



Everything Mehedi Hasan Miraz is touching is turning into gold, it seems, at the moment. After his maiden Test century on Thursday, the all-rounder took four wickets as Bangladesh skittled West Indies for 259 runs in the first innings of the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Spinners leave it late

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Although Bangladesh still have the upper hand on the West Indies after the third day of the first Test with a 217-run lead, the hosts will be keen to post a big target on the fourth day.

Despite left-arm spinner Taijul Islam dismissing Nkrumah Bonner with the very first ball of the day, things did not go the way the Bangladesh team management would have hoped since.

Bangladesh were unable to create pressure, especially the three spinners in the form of Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Nayeem Hasan and Taijul Islam bowled short and wide.

Skipper Kraigg Brathwaite and debutant Kyle Mayers utilised the opportunity as the West Indies struck 18 fours and a six in the first session, with the pitch in

Chattogram remaining on the slower side with a hint of turn.

Skipper Mominul Haque pushed the fielders with the intention of stemming the flow of runs, but there were also some attacking moments.

"Obviously we can say this is a spinning track. But since the positive start to the day, we, the spinners, were unable to bowl consistently in good areas. I think the first session went bad for the spinners and if we could bowl in the right areas, the results would have been better," Taijul told the media at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

"But still, we have a lot of time and it's part of cricket. Maybe it's because of becoming acclimatised since we are making a comeback in Tests after a long gap."

Apart from the bowling, Bangladesh were also unable to grab opportunities in the field.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: First innings 430 all out in 150.2 overs (Mehedi 103, Shakib 68; Warrican 4-133)
West Indies: First innings 259 all out in 96.1 overs (Brathwaite 76, Blackwood 68; Mehedi 4-58, Mustafizur 2-46, Nayeem 2-54, Taijul 2-84)
Bangladesh: Second innings 47 for 3 in 20 overs (Mominul 31 not out, Mushfiqur 10 not out, Shadman 5; Cornwall 2-28, Gabriel 1-13)

Nazmul Hossain Shanto dropped a rather straightforward catch at first slip off Joshua Da Silva when he was on 24 as he went on to score 42 runs and added 99 runs for the sixth wicket with Brathwaite.

Yasir Ali, who came on as a substitute for Shakib Al Hasan, also missed a couple of opportunities, at short leg and silly mid-off, which hurt the Tigers in crucial situations.

However, Bangladesh did manage to make a comeback by riding on the spinners. Mehedi

ended up picking four wickets while Taijul and Nayeem bagged two each as the Tigers staged a dramatic comeback in the last hour before tea.

The spinners picked up the last five wickets in just 23 balls at the cost of only six runs as the visitors folded for 259.

A lot will depend on the pitch too, which has not turned till the end of the third day. But according to Taijul, the pitch might get more difficult for the batters on the fourth day. He also added that a lead of 300 to 350 runs in the second innings would be enough for Bangladesh to win the Test.

"It's actually tough to say but it's natural that it may become difficult for the batsmen on the fourth day. The spinners can take more advantage from the pitch but to do that it will be important to bowl in the right areas consistently," Taijul said.

Shakib's participation in doubt

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



When Taijul Islam, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Nayeem Hasan were scalping wickets thick and fast in a West Indies batting collapse that saw the visitors lose five wickets in just 23 deliveries and get bundled out for 259, Shakib Al Hasan's injury update was in stark contrast to the home side's spark on the field.

A BCB press release stated that Shakib's MRI scan revealed that he suffered a fresh injury, a strain on his left thigh, putting the premier all-rounder's further participation in the ongoing Test against the West Indies in jeopardy.

The top all-rounder did not take any part in yesterday's play as he was taken to hospital for a scan. And even though the press release mentioned that "the BCB medical team will continue to treat and review his progress over the course of the first Test", it remained unclear if the Chattogram Test would see any more involvement from Shakib.

The injury happened when he came to bowl following Tea on Day 2. Shakib seemed to have pulled his groin muscle when he attempted to stop a ball with his leg after Windies skipper Kraigg Brathwaite pushed it towards mid-on for a single in the sixth over.

Shakib continued after that and bowled

three more overs but left the field clutching his groin muscle in the 17th over of the innings. And it seemed as if Shakib, who was clearly in a lot of discomfort, had aggravated an old groin injury.

Shakib was picked for the Test after recovering from a groin injury that he suffered during Bangladesh's third and final ODI against the Windies last month. However, even though his latest injury was ruled a fresh one, questions still remain over his match fitness.

"He is still not quite at 100 per cent," were the words of Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo following Tigers' practice session last Monday, just a day and a half before the first Test. He had however hoped that the premier all-rounder would gain match fitness in the remaining time.

Perhaps ominous signs were also there when the team physio was seen having a few words with the 33-year-old Shakib during almost every drinks break when Shakib was batting on the second day. Shakib, however, exhibited very little discomfort while wielding the willow during his 230-minute stay, during which he scored a 150-ball 68.

Bangladesh went with a sole pacer and a spin quartet, of which Shakib was a crucial part, for this Test. And while the team management's decision to involve a fourth spinner over giving another pacer a chance has already raised eyebrows, it now has to be asked whether there were doubts about Shakib's fitness from the start.



Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who barely recovered from a groin injury before the Chattogram Test, could not take to the field yesterday after leaving the field on the previous day with discomfort on his left leg. A scan, according to BCB, appears to have identified a fresh injury on the thigh.

PHOTO: STAR

Pakistan hit back after Nortje five-for

REUTERS

Anrich Nortje took five wickets as Pakistan were dismissed for 272 but South Africa's struggles with the bat in the sub-continent continued as they limped to 106 for four at the close on the second day of the second Test in Rawalpindi on Friday.

Captain Quinton de Kock (24 not out from 11 balls) and Temba Bavuma (15 not out) survived in the gloom at the close, but the tourists still trail by 166 runs and will be looking for a counter-punch on day three.



Nortje (5-56) was superb with the ball, his aggression and accuracy leading to a third five-wicket haul in Tests to restrict Pakistan to a manageable first innings score.

South Africa's openers Dean Elgar (15) and Aiden Markram were positive at the start of the innings, but disaster struck as they lost two wickets in the final two balls of the middle session.

Elgar was caught by wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan off the bowling of Hasan Ali (2-29), and the very next delivery Rassie van der Dussen was deceived by a ball that kept low and clattered into his stumps.



Root's 'very special' ton

AFP, Chennai

Skipper Joe Root hit a century in his 100th Test on Friday, but said England need a minimum 600 runs in the opening match against India.

England ended on 263 for three after Dom Sibley fell to paceman Jasprit Bumrah for 87 in the final over of day one and stumps were called in Chennai. England elected to bat after winning the toss in the first match of the four-Test series.

Root, unbeaten on 128 and battling cramp in the final session, put on 200 runs with Sibley after England slipped to 63 for two in the first session.

"I think we've got to look to try and get as many as we can - 600, 700 if we can, really try and make the most of the first innings while it's good," Root told reporters.

"Those footholes are starting to wear quite quickly. So, if we can bat the whole of tomorrow and maybe into day three then things could speed up quite quickly for us and you never know what can happen from that point onwards, but ultimately we've got to try and back up today."

Friday's effort was his third successive and 20th Test ton and termed it a "very special" knock.

"Yeah, very special. Last night the guys actually put a little surprise together for me - put some videos from some past players, some friends and family. And Ben in particular, stood up and said some really kind words," said Root.

Kings perfect, Abahani resurgent

SPORTS REPORTER



Holder Bashundhara Kings continued their perfect record in the Bangladesh Premier League with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Chattogram Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Mahbubur Rahman Sufil scored the decisive goal in the second half to drive Kings to their sixth straight win, helping the Federation Cup champions to move to 18 points, four ahead of second-placed Abahani.

Bashundhara Kings took to the field on the back of morale-boosting 4-1 win over Mohammedan in Cumilla, but they faced stiff challenge from Chattogram Abahani, who threatened to snatch points despite playing with a depleted squad featuring only two foreign players.

The first half was an even contest, with both sides creating a couple of chances before Kings took the lead in the 61st minute when Sufil nodded home a well-judged corner from Jonathan Fernandes.

Chattogram Abahani had a shout for a handball turned down five minutes later when the ball hit Tapu

Barman's hand off a back-header from teammate Rimon Hossain but referee Jashim Atker overlooked the incident. Winger Rakib Hossain wasted a good chance to level the margin in the 71st minute as he failed to muster a proper shot, with only Kings' goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico to beat.



Kings also had two good chances to increase their lead but Sufil and Robson Da Silva drove wide on both occasions.

UTTAR BARIDHARA HOLD MOHAMMEDAN

Since their success in the opening match against Arambagah, a win has eluded Mohammedan in the past five matches as the Black and

Whites came from behind to play out a goalless draw against lowly Uttar Baridhara Club at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi yesterday.

Smarting from a 4-1 drubbing at the hands of holders Bashundhara Kings in the previous match, Mohammedan survived a scare

stoppage time of the first half after defender Papon Singh handled the ball inside the box while attempting to clear a shot from Uryu Nagata.

Arif Hossain put the ball in the back of Mohammedan's net in the 64th minute, but referee Bhuban Mohan Tarafder ruled it to be off-side.

ABAHANI BACK TO WINNING WAYS

After successive draws against Mohammedan and Chattogram Abahani, six-time champions Abahani returned to winning ways with an emphatic 4-1 win over Muktiyoddha Sangsad at Bangabandhu National Stadium last night.

Despite struggling to retain their lead against Mohammedan and Chattogram Abahani in previous matches, the Sky Blues hardly faced any trouble to score two goals in each half of the match. Poor goalkeeping from Muktiyoddha's Mahfuz Hasan Pritom helped Abahani's cause.

Masih Saighani scored twice while Sohel Rana and substitute Dipok Roy netted one goal each for Abahani while Sarwar Jaman Nipu pulled one goal back for Muktiyoddha Sangsad.

I'm still the best, insists Serena

AFP, Melbourne



Serena Williams on Friday insisted she was still the player to beat at 39, as she drew inspiration from ageless NFL quarterback Tom Brady ahead of the Australian Open.

Williams' comments came after her quarterfinal win at the Yarra Valley Classic where she looked in ominous form -- before pulling out of the tournament with a right shoulder injury.

The tennis icon, who is aiming for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, said her advancing age was inconsequential and said she looked up to athletes like Brady, 43, who on Sunday is seeking his seventh Super Bowl title. "I feel good. I look at Tom Brady, it's so

inspiring," she said.

"I think with all the new things, all the new technology, all the new physical treatments, rehab, things that you can do ... obviously it prolongs careers for so long."

Williams, who defeated fellow American Danielle Collins 6-2, 4-6, 10-6 after a mid-match wobble, was set for a semifinal showdown with world number one Ashleigh Barty Saturday before the injury.

Asked whether she is still the best in the world when on top form, Williams was unequivocal. "I absolutely wouldn't be playing if I didn't think that," said the American.

Williams is drawn to play Germany's Laura Siegemund in the opening round of the Australian Open starting on Monday.

