



## 'Bangladesh's batting almost equal to Australia's'

STAR SPORT DESK

Bangladesh's batting has improved by leaps and bounds but their bowling department still needs work if they are to compete with the best teams, according to former Australia cricketer Michael Hussey.

While speaking to ESPNcricinfo, Hussey highly praised Bangladesh's batting, especially the way they tried to handle the chase of 382 against Australia in a World Cup encounter on Thursday.

"I have to tip my hat to Bangladesh and the way they [almost] chased down the huge target. They never gave in till the end and certainly at various stages, the Australians were a little bit worried," Hussey said.

While the Tigers' batsmen have notched three 300-plus totals in the ongoing tournament, their bowling department have conceded 300-plus runs in four of five matches. After Friday's match, Hussey was of the opinion that the difference between the two sides was their bowling.

"I think if you compare the two, Bangladesh's batting has improved so much that it almost equalled Australia. But I feel the difference between the two teams was in the bowling department," he opined.

"If Bangladesh really focus on the bowling aspect and improve in the next few years, maybe even find a few nice mystery spinners and someone with a bit of pace, then I really believe they can rise in world rankings."



PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN  
 Mushfiqur Rahim scored his maiden World Cup century (102 not out) against Australia on Thursday and shared a 127-run partnership with Mahmudullah Riyad (inset) who scored 69 runs in a Thursday chase as Bangladesh posted their highest ever ODI score of 333 to lose the match by 48 runs. The duo oblige local fans before leaving for Southampton from Nottingham yesterday.

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## Tigers learning and growing

SAKEB SUBHAN from Nottingham

Unless the stars align, they pull off an unlikely win over India -- assuming they get past Afghanistan on Monday -- and a more likely one against Pakistan, Bangladesh are not going to make it to the semifinals of the 2019 World Cup. That may be a bitter pill to swallow for many of Bangladesh's passionate fans, but when the dust settles on this World Cup, even if the July 5 league game against Pakistan is the last match Bangladesh play in the mega event, there will be more positives than negatives to take home.

The Tigers have lost three of six matches so far. Those three matches were against World Cup favourites England, Australia and a genuine contender in New Zealand. Bangladesh were outplayed in just one of those reversals -- when England posted 386 for six and bundled Bangladesh out for 280.

They almost won the match against New Zealand, who won by two wickets. Even though the eventual margin against Australia was a 48-run defeat on Thursday, the Tigers were very much in the match for 95 of the 100 overs despite conceding 381 for five. And against an opponent that they have never really challenged except one win in Cardiff 14 years ago, that they went toe to toe with the defending champions will certainly be a confidence booster.

Even as Bangladesh were on their way to conceding the mammoth total, their body language had not dropped. Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman could be seen enjoying themselves and laughing as the score passed 350.

While cynical fans would have thought in the past that visible enjoyment during a struggle betrayed a lack of sincerity, it is hard to level that allegation against this team, especially after what followed in Bangladesh's chase. Just by reading the scorecards, the England match and the Australia match may seem similar -- big total conceded, a run chase containing one century (Shakib against England and Mushfiqur Rahim against Australia) and a margin of defeat that suggested that the match was

not close.

In reality, the matches were poles apart. As mentioned, Bangladesh were in the contest for much of the game and only after Mahmudullah Riyad was out in the 46th over did it seem that the match had escaped the Tigers' grasp.

In the match against England, Bangladesh had reached 169 for two in the 29th over with Shakib and Mushfiqur at the crease. After the match, Shakib said that the target was to get between 180 and 200 for one or two wickets in 30 overs and then reassess the situation. Although Bangladesh were near the initial target, Mushfiqur's wicket left Shakib to play a lone hand as the rest imploded around him.

Against Australia, Bangladesh lost wickets at crucial times -- Shakib left at 102 after a 79-run stand with Tamim Iqbal, who left Mushfiqur's company soon after with the score on 144 for three. Liton Das departed to make it 175 for four in the 30th over -- nowhere near the ideal launching pad for chasing a total past 350. It was then that Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur proved that this Bangladesh side were no longer panicking during a chase of 350-plus, which they knew would be a regular possibility in this

World Cup. That is what Shakib had said after his century and Liton's 94 shot them past a 321-run target in just 41.3 overs against the West Indies on Monday -- that the lack of panic was the best thing about the chase.

While England taught hard lessons and West Indies provided the confidence, the good thing from Bangladesh's point of view is that both those diverging influences were utilised against Australia.

Bangladesh have long since ceased being a team that revels in respect earned despite a loss. However, as the team were leaving Nottingham for Southampton yesterday, there seemed to be little disappointment on the faces of the players. Perhaps, like Shakib and Mustafizur near the end of the Aussie innings, they know that there is still some cricket to be played and they have the belief that they can overcome setbacks.

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## 'Saifuddin uncertain, Mosaddek looking good'

SPORTS REPORTER from Nottingham

A mostly content Bangladesh camp faced a bit of controversy after a news report in a Bengali daily suggested that pace-bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin may have been overplaying a back injury to get out of the tough World Cup match against Australia, which Bangladesh lost by 48 runs in Nottingham on Thursday.

Bangladesh Cricket Board's cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan, in the UK with the team, said yesterday that they would have to take Saifuddin's word as far as the state of his injury was concerned. While Saifuddin's situation is as yet uncertain, former national captain Akram however said that the other injured regular, Mosaddek Hossain, is looking good for the next match against Afghanistan in Southampton on June 24 after missing the Australia match because of pain in his left shoulder.

"As far as I know he [Saifuddin] is experiencing some pain and it may take some time," Akram said. "I will talk to the physio [Thihhan Chandramohan] about that. But Mosaddek may be fit for the next game."

"He [Saifuddin] did not play because he has a problem. You cannot just avoid playing a match if you feel like it. And if he says that he has pain, then we will have to place importance on his words."

Mosaddek's probable return will be a fillip for the Tigers as they attempt to stay in contention for a maiden World Cup semifinal berth. More than his batting at number seven, Bangladesh need his part-time off-spin to balance the bowling attack, which they missed against



MOHAMMAD SAIFUDDIN

Australia when left-handed batsmen David Warner and Usman Khawaja ran up a match-shaping 192-run second-wicket partnership.

Saifuddin is still the highest wicket-taker in this edition of the World Cup for Bangladesh, having taken nine wickets from four matches. He did not practise on the eve of the match against Australia. Bangladesh bowling coach Courtney Walsh said before the match against West Indies that he had been struggling with an injury and that he would be happy to have Saifuddin 95 per cent fit heading into the match. Saifuddin played that match, and took three wickets for 72 runs in 10 overs.

## We just stuck to our basic plan: Malinga

AFP, Leeds

Lasith Malinga insisted he had done nothing new after starring in Sri Lanka's stunning World Cup win over England at Headingley on Friday.

The veteran pacesman took four for 43 as Sri Lanka, defending a modest 232-9, beat England by 20 runs to open up the race for a semifinal spot.

Malinga's haul saw him become the fourth bowler to take 50 wickets at the World Cup after Glenn McGrath, Muttiah Muralitharan and Wasim Akram.

"We know how hard Ben Stokes hits it, he got two or three boundaries but we just kept bowling our stock ball," said Malinga. "We stuck to our basic plan - line and length, no loose balls and add in some variations and bouncers."

Meanwhile, Buttler said Malinga remained as awkward to face as ever. "He is just different - as much as

you do face him he is different," Buttler insisted. "The stumps are always in play with him, with his release point if it hits you in line it's generally close (to getting you out)."

"We didn't counter him as well as we could have today but credit to a fantastic bowler."

Sri Lanka next play strugglers South Africa in Chester-le-Street a week on Friday and an elated Malinga said: "We want to carry on the momentum and confidence into the other matches."

RAHIM STEEL

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After scoring 29 runs with the bat, Sri Lankan all-rounder Dhananjaya de Silva was instrumental with his off-spin against England yesterday. The 27-year-old picked up the wickets of Chris Woakes and Adil Rashid in the same over to bring Sri Lanka back into the game before removing Adil Rashid as Sri Lanka edged towards a fantastic victory.



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