

Improvement in key areas a necessity

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the West Indies and especially left-hander Kyle Mayers deserve most of the credit for a magnificent win in the first Test in chase of a record 395 runs in the fourth innings in Chattogram, one must also analyse where the Bangladesh team were lacking in the shock defeat. Faced with the task of saving the series, Bangladesh will be desperate to win the Mirpur Test starting from today.

and Nkrumah Bonner, who added a match-winning 216-run fourth-wicket stand for West Indies, were both dropped in the first game.

Nazmul Hossain Shanto dropped two catches at slip off spinners which should have been taken in line with international standards. Following Shadman Islam's injury, substitute Yasir Ali took up the job at short leg and silly mid-off and although he took a brilliant catch at short-leg, it is unlikely that he will make the playing eleven.

It will be yet another test for the Tigers to unearth a specialist

close-range fielder, with skipper Mominul previously standing in those positions which require agile reflexes and great catching skills. Even wicketkeeper Liton Das missed a few sharp chances behind the stumps.

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM TAKING REVIEWS

Bangladesh and especially skipper Mominul will have to come up with a better strategy to utilise the review system, their failure to make the most of which raised many questions in the first Test. Mayers and Bonner benefitted again after neither Mominul nor

the bowler went for reviews upon being denied by the on-field umpire for leg before decisions. On both occasions, off the bowling of Nayeem Hasan and Taijul Islam, replays showed the batsmen would have been gone if the review was taken. It is important to realise the situation of the game although having only three reviews in hand, it can be a tricky call for the captain sometimes. Still, the skipper will have to be more spontaneous and specific, instead of giving into confusion if the hosts are to make the most of the review system in the coming days.

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Circumstances ahead of Bangladesh's second and final Test against the West Indies, starting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today, stand in stark contrast to what they were ahead of the first Test in Chattogram.

The tables were turned drastically after Kyle Mayers hit an unbeaten double ton on Test debut to shellshock the hosts and snatch a win for the visitors in the port city. Whereas a win against a depleted Caribbean outfit was expected and almost seemingly taken for granted both by the media and players before the first Test, it now remains a matter of salvaging a series draw and helping instil faith and confidence into the shocked Tigers' camp with a win in the last of the two-match Test series.

Add the news of Shakib Al Hasan and Shadman Islam's absence through injury and the challenge of fielding a well-balanced XI in pursuit of Bangladesh's first World Test Championship points only become steeper.

Shakib, who suffered a thigh injury in the Chattogram Test, was ruled out of this Test while Shadman Islam, a first-choice opener in Tests, also failed to fully recover from a hip injury incurred as a result of an awkward fall while fielding on day four of the first Test. Soumya Sarkar was announced as the replacement for Shakib, but Bangladesh are yet to announce a replacement for the left-handed Shadman.

Skipper Mominul Haque said that he would not be thinking about Shakib's absence because he was trying to get the job done with the ones available for the game.

"It is not like the team, the world or the Bangladesh team would cease to function without Shakib bhai. When Shakib bhai was not around earlier and before his time, Bangladesh played, played well and won matches," Mominul said during the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"It depends on how you take his absence. I had to play a number of series without Shakib bhai and here we only have one match left in the series. So I am not actually thinking about



Soumya Sarkar practises catching, an area where Bangladesh need to improve markedly, during training yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium ahead of the second Test against West Indies starting from today. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

his absence. I am trying to keep that out of mind and prepare with the ones available."

When asked about the logic behind replacing Shakib with Soumya, who was not even in the 20-member preliminary Test squad for the series, the skipper made clear that it had to do with the left-arm's ability as an all-rounder.

It might be that instead of playing Soumya in the middle order in Shakib's role, he might be asked to open the innings. That might see Bangladesh opt for another front-line seamer alongside Mustafizur Rahman following the fuss that was created after the Tigers opted for just one seamer in Chattogram. In that case, regular Test choice Abu Jayed may get back in the eleven or Hasan Mahmud, who impressed during the three ODIs, could get the nod for today's match with Soumya playing the role of a third seamer.

With Bangladesh missing Shakib's spin, it is unlikely that they will drop any of the three other spinners -- Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam and Nayeem Hasan -- for the game as the Mirpur pitch has always assisted spinners from the early sessions of the game.

The biggest thing is not to get carried away [due to the win in the Chattogram Test]. We are obviously happy with that win but we have to start back from zero [in the Mirpur Test]. That's the point we stressed on in last two practice sessions. It is important to stay disciplined, stick to the plan and work hard as a bowling unit and a batting unit and not to think that we are starting from hundred and to know that we are starting from zero.

KRAIGG BRATHWAITE
WEST INDIES CAPTAIN

But it will not be an easy task against a confident West Indies side, especially if the Tigers fail to rectify their mistakes or fail to focus on the areas that could change their fortunes in the longest format of the game.

GRAB THE CHANCES

Bangladesh fielders dropped at least four catches from close catching positions such as at the slip, gully, short-leg and silly mid-off regions during the first Test. The Tigers are yet to find a specialist slip fielder, which has remained a persistent issue over the years. Kyle Mayers



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal, who scored only nine runs in the first Test in Chattogram, inspects the pitch while Chattogram Test's hero Kyle Mayers and spinner Jomel Warrican stretch during a practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Spinners need to adapt and level up

MAZHAR UDDIN



The ploy of packing the side with an arsenal of spinners on a pitch prepared to aid them backfired yet again as hosts Bangladesh suffered a shocking defeat in the first Test in Chattogram, where West Indies chased down a record 395-run target.

Bangladesh faced a similar outcome in the last Test they played at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, in 2019. The hosts then fielded four spinners and went down by an embarrassing 224-run margin against Test newcomers Afghanistan.

This time, the surface in Chattogram was not tailor-made for the three Bangladeshi spinners in off-spinners Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Nayeem Hasan and left-arm spinner Taijul Islam after Shakib Al Hasan suffered a thigh injury and had to sit out since the second day.

Although the pitch did offer turn and the odd variable bounce, it was only if the ball was bowled at the right line and length. Mehedi did get the reward for that and picked up eight wickets in the game but still, the pitch did not meet the expectation of an out-and-out rank-turner surface till the end of the fifth day.

It seemed the Bangladesh spinners were expecting the pitch to change its nature over the last three days. Instead, the pitch was on the slower side and despite there being a hint of turn on the surface, what cost Bangladesh was undisciplined bowling on a surface that demanded accuracy. More dispiriting for the hosts would have been the fact that visiting finger spinners Rahkeem Cornwall and Jomel Warrican had displayed the requisite accuracy in Bangladesh's second inning.

Just a day later, the home spinners often erred on the short side and conceded regular boundaries, especially to left-hander Kyle Mayers, who hit 20 fours and seven sixes during a match-winning 210.

With Shakib missing out on the second Test in Mirpur too, it will be important for the three remaining spinners to step up their skills instead of relying on a surface that is may or may not be a perfect fit.

In the last Test they played in Mirpur against Zimbabwe last year, Bangladesh did field two-seamers in Ebadot Hossain and Abu Jayed, and the latter bagged four wickets in the first innings.

But it was Taijul and Nayeem who



Average degree of turn from the Bangladeshi spinners in the first Test

Nayeem Hasan - 5.7, Taijul Islam - 5.0, Mehedi Hasan Miraz - 4.9, Shakib Al Hasan - 3.9

Breakdown of lengths from the Bangladeshi spinners in the first Test

MEHEDI HASAN MIRAZ						
Length	Overs	Runs	Wkts	Economy	Average	SR
Full Toss	0.5	8	0	9.6	-	-
Full (2-4m)	7.2	25	2	3.4	12.5	22
Good Length (4-6m)	44.2	90	5	2	18	53.2
Short (6m+)	8.3	47	1	5.5	47	51

TAIJUL ISLAM						
Length	Overs	Runs	Wkts	Economy	Average	SR
Full Toss	0.1	4	0	24	-	-
Yorker (0-2m)	0.3	4	0	8	-	-
Full (2-4m)	10.2	34	0	3.3	-	-
Good Length (4-6m)	58.4	105	4	1.8	26.3	88
Short (6m+)	8.3	28	0	3.3	-	-

NAYEEM HASAN						
Length	Overs	Runs	Wkts	Economy	Average	SR
Full Toss	0.1	0	0	0	-	-
Yorker (0-2m)	0.1	0	0	0	-	-
Full (2-4m)	5	20	0	4	-	-
Good Length (4-6m)	35.3	96	2	2.7	48	106.5
Short (6m+)	9.4	43	1	4.5	43	58

were instrumental, bagging 15 wickets in the game and the seamers bowled just nine overs in the second innings as Bangladesh registered a comfortable innings and 106-run victory.

However, the scenario will be different against an upbeat West Indies with an experienced and able pace attack with Kemar Roach and Shannon Gabriel leading the charge. The impressive Alzarri Joseph could well be included.

Mominul said the team management is willing to reverse their one-pacer strategy after fielding

Mustafizur Rahman as the lone pacer in Chattogram. However, he did add that everything will depend on the conditions.

The Fizz also struggled despite a brilliant start in the first innings when he picked up two wickets but the left-arm seamer was uncomfortable with his follow-through after being warned twice by the umpire for running on the danger zone.

"It will depend on the conditions and if it allows for three pacers or if it requires spinners we will go accordingly," said Mominul.

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