

What to WATCH

TEN 1

UEFA Champions League
Sevilla vs Dortmund
Live from 2:00 am (Thursday)

TEN 2

UEFA Champions League
Porto vs Juventus
Live from 2:00 am (Thursday)
T SPORTS & STAR SPORTS
SELECT 1

English Premier League
Burnley vs Fulham
Live from 12:00 am (Thursday)
Everton vs Manchester City
Live from 2:15 am (Thursday)

Test of application failed

Al-AMIN



When Bangladesh's off-spin-bowling all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz was hitting those boundaries on the fourth evening at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur to endanger a West Indies victory, his efforts appeared more like damage limitation than a serious statement.

Had Mehedi pulled off that one-wicket win, we would probably be running stories about his heroics. Cricket fans, now crucifying Tigers for the abject performance in the two-Test series, may have tried to seek some solace from that 'face-saving' win.

But that did not happen, and the true picture of Bangladesh's strength and approach towards Test cricket has emerged from under the carpet.

The three-wicket loss against the West Indies in the first Test at Chattogram was a chastening one for Bangladesh. The second one in Dhaka -- by 17 runs -- on Sunday was humiliating for the home side as it completed a 2-0 whitewash by the touring team.

Not many would have seen it coming when West Indies arrived here with a depleted side, leaving some of their frontline bowlers and batsmen behind. Still, that does not mean those fringe players looking for exposure lacked quality, and they proved that by winning on wickets tailor-made to suit the strength of the home side.

More importantly, they are from a place steeped in the nuances of Test cricket and with a resplendent history-- let's not forget that the West Indies once ruled the cricketing world for more than a decade.

The WI debacle was not accidental; it is an outcome of neglecting the oldest format of the game in our cricketing culture for a long time. Starting from the top



boss of Bangladesh cricket, every individual associated with the game is responsible for this.

While the Test culture part is associated with the establishment, the approach towards Test cricket is the domain of professional cricketers and to some extent their support staff.

How have cricketing professionals of the country, and the batting unit in particular, approached this Test series?

The earliest purveyors of cricket and their many successors have taught us that Test cricket is all about testing skills, endurance and application to the limit. For a batsman it is not just about scoring runs, but grafting, absorbing the pressure and taking a few blows on the body. It's more about winning -- or surviving, often one and the same -- a session than scoring a flashy fifty. It has everything to do with determination and putting a price tag on one's wicket. It is also about adapting with the constantly changing situation of a game.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh as a batting unit refused to take a leaf out of that standard manual when it came to applying themselves despite knowing well its importance and having honed their skills for years to be bracketed in that select group.

When Bangladesh were set a target

of 231 to win the second Test with five sessions in hand, the batting unit simply failed to show the grit needed in a Test match on a responsive wicket and crumbled in just 61.3 overs.

This was not the case in just those trying conditions, but throughout the test series the batting as a unit failed to demonstrate the necessary application needed in a Test match. Apart from the fourth morning of the second Test in Dhaka, there was actually no devil in the wicket. In Chattogram, the wicket played as true on the fifth day as it did in the opening morning.

For the record, there was only one session in the two-Test series when Bangladesh did not lose a wicket, there was one fifty partnership for the opening stand in four innings and there were only two hundred-run partnerships.

Opener Tamim Iqbal and former captain Mushfiqur Rahim have played more than fifty Test matches each. But the way they got out, playing rash shots, was anything but proper application in a Test match. Mushfiqur's reverse sweep has already become a topic of animated discussion in cricketing circles.

It is not just the two experienced batsmen who are to be blamed. Every member of the team was at fault when it came to applying themselves.

None showed the ability to change gears from limited-overs mode -- that they seem forever stuck in -- and many were victim to glory-hunting shots that are common in the shorter formats.

Some might argue that they did not get enough time and practice before returning to Test cricket after almost a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

But does that have anything to do with showing the necessary grit and temperament out in the middle? Nobody would have blamed a player had he shown that he tried. If one revisits all the dismissals of the two Test series, one would be amazed to

He might have flaws in technique, but the left-hander from Barbados showed the true temperament of Test cricket in that imperious knock. If you are a Bangladesh fan, one session you probably enjoyed most was when Liton Kumar Das and Mehedi batted out the entire post-lunch session on the third day of the second Test.

In the whole session Liton did not play a single rash shot. Mehedi was equally focused apart from one paddle sweep that the leg gully fielder could just fend. The session also brought about the beauty of a Test match where West Indies

second new ball due in a few overs, West Indies need to exploit that and the pacers have to do that if they are to wrest control of the game.

But both Liton and Mehedi passed through that phase gamely. There were a few bouncers from Shannon Gabriel, a vicious look from the bowler and a smiling response from Mehedi. When it looked like they were enjoying every bit of what Test cricket is all about --Liton played a sweep against West Indies' portly off-spinner Rahkeem Cornwall.

The right-hander was caught down the leg side. He played 132 deliveries before that one and had not even tried



see that over 80 percent were due to unforced errors.

Throughout the Test series, one innings enthralled a cricket fan most - West Indies batsman Kyle Mayer's unbeaten 210 on his Test debut, which pulled off a thrilling win for the West Indies in the first Test at Chattogram.

bowlers tried everything to break the partnership.

When the duo came out to bat after the tea break, Ian Bishop, the former West Indies fast bowler who was commentating inside a bio-bubble, clearly showed the visiting team's frustration. He said with the

to play that uncalled for, risky shot. Liton is not a fan of that shot. But why did he play it?

It is not just Liton, but every Test batsman in the Tigers' ranks needs to answer if Bangladesh really want to be a proper Test team, irrespective of winning or losing.

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