



RALLYING CRY: A jubilant Rashid Khan is swarmed by teammates after leading Afghanistan to just their second ever Test win against Bangladesh in Chattogram yesterday. With this being his first outing as captain, Rashid took charge in all aspects of the game to hand the visitors a

## A new high in humiliation

NABID YEASIN



Everything working fine for Bangladesh on the

fifth day of their one-off Test against Afghanistan until the rain that had marred most of the day's play, seeming to answer most Bangladesh players' and fans' prayers, stopped and play resumed at 4:20 pm with 18.3 overs more to be played at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

Afghanistan, who dominated the game for the four previous days, just needed that bit of luck and time to wrap up the game. They went on to pick up a mammoth 224-run victory -- their second Test victory ever and indeed a very well deserved one -- with just 3.2 overs left in the day.

Bangladesh -- a team that were playing their 115th Test -- have endured defeats of much larger magnitude since their introduction to the format back in 2000. But this 224-run thumping at the hands of a team just playing their third Test may well be the most humiliating one till date.

The fact that Bangladesh's name

any other team -- in the list of the 20 largest defeats in Tests shows that the Tigers have scars aplenty in the format. West Indies thumped Bangladesh by an innings and 310 runs -- the seventh largest innings win in Tests -- during the sides' first ever meeting in the format in Dhaka back in December 2002. Although the Tigers were clearly outclassed in that game, no one even entertained the notion that Bangladesh would pose a threat to a side playing their 392nd Test and boasting 142 Test wins while the Tigers were still rookies in the format, playing in just their 16th Test.

Next on the inauspicious list comes the defeat to Pakistan by an innings and 264 runs in Multan in July 2018. However, the match in 2001. The margin of defeat that ended with Bangladesh being was much larger than vesterday's one but was it really shocking? in foreign conditions still does not was Afghanistan who looked more The answer would be no. Playing against a side that boasted the likes of Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Saeed Anwar and Inzamam-ul-Haq did not really leave much of a chance for a side playing their fourth Test and still trying to come to terms with the nuances of the

More recently, Bangladesh were comes up five times -- more than bundled out for 43 -- their lowest The youngsters are learning very quickly, and especially we have a good four-day structure at home. That's the best thing done by the cricket board.

> **RASHID KHAN** AFGHANISTAN SKIPPER

ever total and the 12th lowest ever in Test history -- by West Indies when the Tigers toured the Caribbean beaten by an innings and 219 runs surpass the level of humiliation that the Tigers suffered at the hands of Afghanistan over the past five days.

In none of the aforementioned scenarios were the Tigers considered favourites. The oneoff Test against Afghanistan was one of the rare occasions when they were considered favourites and Bangladesh faltered like never Afghanistan outplayed before.

Bangladesh in every department. Skipper Rashid Khan had a clear plan from Day One while Tigers' captain Shakib Al Hasan could only say that he had expected the wicket to aid his team more. The likes of Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah and Asghar Afghan showed how to be patient and pick their shots in such conditions.

More importantly, Afghanistan portrayed intent, aggression - all of which the Tigers lacked -- to win the game. And they were able to inflict wounds the like of which the Tigers had never suffered before and left scars that are much deeper than they have ever experienced.

The gulf in experience between the two sides was prominent - with Bangladesh having played 112 Tests more than Afghanistan -- but it mature while the Tigers looked like novices. And while the Tigers' lapses in Test cricket came to the fore a number of times in the past, those could be somewhat be justified as almost every time Bangladesh were underdogs. However, this defeat just exposed the huge gaps that Bangladesh still need to fill if they are to make any progress in the

# A TIME FOR introspection

SAKEB SUBHAN



There was much that was discouraging about Bangladesh's 224-run loss to Afghanistan in the one-

off Test in Chattogram yesterday. It has already been mentioned ad nauseum, but bears repeating one more time. Afghanistan were playing their third Test match just over a year after playing their first. Bangladesh were playing their 115th almost 19 years after playing their maiden Test.

Given this gulf in experience, the most dispiriting aspect of the Tigers' loss was that it was not surprising. It may be seen the world over as a big upset, but can anyone closer to home say that if there were to be a second Test against the same opposition, the result would be much different?

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan once told this paper in an interview that if there was one thing that he could not stand, it was losing. He must be in quite a fit after the most recent result, and that seemed to be the case after the fourth day on Sunday when he said that he cannot be expected to 'teach them Test cricket'.

An eighth-placed World Cup finish must also not have pleased the BCB brass, and that manifested in then coach Steve Rhodes being shown the door. What is the way forward now, who to scapegoat? Surely Russell Domingo, appointed less than a month ago, cannot be asked to follow his predecessor in a premature exit, mainly because he had very little to do with the debacle.

This was possibly Bangladesh's worst loss



A befuddled Shakib Al Hasan is left to ponder what went wrong as the Bangladesh skipper slowly claps in appreciation of their defeat at the hands of Afghanistan in a one-off Test in Chattogram yesterday.

in Tests and now may be the time for the BCB to depart from their practice of taking credit for wins and blaming the team for losses. It does not fall upon a board president to coach the country's cricket team. Instead, Hasan should be able to answer for having overseen a culture where domestic bowlers have just been allowed to turn their arms over on slow, low pitches and wait for batsmen to make mistakes or be beaten by variable bounce. Bigger-picture decisions like changing the nature of the country's pitches are more his purview than agonising over the results of the national team.

The problem against Afghanistan was not in succumbing to the whippy wiles of Rashid Khan. Even India allowed Rashid four albeit much more expensive wickets in Afghanistan's maiden Test. The damage was done in allowing Afghanistan, widely acknowledged to be a weak batting team, to score 342 in the first innings and back it up with 260 in the second.

Even against a side still getting used to Test batting, the home attack looked toothless. That may have come as a rude shock to many who had believed the myth of home dominance that has been propagated since the 2016 Test series against England. Faulty systems thrive on such myths and the complacency they cause.

Since that series against England, Bangladesh have won just one home series against West Indies in late 2018. Three other previous series were drawn by 1-1 margins -- against England (2016), Australia (2017) and even Zimbabwe (2018), who Bangladesh were expected to beat much like they were Afghanistan. In early 2018 against Sri Lanka -- an opposition that was as, if not more, familiar with spin bowling -- Bangladesh lost the two-match series 1-0.

But having won the most recent home series against the West Indies, who are poor players of spin, the spin reliance and dominance myth persisted. Against Afghanistan, the Tigers played with a onedimensional spin attack after opting not to include a single pacer in the eleven.

Spinners have of course been far more successful at home but, as mentioned, the type of spin Bangladesh bowl offers success against a limited number of teams and then too on pitches tailor-made for them and perhaps more variety in the attack would have helped.

Shakib and Co. operate in a cricketing culture where first-class cricket is of a lower standard than the one-day Dhaka Premier League. Spinners bowl on pitches that do not encourage them to give it a rip and therefore there is not a wrist-spinner in sight. Far from being incentivised to bowl fast, pacers now know that they are not likely to be given a chance in home Tests. Domestic batsmen, meanwhile, just have to ride out low-quality bowling to score big runs.

Whether this result will bring about a comprehensive review of the country's cricket is anyone's guess, but if the BCB continue believing in their own myths and sees this as blip rather than symptom, such results could become the norm.

### This Afghan side is vulnerable: Maruf

UEFA A licensed coach Maruful Haque guided Bangladesh in the SAFF Championship in 2015 with a hope of moving into the last four, but that dream was shattered after the team lost 4-0 against Afghanistan in the opening match. With the first World Cup Qualifier against the same team today, the former national team coach spoke to The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman about the two sides and Bangladesh's chances in the match.

The Daily Star (TDS): Bangladesh had a disappointing outing in the last edition of the World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers. How will they perform this time around? Maruful Haque (MH): I think we should concentrate on Asian Cup Qualifiers instead of the World Cup Qualifiers because in our group there are three teams who are almost equal in strength: Qatar, Oman and India. The maximum points we may secure in eight-group matches is 10 – four points from six matches against Qatar, Oman and India and six points against Afghanistan. So we won't be able to get through the group stages, but 10 points will be good enough to qualify for the Asian Cup Qualifiers.

TDS: How is the Bangladesh team this time according to you?

MH: Bangladesh is a very young side and there are not many experienced players in any department except for midfielders Jamal Bhuiyan and Mamunul Islam. The young players may have more energy but it will be tough to register wins in the long run of qualifiers. Bangladesh may face problems due to their lack of experience. From the past, though, I think this team is not different in technique or tactic, but certainly different in terms of fitness and speed of the players.

TDS: You have certainly watched the Afghanistan-Qatar match. How do you rate this Afghanistan side?

MH: I think Afghanistan are in a vulnerable state which they had not been in the last eight to 10 years. They leave a lot of space behind their defence. It seemed to me that their defence is not that quick, so if we can play behind their defence with our fastpaced forwards, it is possible to get goals. Furthermore, Afghanistan could not create any chances against Qatar.

TDS: How do you think Bangladesh will perform against Afghanistan?

MH: I'm hopeful that Bangladesh will play good football. If the coach can find the right strategy of playing behind their defence, it is possible to beat them with just a single strategy. Bangladesh must play with a packed defence and possessional football to utilise the open spaces behind their defence because it will be tough to get chances in counter-attack. I think Mamunul is possibly the player who can put the ball behind the defence. Robiul Hasan is another option but the coach doesn't play him in that position.

TDS: Do you see difference between the squads that played in the 2015 SAFF Championship under your coaching and

MH: During that time there were a lot of experienced players in Bangladesh squad, but they didn't have the speed the current squad has. Besides, that squad had only one scorer but there are lot of goal-scorers in this squad. If I compare the Afghan squad, Afghanistan's defence was very strong at that time and had an effective attacking line-up too, but this time they lack in both departments.

## Bangladesh looking for a fresh start

Take on Afghanistan in the first qualifier in Tajikistan today

SPORTS REPORTER



Putting the frustrating campaign of their last campaign behind, Bangladesh are looking forward to a fresh start when they take on Afghanistan in their opening

match of the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Qualifiers at the Central Republic Stadium Dushanbe, Tajikistan today. The match gets underway at 8:00pm

Bangla TV transmitting the match live. Bangladesh had ended the 2018 World Cup and the 2019 Asian Cup Qualifiers on a disappointing note after losing seven out of their eight matches of the five-team group, conceding 32 goals and

(Bangladesh time), with private satellite channel

finishing on bottom with only one point. Since a humiliating 8-0 drubbing at the hands of Jordan in their last qualifying match some three-and-a-half years ago, Bangladesh have gone through a bit of change over the last oneand-a-half years under the guidance of Jamie Day, who has blooded younger players who have good fitness and speed with intense fighting attitude till the last minute.

The team started their preparation with a new hope since they were pitted against neighbours India, Afghanistan along with mighty Qatar and Oman in Group E. And the moment has finally arrived for the men in red and green to prove a point against Afghanistan, who outclassed Bangladesh 4-0 in their last meeting during the 2015 SAFF Championship, but suffered a 6-0 defeat against Qatar five days ago.

"All we can do is give our best in every game and try to give each opposition a tough match. We are the lowest ranked side in the group and big underdog. As I have said before it will be a great experience for our younger players to take and use in future competitions," said Day, who makes his debut in guiding a national side in the World Cup Qualifiers.

Day sees a possibility to get points against Afghanistan, but his charges have to give their



#### **HEAD-TO-HEAD**

Date Venue Match 12/01/1979 Dhaka Bangladesh 2:2 Afghanistan Bangladesh 4:1 Afghanistan 16/01/1979 Dhaka 05/05/2008 Bishkek Bangladesh 0:0 Afghanistan Bangladesh 2:2 Afghanistan 06/06/2008 Colombo Bangladesh 1:1 Afghanistan 1/06/2015 Dhaka Bangladesh 0:4 Afghanistan 23/12/2015 Kerala Win -1, Draw - 4, Loss - 1

best against a side comprising of Europe-based players and technically gifted ones.

"Everyone is excited about tomorrow's game because we know we have a chance to get points. Everyone will need to play at their best if we are to achieve a positive result against Afghanistan. We can still play fantastic football and lose,

best of our ability, I can't ask for more from the team," said the 39-eyar-old tactician. The Englishman is aware of the quality of

that's football, so as well as we perform to the

the opposition and he feels the players must concentrate on defending well and avail the chances against Afghanistan.

Day's counterpart Anoush Dastgir is optimistic about notching a win over Bangladesh following a two-day preparation since the defeat to Qatar.

"We lost against a team who are Asian champions. If we play 50 times against Qatar, maybe we can draw once. We have to be realistic on that but Bangladesh game will be a different game, different system and style. We know Bangladesh prepared well but it's a game we have to win and we are prepared as well," said 29-year-old Dastgir, who was a playing member during the 2015 SAFF Championship.