

## Objectives vary for Shakib and Rashid

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

*There is always a lot of speculation about game planning and probable strategies of teams before any international game and when it comes to five-day cricket, the nuances and variables only increase. However, during press conferences no captain would want to disclose or even elaborate on their plans and that was the case for both Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan and his Afghan counterpart Rashid Khan at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. There were however some key points and hints during the press meet that gave an inkling about the probable strategies of the sides for the one-off Test beginning in the port city from today.*

### BANGLADESH CAPTAIN SHAKIB AL HASAN

#### Trying to exploit opposition's weakness

Reluctant to reveal his plans for the opposition, Shakib did hint that the Tigers were looking to exploit Afghanistan's weakness, which has remained the batting department, partly due to their aggressive style of play that is more attuned to limited-overs cricket. The hosts will be willing to test the patience and concentration levels of the Afghan batters -- two major components of Test cricket. The experienced cricketer also had his eyes on Afghanistan's A team tour to Bangladesh in July, when the visitors displayed commendable patience with the bat.

"I think it's an important point but still we have to take into account the patience their openers showed during the A teams' tour and even in the two-day warm-up match [Afghanistan XI against BCB XI, September 1-2]. We will take everything into consideration and what we need is to do the basics right and if we are able to keep our focus, I think we can do something good," Shakib said.

#### Not bothered fielding one seamer

The spin-heavy strategy at home has paid dividends for Bangladesh over the past three years and there is once again talk of whether the Tigers would be heavily armed with spinners. Critics have pointed out that a lack of exposure for pacers at home -- in their last 10 home Tests, they have fielded just one pacer in seven games



and none in their most recent -- hurts the Tigers abroad. Not bothered about such critics, Shakib pointed out the importance of winning the game by making the best of conditions than anything else. He added that it was also up to the pacers to earn places in the team through performance.

#### Batting will make the difference

There have been talk about the battle between the spinners of the sides and the Test was even termed as a Shakib-Rashid battle, but Shakib said that it was the batting that would make the difference.

"Look, we have been bowling well at home and whenever our spinners got suitable wickets they have done well. But having said that, they also have quality spinners and I think it's the batting of the two sides that will make the difference," he said.

#### Eager to get Bangladesh back on track

It was evident that Shakib had been observing the performances of the Bangladesh's age-level, High Performance and A teams recently, all of which had generally been below-par, much like the Tigers' own underwhelming show in the ICC World Cup this year. For Shakib, a Test win against Afghanistan -- whether it was a 10-wicket or a one-wicket win -- would help Bangladesh cricket get back on track.

He, however, did pay his newest opposition their due respect. "Whenever we played our first Test against any opposition, we were the underdogs and did not have any particular strength which would cause them concern. Afghanistan, however, are different because they have the spin strength that we have to think about."



### AFGHANISTAN CAPTAIN RASHID KHAN

#### Remain Calm

Afghanistan have already established themselves as one of the exciting teams in limited-overs cricket for their aggressive approach and attitude. Ahead of just their third Test, however, skipper Rashid tried to downplay all the aggression and stressed on the need to remain calm as being the key for his side. He seemed keen to play Test cricket in the appropriate manner and was also not shy of putting Bangladesh ahead in terms of experience.

"Bangladesh are much more experienced than us as they played more than 100 Tests and you keep learning in each and every game."

"This format is new for us but definitely we have the talent and

skill and we just need to make sure we play positive cricket, play to our strengths and believe in ourselves. This game is all about patience and remaining calm -- once we do that the result will be positive," said Rashid.

#### Getting into the Test groove

It will be a huge challenge for Afghanistan to identify and adapt to the pace of five-day cricket. Although Rashid said that once they gain momentum they could beat any side in the world, he did add that it takes more matches and years to get used to Test cricket.

Much like Bangladesh when they stepped into the Test arena, Afghanistan are keener on learning than just looking to win a Test match.

Taking confidence from the maiden Test win over Ireland

It took 35 Tests and five years for Bangladesh to win their first ever Test match since playing their inaugural Test in 2000 while Afghanistan needed just two Tests to taste victory against Ireland earlier in March this year, just a year after receiving Test status.

According to Rashid, that win certainly boosted the confidence as the side experienced the process of winning a five-day game.

The best leg-spinner in the world also admitted that his side had no idea what was happening when they played their first Test against India last year and was crushed by an innings and 262 runs inside two days.

#### Not taking any added pressure as bowler or captain

Undoubtedly, being the best leg-spinner in the world, there will be high expectations of Rashid to take the leading role with the ball for his side in the longer version cricket as well, especially in conditions expected to suit his bowling.

However, the weight of expectations can prove to be detrimental for Rashid who, at 20, is set to become the youngest captain in Test history.

But he looked confident and said, "When I am bowling, I always focus on my bowling rather than being a captain. I just try to keep enjoying and not try to add extra pressure on myself. If the captain is under pressure, the team will be under the same. I will try to be relaxed, calm and try to enjoy the game."



Bangladesh are going to play their one-off Test against Afghanistan starting from today at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram. (From R to L) Although the Bangladesh and Afghanistan players faced no issues while training yesterday, the fans coming to see the match today may not have a very good time judging from the poorly maintained gallery.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



**Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association**  
BGMEA OFFICE BUILDING AT SECTOR -17, BLOCK-H-1, ROAD AVENUE-06, UTTARA (PHASE-III).

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- 5.** The Tenderer must submit 2% earnest money of the total tendered amount in favor of "BGMEA" in the form of Pay Order/Demand Draft from any schedule Bank. Without earnest money the offer shall be treated as non-responsive tender. BGMEA Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the tenders without assigning any reason (s) whatsoever.

Secretary, BGMEA

## Tigers' nine previous firsts

STAR SPORT DESK

*Today, Bangladesh will set off on a mission to do what they have never done before -- win the first match played against an opposition. The Tigers were the whipping boys in nine previous such matches, but having played 112 more matches than rookies Afghanistan, they will be the favourites over the next five days. We take a look back at the Tigers' nine previous maiden Tests against oppositions over the first two years as a Test team:*

#### VS INDIA (DHAKA -- NOVEMBER 10, 2000)

After being granted Test status in June 2000, Bangladesh played their inaugural Test against India in November of that year. The match was believed to be an opportunity for Indian batsmen to achieve new heights and set new Test records. Surprisingly, and to the credit of the first 11 Bangladeshis who adorned the white jersey, even as late as the third day, the game could still have gone in the Tigers' favour with India struggling at 366 for seven after Bangladesh had piled up an unexpected score of 400 in the first innings with Aminul Islam scoring a century. However, Bangladesh slumped to 91 all out on the fourth day and India secured a nine-wicket victory.

#### VS ZIMBABWE (BULAWAYO -- APRIL 19, 2001)

When Bangladesh first met Zimbabwe in the longer format of the game it was Bangladesh's second Test while Zimbabwe were playing their 49th. And experience-wise, Zimbabwe -- who were a much stronger side than the Zimbabwe we know today -- were clear favourites. Bangladesh were comprehensively beaten by an innings and 32 runs but the only highlight for the Tigers was that Javed Omar, with an unbeaten 85, became only the third cricketer to carry his bat through an innings in his debut Test.

#### VS PAKISTAN (MULTAN -- 29 AUGUST, 2001)

When Bangladesh first met Pakistan in Tests, just the fact that Pakistan were playing their 279th Test while Bangladesh were playing just their fourth was enough to convey the gulf in experience between the sides, as well as Bangladesh's slim chances. The outcome was not shocking. Bangladesh lost by an innings and 264 runs as Pakistan achieved their 80th win in Test cricket while Bangladesh were left waiting for their first.

#### VS SRI LANKA (COLOMBO -- SEPTEMBER 6, 2001)

Mohammad Ashraful will remember the date sixth of September, when Bangladesh met Sri Lanka for the first time in Tests, vividly. Ashraful, at the age of 17, became the youngest player to score a hundred on Test debut. But it was his 114 off 212 balls that was the only positive for the Tigers from this match as the visitors were thrashed by an innings and 137 runs.

#### VS NEW ZEALAND (HAMILTON -- DEC 18, 2001)

Even after rain washed out the first two day's play completely, it was not enough for a side like Bangladesh playing in just their eighth Test to avoid defeat against New Zealand, who

were playing their 292nd Test. New Zealand won by an innings and 52 runs to celebrate their 48th victory.

#### VS SOUTH AFRICA (EAST LONDON -- OCTOBER 18, 2002)

When Bangladesh stepped on to Buffalo Park in East London for their 14th Test and first against South Africa, they were facing an opposition that had won more than five times the Tests that the Tigers had actually played. There was also the matter of the pacy conditions and just the overall superiority of the opposition. The Mark Boucher-led Proteas did not give the rookies a sniff, piling on 592 for four and winning by an innings and 107 runs.

#### VS WEST INDIES (DHAKA -- DECEMBER 8, 2002)

Bangladesh were totally outclassed by West Indies when the two sides first met in the longest format. An innings and 310-run hammering at the Bangabandhu National Stadium spoke of the magnitude of the defeat. The result probably looks less humiliating when the fact that West Indies were playing their 392nd Test while Bangladesh were playing just their 16th is considered, but the seventh-largest victory margin in Test history showed how far Bangladesh still had to go.

#### VS AUSTRALIA (DARWIN -- JULY 18, 2003)

The combined score of Justin Langer (71), Darren Lehmann (110) and Steve Waugh (100) in the first innings were more than what the whole Bangladesh squad managed in two innings during the sides' first Test meeting at TIO Stadium. Australia, playing their 641st Test, went on to complete their 286th victory in the format in style as they beat Bangladesh -- still in pursuit of their first Test win in their 20th Test -- by an innings and 132 runs.

#### VS ENGLAND (DHAKA -- OCTOBER 21, 2003)

A seven-wicket defeat by England was by far the best result for Bangladesh in their maiden Test against any opposition till today. It was the first time that Bangladesh were able to bundle out a team for below 300. England had to play the match till the final day to secure their 276th victory in Tests.

#### VS AFGHANISTAN (CHATTOGRAM -- SEPT 5, 2019)

For the first time ever, Bangladesh are considered the favourites when facing a Test opponent for the first time. Bangladesh will be playing their 115th Test match when they take on Afghanistan -- who will be playing their third -- during their one-off Test starting today in Chattogram.