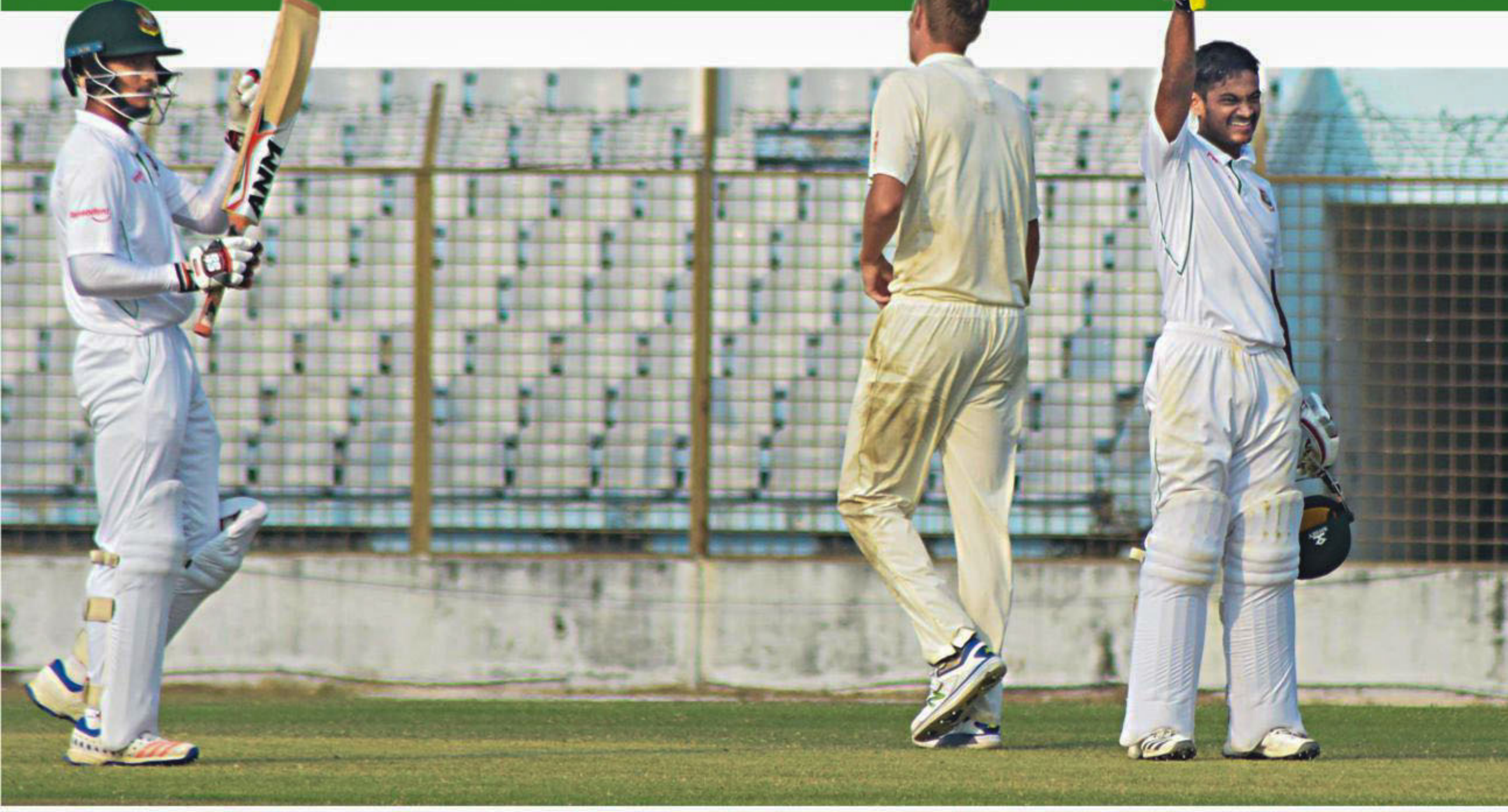


# SPORT



Bangladesh Under-19s batsman Mahmudul Hasan (R) celebrates after reaching a century on the final day of the second four-day Youth Test against England Under-19s at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The right-hander stood his ground for five hours per innings to help the hosts pull off a spectacular three-wicket win.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Mahmudul scripts memorable win

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Under-19s bade adieu to their English counterparts in emphatic fashion, sealing a fantastic three-wicket win on the final day of the second and final four-day match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Mahmudul Hasan, a BKSP student from Chandpur, was the main architect behind the win as the right-hander followed his 74-run first innings score with a stupendous hundred in the second innings to help the hosts reach the 333-run target with three wickets in hand. With this triumph, the young Tigers completed a clean sweep of England Under-19s tour of Bangladesh as the visitors also lost the solitary T20 match, three-match ODI series and the first youth Test on the nearly month-long tour.

Scoring 299 runs on the final day is no joke but patience and building partnerships is also key in making things happen in the longer version and in this regard, Bangladesh's players got full marks while Mahmudul in particular deserves a special accolade for his performance.

When pacer Adam Finch gave England the first

breakthrough of the day by removing opener Tanzid Hasan, who scored 51 after resuming on 28, the visitors were on course to a consolation win. However, Mahmudul stood firm in the middle while brilliantly aided by Parvez Hossain and Towhid Hridoy before Shahadat Hossain's vital 25-ball 20 sealed victory.

The right-hander batted for five hours in each innings, a clear representation of how intent he was to keep batting. During his 301-minute stand in the first innings, Mahmudul faced 216 balls to score 74 runs, featuring four boundaries. In the second innings, he stayed on for 307 minutes to strike 114 runs off 224 balls, laced with 13 boundaries. When he was finally dismissed as the sixth batsman out, Bangladesh required only seven more runs.

After beginning the campaign with a 44-run knock in the lone T20, Mahmudul remained consistent throughout the series, hitting 33, 58 not out and 57 in the three one-dayers.

Back in yesterday's game, Mahmudul was first aptly supported by Parvez as they shared a 54-run third-wicket partnership to steady the ship before Towhid arrived in to share in a 142-run fourth-wicket stand. Towhid scored 76 off 145 balls, containing six fours and

a six, while Parvez added 37 off 81 balls with three fours.

"The boys were really fantastic all through the series. What impressed me the most was the determination of the players for improvement. I think our whole top-order batting was fantastic but Mahmudul's patience and ability to play the ball according to the merit was outstanding. Now the challenge is to guide these boys properly so that they can be consistent in their performances," said junior team selector Hasibul Hossain.

"They were confident about chasing down the total. Actually, these boys are very hungry for success. Mahmudul, who missed the first four-day match due to his SSC exam, was outstanding," added team manager Sajal Chowdhury.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND U-19s: First innings 337 and second innings 223 for 8 decl.

BANGLADESH U-19s: First innings 228 and second innings 333 for 7 (Tanzid 51, Parvez 37, Mahmudul 114, Towhid 76, Shahadat 20; Finch 2-60, Aldridge 2-79, Qadri 2-61)

Result: Bangladesh U-19s won by 3 wickets and clinched the 2-match series 2-0.

Player-of-the-match: Mahmudul Hasan.

Player-of-the-series: Minhazur Rahman.

## A look back and a look forward

SPORTS REPORTER from Dunedin



With two ODIs and the series lost, the mood was a mixed one yesterday at the Bangladesh team's practice session ahead of the last ODI in Dunedin on February 20.

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal, who made his Test debut at the Universal Oval -- coincidentally also the first Test at the ground -- back in 2008, was reminiscing about the occasion yesterday at the venue.

"I can remember that we all gathered near the flag and sang our national anthem on my Test debut."

Mushfiqur Rahim was not in the best of moods as the wicketkeeper-batsman was struggling with a trio of injuries -- his pre-existing rib cage injury, pain in his wrist and a side strain -- and spent most of the time running and receiving throwdowns.

But he also recalled his 86-run knock in the only ODI that the Tigers played here back in 2010 but ended up in the losing cause.

"I remember the knock -- the only time we played here nine years back was a tough one for us as we lost the game convincingly. Let's see whether we can change fortunes this time around," Mushfiqur said.

Another injured, Mohammad Mithun -- who pulled a hamstring during the second ODI in Christchurch -- did not train and the duo are expected to undergo a scan today.

Mushfiqur's injuries do not seem too serious and the experienced cricketer is expected to play the third ODI. But the picture is not rosy for Mithun, who scored back-to-back fifties in the two games, as the team management have already called up Mominul Haque for the third ODI. Bangladesh's Test specialist, Mominul was with the remaining members of the Test squad in Christchurch.

According to Tamim despite the injury concerns the Tigers game plan will remain the same.

"The game plan will remain the same as whoever replaces them will try to bat long. As I mentioned before we will hope not to give the game away in the first 10 overs because when you lose four wickets early its always difficult to make a comeback.

"So I hope we won't do the same mistakes as the World Cup is not far away and as a team we want to do well in these conditions. We have almost toured four, five times here but we haven't done well and we have beaten this same team in England and Ireland in the past. There is no reason why you won't play well here but before saying anything, we have to play well," said Tamim.



PHOTO: MAZHAR UDDIN

Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim looks on during a training session in Dunedin ahead of the third ODI against New Zealand tomorrow.

## A mundane draft

SPORTS REPORTER



The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) is scheduled to start from March 8, but the glamour and glitz that was once associated with the DPL -- the premier domestic one-day tournament -- seems to have faded over the years and the lack of hype and buzz could also be noted during the players' draft held at a city hotel yesterday.

Additionally, there were no major names swapped between the 12 participating clubs during the draft, which could possibly have ignited a little bit of buzz among reporters present during the event.

Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mosaddek Hossain and Nazmul Hossain Shanto were retained by defending champions Abahani Ltd while Imrul Kayes, Mehedi Hasan and Abu Hider were retained by Gazi Group.

However, the services of some big names like Mahmudullah Riyad, Mustafizur Rahman and Liton Kumar were secured by Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club, Shinepukur Cricket Club and Mohammedan Sporting Club respectively.

Defending champions Abahani could be said to have already made a strong case for the upcoming season as they also ensured the services of national ace pacer Rubel Hossain in the very first round of the draft. The team looks compact as Abahani -- to be led by Mashrafe -- later added all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz, batsman Mohammad Mithun and all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin to their arsenal.

The decrease in excitement could be understood by the fact that two national stalwarts, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim, have already asked to be rested for this edition of the premier league and Shakib Al Hasan's uncertainty of featuring are taken into account.

However, according to Kazi Inam Ahmed, the chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM), although the major attraction towards DPL draws from the participation of national cricketers, but it has to be ensured that the local players are kept in mind.

"The excitement that we get from the participation of national players in the DPL is high but at the same time the premier league is actually a platform for earning livelihood for some players, who are out of the national fold. We need to ensure that the tournament is not delayed from its scheduled time for the national cricketers."

However, one thing that came as a surprise is when Inam informed that a T20 tournament will be played ahead of this season's DPL.

### T20 lead-in

SPORTS REPORTER

A T20 tournament will be played by the clubs of this edition's DPL ahead of the league, as informed by the chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM), Kazi Inam Ahmed.

"We have decided to arrange a T20 tournament in a small scale prior to the Dhaka Premier League. 12 clubs divided into four groups will take part in the tournament. A total of 15 matches will take place and every club will be able to play at least two matches. League matches will be held between February 25 to February 27 and a semifinal will be held on March 1. The top team from each group will play the semifinals, with the final on March 3 under lights."



WHO WENT WHERE AFTER DPL PLAYERS' DRAFT

## 'Natural game is a game plan'

Neil McKenzie's time as the ODI batting coach for Bangladesh since the former South African batsman joined during the tour of West Indies last summer has generally been a good one. He has helped the batsmen technically and mentally -- for instance when his advice to Mahmudullah Riyad on how to play the leg-spin of Afghanistan's Rashid Khan during the Asia Cup helped the right-hander score a match-winning 74. His first real test has arrived in the top-order batting failures in New Zealand so far, and the 43-year-old spoke to *The Daily Star's* Mazhar Uddin about the problems the batsmen may be facing, the oft-quoted 'natural game' and other technical aspects of willow-wielding. The following are excerpts from the exclusive interview:

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Batting hasn't been successful in New Zealand in the first two ODIs as the players talk about conditions all the time. What are the difficulties batsmen actually face here in New Zealand?

**Neil McKenzie (NM):** I think it's just the acclimatisation in terms of New Zealand wickets. They haven't been bad wickets but obviously there is a little bit of bounce on the wicket and the new ball swings a little bit. And obviously the world-class bowlers in the opposition like Trent Boult always asking the questions, and they all bowl over 140 km/h. They also have Matt Henry, Lockie Ferguson. I think the biggest challenge is to get out of the mindset of getting on the front foot too early and [instead] try to stay on top of the ball as long as you can and really hold your shape. In Bangladesh the balls skids onto you and you can throw your hands at the ball, but here there is an extra bit of bounce and a little bit movement off the seam, it swings and you really have to hold your shape. So acclimatisation of New Zealand is quite different, but it's nothing like that and I think we definitely should do better on these wickets, especially the class we have got in the team. It's disappointing to lose early wickets and not be able to post decent big scores but in the second game the conditions were favourable for the seamers and losing the toss was also crucial.

**TDS:** Is there a mental barrier?

**NM:** I think it could be a mental thing but from the technical side I don't see there is a flaw; I just think it's about technical knowhow. If you look at world-class players, they adapt to conditions. Yes if you go to the subcontinent they tend to be on the leg side while when you go to South Africa and Australia, you got to get on to the off stump. So it's more technical, little changes, and that comes with time as it's not easy to get off the plane, get here and play. It is a different type of game plan but the big thing here is to stay on top of the ball and a lot of us are sliding in front as the front foot goes too forward. Sometimes you have to sacrifice the big foot move-

ment and just get on top of the ball as much you can and be positive. There are a few positives like [Mohammad] Mithun and Sabbir [Rahman] played decent knocks along with Soumya Sarkar, who got some good starts. It's just about playing more and getting used to these conditions.

**TDS:** Why are the likes of Mithun and Soumya unable to convert their starts into big ones?

**NM:** I think it's just about being hungry as you are playing for Bangladesh and I think when you score 50-60 that keeps you in the

seen the best of Soumya and that's exciting for me and I think he is a really class player and will only get better and better... he is going to be a big player for Bangladesh.

**TDS:** Most players talk about playing their 'natural games'. What does 'natural game' mean to you?

**NM:** Natural game is where they want to score, how they are looking to play and what sort of positive they are against different attacks. I think sometimes the biggest challenge is to find the game plan. I think when you get into a really class

like Mahmudullah gets out playing a sweep, that's not his natural game but if he gets caught straight you will realise that's his natural game. When you talk about natural game you talk about scoring areas -- what balls to normally score off and where they have been productive. But your natural game changes a bit when you travel away from home.

**TDS:** Do you think the Test series will be tough?

**NM:** Yes, I think if you look at the history and stats of Bangladesh in New Zealand it will tell you that it is going to be really tough. But I think we are making progress and sometimes everybody wants to win, and we try our 120 per cent to win, but sometimes you may take the positives out of this as well. It's been a good acclimatisation for us on this tour and things haven't been gone well for us up front, but it's an extra tour that Bangladesh didn't have going into the World Cup. We could have easily played New Zealand in Bangladesh and been really successful but it would not have shown us anything. This wicket has shown us where we need to improve and what we need to work on, and individually the guys know. I think it's going to put us two steps back and four steps forward and that's the way we are going to look at these last week and a half.

**TDS:** Why are the likes of Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur still unable to adapt to conditions?

**NM:** Cricket is a tough game where you face the new ball up front, so Tamim obviously came off a great hundred in the BPL and he is in a good frame of mind. There is jet lag and I think they are seven hours behind, and that's nothing we can control. These guys are quality cricketers and want to do better for Bangladesh. Mahmudullah got dismissed off a good ball from the leg-spinner and it's not easy when you are 40 for four. We know Mushfiqur chopped on to the stumps twice to get dismissed and I think he is getting a bit deeper in the crease and he will be back as he is a class player.



game, but when you make it 100-120, that wins the game. So definitely that's the right language we are talking at the moment but a guy like Mithun -- who played some good knocks in the Asia Cup -- he knows he needs to convert. He knows that he made a mistake and played a poor shot but he really played a good innings. Soumya is also getting starts and he knows how to convert those. He is one of those attacking players as when you watch him play it's beautiful, so you don't want to take that away from him, but you just want him to get nice and hungry and get those big hundreds. I think we definitely haven't

side you generally see a guy like Mushfiqur [Rahim], and you know that he is going to sweep because you have seen it over and over and it's his game plan. I think the trouble is when you get the young players you are not sure what they are going to do. So, for the same ball they would be hitting one over cover, one past point or one at midwicket. I don't think that's their natural game as the natural game is to have a game plan that you stick to which works. So if Mushfiqur got out playing a sweep, especially with the ball turning away from him, everyone says that's one of his strengths. But if a guy