



There was a little bit of drama with the review as to whether Tamim Iqbal's drive made contact with the turf just before it hit the fielders boot before being caught at silly point. The left-hander, however, survived to remain unbeaten on 74 and ensured there was no late hiccup after Bangladesh lost two early wickets during the final day's play of the first Test in Pallekele yesterday.

PHOTO: SLC

## Points and confidence the biggest takeaways

SPORTS REPORTER



Although rain washed away the final session of play on the fifth and final day of the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka yesterday, the eventual draw was always on the cards at the placid pitch of Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy.

The Test match, which witnessed 1289 runs scored against 17 dismissals, proved to be a nightmare for the bowlers despite the expectations of assistance for the pacers on what had initially looked like a green top. The pitch flattered to deceive, though, as it remained ideal for batting till the last day, with four centuries scored including a double ton.

Bangladesh will be relieved to finally register their first points on the ICC Test Championship table, and more importantly, the drawn result will boost their morale following a disappointing



string of results in recent times.

Tamim Iqbal continued his fine run with the bat and scored his second fifty of the game, remaining unbeaten on 74 while skipper Mominul Haque was not out on 23 as Bangladesh reached 100 for two in their second innings before rain brought an early end to the game.

The visitors, though, were in some discomfort early in the second innings after pacer Suranga Lakmal picked up two quick wickets -- those of Saif Hasan (1) and the centurion of the first innings, Najmul Hossain (0). Bangladesh seemed to be struggling on 27 for two at that point, but Tamim's aggressive batting made sure the Tigers negotiated the remainder of the day without any more

hiccups.

Earlier, Sri Lanka declared their first innings on 648 for eight at lunch, taking a first-innings lead of 107 runs. Taskin Ahmed dismissed both overnight batsmen -- skipper Dimuth Karunaratne and Dhananjaya de Silva -- early in the morning.

Karunaratne, who scored his maiden double ton on the fourth day, was dismissed for 244 off 437 balls, his innings featuring 26 fours while Dhananjaya, who registered his seventh Test hundred, departed for 166 off 291 balls, the knock laced with 22 fours.

Taskin was the most successful bowler for the visitors and registered his best bowling figures in Test cricket, picking up three for 112 in 30 overs.

The pacer will surely gain some confidence after making a comeback to the Test side following a four-year gap.

Left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam bagged two wickets while off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz and pacer Ebadot Hossain picked up a wicket each for the visitors.

## 'Drawing a Test match away from home is a good sign'

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka ending in a draw, the game offered huge relief to Mominul Haque and Co. as they showed signs of shedding their longest lean patch in the longest format of the game in recent memory.

Bangladesh were desperate to overcome recent Test debacles which included a 2-0 defeat at the hands of a relatively inexperienced West Indies at home.

Questions over their approach and strategy from the team management also remained the center of discussion ahead of the first Test.

The visitors eventually took those to the challenge after coming in to bat on a green Pallekele pitch that initially looked favorable for the seamers.

Young Najmul Hossain and skipper Mominul Haque both scored by centuries in the first innings while experienced opener Tamim Iqbal scored a brilliant ninety in the first innings as the Tigers posted a big total.

Mominul credited Tamim's knock in the first inning, saying the left-hander set the tone for the team. He also praised Najmul for his maiden ton and said that the draw would certainly boost confidence.

"We were unable to get results in both the home and away series previously. After losing a home series, managing to draw a Test match away from home is a good sign. It will surely boost our confidence for the second Test because everyone played as a unit. Whenever Bangladesh plays as a unit, we are in a good position," said Mominul.

The 29-year-old registered his eleventh Test ton, the most by a Bangladeshi batsman, with what was his maiden hundred away from home. He opined that there were still many areas his side has to work on, especially in the batting department.

"We were confident of going with five bowlers because you always need five bowlers when you play in Sri Lanka, keeping injury concerns in mind. If you want to move forward in Test cricket,

you need to go with five bowlers and six batsman in the line-up at times. When you play with six batters, I think everyone plays more responsibly. And if you want to pick 20 wickets you need five bowlers," he said.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka replied strongly, riding on skipper Dimuth Karunaratne's maiden double ton alongside Dhananjaya De Silva's century. The duo added a record 345 runs -- the highest fourth-wicket stand for Sri Lanka as the hosts took a first-innings lead.

Karunaratne, who literally spent the entire duration of the Test match on the field as he fielded before scoring 244 off 437 balls, conceded that he was tired but added that he would bat till the end of the fifth day if the situation permitted.

"On this pitch, a fifty wasn't enough for me. I saw that almost everyone in the Bangladesh team got a fifty. I'm not the kind of player who's satisfied with just getting a fifty on this kind of pitch. I wanted to turn my 50 into a hundred and my hundred into a one-fifty. And you very rarely get pitches like this in Sri Lanka. You generally get tracks that turn a lot. And when you go overseas, you get a lot of seaming conditions. I wanted to get the maximum out of this pitch," Karunaratne said.



"I enjoyed Taskin's bowling a lot. The way he bowled, you won't feel that he has played just six Test matches, including this one. You guys might not know, but Taskin worked really hard in the past one-and-a-half years and I think he was rewarded for that hard work. Honestly, he gave a lot of effort and he was there whenever the team needed him. It is difficult to bowl for such a long period in such conditions. I am very happy for his performance."

MOMINUL HAQUE

SCORES IN BRIEF

**BANGLADESH (FIRST INNINGS):**  
541 for 7d and 100 for 2 in 33 overs (Tamim 74 not out, Saif 1, Najmul 0, Mominul 23 not out, extras 2; Lakmal 2-21)

**SRI LANKA (FIRST INNINGS):**  
648 for 8dec in 179 overs (Karunaratne

244, Dhananjaya 166, extras 27; Taskin 3-112, Tajjul 2-163, Ebadot 1-99, Miraz 1-161)

**RESULT:** Match drawn.

**PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH:**  
Dimuth Karunaratne.



## RECORD CROWD IN THE TIME OF COVID-19!

Just over 78,000 spectators packed Melbourne Cricket Ground Sunday for an Australian Rules football match, in what is believed to be the biggest crowd at a sporting fixture since the Covid-19 pandemic began. However, the crowd size fell short of expectations that 85,000 could attend the traditional Anzac Day match between the Collingwood Magpies and Essendon Bombers. The MCG can seat 100,000 people and the Australian Football League (AFL) had hoped health authorities would allow the match to be played in front of a capacity crowd.

PHOTO: TWITTER

## 37 runs in one over: Jadeja's final-over carnage

PTI, MUMBAI

The irrepressible Ravindra Jadeja blasted an IPL record-equalling 37 runs in one over and then grabbed three big wickets in an outstanding all-round display as Chennai Super Kings crushed Royal Challengers Bangalore by 69 runs yesterday.

Jadeja pummelled 62 off 28 balls and lifted CSK to 191 for four after skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni opted to bat in a top-of-the-table clash.

Then, with his slow-left arm spin bowling, the star all-rounder picked up the important wickets of AB de Villiers



and Glenn Maxwell to derail RCB's run chase on a sluggish Wankhede pitch.

Jadeja began the final over of CSK innings by clobbering four consecutive sixes off Harshal Patel before adding another off the fifth ball.

He smashed the last ball over square leg for four as Harshal, who had figures of 3 for 14 going into the final over, finished with 4-0-51-3.

Playing for RCB, Chris Gayle had also scored 37 runs, against Kochi Tuskers Kerala in the 2011 edition, the bowler being Prasanth Parameswaran on that occasion.

## In the shadow of the Super League

SAMAMA RAHMAN



Among sport, football perhaps has been used the most as an instrument to placate the masses while consolidating the power of the few.

From Pele winning World Cups to appease a nation under a brutal military regime in the 70s to club ownership being increasingly dominated by oligarchs since the turn of the millennium, the 'people's game' in the 21st century has now morphed into a billionaire's PR project at best and a cashcow for businessmen looking to turn tidy profits at worst.

From a sport that went from being the 'people's game', with community values and entertainment as the focus, modern football finds itself looking to squeeze every ounce of revenue from commercial deals, going so far as to sell the naming rights to legendary venues.

The European Super League (ESL) was a continuation of the hungry capitalism that football has allowed into it, but the reasoning behind the concept was not borne only out of greed, but out of a fair hint of caution.

At the conclusion of the 2018/19 season, the last that was not interrupted by a pandemic, Barcelona earned €166.5 million for winning La Liga while Real Madrid received €155.3 million for finishing second and Atletico Madrid got €119.2 million for being third from the league's broadcasting deal worth €1.42 billion.

Those are big numbers, but even in the 2019/20 season, one that was interrupted due to the pandemic, Leicester City still earned over €155 million for finishing seventh in the Premier League. Champions Liverpool earned just above €200 million that year.

The fear that Perez and Co. have is that they are running out of time

to get a bigger slice of the pie in terms of revenue. La Liga's revenue-sharing deal means Real, Atletico and Barcelona always earn the most money in terms of percentage, but the revenue from broadcasting deals is still not close to the levels of the Premier League.

There is a chance to earn more money from the Champions League, upto €110 million just for making it to the quarterfinals, but even that was not enough to allay their worries. The ESL promised billions and from their perspective, European football

However, despite all their wealth, eight of the 12 clubs that committed to the ESL were bought in the past 20 years and half have amassed debts that the pandemic has made them think are unserviceable. Inter Milan already asked for 200 million in February, while Juventus reportedly must come up with 120 million at season's end. In Spain, Barcelona and Real Madrid find themselves about 1 billion in the red while Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur are both also burdened by debt. The Super League would have

gladly deferred the spotlight to their Premier League counterparts.

The ESL probably would not have significantly affected smaller leagues like the Eredivisie anyway, whose players are poached as soon as they show any glimpse of talent. In fact, smaller leagues have been taken advantage of ever since the Champions League decided to go from being a tournament for domestic champions of Europe to one where the champions from some countries and top four or three from other countries would qualify. Without a consistent Champions League place, teams often fail to attract the talents that could change their fortunes.

The last major Champions League reshuffle led to an unprecedented boost in revenue and the formation of a tournament that is known as Europe's elite, but is it not surprising that people suddenly noticed the problem with the ESL only when mid-table clubs of major leagues were asked to deal with issues that already affect everyone else? For many, even finishing as champions of their domestic league is not enough for a guaranteed spot at the Champions League table.

The Premier League and others have been jolted into action by the brazen Super League attempt, knowing that another will always be playing on the minds of the biggest clubs hoping not to fall behind. Boardrooms are in disarray as fans aim to take back their game.

But the job that fans are now tasked with is not simply curbing the capitalistic greed that has pervaded their beloved sport. FIFA and UEFA must also be held to account for inconsistent and toothless policies on racism from FIFA and UEFA, a failure to enforce Financial Fair Play regulations, the debacle around awarding World Cups and the sheer corruption within the sport.

Football's death, like all others, will be a process. The questions on every fan's mind now is: can they stop the process?



needed to be saved.

An obscene concentration of wealth at the top of each league is clear to see and the results of that wealth are evident. Juventus in Italy, Paris Saint-Germain in France and Bayern Munich in Germany have all won nearly ten league titles in a row, while Real Madrid and Barcelona lost La Liga just once to Atletico in the past decade.

In England, that wealth is found all down the ladder, especially now. 20 years ago, Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur would be nowhere near the status they were given as one of the 15 founding member, a privilege that meant they could never be relegated and lose out on revenue from the ESL.

given them a way to continue to be callous as revenue would have been guaranteed.

Millions are in fact found all the way down the English table and that enormous advantage which Premier League clubs exert over the rest of Europe perhaps accelerated the jump to the idea that the rest of European football could be left behind.

That also proved to be something of a saving grace, as Premier League clubs banded together to fight against the ESL. Ironically, although UEFA's Champions League has created massive clubs that dwarf most of the competition they ever face domestically. Those leagues, perhaps aware that potential losses in revenue would be irrevocable,