue your follow-through a bit longer, keeping the movement of the ball in mind," Bangladesh's limited-over batting consultant Neil McKenzie told Mushfiqur during a nets session on Tuesday after the right-hander played a cover drive without leaning forward.

The former South Africa batsman, who is quite knowledgeable about the seam-friendly New Zealand conditions, was providing plenty of valuable tidbits such as that ahead of the first ODI on Wednesday.

However, the Tigers made exactly the same mistakes as in the past by being overly-aggressive without adjusting to the swing of Trent Boult, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson early on in their innings and the Kiwi trio reaped the rewards, sharing seven wickets.

When it came to adjusting to the initial seam movement, it was Tamim Iqbal who was the first one to be undone. A Boult outswinger invited the left-hander for a drive, but he closed the face of the bat a bit early and edged behind.

The likes of Liton Das and Mushfiqur also paid the price for trying to play strokes closer to the body and both were bowled.

Mushfiqur was unsettled by an ugly bounce to the helmet from Boult before he attempted to exact revenge in the same over by slashing at a delivery close to his body, only to edge onto his stumps.

Soumya Sarkar took the time to settle in and even struck five fours and a six during his 22-ball 30, but he threw away his wicket while trying to pull of Henry and only getting a top-edge.

That over-aggression from the Tigers top-order actually put them under huge pressure as Bangladesh were four down inside the first ten overs with the scoreboard reading 42.

The experienced Mahmudullah Riyad and younger Mehedi Hasan Miraz both got starts but were guilty of not being able to build partnership; instead looking for big shots throughout their stay.

It was only courtesy of Mohammad Mithun and Mohammad Saifuddin's record 84-run eighth-wicket stand that the visitors could post a modest 232 before being bundled out with seven balls to spare.

Adapting to conditions will be key for the Tigers and directly playing a fifty-over

After being hit on the helmet by New Zealand pacer Trent Boult in the eighth over, Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim edged the final delivery of the over onto his stumps. He walks off the field after scoring only five runs in Napier yesterday. The stalwart, much like his other teammates, had a torrid day as the Tigers lost by eight wickets.

PHOTO: AFP

## The Rubel conundrum

SPORTS REPORTER



It is important that some selection attitudes be sorted out as Bangladesh head towards the World Cup which, given Bangladesh's recently attained consistency in ODIs, is perhaps the most important tournament in the team's history. Yesterday's defeat to New Zealand was nothing alarming, especially because the team are coming off a different format -- the T20 Bangladesh Premier League -- and also as most of the players have been in New Zealand for less than a week. The one contentious call in the side that played the first ODI was the absence of Rubel Hossain.

It was a tough call because Bangladesh are without Shakib Al Hasan due to injury. Having the

world's best all-rounder in the side effectively means that the Tigers take the field with 12 players, and it is understandably a selectors' nightmare when he is absent.

The silver lining is that it is good practice in case of unforeseen injuries in the World Cup. But for it to be fruitful, the selection committee of Minhajul Abedin and Habibur Bashar have to ask themselves which is the better outlook -- focusing on team combination or selecting the 11 best players available. Bangladesh went in with four specialist bowlers, and Rubel was presumably sacrificed to include all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, because he ticks a box in Shakib's absence. The youngster is one of the most promising players in Bangladesh and performed notably with the bat in Bangladesh's eight-wicket loss yesterday, but it has to be



asked whether he is one of the four best bowlers in the country.

Rubel can certainly lay claim to that. Since the beginning of 2017, Rubel's 33 wickets from 26 matches is third on Bangladesh's wicket-takers' list behind Mustafizur Rahman and

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and ahead of Shakib, who has taken six fewer wickets from 29 games. Even more than the numbers, his role in the team and the impact he has -- as shown by two four-wicket hauls over the aforementioned period -- as a death-over bowler is not without substantial value. It very likely would not have been enough to deliver a win yesterday as the defeat was down to batting failures, but it certainly would not have harmed their chances.

There are seven ODIs left before Bangladesh play their World Cup opener against South Africa on June 2, and if Rubel is indeed in their plans, then him playing each of those matches is imperative. Dropping Saifuddin after Shakib returns and only then bringing back Rubel would just waste valuable opportunities for a valuable member.

## Two tons, one in vain

SPORTS REPORTER

The opening day of the Youth Cricket League saw two centuries yesterday. North Zone's Pritom Kumar's 111-ball 103 helped his side post 277 for nine in their 69-run win over South Zone in Bogura, but Central Zone opener Sazzad Hossain's 113 off 146 balls went in vain as his side lost to East Zone by one wicket in Rajshahi.

North batsmen Pritom and Meherub Hossain's 132-run fourth-wicket stand was crucial to their sizeable total. Meherub scored 58 off 69 balls before falling prey to Jahirul Islam. South could only manage a total of 208 runs in 47.2 overs in reply, with Abdullah Al Mamun -- whose 70 was the highest score before he was forced retire out.

In Rajshahi, Central could only manage 227 runs in 48.3 overs after a solid show from opener Sazzad. East then suffered a batting collapse at the top but contributions from Fazly Rubbi (66) and Mohammad Faisal (49) eventually saw their side win.

## 'It was nice to finish with a win'

AGENCIES, Gros Islet



England captain Joe Root expressed disappointment over the 2-1 series loss to the West Indies, but lauded his team's 'bouncebackability', after the final Test in St Lucia.

England were outplayed in the first two Tests, in Barbados and Antigua, where they lost by 381 runs and 10 wickets respectively. But Root led England's fightback in St Lucia with a magnificent hundred, which alongside Mark Wood's five-wicket haul, underpinned England's 232-run win on the fourth day.

"It was nice to finish with a win," Root said on Tuesday. "It's been a tough old tour and we played some poor cricket at times, but I thought this week we played really well. We have to learn from some of the mistakes, but we also have to look at the things we've done well -- and we did plenty of that this week."

Root stressed the importance of England's fight in light of an important summer, featuring the 2019 ICC World Cup, followed by a home Ashes series. "It was really important we won this week," he said.

Root put England's win in perspective by drawing comparisons to the previous winter, when England lost 4-0 to Australia in the 2017-18 Ashes, and 1-0 to New Zealand.

We need to continue to build and not rest on our laurels. Our number one goal is to be the number one team in the world so there is a lot to improve on.

JASON HOLDER  
WEST INDIES CAPTAIN

### BD-NZ SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH	R/B	4s/6s		
Tamim c Latham b Boult	5/6	1/0		
Liton b Henry	1/8	0/0		
Soumya c & b Henry	30/22	5/1		
Mushfiqur b Boult	5/14	1/0		
Mithun b Ferguson	62/90	5/0		
Mahmudullah c Taylor b Ferguson	13/29	0/0		
Sabbir st Latham b Santner	13/20	2/0		
Mehedi c Neesham b Santner	26/27	3/1		
Saifuddin c Guptill b Santner	41/58	3/0		
Mashrafe not out	9/14	1/0		
Mustafizur b Boult	0/6	0/0		
Extras: (lb-5, nb-1, w-16, pen-5)	27			
Total: (All out in 48.5 overs)	232			
Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-19, 3-42, 4-42, 5-71, 6-94, 7-131, 8-215, 9-229, 10-232.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Henry	9	1	48	2
Boult	9.5	0	40	3
De Grandhomme	5	0	19	0
Ferguson	10	1	44	2
Santner	8	0	45	3
Neesham	7	0	26	0
NEW ZEALAND	R/B	4s/6s		
Guptill not out	117/116	8/4		
Nicholls b Mehedi	53/80	5/0		
Williamson lbw b Mahmudullah	11/22	1/0		
Taylor not out	45/49	6/0		
Extras: (lb-3, w-4)	7			
Total: (For 2 wickets in 44.3 overs)	233			
Did not bat: Latham, De Grandhomme, Neesham, Santner, Henry, Ferguson, Boult.				
Fall of wickets: 1-103, 2-137.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mashrafe	8.3	0	33	0
Saifuddin	7	0	43	0
Mustafizur	8	0	36	0
Mehedi	8	1	42	1
Sabbir	7	0	41	0
Mahmudullah	5	0	27	1
Soumya	1	0	8	0
Result: New Zealand won by 8 wickets.				
Player-of-the-match: Martin Guptill.				



New Zealand opener Martin Guptill authored an unbeaten 117 to help side romp to an eight-wicket victory over visiting Bangladesh. Tigers' all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz (inset) is left scratching his head trying to find ways to stop the right-hander who was in exquisite touch throughout.

PHOTO: AFP

## Lack of adjustment was a factor: Mashrafe

SPORTS REPORTER from Napier



Playing the first ODI in testing New Zealand conditions less than three days after the full squad arrived, the lack of adjustment was palpable in the way Bangladesh's batsmen batted as the visitors fell to a comprehensive eight-wicket defeat against the hosts in Napier yesterday.

The Tigers' top order was unable to negotiate the initial movement from the Kiwi seamers and at one point were struggling on 94 for six inside 23 overs, but still managed to post 232 before being bundled out with seven balls left unplayed.

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza did say that the lack of adjustment was a factor but was reluctant to use that as an excuse. Instead, he was positive about his top-order batsmen, who he hoped would play a big role in

winning matches in New Zealand.

"There are always high-scoring games in New Zealand and batsmen play a big role, unless you have an extraordinary bowler. As we are already playing without Shakib, we need to put up a fighting total so that the bowlers can fight it out.

"I think 230-250 will be very difficult to defend as it's a true wicket. Our batsmen also have the ability and I believe there might be a lack of adjustment. It may sound like an excuse but to be honest there is a matter of adjusting. Still, we have two more days before the next game and hopefully we will be able to give our best," Mashrafe told reporters after the defeat yesterday.

The 35-year-old pointed to poor shot selection and lack of patience from the batsmen as being one of the biggest reasons for the early batting collapse and wished for a better show from the top order in the coming games.

On the other hand, Martin Guptill, making a comeback to the side after his back injury, expertly showed how to negotiate the New Zealand pitch -- he was patient initially before picking up the tempo during an unbeaten century to guide his side home without trouble.

"It has been a funny old summer. We haven't really had the flat wickets with good carry and bounce like in the previous years. So some of them have been quite hard work and you had to find a way to get through. Hitting through the line of the ball isn't much of an option sometimes.

"So if you can try to just rotate the strike and work with the guy at the other end and build a partnership, you can go a long way to setting up a large total or chase a big total down," said Guptill, adding that they had to work hard to score runs and gave credit to the Bangladesh bowlers, who initially kept things tight.



England Captain Joe Root (R) applauds the supporters after securing a win in the third and final dead-rubber Test against West Indies at the Darren Sammy Cricket Ground in Gros Islet on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP