

Familiar patterns as Tigers unravel

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's inability to play consistent cricket was exposed yet again, with the visitors on the verge of a Test defeat after brilliant execution from the Sri Lankan spinners on a Pallekele pitch that offered plenty of purchase.

The Tigers were struggling on 177 for five in chase of a mammoth 437 after bad light forced an early end to the fourth day's play. The hosts will be hoping to get the remaining wickets on the final day to win the Test and clinch the two-match Test series 1-0.

Off-spinner Ramesh Mendis bagged three wickets while left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama picked up two to take his match tally to eight as the Bangladeshi batters struggled to spend time at the crease in their second innings.

According to Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo, fatigue has set in after the Tigers spent 179 and 159.2 overs on the field in the two Tests against Sri Lanka. He believed it had taken the players close to their physical and mental breaking point.

That fatigue may have forced the Bangladeshi batters to opt for an attacking strategy even when the need of the hour was some sort of resistance designed to save the match. In fact, the top five Bangladeshi batsmen who were dismissed yesterday managed to get starts but none of them were able to display enough patience on the crease.

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka: First innings-493 for 7d and Second innings 194 for 9d (Karunaratne 66, Dhananjaya 41, extra 1; Miraz 2-66, Tajjul 5-72, Taskin 1-26, Saif 1-22)

Bangladesh: First innings-251 all out in 83 overs (Tamim 92, Saif 25, Mominul 49, Mushfiqur 40, Miraz 16, extras 12; Lakmal 2-30, Ramesh 2-86, Jayawickrama 6-92) and Second innings-177 for 5 in 48 overs (Tamim 24, Saif 34, Najmul 26, Mominul 32, Mushfiqur 40, Liton 14 not out, Miraz 4 not out, extras 3; Ramesh 3-86, Jayawickrama 2-58)

The strategy to attack Lankan spinners backfired in the second innings, with in-form Tamim Iqbal once again starting off brilliantly. But this time he had to return to the dressing room before reaching a fifty for the first time in the series.

The left-hander was dismissed by a brilliant Mendis delivery and was caught behind after scoring 24 off 26 balls. His partner Saif Hassan was guilty of playing too many shots and



Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque looks back at his shattered stumps after his dismissal by Sri Lanka spinner Ramesh Mendis during the fourth day of the second Test at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

eventually paid the price when he gave a simple catch to cover while trying to play an inside-out shot to Jayawickrama on 34.

Najmul Hossain, who scored consecutive ducks after scoring his maiden ton in the first Test, was the third Bangladeshi wicket to fall before tea. The left-hander also got a start and reached 26 before Jayawickrama's delivery went through his defensive gate and struck timber.

With one session to go before stumps, Bangladesh were on 104 for 3 with an initial plan of playing out the day. However, the visiting batsmen had other ideas. Both experienced campaigners Muhsfiqur Rahim and skipper Mominul Haque continued to play with an attacking mindset after tea, but that did not work well for the visitors.

Mominul, on 32, was played on while trying to guide Mendis through the slip cordon just five overs before the final session of the day. Mushfiqur was also riding his luck and was lucky twice before he too perished, being caught at short leg for 40 off the bowling of Mendis as Bangladesh started to anticipate a defeat.

"It is natural that the spinners will get the assistance from the pitch on

the fourth and fifth day of a Test match. We all started well but were unable to convert those starts into a big one. Maybe if we didn't lose more than three wickets today (yesterday) it would have been a good day for us," Najmul told media. "On such wickets, it is very difficult for batters if they remain negative. It's not that being positive means we have to hit every ball, but everyone tried to play with intent."

Earlier, Sri Lanka declared their second innings on 194 for nine shortly after lunch yesterday, with skipper Dimuth Karunaratne top-scoring with 66. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam bagged his second five wicket haul away from home after the Lankan batters tried to score some quick runs in the end.

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Inter win first Serie A title in 11 years

AGENCIES



Inter Milan clinched their first Serie A title in 11 years on Sunday after Sassuolo drew 1-1 with Atalanta to assure Antonio Conte's side of the league crown.

Inter are 13 points clear in first place with four games remaining, and their triumph ends a run of nine consecutive title wins for Juventus.

The league title is Inter's first since winning the Serie A, Coppa Italia and Champions League Treble in 2009/10 under Jose Mourinho, and their 19th overall.

Inter have therefore overtaken AC Milan, who have 18 Serie A titles, to become the second-most successful club in league history behind Juventus, with 36 league wins.

Inter beat Crotone 2-0 on Saturday to go 14 points clear at the top.

Coach Antonio Conte's consistency in selection aided his side's consistency in performance. Inter have grown into the season after a shaky start, and their league form was undoubtedly helped by a disappointing group stage elimination from the Champions League at the end of 2020.

Conte's side lost to AC Milan and dropped points against Parma and Atalanta as they struggled to juggle domestic and European exertions.

But after finishing bottom of a group with Real Madrid, Borussia Muenchengladbach and Shakhtar Donetsk in December, Inter were the only team in Serie A's top seven that had no European distractions remaining.

That allowed Conte's side a full week of preparation for most league games, and they went on to become the first Serie A team to start the second half of a season with 11 consecutive wins.

Inter Milan manager Antonio Conte said his players deserve praise. "The season we are having is the result of a constant growth from every point of view, not only technical and tactical, of mentality, sharing, living it intensely," Conte told Sky Italia.

Meanwhile, Manchester City were also on the brink of a third Premier League title in four seasons after a 2-0 win at Crystal Palace on Saturday secured with goals by Sergio Agüero and Ferran Torres.

City's title will be confirmed if Liverpool win at Manchester United on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's side have 80 points with four games left, while second-placed United are on 67 with five to play.

"We can start to put the champagne in the fridge -- not to open yet but to think about it," said Guardiola, whose side face Paris St Germain on Tuesday in the home leg of their Champions League semi-final with a 2-1 lead.

"The Premier League is already there -- it is in our hands. We need one more victory, two more points."

In La Liga, Real Madrid's Brazilian duo Eder Militão and Casemiro struck in the second half to secure a 2-0 home win over stubborn Osasuna on Saturday and keep the heat on the La Liga leaders, Atlético Madrid.

Atlético Madrid stayed in charge of La Liga's four-way title race by grinding out a 1-0 win at struggling Elche on Saturday but rode their luck to the extreme when the hosts missed a penalty in stoppage time.



Inter Milan's Christian Eriksen celebrates after scoring their first goal during a 2-0 win over Crotone on Saturday.

Mohammedan planning to revive their glory days

SPORTS REPORTER



Although Mohammedan's rich trophy cabinet is still a point of envy for their rivals, the Black and Whites have lagged behind in terms of winning silverware over more than a decade. The Motijheel-based outfit still live with the regret of not winning the professional football league since its introduction in 2007.

Inefficiency of club officials has been a major reason behind Mohammedan's failures, which began with them finishing behind the champions in the first three editions before the team were apparently stripped of all pride and turned into a mediocre side, much to the frustration of their large number of supporters that have not wavered despite the lean years.

The new board of directors elected in early March are now taking initiatives to restore that lost pride by paying attention to football. As part

of the initiatives, the board yesterday formed a 25-member football committee for the next 2021-22, five months before the ongoing 2020-21 season comes to an end.

Engineer Golam Mohammad Alamgir and Engineer Dato Mohammad Ekramul Haque were named chairman and vice chairman respectively while Abu Hasan Chowdhury Prince was named secretary of the committee. The committee will be assisted by a nine-member technical committee and five-member advisory committee.

"Each club usually forms their squad before the season is declared, so the football committee has been formed to work on forming a champion calibre team for next season. The same committee will also look after matters regarding the team for the ongoing season," Abu Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We have already estimated a budget for the next season and decided to sign quality foreign players like the foreign recruits of Bashundhara

Kings as well as rope in at least 10 new players, including some national players," explained Hasan.

However, former footballer Imitiaz Sultan Jonny said he was not aware of the duties of the technical committee, which besides him also comprises former Mohammedan footballers like Jakaria Pintu, Rummon Bin Wali Sabbir, Kaiser Hamid, Shafiqul Islam Manik, Hasanuzzaman Khan Bablu and Riaz Uddin and organiser Fazlur Rahman Babul.

"Mohammedan has already recovered from a poor condition and I still don't know the responsibilities and duties of the technical committee. I can tell you once we meet the football committee, which must have a vision before forming the squad," said Jonny. "In the past 15 years, there are no satisfactory tales of Mohammedan football. I think we still have to do a lot of work to restore the pride and the committee should think of contributing to the country's football along with Mohammedan success."

MU fans invade pitch at anti-Glazer protest

REUTERS

Manchester United fans protesting against the Glazer family's ownership of the club stormed into their Old Trafford stadium and gathered on the pitch ahead of Sunday's Premier League game against Liverpool.

British media reported fans turned up at Old Trafford at 1 p.m. local time (1200 GMT) to protest against the owners with banners and flares.

They pushed down the barriers to force their way into the ground ahead of one of the biggest domestic games of the season, which is scheduled to kick off at 4.30 p.m. local time. They left the pitch after about 10 minutes. The anti-Glazer movement has gained momentum in recent weeks following the club's failed attempt to form part of a breakaway European Super League last month.

United owner Joel Glazer, who was named the European Super League vice-chairman when the announcement was made, has apologised to the fans in an open letter after they withdrew from the project.

However, that apology seems to have been rejected by the club's supporter base who protested outside Old Trafford last week.

The invasion of the pitch followed a protest outside the Lowry Hotel, where the United squad traditionally spend the night before any home match in preparation for games. United was bought by the American Glazer family for 790 million pounds (\$1.1 billion) in 2005.



TIGERS BEGIN TRAINING FOR SRI LANKA ODI SERIES

Imrul Kayes, who last played an ODI in 2018, and Mahmudullah Riyad took part in the training sessions along with the other group members at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. The group started training after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 23-member preliminary squad on Saturday for the three-match ODI home series against Sri Lanka this month.

The selectors have named Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman, both currently playing in IPL, in the squad although it is not clear whether they will join the camp on time. The series is likely to start on May 23. The IPL's league stage also concludes on May 23, with the final on May 30. The preliminary squad will train till May 9; after which they will get a seven-day break for the Eid festival. Most of the preliminary squad is made up of cricketers who played in Bangladesh's recent white-ball tour of New Zealand. The three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka is part of the ICC's Super League. (SQUAD) Tamim Iqbal, Naim Sheikh, Imrul Kayes, Litton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mohammad Mithun, Mahmudullah Riyad, Afif Hossain, Mosaddek Hossain, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Mehidy Hassan Miraz, Tajjul Islam, Nasum Ahmed, Saif Uddin, Mustafizur Rahman, Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam and Shohidul Islam.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

England's Jos Buttler celebrates his maiden Twenty20 ton during Rajasthan Royals' 55-run victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League (IPL) yesterday. Buttler's 124 was the centrepiece of the Royals' 220-3, coming off 56 balls including 10 fours and five sixes. The Sunrisers only managed 165-8 in reply at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium. Bangladesh and Royals pacer Mustafizur Rahman picked up three wickets for 20 runs.

PHOTO: BCCI

