



Young Bangladesh opener Mohammad Naim (R) tries to slog Washington Sundar over deep midwicket only to see his nifty 36-run knock, the highest score in Bangladesh's modest 153-run innings, come to an end during the second T20I against India in Rajkot yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers waste a promising start

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Rajkot

Bangladesh had complete control of things early on in the do-or-die match for India during the second T20I at Rajkot's Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium yesterday.

Having been asked to bat, Liton Das and Naim Sheikh seized the upper hand right away. Naim latched onto three loose deliveries from Khaleel Ahmed for three boundaries on the trot, all off short balls as Bangladesh put pressure on an India side looking to keep the three-match series alive.

Liton was fortunate during his 21-ball 29, having a stumping disallowed by the third umpire in the sixth over because wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant had collected the ball fractionally in front of the stumps. 54 runs came from the Powerplay, and things only got worse for India when skipper Rohit Sharma dropped Liton off Washington Sundar on 26 in the seventh over.

Pant did not have to rue the mistake for long as Liton fell to a brain-fade, unable to read a googly from Yuzvendra Chahal and then risking a run without knowing where the ball went. Pant collected it and flung a direct hit to signal an end to Liton's luck.

Soumya Sarkar joined Naim and started to play aggressively to keep the runs flowing but the latter who had played beautifully

for his 31-ball 36, then skied one to lose his wicket off Washington Sundar. That is when India began to wrest control back from Bangladesh.

Hero of the last match, expectations were high that Mushfiqur Rahim would take Bangladesh to a challenging total. The right-hander however fell trying to sweep Chahal and Soumya fell in the same over, stumped playing a rash shot after a decent 20-ball 30.

The slump well and truly began from that point onwards and proved how important partnerships and wickets in hand were in the shortest format of the game. Mahmudullah Riyad was watchful while India tidied things up after bowling loose deliveries at the start of the innings.

The skipper played a few deft strokes but with runs not flowing on a surface tailor-made for big runs, Afif Hossain succumbed trying to cut loose and holed out at cover. Mahmudullah, upon reaching 30, maintained the pattern of Bangladesh batsmen getting starts in this match but not making it count.

With no set batsmen at the crease, the Tigers in the end managed what appeared to be a middling score of 153 for six on this surface, falling way behind their own expectations after the bright start from the openers.

Failure to keep focus and throwing away wickets undid the Tigers and they were left needing a special effort from the bowlers.

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BANGLADESH	R/B	4s/6s
Liton run out	29/21	4/0
Naim c Iyer b Sundar	36/31	5/0
Soumya st Pant b Chahal	30/20	2/1
Mushfiqur c Pandya b Chahal	4/6	0/0
Mahmudullah c Dube b Chahal	30/21	4/0
Afif c Sharma b Ahmed	6/8	0/0
Mosaddek not out	7/9	0/0
Aminul not out	5/5	1/0
Extras: (b-2, nb-1, w-3)	6	
Total: (For 6 wkts in 20 overs)	153	
Did not bat: Shafiqul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Al-Amin Hossain.		
Fall of wickets: 1-60, 2-83, 3-97, 4-103, 5-128, 6-142.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Chahal	4	0	25	1
Khaleel	4	0	44	1
Sundar	4	0	25	1
Chahal	4	0	28	2
Dube	2	0	12	0
Pandya	2	0	17	0

INDIA: Rohit Sharma (capt), Shikhar Dhawan, KL Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Krunal Pandya, Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Deepak Chahal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Khaleel Ahmed.

Umpires: Chettithody Shamshuddin (IND), Nitin Menon (IND)
TV Umpire: Anil Chaudhary (IND)
Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (SRI)

Bond keen on England coaching role

AGENCIES, London

Former New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond has set his sights on the role of England's bowling coach. With Chris Silverwood taking the role of the head coach, England roped in Darren Gough to work with the bowlers in the lead-up to the two-Test series in New Zealand. However, on a full-time basis, the post remains vacant.

"I know all the English guys. I caught up with them in Christchurch when they down for their pre-season tournament [T20 warm-up fixtures]. I really enjoyed being with the team and liked the guys," Bond said.

"I think you look at everything that's put in front of you, wherever the opportunities come up."

SPORTS REPORTER from Rajkot

Sun smiles on cricket-crazy Rajkot

The prayers from the cricket fans were answered as Rajkot saw sunshine from early yesterday morning. The sunshine raised hopes that the second T20I between Bangladesh and India would take place without a hitch despite Cyclone Maha being a constant threat in the lead-up to the match.

The Tigers had seen bright and sunny days ever since arriving in Rajkot but a storm gathered in the early evening on Wednesday, raking in gusts of wind. The power went off at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium that evening. The storm had reportedly subsided and turned into a deep depression but the day was bright and sunny.

The city was abuzz as the sun shone throughout the day. Rajkot had only hosted two T20Is before this game and expectant crowds had gathered outside the stadium. While riding through the city, a taxi driver informed this reporter about cricket-crazy Rajkot.

"We are a small town but you know what, we are the craziest about cricket in all India," he

said. Asked about his favourite cricketer, he replied: "We don't have a favourite here, we support India and that's how we see the game."

Pressed on who he sees as favourites, the cabbie said: "There is a huge chance India won't win unless Rohit [Sharma] does something. Bangladesh are the team in form."

Riding with future stars

The cricket-crazy state is making huge strides in producing

their own heroes. There are 22 academies in Rajkot which provide optimum support to both boys' and girls' age-level cricket teams. 15 to 20 ball-boys were selected from such academies in Rajkot for yesterday's match. It was an opportunity to inspire the next generation of stars. The parents dropped them off at a predetermined location from where they were picked up by a BCCI bus which also accommodated reporters from Bangladesh.

Afjal, a student of class seven



England look to stay alive

Fourth T20I against NZ today

AGENCIES, Napier

New Zealand would deserve it too. They've played better cricket so far, and look like the more complete side in all departments. But England aren't done yet either, and they would be looking at their seven-wicket victory in the first T20I as a reference point and study in how to overcome the threat of the Black Caps.

But for that to happen, England need to improve in all areas, specially their batting in the middle overs. The two Sams Billings and Curran have not performed at number 5 and 6 respectively, and in order to successfully put up a big total or chase down a score depending on the situation, the contributions of those two positions are vital.

England's weakness has been New Zealand's strength. Ross Taylor and Jimmy Neesham have been in good nick, but the biggest plus point has undoubtedly been the form of Colin de Grandhomme who has enjoyed a renaissance at the number four position. 102 runs at a strike-rate of 167.2 speaks for itself.

De Grandhomme is aware that the series is far from done. "Definitely you can't give them an inch. You've got to keep hitting them hard and try and win every game when you can," he told reporters before the game. "They're pretty good lads and they're a good team, so it's always nice beating them, but we've got to move on from that."

England gave the home side a tough fight in the last match before losing control from a position of dominance, losing the plot from being 139/2 and chasing 181. They lost five wickets in merely ten runs, and as well as the New Zealand bowlers bowled, it was also a case of England pressing the self-destruct button.

RAJKOT REVELRY

SHORT CORNER

Rare feat

Meghalaya off-spinner Nirdesh Baisoya claimed a rare feat by taking all 10 wickets in an innings in a U-16 Vijay Merchant Trophy fixture against Nagaland in Tezpur on Wednesday.

The 15-year-old bowler, originally from Meerut, moved to Meghalaya as a guest player two years ago. He was coached by Sanjay Rastogi, a coach who has also trained India seamers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Praveen Kumar.



"I have been training under Rastogi sir since childhood and I train regularly at the Victoria Park in Meerut," Baisoya told Sportstar on Wednesday. Baisoya registered figures of 21-10-51-10 in the match on Wednesday. Nagaland were bowled out for 113. In reply, Meghalaya finished Day 1 on 109/4.

Two Indian cricketers arrested for spot-fixing

Two former Indian Premier League players have been arrested for spot-fixing in a scandal-ridden regional

tournament, police said Thursday. Wicketkeeper-batsman CM Gautam and Abrar Kazi were arrested in Bangalore by a special unit investigating corruption and fixing in the Karnataka Premier League.

Gautam, the 33-year-old former captain of Bellary Tuskers, and teammate Kazi allegedly accepted \$28,000 each for "slow batting" in this year's tournament final against Hubli Tigers. The Tuskers lost the game by eight runs.

"The Central Crime Branch has made two important arrests in the KPL spot-fixing scandal," Sandeep Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police, told AFP, naming Gautam and Kazi.

"They did spot-fixing in the KPL 2019 finals between Hubli and Bellary. They were paid two million rupees (\$28,000) for slow batting.

"Also, they fixed another match against the Bangalore team. Further investigations are on and more arrests will be made."

Cricket has become a key battleground in the fight against spot-fixing -- illegal bets on a certain part of the action, such as how many runs are scored in an over.

The KPL has been under growing suspicion since Ashfaq Ali Thara, owner of a KPL team and a side in the Dubai T20 League, was arrested for placing bets and a possible role in fixing matches.

Two more players were arrested on charges of betting and match-fixing.

--AFP

'Hopeful because of our preparation'

Bangladesh's Test players depart for India today

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz said yesterday that preparations for the upcoming two-match Test series against India have been going smoothly as Bangladesh try to push the formidable Virat Kohli-led India in their own backyard.

The young off-spinner exuded confidence after Tigers' T20I squad got off a flying start on tour by winning the first T20I in New Delhi.

Mehedi, along with new Test captain Mominul Haque, Shadman Islam, Imrul Kayes, Saif Hasan, Nayeem Hasan, Abu Jayed and Ebadot Hossain will leave today to join the team in Nagpur, where the Tigers will play the third and last T20I against India, who is being led by Rohit Sharma in place of the rested Kohli. The first Test of the two-match series will start in Indore from November 14 and the final Test will take place in Kolkata from November 22.

"It's a very important tour for us and we have to take up the challenge. Mental preparation is very important because it would not be an easy task to play Tests on Indian soil. I am hopeful because of the way we are preparing for the series. We are now confident as we made a good start in this series. It is possible to do something if everybody steps up," Mehedi told the reporters yesterday.

The 22-year-old all-rounder, who has so far played 20 Tests since making his debut against England in Chattogram in October 2016, also said that he will miss bowling in partnership with ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan.

"I really enjoy the partnership with Shakib bhai. He helps me a lot during my bowling as he always advises me about what I need to do. So, I have to be prepared as I will not get his assistance this time. But we have our [spin] bowling consultant Daniel Vettori and I hope I can learn many things from him," said Mehedi.

"His [Shakib's] absence also puts additional pressure on other spinners, but we have to take that pressure and face that challenge," he added.



Mehedi Hasan Miraz, a part of Bangladesh's Test squad, was seen practicing in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED