

Let the emotional override subside

AL-AMIN
THIRD EYE

Bangladesh's World Cup ended with a crushing defeat against Pakistan at Lord's on Friday. It was an anticlimactic finish to an otherwise fantastic run by the Tigers in the showpiece event that had started brilliantly for them with a fabulous victory against South Africa more than a month ago.

Interestingly, the harsh reality after Friday's chastening defeat is that we are no longer talking about how well the Tigers have played but how badly they have signed off.

The Pakistan game was a dead rubber for Bangladesh. The only thing at stake for the Tigers was to win the game and finish fifth, just beneath the four semifinalists. It could have been a logical conclusion after a campaign that saw the Tigers beat West Indies and Afghanistan apart from that near-miss against New Zealand and two closely-fought battles against Australia and India respectively. There was also a washout disappointment for the Tigers against the Lankan Lions.

But those were blurry amidst the punishing defeat by Pakistan, a team

that also blew hot and cold throughout their own campaign.

It was arguably only the second of Bangladesh's nine league games where they were outclassed by the opposition after that heavy England defeat.

They bowled badly and fielded even worse, allowing Pakistan to post a commanding 315. It was a tough task to chase down that total on a slow wicket. The Tigers fans were still hoping that it was possible considering that the Tigers had scored three 300-plus totals in the tournament so far against quality attack.

It would be cruel to say that the batting unit, the most impressive of the three departments, did not try, or that they threw their wickets away. The truth is that they were outsmart by a fantastic young Pakistan bowler -- Shaheen Shah Afridi. The left-arm pacer took six wickets and earned all of them.

His immaculate line and length, subtle changes of variation and pace and those searing yorkers were too hot to handle for the Tigers. Shaheen turned up with his golden arm whenever the Tigers tried to wrest the initiative from the firm grip of Pakistan.

Shakib Al Hasan tried hard. He was out there to complete his seventh fifty-plus knock in eight completed games before being dismissed by Shaheen.

It was a game where Bangladesh's



weaknesses in two departments -- bowling and fielding -- were exposed for the umpteenth time. After the game it came under the scanner, which is quite logical.

But the emotional override after that defeat was not all that rational, especially when the criticism targeted Tigers captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who took only one wicket in the whole tournament. There was a lot

of speculation about Mashrafe's participation in the last game against Pakistan. Thankfully, he played what was his last World Cup game, which was a logical decision.

The fans perhaps expected him to make an announcement of his retirement in that game. But he preferred to buy some time to make his decision, which is also understandable. He said it

was his last World Cup. He has served Bangladesh cricket on those bad legs with extreme dedication and is the man behind taking Bangladesh to a position of strength in the one-day format.

Mashrafe is a born fighter. We can be critical about his performance in the World Cup. But he also deserves to make his own decision.

What every stakeholder of the game now needs is to allow enough time for the overflowing emotions to die down.

After the Champions Trophy semifinal defeat against India in England in 2017, Shakib was having a chat with a few Bangladesh reporters ahead of the post-match briefing. Asked what areas Bangladesh needed to improve on to be more competitive, Shakib said: "We are all emotional at the moment. I think we should allow it to subside and then sit together so that we can make that decision rationally."

It was as true then as it is now. The reality is that Bangladesh's glorious chapter with Mashrafe is all but over. It is time to take a deep breath and plan for the 2023 World Cup.

Choose a new leader wisely, think of a new set of coaching staff if necessary and harness a combination most suited for Indian conditions where the next World Cup will be held. It will only help to dream big.

MR EFFICIENT

When the oil is lite, LIFE IS A DELIGHT

KING'S

With Sri Lanka reeling on 55 for four, Angelo Mathews rescued the Islanders alongside Lahiru Thirimanne. The pair stitched a 124-run stand to steady the ship. Although Thirimanne was dismissed after scoring 53, Mathews went on to script another 74-run Silva before being dismissed for 113 off 128 balls.

'Praise would be justified if we made the semis'

SPORTS REPORTER from London

For the first six matches, Bangladesh could have been called the success story or the surprise package of this World Cup, but the Tigers ended their campaign with a whimper by losing their last two matches against India and Pakistan. Bangladesh could however boast one success story that will last much longer than their initial momentum in the World Cup. Shakib Al Hasan's 606 runs and 11 wickets constitute the best performance by an all-rounder in the World Cup -- he is only the third person to score more than 600 runs in a single edition, and the only one to take at least 10 wickets and score more than 400 runs.

As the team were preparing to leave London and head back home yesterday, Shakib took a look back at the World Cup and admitted that by the end of their campaign, the tournament has turned out to be a pretty disappointing one.

"It is hard to say whether we need a trophy," he replied when asked whether Bangladesh would have to be champions to be recognised as a big team. "Not every team wins trophies, but they become big teams regardless. I don't think England ever won a World Cup, but they are still a big team.

"If we could play the semifinals this time, we would have been able to justify the praise that former cricketers and those from other countries had showered on us. That is where there is still a gap. At the end of the day, if South Africa win, we will be at number eight, so from that perspective it would be a pretty bad result. So I don't think we have been able to justify the praise that we have gotten. Many talk about the washed-out game against Sri Lanka. But what if we lost that match? Even without that match we had a chance, but we could not seize it."

Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said the previous day, after Bangladesh surrendered their last match against Pakistan by 94 runs

at Lord's that his big regret was that the team could not take Shakib to the semifinals.

The man himself said that his disappointment was for the team and not that he could not go further personally. "There is regret for the team, because our target was to reach the semifinals and we could not do that. But the regret is not occasioned by the fact that I played well and the team couldn't."

Mashrafe said he felt sorry for Shakib, and it would be hard not to have that emotion. The top all-rounder had shed some weight before the World Cup and was arguably more involved with the team and on the field than he had ever been. A lowest score of 41 and seven 50-plus scores -- including two centuries -- was a level of consistency that not even Bangladesh's most consistent cricketer had ever reached.

"It is hard to say why," Shakib said when asked what made this World Cup different. "It just felt to me that this is important -- it's good that I felt that way before the World Cup and so could come prepared. I wasn't surprised [by my performance], because I knew what I was thinking when I came here. But yes, the best that could happen, did happen."

On the tour of Ireland in May, a leaner Shakib was pressed on what brought about his physical change. He then recalled a Salman Khan movie, 'Kick', in which the main character needed a kick to get things done in life. Shakib said then that he had needed a kick, but would not reveal what it was, instead saying that he would reveal it after the World Cup.

"Let some things remain secret," Shakib said with a smile when reminded of his promise. Perhaps he thought that the end of Bangladesh's World Cup would have been a happier occasion -- after all, he had done all that that could humanly be done to accomplish that.

'I didn't live up to my expectations'

ICC

Holding their own in unfamiliar conditions is a positive to savour for batsman Liton Das despite Bangladesh's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup ending at Lord's.

The semi-finals proved a step too far for the Tigers, a 94-run defeat by Pakistan closing out a tournament that had its ups and downs.

Plus points were plentiful, both individually and as a team, but for Liton it's the way they handled the unknown that will likely prove to be the most pleasing.

Wins against South Africa and West Indies saw Bangladesh firing while each of the four semi-finalists were tested by a side more accustomed to slower, lower pitches in Asia.

Match those performances and results will follow sooner rather than later in the eyes of Liton as they switch their focus to the future.

"This has not been a bad tournament, there were a lot of close games, there are lots of positives we can take," said the 24-year-old.

"We've come to different conditions and proven that we can win matches, that we can play against the top opposition.

"We beat South Africa and West Indies here in conditions that are not easy for us, we ran Australia, India and New Zealand close, and that's a big positive.

"It shows that we can play all around the world and we should take a lot of confidence from that. It can stand us in good stead for future tours and other competitions, knowing that we are capable of adapting and playing good cricket.

"We had some stand-out performers, Shakib Al Hasan was very impressive and it's really great to be able to take that going forward."

Liton's tournament began in near perfect fashion, striking an unbeaten 94 as he and



Shakib guided their side to a seven-wicket win over West Indies at Taunton that made others stand up and take note.

But where Shakib kept up the form, wicketkeeper-batsman Liton was unable to follow suit, with the 32 he made against Pakistan proving to be his next best score of the tournament.

Consistency is therefore the ultimate aim for a man who scored 121 against India in last year's Asia Cup final, looking to put the talent to good use on a more regular basis.

"I didn't live up to my expectations, I scored

a few 20s or 30s but if I had got that up to 50 or 60 if not more, that could have made a big difference to the team," he added.

"It's quite disappointing not to contribute in the way that I would have liked, it wasn't the manner I hoped for, you need some luck along the way but I didn't feel I played the way I know I can.

"I had some okay performances but I wanted a lot more to be able to help my team to wins.

"Shakib has played very well but we lost out in some of the partnerships and weren't able to support him as much as we would have liked."

CRICKET STARS VISIT WIMBLEDON



England's cricketers Jonny Bairstow (L) and Joe Root took time out of their World Cup campaign to be among the stars in the Royal Box on day six at Wimbledon. The first Saturday of the Championships is renowned for attracting the very best in the sporting world to Centre Court, where the likes of Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer will perform. England skipper Eoin Morgan and pacer Tom Curran are also visible in the background. PHOTO: REUTERS

We won't get carried away, says Rashid

ICC

England are now chasing history at this World Cup but, on home soil, Adil Rashid knows it is vital that they do not get carried away with the occasion.

England have never before won the World Cup and are now in the semifinals for the first time in 27 years.

Next week they will take on Australia or India at Edgbaston with a place in the final on the line.

But Rashid -- who played all nine group games for England and took eight wickets -- insists his side will be taking it all in their stride.

"It's the same feeling," he said. "Yes, we know it's a semi-final of a World Cup but we will definitely take it as another game.

"We'll go out there, try our best, have a positive mindset, play a positive brand of cricket with bat and ball and see what happens. We won't be taking any pressure on, we'll go out there, enjoy our cricket and hopefully everything else will look after itself."

Rashid has been troubled this summer by a shoulder injury that limited his involvement in the warm-

ups. But his importance to this side is emphasised by the fact that Trevor Bayliss has yet to rotate him out of the first XI.

And the legspinner insists he is firing on all cylinders for the end of the tournament.

"I had the niggles a month ago. Just before the World Cup I had an injection and had a shoulder problem. It's all good for now. I'm 100 per cent," he added.

"I'm trying to (bowl) all variations, sometimes it can be a bit difficult. That's not an excuse for not bowling it much. At times it can be a bit difficult but that's one of my strengths, my variations. For me it's just getting back to bowling my variations.

"There's been some games where I felt as though I've been a bit unlucky, there's been a few dropped catches and missed stumpings and whatever. If you take all that in things could be completely different, you could easily be on 15 or 16 wickets.

"It is what it is, dropped catches and missed chances are part and parcel of cricket. But we're winning, we've got through to the semis so

we're in a good place."

Rashid might not have claimed as many wickets as he would have liked so far.

But he has found other ways to help the team, including a fine run-out of Ross Taylor in Durham on Wednesday.

Fielding has improved across the board for England in their rise to the top of the world rankings, and Rashid as one of the less natural athletes in the field epitomises that development.

He added: "It was nice to get that one-handed pick-up and throw over the stumps. It was a nice feeling, a big wicket as well, Ross Taylor was going along nicely. We work hard on our fielding, all of us work hard on all aspects so credit to them.

"As a team we're always looking to improve. If we're good we're looking to be better. That goes for everybody, for myself as well, I'm always looking to improve.

"You might have the days where you might not feel as good or whatever but if you're putting the hard work in the field practice then things will go well."

Gould to bid adieu at Headingley

ICC

Before Gary Pratt there was Ian Gould. The English umpire will be in the middle for the final time in India's clash with Sri Lanka at Headingley.

An accomplished wicket-keeper, Gould was part of the squad that toured Australia in 1982/83, and in the fourth Test came onto the field as a substitute during Australia's chase of 292 for victory in the Test and the series.

However it is as an umpire that he has perhaps become best known. For more than a decade he has been a fixture on the international circuit, notable for his practice of not employing a standard ball counter, instead using six Bahraini Dinars to count deliveries.

Gould finishes his career having umpired 74 Tests in all, while this will be his 140th ODI.