



# THE NUMBERS BEHIND TOP-ORDER DEBACLE



The numbers say it all. Bangladesh's oft-vaunted top five -- albeit with the talismanic Shakib Al Hasan absent through injury -- abjectly and collectively failed during the 3-0 ODI whitewash at the hands of hosts New Zealand. Mahmudullah was the fifth wicket to fall in each match and the highest score mustered by the time he fell was 93 in the second game. Conditions were undoubtedly tough and the lead-in ridiculously inadequate to one of the toughest tours for a subcontinent team, but the approach showed by the quintet -- exemplified by Tamim's wild second-ball slog yesterday, will raise a few concerns for this summer's World Cup. Scan the QR code for a more detailed examination of the collective failure.



TAMIM IQBAL

First ODI	Second ODI	Third ODI	Total	Avg
5	5	0	10	3.33



LITON DAS

First ODI	Second ODI	Third ODI	Total	Avg
1	1	1	3	1



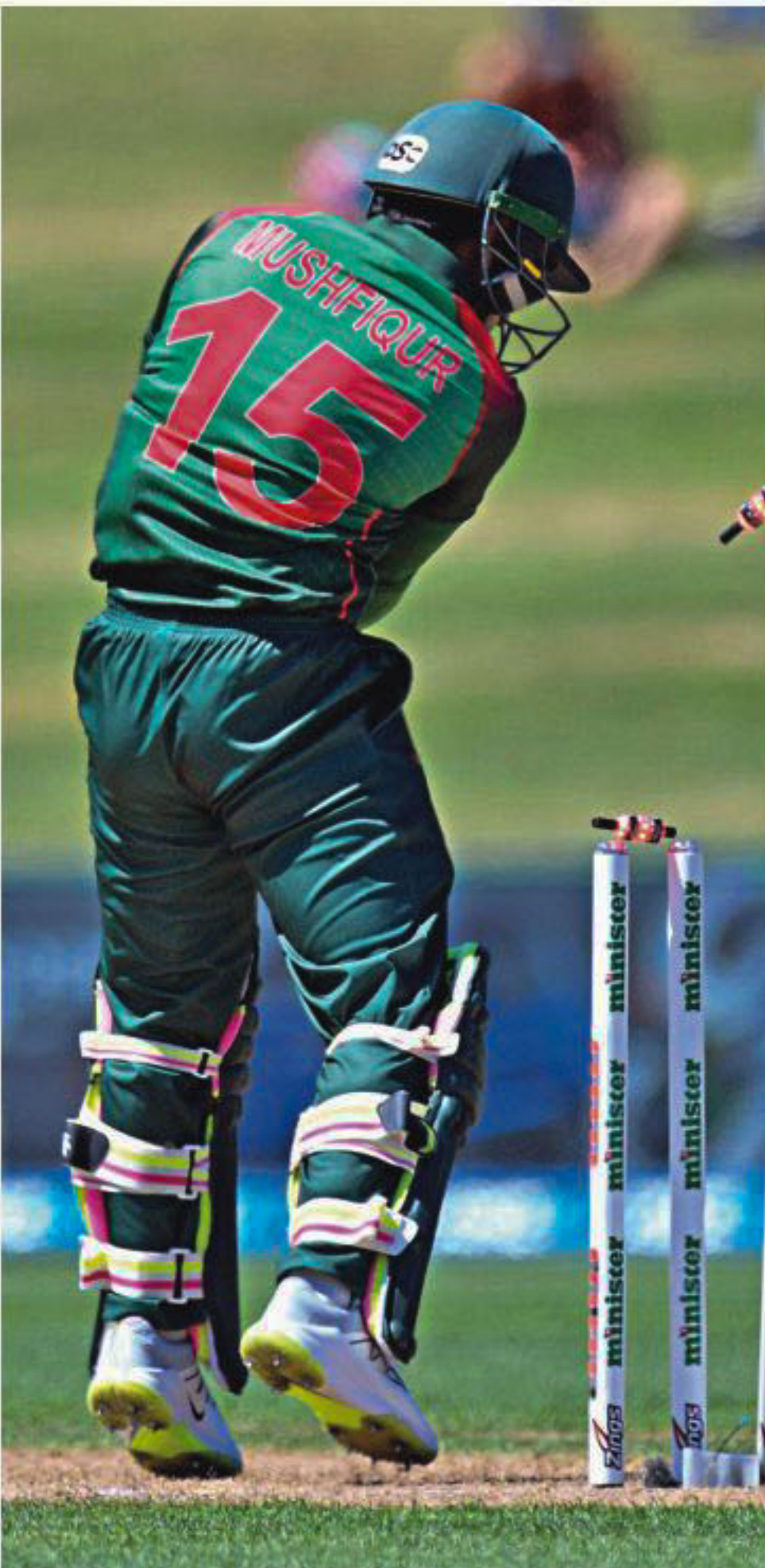
SOUMYA SARKAR

First ODI	Second ODI	Third ODI	Total	Avg
30	22	0	52	17.33



MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD

First ODI	Second ODI	Third ODI	Total	Avg
13	7	16	36	12



MUSHFIQUR RAHIM

First ODI	Second ODI	Third ODI	Total	Avg
5	24	17	46	15.33

## Three forged in Kiwi fire

SPORTS REPORTER from Dunedin

Bangladesh's cricket has reached a standard where one or two heroic individual performances do not count for much if they do not lead to wins for the team. The tour of New Zealand has been a disappointing one so far as the Tigers were whitewashed after playing cricket that was consistently below par.

Keeping the upcoming ICC World Cup in England this summer in mind, the series in New Zealand was considered the perfect platform for the team management to form the ideal team combination for the mega event.

Among all the negatives -- such as top-order batting failures -- there were a few individual performances that will lend the team management relief. And that it did not come from serial performers like Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad may eventually prove to be a blessing in disguise.

There were three cricketers in particular who the selectors had kept an eye on and had question marks over their place in the eleven before the tour. The marks over into the New Zealand series were Mithun, Sabbir Mohammad and they managed, to degrees, to show their tough New Zealand conditions.

Middle-order batsman Mithun, who was not originally in

consideration for the World Cup squad after initially playing some valuable innings in last year's Asia Cup, continued his fine run in New Zealand.

The right-hander struck consecutive fifties in the first two ODIs against New Zealand and showed a lot of character in tackling pressure situations. Even so, Mithun did make some mistakes because he wasted the platform he created to score big in both the ODIs he played, throwing his wicket away each time. It remains to be seen whether he will learn the lessons.

Arguably skipper Mahsrafe Bin Mortaza's biggest challenge was to justify his pre-tour request to include Sabbir in the touring party, for which the board controversially reduced a six-month disciplinary ban by a month.

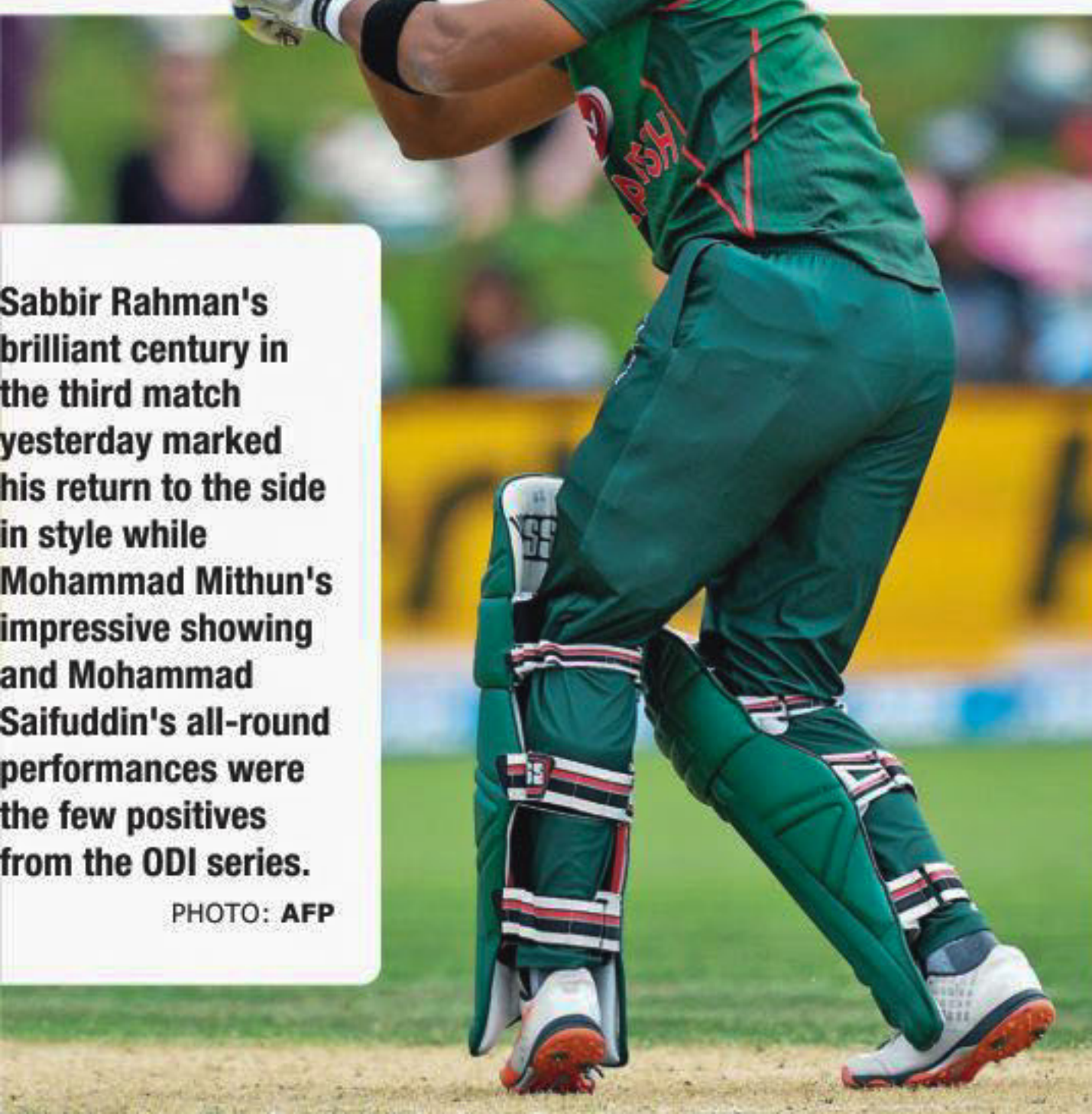
The dashing right-hander however did prove his worth by displaying a rare comfort against express fast bowling in testing conditions and followed his 43 in the second ODI by smashing a maiden hundred -- a 110-ball 102 in the third ODI in Dunedin yesterday.

Although his hundred ended up in a losing cause, the way Sabbir paced his innings and handled the likes of Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Lockie Ferguson with sheer class would be something the team management would expect more of from him in the World Cup.

Last but not the least, Saifuddin also remained instrumental with both bat and ball as he struck forties in the first and third ODI.

But bowling is his main function and the right-arm seamer did manage to create the impression of a genuine seam-bowling all-rounder in all three ODIs against the Kiwis, which will certainly create a good balance in the team for the World Cup.

BD-NZ SCOREBOARD									
NEW ZEALAND					R/B 4s/6s				
Guptill c Tamim b Saifuddin	29	40	3	1					
Munro lbw b Mashrafe	8	7	0	0					
Nicholls c Tamim b Mehedi	64	74	7	0					
Taylor c Mahmudullah b Rubel	69	82	7	0					
Latham c Soumya b Mustafizur	59	51	2	3					
Neesham b Mustafizur	37	24	3	2					
De Grandhomme not out	37	15	4	2					
Santner not out	16	9	0	1					
Extras: (lb-3, nb-2, w-6)				11					
Total: (For 6 wickets in 50 overs)				330					
Did not bat: Southee, Ferguson, Boult.									
Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-59, 3-151, 4-206, 5-271, 6-284.									
Bangladesh					R/B 4s/6s				
Mashrafe	0	1	51	1					
Mustafizur	10	0	93	2					
Rubel	9	0	64	1					
Saifuddin	10	0	48	1					
Mehedi	9	0	43	1					
Mahmudullah	2	0	28	0					
Bangladesh					R/B 4s/6s				
Tamim c Latham b Southee	1/2		0	0					
Liton lbw b Southee	0/4		0	0					
Soumya b Southee	0/2		0	0					
Mushfiqur c Munro b Boult	17/27		3	0					
Mahmudullah c Munro b De Grandhomme		16	36	1	1				
Sabbir c b Southee	102/110		12	2					
Saifuddin c Guptill b Boult	44/63		4	0					
Mashrafe c Boult b Southee	2/3		0	0					
Mehedi c Guptill b Southee	37/34		7	0					
Rubel run out	3/3		0	0					
Mustafizur not out	20		0	0					
Extras: (lb-2, w-18)			0	0					
Total: (All out in 47.2 overs)			242						
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-1, 3-2, 4-40, 5-61, 6-162, 7-170, 8-237, 9-242, 10-242.									
Result: New Zealand won by 88 runs and clinched the 3-match series 3-0.									
Player-of-the-match: Tim Southee.									
Player-of-the-series: Martin Guptill.									



Sabbir Rahman's brilliant century in the third match yesterday marked his return to the side in style while Mohammad Mithun's impressive showing and Mohammad Saifuddin's all-round performances were the few positives from the ODI series.

PHOTO: AFP



## 'We need to work on our mindset'

Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza must have been disappointed after his side's 3-0 defeat to New Zealand, especially when there were high hopes on this series ahead of the World Cup. However, he was still upbeat about the Tigers' chances at the World Cup when he spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin at the team hotel in Dunedin yesterday. Other topics were the performances of Sabbir Rahman, Mohammad Mithun and Mohammad Saifuddin and his political commitments. The excerpts from the interview are below:

**The Daily Star (TDS):** This was the last series before picking the World Cup squad. Have you found your team here? **Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (MBM):** I am the captain (smiles). I am not in the selection panel but if they ask me, I will give them my opinion. My suggestion (to include Sabbir for the New Zealand tour) created a lot of controversy. My logic behind that was that Sabbir plays fast bowlers well. I think there is not much to change. I think the cricket followers of Bangladesh also knew the eight-nine players who would be in the playing eleven so there is not much chance of making a huge change. I hope the (players') performances in the Test series won't affect the ODI team as it's totally a different format.

**TDS:** Do you think that after Sabbir's performances your opinion should be prioritised?

**MBM:** It's not like after one success I will tell them to take to my call, but obviously they take my opinion and it would be a lie if I said they didn't take my calls. I can only give my opinion but the final call will be theirs. I am not expecting that there will be huge changes after a bad series and I am sure that there are not many options left to make huge changes. There are one or two positions in the pace bowling and the batting department which the selectors will have to decide upon.

**TDS:** Were you under pressure for backing Sabbir?

**MBM:** No. You have to take a decision and whoever you bring in, it's not a certainty that they will score a hundred. But when you think that someone will score 40-odd runs facing 20-25 balls at number seven, that's what you expect. And I always believed that Sabbir has the ability to play such fast bowlers but you can't guarantee that he will score in every game. It is important that your thinking is clear and even if he was unable to score here, I would have backed him for his abilities.

**TDS:** How much confidence did you gain after the performances of Mithun, Sabbir and Saifuddin?

**MBM:** First of all, Saifuddin is very positive. If he can bat like this it will be

good but I would want more of his bowling than batting as it will be more crucial to us. He has done well today (Wednesday). Sabbir has good potential and I hope after scoring his maiden hundred he will realise his potential and be more disciplined in his personal life. He has a lot to give to Bangladesh cricket and he should realise after scoring this hundred that he has got the ability to give a lot for the next six-seven years. Mithun obviously is very positive but as Shakib also bats at number five there is a matter of calculation for us so there will be some fine-tuning.

**TDS:** How do you see Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar's performances?

**MBM:** Both have potential. Liton



proved that by scoring a hundred under pressure and he has the ability to score on any wicket. He just has to set his game plan. Soumya also scored and he did get starts in the twogames and if he was able to score a fifty and a hundred he would gain a lot of confidence. Actually, it's about keeping the right mindset which Sabbir was able to do. So it's their job to work accordingly as there are still 100 days left till the World Cup.

**TDS:** Will you engage in your political commitments again when you return?

**MBM:** At the moment, no. As I said previously, I won't be engaged in anything before the World Cup. But I will go to my hometown (Narail) and meet with the people but until the World Cup my whole mindset is towards the World Cup. **TDS:** How did it feel when you first entered the parliament?

**MBM:** I have said previously that it's a big thing. Bangladesh will go to the World Cup with the best possible team and if everyone remains fit, obviously we will go there aiming for something big. This World Cup is more important to those who love the game in the country and for whom I play the game. The team is always more important than me.

**TDS:** What will you do after returning?

**MBM:** I have gone through a lot of pressure since last October whether you talk about my personal life or in regards to cricket. I will take a break of two weeks to go home as I have some issues and I need to see doctors. After that I will start preparing for the World Cup and I will play in the Dhaka Premier League. **TDS:** Will you engage in your political commitments again when you return?

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**MBM:** Actually what I shall say is that as I am still not involved properly and haven't started my work, I will be able to understand more as time progress.