



It was Tom Latham's celebration following a match-winning unbeaten century that prevailed as the picture of the day while the jubilation of Mustafizur Rahman and Tamim Iqbal, instigated by the dismissal of New Zealand opener Martin Gupthill, faded away as the Tigers let the game slip away during a five-wicket defeat in the second ODI at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Close enough not good enough for Bashar

BISHWAJIT ROY



"Catches win matches" is one of the oldest adages in cricket. There are several occasions when catches have won matches and dropped catches have cost matches.

Bangladesh perhaps could have won a first-ever international match in New Zealand against the hosts at the Hagley Oval on Tuesday had keeper Mushfiqur Rahim held on to a simple catch from Jimmy Neesham and had Mahedi Hasan managed a return catch to send back stand-in skipper Tom Latham, who hit an unbeaten hundred to help New Zealand take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

"Everybody rued the two dropped catches and that's very natural. But from my perspective, the first win in New Zealand eluded us today because of a poor overall fielding effort. Stats will show you that Taskin Ahmed conceded 67 runs in his ten-over spell without success but I think he bowled brilliantly and was just unlucky. Not only that, he induced some good inside edges but conceded runs because of sloppy fielding," former national captain-turned-selector Habibul Bashar, who is touring with the team, told The Daily Star over phone after the match.

"We conceded too many singles and doubles as well as a few boundaries because of fumbles in the field. If you give New Zealand the slightest chance in their

own backyard, they will grab it with both hands. Still, those two catches were very costly. The first one could have changed the complexion of the whole game and we could have regained momentum," he continued.

Bashar was disappointed that the Tigers failed to capitalise after the batsmen bounced back from a dismal performance in the first game.

"It was a good wicket to bat on, especially if you consider our batting strength. We were a bit shaky initially because of the first-match disaster, but the batsmen finally showed character and put a fighting total up on the board. I think our overall bowling was also not bad considering the pitch, but there is no point finding positives when you ultimately lose the match."

"I think the only positive sign was that the team bounced back strongly after a poor showing in Dunedin. This performance also showed that we have got the ability to win matches against New Zealand in their own backyard. But they have to prove it by winning. I will only be happy if they can continue their good performance in the next game and win the final one-dayer [on Friday]," he added.

The former skipper also gave credit to skipper Tamim Iqbal for the way the left-hander built up the innings and bolstered the Tigers' confidence. "Tamim not only batted well, the way he is leading the team on and off the field is also very encouraging. But again we have to win."



Bangladeshi expatriates in New Zealand cheer the Tigers during the second ODI at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fielding the latest culprit of Tigers' Kiwi woes

NABID YEASIN



Bangladesh's five-wicket defeat to New Zealand in the second ODI at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday meant that the Tigers lost the three-match series with a game left to play.

A five-wicket win may sound a convincing victory but the margin fails to reflect how close the Tigers came to registering their first win against the Kiwis in their backyard.

Regardless of that fact, the records will still show that the Kiwis extended their home winning streak to 28-0 across formats against the Tigers, and 15-0 in ODIs.

The eight-wicket thumping in the first ODI in Dunedin was due to a batting debacle that saw the Tigers surrender to a formidable Kiwi pace attack for a meagre 131. And with the Bangladesh batsmen's history of failing on fast and bouncy tracks overseas, the prime focus since the first ODI was on the batsmen putting up a decent score that would at least leave the bowlers with something to defend.

However, it seemed that while focusing on batsmen doing their bit to bring bowlers into the game, the Bangladesh team completely

"Nice to have a match-winning contribution. We knew Bangladesh would come out fighting with the ball. We had to build some partnerships - did that with Dev (Devon Conway) and Neesh (James Neesham). Dew made it tough. It was a tricky surface. Nice to cross the line. Always nice to win the series. Want to keep improving as a side."

NEW ZEALAND STAND-IN SKIPPER
TOM LATHAM

"We should've won this game. Bowler created chances, we couldn't hold on. The dropped catches, you know. When situation comes, you have to do things 100%. Disappointed today. Batters did really well. It was a different surface, a bit slow, 271 was a decent score. And when the chances came, we couldn't hold on."

BANGLADESH CAPTAIN
TAMIM IQBAL

ignored and forgot to cover the other crucial facet of the game -- their fielding.

It was a rare instance of Bangladesh batsmen coming up with a collaborative effort against New Zealand in their backyard. Skipper Tamim Iqbal's 78 at the top was well complemented by Mohammad Mithun's career-best unbeaten 73 off 57 deliveries that helped the Tigers put up a competitive score of 271 for six.

Collective effort was seen in the bowling too. The Tigers had reduced the hosts to 53 for three in 10.5 overs. Although a 113-run fourth-wicket stand between Devon Conway and skipper Tom Latham had swung the momentum back

towards the hosts, a brilliant piece of fielding from Tamim -- a direct hit at the bowler's end -- in the 34th over offered renewed hope.

That bit of brilliance was the only moment of excellence in an otherwise lacklustre fielding effort. Just an over later, Mushfiqur Rahim failed to grab on to a regulation catch after pacer Taskin Ahmed had induced an edge off the bat of James Neesham on three. And again, in the very next over, off-spinner Mahedi Hasan dropped Latham off his own bowling when the eventual centurion was on 58.

Mushfiqur is undoubtedly one of the hardest-working players in the Tigers' unit. But it was not the only instance of him letting down

the team with poor efforts behind the stumps. The 33-year-old has come under scrutiny multiple times in the past for his below-average glove-work.

While those two mistakes could well have turned the game around on its head, there were some abysmal fielding errors -- from Mahmudullah Riyad and Mahedi -- made in the outfield that also contributed immensely to the outcome of the game.

And even though the burden of yesterday's defeat would have to be shared by the whole fielding unit, it may be time for the team management to fix the one issue -- that of replacing Mushfiqur as the wicketkeeper with a more proven and better gloveman in Liton -- that has repeatedly cost the Tigers dearly in the past.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 271 for 6 in 50 overs (Tamim 78, Soumya 32, Mushfiqur 34, Mithun 73 not out, extras 24; Boult 1-49, Henry 1-48, Jamieson 1-36, Santner 2-51)

New Zealand: 275 for 5 in 48.2 overs (Gupthill 20, Conway 72, Latham 110 not out, Neesham 30, extras 17; Mustafizur 2-62, Mahedi 2-42)

Result: New Zealand won by five wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Tom Latham.

Booters start with encouraging win

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh began the Three Nations Cup on a winning note, handing a 1-0 defeat to Kyrgyzstan's U-23 team in the opening match at the Dashrath Stadium in Kathmandu yesterday.

The men in red and green now need to only secure a draw against hosts Nepal on March 27 to claim a spot in the final of the tournament. Nepal will play Kyrgyzstan U-23 tomorrow in a match that could decide the finalists altogether.

Head coach Jamie Day was determined ahead of the tournament to blood young players and see if any were capable of making the cut for June's World Cup Qualifiers and he handed debuts to three players.

Center-back Habibur Rahman Shohag, left-back Rimon Hossain and forward Mehedi Hasan Royal all debuted in the opening match of the tournament and Jamie was perhaps happy with the overall performance from the team, although expectations were somewhat tempered by the national team's poor show against Qatar during a World Cup qualifier in December.

Day's charges clearly lacked in terms of stamina and fitness against Qatar, but looked better in both regards throughout yesterday's match thanks to the resumption of domestic competitions. Bangladesh may have played their senior side against Kyrgyzstan's Olympic outfit, but most of the Bangladeshi players were below 23, barring two or three players in the first half.

However, Day sent three pairs of fresh legs at the start of the second half, with Jamal Bhuiyan, Riyadul Hasan and Rakib Hossain coming on to replace Masuk Mia Jonny, Biplo Ahmed and Shohag while midfielder Manik Hossain Molla replaced debutant Mehedi Hasan Royal.

The boys in red and green got off to a fine start with better possession and built up through the flanks while debutant Shohag proved instrumental from nearly all the set-pieces and almost provided the lead from a free-kick only to see the shot fisted away by Kyrgyz goalkeeper Toktaev Erzhan in the

13th minute.

With Bangladeshi players struggling slightly to cope with the fast nature of the pitch, Kyrgyzstan came close to breaking the deadlock in the 27th minute but forward Borudaev Gulzhigit, availing a long ball, drove miles off the target from inside the box with goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico to beat.

Three minutes later, Bangladesh burst into celebrations as Kyrgyz defender Kumabrajulu Baiaman bundled into his own net. Biplo Ahmed initiated the move by snatching the ball from the feet of the opposition and freeing Saad Uddin down the right. The Abahani player then ran into the box and whipped back a fierce low-ball into the box for Biplo that Baiaman drove into his net while attempting to clear.



A couple of minutes later, Kyrgyzstan went close to equalising but Zico kept Bangladesh in the match by thwarting a one-on-one effort against Tapaev Temirbolot.

After resumption, Bangladesh looked better on the back of three changes.

Matin Mia, who staged a comeback after sustaining a hamstring injury during the 2020 Bangabandhu Gold Cup, penetrated the opposing backline time and again. He brilliantly entered the box from the right before cutting back for stand-in-captain Sohel Rana, but the midfielder was well-blocked by a defender in the 55th minute.

10 minutes later, Matin ran down the left flank and delivered a nice ball to substitute Manik Hossain Mollah, who failed to connect with the ball from the edge of the box. Kyrgyzstan exerted more pressure in the latter stages in search of an equaliser, but could not find the target against some good defending.

Shahadat hits debut ton

SPORTS REPORTER



Young batsman Shahadat Hossain Dipu smashed his maiden century on his first-class debut to put Chattogram Division in the driving seat against Rajshahi Division on the second day of their Tier 2 fixture of the Bangabandhu National Cricket League (BNCL) yesterday.

Despite scoring the century and helping Chattogram post 287 in their first innings at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Shahadat will have to do it all over again as his side are struggling on 43 for five in their second innings.

Rajshahi's first-innings reply was a poor one too as they were bowled out for 152 runs, thanks to Noman Chowdhury's four wickets and Mehedi Hasan Rana's three wickets.

Chattogram, despite leading by 178 runs in their second innings, will be looking to stretch the lead further when they resume the third day against the hosts.

Earlier, Chattogram resumed the day on 256 for seven in their first innings, with Shahadat 12 runs shy of his maiden ton. While he kept losing wickets at the other end, the member



of Bangladesh's Under-19 World Cup-winning side reached the milestone before being dismissed for 108 off 256 balls, his innings featuring eleven fours and two sixes.

"I was a bit nervous to be honest when I was on 97 and batting with Noman Chowdhury, the last batsman. But thankfully he negotiated the bowling well and I reached my century. This is very special for me and I will cherish this century for a long time," Shahadat told The Daily Star.

In the other Tier 2 game, Dhaka

Metropolis skipper Marshall Ayub struck his 21st first class hundred to help his side to a first-innings lead over Barishal Division at the Barisal Divisional Stadium.

In reply to Barishal's 241 in the first innings, Dhaka rode on Marshall's brilliant ton and 60 from opener Zahiduzzaman to conclude the day on 324 for seven, taking a lead of 83 runs.

In Tier 1, Khulna's right-arm seamer Masum Khan bagged four wickets to leave Sylhet 130 for eight, Khulna still leading by 245 runs in the first innings. Resuming the second day on 308 for seven, defending champion Khulna were all out for 375 with pacers Abu Jayed and Ebadot Hossain picking up three wickets each.

At BKSP, Nasir Hossain kept the hopes of Rangpur alive with an unbeaten 93 against Dhaka Division. Rangpur still trail by 171 runs.

Resuming the day on 297 for eight, Dhaka went on to post 365 in their first innings before Rangpur found themselves in a spot of bother right from the start.

None of the other Rangpur batsmen were able to score big as left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam took three and pacer Sumon Khan bagged two wickets for Dhaka.

SCORES IN BRIEF

TIER 1

Khulna Division v Sylhet Division
Khulna: First Innings-375 all out in 109.4 overs (Tushar 99, Imrul 90; Ebadot 3-79, Jayed 3-94)

Sylhet: First Innings-130 for 8 in 58 overs (Imtiaj 37; Masum 4-32, Mominul 2-10)

Dhaka Division v Rangpur Division
Dhaka: First Innings-365 all out in 106.3 overs (Saif 127, Nadif 69; Alauddin Babu 4-25, Mahmudul 2-78)

Rangpur: First Innings-194 for 7 in 71 overs (Nasir 93 not out; Nazmul 3-69, Sumon 2-23)

TIER 2

Barishal Division v Dhaka Metropolis
Barishal: First Innings-241 all out (Ashraf 48, Sayeed 46; Hider 3-34, Rakibul 3-76)

Dhaka Metropolis: First Innings 324 for 7 in 102 overs (Marshall 112, Zahiduzzaman 60; Kamrul 2-44, Monir 2-63)

Chattogram Division v Rajshahi Division
Chattogram: First Innings-287 and Second Innings- 43 for 5 in 19.3 overs (Mahmudul 26 not out; Farhad 3-18)

Rajshahi: First Innings-152 all out in 44.3 overs (Farhad 27; Noman 4-47, Mehedi 3-22)



Cristiano Ronaldo's return to international colours will signal the resumption of his quest to become international football's most prolific scorer, with the Portuguese now just seven shy of Iranian Ali Daei's all-time record of 109 goals ahead of a match against Azerbaijan. Gareth Bale will also return for Wales and he attempted to shut down speculation about his future by saying it was 'no distraction' ahead of Wales' opening 2022 World Cup Qualifier against Belgium. The 31-year-old also confirmed that he planned to go back to Real Madrid at the end of this season to at least see out the last year of his contract.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS