



A hard-fought 229-ball 146 from Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad brought some semblance of an organised batting approach to the Tigers' second innings on the fourth day of the first Test against New Zealand, which the visitors lost by an innings and 52 runs at Hamilton yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Winning it in the last minute

MAZHAR UDDIN from Hamilton

  Following a run of poor form after being brought into the ODI side as a replacement during the Asia Cup, Soumya Sarkar was dropped from the Bangladesh team for the three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe last year. However, the left-hander got another last-minute call for the third ODI in that series and went on to smash a match-winning hundred in Chattogram.

Although the 26-year-old was not selected for the two-match Test series against Zimbabwe, he returned to the Test side later in the year but again disappointed before eventually being dropped for the Test squad for the tour of New Zealand.

Soumya would probably have flown back to Bangladesh after the three-match ODI series against New Zealand -- where he got starts but failed to convert them into big knocks. However, Mushfiqur Rahim's injury forced the selectors to keep Soumya in the Test side.

Habituated to getting those eleventh-hour calls, Soumya previously stated that his bags

are always packed for such situations. However, this time around he had fewer clothes keeping a short stay in mind. He did not even have his Test jersey, which was flown in by a journalist who had gone from Bangladesh to cover the Test series just after the ODI series ended.

Whether it is luck or a strong mentality and determination to prove his worth, the elegant left-hander has managed to stage outstanding comebacks throughout his career, and the latest was a scintillating maiden Test hundred against New Zealand at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

Soumya was also part of the Tigers' sixth-best Test partnership as he and Mahmudullah Riyad, who smashed his fourth Test century, put on a 235-run fifth-wicket stand.

The southpaw, who has been seeking a maiden Test hundred for the past 23 innings, eventually reached the milestone in style, becoming the joint-fastest Test centurion for Bangladesh, alongside Tamim Iqbal, with a 94-ball hundred. He was eventually dismissed for 149 after having thumped 21 fours and five sixes.

"Whatever the Almighty does, it is for good. I may have been playing in the Dhaka

Premier League now and watching this Test match on television, but destiny has brought me here and I got my maiden Test hundred," Soumya told The Daily Star yesterday.

He kissed the three lockets around his neck of Hindu god Shree Ganesh, symbol Radha Krishna and the sacred mantra of Om as a show of gratitude after achieving the feat.

"When I got a chance in this Test series, I thought about my first ODI fifty, which was also in Hamilton," he added.

Despite suffering a blow to his helmet early on in the innings, Soumya remained focused and from elegant cover drives off Tim Southee to a cracking pull against Neil Wagner, the left-hander was on top of his game.

"I have never batted against these field set-ups. I never expected someone could set such a field. I decided to play the short ball behind, using the bounce and the pace, rather than playing in front," said Soumya.

Although Bangladesh lost the first Test by an innings and 52 runs, Soumya will surely be more confident and pressure-free, which can only help him grow as a batsman in the coming days.

'No point playing without belief'

With the absence of two of their most experienced batsmen in Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim due injury, all eyes were on Tamim Iqbal ahead of the three-Test series against New Zealand in the Kiwis' backyard. The left-hander showed the way by scoring a battling yet speedy hundred in the first innings and following it with 74 in the second dig, in the process inspiring the Tigers to meet tough situation head on, although Bangladesh eventually lost the first Test by an innings and 52 runs yesterday. The 29-year-old spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin at the team hotel in Hamilton about various aspects of his batting and Bangladesh's chances in the series. The following are excerpts of the exclusive interview:

The Daily Star (TDS): You always said that you set a high standard for yourself. After a disappointing ODI series, how challenging was it for you start fresh in the Tests?

Tamim Iqbal (TI): To be honest I was very disappointed in the way my ODI series went as I had high hopes and wanted to do well, but unfortunately I didn't. Test cricket is a totally different ball game and what I tried was to be in a positive mindset and, Alhamdulillah, the first Test went well personally but not as a team. Yes, I have scored a hundred and a seventy but it only feels good on the day but if you think about it after six months, the result will show that we lost the game. We do have some positives -- three of us scored hundreds and the way we batted in the second innings. If we could have done the same in the first innings, things would have been different.

TDS: As a batsman coming from a bad patch in ODIs what did you do differently?

TI: Test matches were a bit challenging for me as I am playing this format after a long time -- I played my last Test against West Indies in August last year. The practice game I played here helped. I have almost played 12 years of international cricket and I think that I have learned how to turn the switch on and off, but at times things won't go as you want.

TDS: You have made a few adjustments to your batting, especially when facing Neil Wagner. Was that pre-planned or a last-minute adjustment?

TI: It was a very last-moment adjustment as normally I don't like to change a lot, especially in my batting. But I knew that they will attack us the way they did and my thinking behind all the movement I did in both innings was to do something different so that they also start to guess what I was doing. It paid off a number of times but it backfired too in the second innings. That's how it goes as I know what I was trying to do. The most important thing is that I am trying to do something different to score runs because sometimes it becomes easier for the bowlers to target you if you follow the same pattern.

TDS: How challenging was it to face a barrage of bouncers as well as the chatter from Wagner?

TI: There will be few words on the field in international cricket and, honestly speaking, it doesn't bother me. Talking about facing bouncers, it is difficult as nobody likes to face bouncers but you are playing for your country... it's easy to give up

but hard to stay there and do all the hard work. Even [Mahmudullah] Riyad bhai and Soumya [Sarkar] took the ball to the body -- Soumya even got hit on his helmet. It is also very new for us but we are trying to adapt to this.

TDS: Any regrets for missing out on back-to-back hundreds?

TI: There is no end to regrets as even when you score a hundred you want to score more. When you are satisfied, it's a problem. Obviously, the way I was batting, I would love to have scored another hundred in the second innings but it was a bit unfortunate the way I got out. But I hope I



will try to make it count in the next two Tests.

TDS: Which hundred satisfied you personally?

TI: If I talk about my best Test hundred I would probably say my century against England in Dhaka [2016] because Bangladesh won that match. If you asked this question five-six years ago I would have said something different.

TDS: Is it possible that Bangladesh can win a Test match in New Zealand?

TI: If you don't believe, there is no point in playing as then we will only participate. Yes, we all know it's difficult but not impossible. You saw what Sri Lanka did against South Africa -- nobody expected them to win a series there but they did. We have a young team with a very young bowling attack, but cricket is a funny game and anything can happen.



'Decided not to let things go easily'



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I think to succeed, you have to play tough cricket in Tests because at times there will be good spells from both ends and it's important to understand this things. We took the easy option in the first innings and went for shots and got out. A few of our batsmen fell to same kind of shots. For the second innings I decided not to let things go easily. I wanted to suffer and take blows on the body but still give myself a chance.

MAHMUDULLAH RYAD
BANGLADESH CAPTAIN



Prime Dholeswar captain Forhad Reza (L) and Sheikh Jamal skipper Nurul Hasan pose with the Dhaka Premier League T20 trophy yesterday, ahead of their fight for the title at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Been an honour'

ICC



After signing off with a typically blistering 77 off 27 balls in his final home ODI, opener Chris Gayle reflected on his two-decade international career, and what it meant playing for the West Indies.

In a thoughtful and emotional farewell speech on Saturday, Gayle expressed his gratitude to the people of the Caribbean for their support through this series and his career. With two centuries and two fifties in four matches, Gayle was the biggest thorn in England's side.

"This is my last ODI series in the Caribbean," Gayle said. "So I was giving the fans a nice wave. Right through the tournament, they have been superb from both sides: West Indies and England sides. It would be nice if it was in Jamaica, but the crowds have been fantastic."

"It's been an honour to wear the crest and entertain the people around the Caribbean. West Indies is No. 1. This is the best achievement you can have in the Caribbean as a cricketer. This is the best thing, to be honest with you."

Since announcing his retirement, Gayle has scored 424 runs in four matches at a strike-rate of 134, leaving many, including himself, wondering why he's walking away.

Gayle had been a diminishing force before the start of this series. Runs had deserted him in T20 leagues around the world.

"I'm thankful for the form," he said. "I wasn't getting any runs in the T20 tournaments I was playing. When you get a chance to score runs, make sure you score heavy. But it's the best [I've played] in my home conditions and I'm happy and grateful for that."



Opener Chris Gayle acknowledges the crowd after leading West Indies to victory in the 5th and final ODI against England in Saint Lucia on Saturday.

BD-NZ SCOREBOARD

BANGLADESH: First innings 234

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 715 (Williamson 20 not out, Latham 161, Raval 132; Soumya 2-68, Mehedi 2-246)

BANGLADESH: 2nd innings R/45/6s

Tamim Iqbal b Southee 74/86 12/1

Shadman b Watling b Southee 37/71 5/0

Mominul b Taylor b Southee 8/6 2/0

Mithun Williamson b Southee 0/4 0/0

Soumya b Southee 149/171 21/5

Mahmudullah b Southee 146/229 21/3

Liton b Southee 1/11 0/0

Mehedi b Raval b Wagner 1/4 0/0

Jayed b Southee 3/19 0/0

Khaled not out 4/13 1/0

Ebadat b Watling b Southee 0/4 0/0

Extras: (w-6) 6

Total: (all out in 103 overs) 429

Fall of wickets: 1-88, 2-100, 3-110, 4-126, 5-361, 6-379, 7-380, 8-413, 9-429, 10-429.

Bowler O M R W

Boult 28 3 123 5

Southee 24 4 98 3

Grandhomme 10 1 33 0

Wagner 24 4 104 2

Astle 15 3 58 0

Williamson 2 0 13 0

Result: New Zealand won by an innings and 52 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Kane Williamson.

SLC regains full member status

AGENCIES, Colombo

Sri Lanka secured its full member status with the International Cricket Council while also receiving the funds that were pending since July 2018. The SLC managed to retrieve \$11.5 million from the ICC on Sunday following 'high level discussions' with the sport's governing body, an SLC release confirmed.

Last year, the SL sports ministry intervened to take control of the cricket board. This was a result of the election for the presidency of the SLC being suspended by an appeals court.

Williamson happy to avoid SL repeat



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I suppose the Bangladesh side were a lot more aggressive [compared to Sri Lanka in December], which meant they were clearly scoring very, very quickly. As a bowling unit, you're hoping that provide an opportunity.

KANE WILLIAMSON
NEW ZEALAND CAPTAIN

and Quinton de Kock (81 from 72 balls) put on 136 at more than a run-a-ball for the second wicket.

Du Plessis' century was his 11th in ODI cricket and continues his fine form in the 50-over format with 259 runs in his last four innings, during which time he has only been dismissed once.

The second fixture in the five-match series will be played in Pretoria on Wednesday.

Both teams are using the series to fine-tune their selections ahead of the World Cup in England and Wales that starts in late May.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 231 all out in 47 overs (K Perera 33, Fernando 49, Mendis 60, De Silva 39; Nigidi 3-26, Tahir 3-26)

SOUTH AFRICA: 232 for 2 in 38.5 overs (De Kock 81, Du Plessis 112 not out, Van der Linde 32 not out; Fernando 1-43, Dananjaya 1-52)

Result: South Africa won by eight wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Faf du Plessis.