



Dimuth Karunaratne plays one stylishly through the covers during the third day of the first Test at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy yesterday. The Sri Lanka captain remained unbeaten on 85 as the hosts reached 229 for three at stumps on Friday in reply to Bangladesh's 541 for seven in the first innings.

PHOTO: SLC

Tigers impress but fail to break through

SPORTS REPORTER



As things stand after the third day of the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the hosts trail by 312 runs with seven wickets in hand in their first innings. With the batting-friendly pitch in Kandy in mind, it seems the game is heading towards a draw unless something dramatic happens over the next two days at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium.

After Mominul Haque Bangladesh's first innings on a mammoth 541 for 7 inside the first session of the third day, Sri Lanka replied strongly and ended the day on 229 for 3, with skipper Dimuth Karunaratne heading towards his eleventh Test ton when he resumes the fourth day on 85.

From Bangladesh's point of view, the effort from the bowlers should be appreciated despite the pitch offering hardly anything for seamers on a pitch that was covered in grass at the start of the Test.

But Lankan openers Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne were confident from the start and negotiated disciplined bowling with a mixture of caution and aggression, adding 114 runs for

the first wicket.

Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz provided the breakthrough on the stroke of tea, when he trapped Thirimanne leg before on 58 with a beautifully flighted delivery drifting onto his pads. Although the 31-year-old was lucky that Mominul Haque opted not to review another close leg-before call previously, this time Thirimanne's review went against him.

Fast bowler Taskin Ahmed, on his comeback

tried to flick the ball down the leg side but Liton took a sharp catch behind the wicket.

The visiting bowlers kept asking questions of the Lankan batters and were able to break another dangerous-looking partnership between skipper Karunaratne and experienced Angelo Mathews for the third wicket. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam managed to outfox Mathews after the right-hander misjudged the length of the delivery and was bowled for 25.

There was late drama in the dining hour of the days' play when Karunaratne was lucky after he was given leg before off Taijul's bowling. The left-hander missed a flighted delivery coming into the stumps and the ball hit his back leg, but the Lankan skipper immediately went for the review which showed the ball miss the stumps.

Earlier, Bangladesh declared their first innings on 541 for 7 after resuming the day on 474 for 4 and batted for 90 minutes in the first session.

The visitors hit the accelerator, adding 67 runs in 18 overs. Liton Das scored fifty while Mushfiqur Rahim was unbeaten on 68 off 156 balls, with six fours. Bangladesh total was their sixth-highest Test total and also the third time that the Tigers had five players getting 50-plus scores.



to the Test side after four years, was probably the most impressive Bangladeshi bowler, giving away just eleven runs from seven overs initially and bowling with a lot of aggression.

He eventually got a reward, although it was not off the best of deliveries. Oshada Fernando

'Maintaining discipline will be the key'

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite the lack of assistance from the pitch, Bangladesh bowlers showed good discipline and ended up scalping three wickets on the third day of the first Test at the Pallekele International Stadium in Kandy yesterday.

Sri Lanka trail by 312 runs in their first innings but still it will be very difficult for the Tigers to extract a result with just two days left to go. However, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who bowled 20 overs on the day and scalped the prized wicket of Angelo Mathews, thought that maintaining discipline would be the key for the visitors.

"There isn't much help on the pitch -- be it for spinners or pacers. We need to keep on working by maintaining discipline. If we can maintain discipline and do something good by containing runs and use the pitch [to our advantage] early tomorrow [today], then we can get to a position from where we can win," said Taijul at a virtual press conference after the day's play.

"It's not that hitting the rough patches will make the ball take huge turns. The pitch is actually a very slow one for spinners and our plan is to bowl maintaining discipline. It will be important to figure out how and where to bowl to each batsman," the 29-year-old added.

Taijul, who had said during the West Indies series that a total of 250-300 would be good enough to defend but ended up on the losing side as the Windies chased down a mammoth 395-run target on the final day of the Chattogram Test earlier this

year, emphasised on the importance of not letting the game slip away.

"Our plan for tomorrow is to bowl discipline-wise. We need to bowl with the right kind of fielding protection. Definitely, we will play to win the game. But we need to be mindful of not letting the game slip away from us at any moment," Taijul said.

Bangladesh went with five regular bowlers -- spinners Taijul and Mehedi Hasan Miraz alongside pacers Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain and Abu Jayed. Taijul thought that using five bowlers helps take the pressure on any particular bowler.

BRIEF SCORE

Bangladesh 1st innings: 541 for 7 (dec) in 173 overs (Najmul 163, Mominul 127, Tamim 90, Liton 50, Mushfiqur 68 not out; Vishwa 4-96)

Sri Lanka 1st innings: 229 for 3 in 73 overs (Karunaratne 85 not out, Thirimanne 58, De Silva 26 not out; Mehedi 1-60, Taijul 1-56, Taskin 1-35)

"It's always good to have more bowlers when playing Tests. So, having five bowlers in the side definitely helps me or any other bowler as we get more time to rest and initiate a comeback," Taijul added.

In absence of spin consultant Daniel Vettori, Sohel Islam has accompanied the Tigers as their spin bowling coach.

"We [spinners] actually work with Sohel bhai mostly when we practise in Dhaka. Whenever I face any problem, Sohel bhai recognises it instantly and understands my problem. So it is beneficial for me to have him around," said Taijul.



Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz leaps in the air to celebrate the dismissal of Lahiru Thirimanne on the third day of the first Test in Kandy yesterday. Moments like these were few and far between as Sri Lanka made a strong start in reply of Bangladesh's mammoth first-innings total.

PHOTO: SLC

Kingsley's BPL fate hangs in balance

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Premier League leaders Bashundhara Kings roped in Nigerian-born striker Eleka Kingsley and expatriate winger Obaidur Rahman Nawab in the mid-term transfer window in a bid to strengthening their forward line-up but Kingsley's endeavour of making debut as a Bangladeshi player hangs in the balance due to lack of documents.

The 31-year-old forward, who has been awarded Bangladeshi citizenship in the middle of March, has been training with Kings for more than two weeks ahead of the second-phase of the league, which starts from April 30.

However, the Nigerian forward, who has been playing top-flight football in Bangladesh since 2011, hasn't received a Bangladeshi passport or a national Identity card yet, raising question about his eligibility to play in Bangladesh as a local player.

"We haven't received his passport yet, so how can we treat him as a local player? The bylaws suggest having local passport or NID as mandatory for someone to be treated as a local player," Bangladesh Football Federation's general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told the Daily Star.

When asked whether Kingsley's registration is valid or not, the BFF general secretary said, "It is not that his registration process has not been completed. We will refer this matter to the Players' Status Committee for a final decision as Bashundhara Kings have asked us to treat Kingsley as a local player by providing documents they have. Kings have also sought more time for Kingsley."

"The players' status committee decides whether Kingsley can be an exception. If the committee permits him, he can play for Bashundhara Kings. Otherwise he has no possibility of playing for Kings until he



submits NID or passport," Shohag added.

Bashundhara Kings' technical director BA Jubair Nipu hopes they would get the NID and passport soon as they have already started the process of obtaining those documents.

"As far as we know, Kingsley is eligible for domestic league as a local player but still not eligible for international matches," Nipu said. "Different government offices are closed now due to the pandemic and we are hoping to get his NID within a few days as we have already applied."

However, Obaidur, who has experience of playing in top Qatari League, has no such problems as he has a Bangladeshi passport.

Abdur Rahman, member of the players' status committee, informed that the committee has not been informed yet about the Kingsley issue and that it will enquire into it from the concerned personnel of the game's local governing body.

Messi passes up hattrick chance for Griezmann

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi gave up the chance for a hattrick on Thursday as Barcelona held off a late fightback from Getafe to win 5-2 and stay in the race at the top of La Liga.

Messi scored twice and could have had a third in injury-time at Camp Nou but deferred a penalty to Antoine Griezmann, who completed what was in the end a comfortable victory.

"He's the best in the world, he never lets up," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman.

"If he lowers his concentration you never notice. Hopefully he stays for many more years."

After beating Athletic Bilbao to lift the Copa del Rey last weekend, Barca are now in the hunt for the double, sitting five points behind Atletico Madrid but still with a game in hand.

Atletico had earlier brushed aside Huesca 2-0 to register back-to-back victories for the first time since January and with Real Madrid also seeing off Cadiz on Wednesday, there is no margin for error now in a thrilling battle for the title.

None of Spain's leading trio appear to have been affected by an incredible few days off the pitch, which saw Real Madrid, Atletico and Barcelona all sign up for the hugely controversial European Super League on Sunday.

Atletico withdrew from the breakaway competition on Wednesday but Barca and Real Madrid remain part of a project that would transform the fabric of European football.

Getafe were wearing t-shirts in

protest against the European Super League, even as they gave Barcelona a guard of honour to mark the Catalans' cup success.

Messi now has 33 goals in all competitions and 25 in the league, one more than the total scored by the whole Getafe team.

Getafe are not safe yet, four points the gap above the bottom three.

Messi got to work in the eighth minute, slid through by a piercing

lead, this one more avoidable, with Sofian Chakla failing to spot Soria coming out before passing the ball beyond the goalkeeper and into his own net.

The game looked secure when Messi made it three. Lenglet's looping header gave him the chance to volley left-footed against the far post but the ball arrowed back to the striker, who finished from the angle with his right.



pass by Sergio Busquets and sending a shot into the far top corner, despite a touch by Getafe goalkeeper David Soria.

Yet Getafe were level four minutes later as Angel met Marc Cucurella's cross and the ball cannoned off the unsuspecting Clement Lenglet and flew in.

Another own-goal restored Barca's

Getafe teed up a nervy last 20 minutes when Ronald Araujo, on as a substitute, trod on the ankle of Enes Unal, who scored the penalty to give the visitors hope.

But Barcelona pulled away with two late goals, Araujo heading in a corner from Messi, who then passed up the chance to score his third by giving Griezmann his first.



Jongwe takes four as Zim stun Pak

AFP, Harare

Luke Jongwe took four wickets as Zimbabwe pulled off a surprise 19-run victory over Pakistan Friday in the second Twenty20 international of a three-match series at Harare Sports Club.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam won the toss, opted to bowl, and the tourists restricted their hosts to 118-9 with 34-run Tinashe Kamunhukamwe the only batsman to impress.

Set a run-a-ball target for victory, Pakistan lost star opener Mohammad Rizwan for only 13 and 41-run Azam was the lone batsman to star as they slumped to 99 all out off 19.5 overs.

Right-arm medium pacer Jongwe (4-18) captured the wickets of Rizwan and Azam, and those of Haris Rauf and Arshad Iqbal as the Pakistan tail collapsed.

Ryan Burl (two), Blessing Muzarabani and Richard Ngarava (one each) were the other Zimbabwean wicket-takers.

The result levelled the series at 1-1 and it will be decided at the same venue Sunday after the T20 series, Zimbabwe and Pakistan will play two Tests.