

# Vision for the future still muddled Tigers make their one session count

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The Tigers' team manager suddenly took a U-turn in Chattogram after all the talk of creating a good cricketing culture and giving more exposure to seamers prior to the start of the two-match Test series against the West Indies.

The think-tank had surprisingly opted to field just one seamer in the form of Mustafizur Rahman, who made a return to Test cricket following an impressive run in the preceding three-match ODI series. Alongside him, Bangladesh opted for four spinners, but the lone seamer strategy failed to pay dividends once again. At one point, Skipper Mominul Haque looked helpless after prime left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan was injured midway through the Test, leaving the Tigers distinctly lacking variety in the bowling attack.

Mustafizur started the first Test on a promising note, picking up two wickets early in the innings. But since then, the 25-year-old has lost his rhythm, even being warned twice by the umpire for stepping onto the danger zone.

Following a shock defeat in the first Test in Chattogram, where the West Indies rode on Kyle Mayers's double ton and chased down a record 395 runs on the final day, many thought the team management would move on from their one-seamer strategy in the second Test.

But interestingly, Bangladesh technically stuck to the same game plan. Regular Test pacer Abu Jayed



**Bangladesh pacer Abu Jayed, who replaced Mustafizur Rahman in the playing XI, celebrates the wicket of West Indies batsman Kyle Mayers. [Below] Mustafizur shares a light moment with uncapped pacer Hasan Mahmud during the first day's play of the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

was included for the Mirpur Test in place of Mustafizur while Soumya Sarkar was included as a second seam option with his part-time medium pacers in place of the injured Shadman Islam. Batsman Mohammad Mithun was named as Shakib's replacement.

Jayed delivered for the Tigers and picked up two wickets -- including the hero of the first Test Kyle Mayers -- with his beautiful



## Chennai gears up to welcome crowd

AFP, Chennai

Stung by their crushing defeat in the opening match, India and captain Virat Kohli are looking to get their revenge on England in the second Test starting Saturday as crowds return to cheer on the hosts.

England, led by Joe Root, outplayed India to win by 227 runs on Tuesday to lead the four-match series 1-0 and jump to the top of the inaugural World Test Championship table.

It was a shock loss for India, coming into the encounter flying high after their historic series win in Australia and with the talismanic Kohli back in the side after his paternity break.

But the hosts will likely be lifted by Chennai allowing spectators in, meaning India will be playing in front of a home crowd -- albeit at reduced capacity -- for the first time since October 2019.

It's unclear how many England supporters the Barmy Army will muster, with foreign tourists still barred from India because of the coronavirus pandemic. In the recent Sri Lankan series, they had just one fan.

Root, who scored a match-winning 218 in his 100th Test in Chennai, said he missed the travelling fans but people in the ground would "improve the aesthetics of Test cricket."

Kohli has vowed to give a "tough fight" but the skipper is under pressure having now lost four Tests in a row including two in New Zealand.

## Barty wobbles before reaching third round

REUTERS, Melbourne

World number one Ash Barty suffered a meltdown on the brink of victory but regrouped herself to fend off local compatriot Daria Gavrilova 6-1, 7-6(7) and reach the third round of the Australian Open yesterday.

Barty, who came onto centre court with her left thigh heavily strapped, served for the match at 5-2 but was broken twice in a hail of unforced errors, allowing wildcard Gavrilova to drag the contest deep into a tiebreak.

Fortunately for Barty, Gavrilova relieved her twice with unforced errors on set point and then coughed up another on match point to surrender on a steamy day at Rod Laver Arena.

Having destroyed first round opponent Danka Kovinic 6-0 6-0 in 44 minutes, Barty said her slump against Gavrilova was par for the course after missing almost the entire 2020 season. "I think it's natural," the top seed told reporters.



fuller-length deliveries and a hint of swing. However, he was more on the shorter side and could not trouble the Windies batters as the visitors dominated the first session. Jayed came up with a more disciplined length and eventually got the reward. More importantly, he showed that even if there was nothing in the pitch, a seamer could still play a big part in the bowling attack. Jayed bowled 18 overs in the day at an economy of 2.50, with skipper Mominul using him in five short spells yesterday. "As you know I am not an

express fast bowler and I lack pace. But if I want to survive in international cricket, I have to focus on my length and line. I have no option except bowling in the right areas and I always keep that in my mind whenever I bowl," Jayed told the media yesterday.

Soumya also bowled at a decent length with his gentle medium pace and picked the wicket of Kraigg Brathwaite, tempting the right-hander into cutting at a delivery outside the off-stump and getting an edge.

The chop and change strategy from the Tigers team management, highlighted by including Mustafizur in the first Test and dropping him for the second, does not reflect the ideals of long-term planning.

On the other hand, the decision to not include Jayed in the first Test despite him being a regular feature in the Test side recently also does not send out a good message, especially for the seamers who are expected to deliver abroad.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning his second round match against American qualifier Michael Mmoh yesterday. Nadal dispelled any remaining doubts over his fitness with a commanding 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 win to march into the Australian Open third round.**

"I mean, I haven't played a lot of tennis over the last 12 months. Obviously (I'm) going to have ebbs and flows, not only in your concentration but your level of play as well.

"It's important to be able to bring that back as often as possible. For a couple of games, I wasn't able to do that."

Barty said she had tweaked a muscle in her leg when warming up for her first round match on Tuesday but downplayed the injury. "The bandage is very big, but that's more just support so that the tape itself doesn't fall off," she said. "It's not a very subtle tape job, you often see it on a lot of the girls. The guys can hide it beneath their shorts a little bit better. "Obviously it's not affecting the way that I can play in any way."

Barty, who will face Russian 29th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova for a place in the fourth round, reached the semi-finals last year only to be shocked by surprise winner Sofia Kenin when seemingly on the verge of ending Australia's long wait for a home winner.

The last Australian to win the singles title was Chris O'Neil in 1978.

## 'Barca are capable of anything'

REUTERS

Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman said his side's 2-0 defeat to Sevilla in Wednesday's Copa del Rey semi-final first leg was an unfair scoreline given their performance but backed them to turn the tie around.

The defeat ended a six-game winning streak for Barca in all competitions but Koeman said he was not worried the result would knock his side off course.

"I don't think this will affect us, we'll continue with the same mentality and commitment," he said. "We've played 11 matches away from home this season and I would sign up to having the same results again. Of course I'd have preferred to have lost one more of those games and won today, but overall I cannot criticise the team."

He also believes his side are capable of turning the tie around in the second leg, just as they came from behind to beat Rayo Vallecano and Granada in the previous two rounds, adding: "When we're at home, Barca



**Sevilla's Jules Kounde celebrates their first goal with Ivan Rakitic as Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong looks dejected during a 2-0 win in Wednesday's Copa del Rey semifinal first leg match.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

are capable of anything." Defender Jules Kounde put Sevilla in front in the first half after a stunning individual run while Ivan Rakitic added the second late on, after Barca had been denied a penalty and Lionel Messi had been thwarted three times by keeper Bono. "It's a very tough punishment. We should have got a better result, we had a lot of chances and played well but leave here with a bad result," Koeman said.

## 'Pessina was extraordinary'

REUTERS, BERGAMO



Matteo Pessina scored twice as Atalanta knocked holders Napoli out of the Coppa Italia with a 3-1 victory on Wednesday to set up a final against Juventus.

A goalless draw in the first leg of the semi-final left the tie on a knife edge, but the hosts raced into a commanding early lead as Duvan Zapata smashed in an unstoppable shot and Pessina swept home the second inside the opening 16 minutes.

Napoli came to life after the break and pulled one back through Hirving Lozano before Pessina's dinked finish 12 minutes from time left the visitors' hopes of a successful Cup defence in tatters. "It's a great satisfaction, we dedicate this to the fans. The regret is not to live these moments with them, but reaching a final is a sign of continuity," Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini told a news conference.

"Since Jan.3 we've played every three days, for six weeks. These guys are extraordinary, it's not easy to recover all your energy. This is an extraordinary team for its courage and spirit but also for its respect for the opponent."

"Pessina? He was extraordinary in his two goals, he will also be very useful for the national team," he added.