

Tigers revert to type

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's performance in the two-match Test series in Sri Lanka was a fair reflection of what happened to them in the past.

The Tigers had a good outing with the bat in the first Test, with Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque scoring centuries and veteran Tamim Iqbal proving the most consistent batsman with three half-centuries in two Tests.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed showed vast improvement in his comeback Test after four years and was by far the most successful bowler in the Bangladesh side.

The visitors declared the first innings of the first Test on 547 for seven, and although the hosts took a lead, Bangladesh batsmen kept

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka: First innings-493 for 7d and Second innings 194 for 9d.
Bangladesh: First innings- 251 all out and Second innings-227 all out in 71 overs (Tamim 24, Saif 34, Najmul 26, Mominul 32, Mushfiqur 40, Liton 17, Miraz 39, extras 6; Ramesh 4-103, Jayawickrama 5-86)
Result: Sri Lanka won by 209 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Praveen Jayawickrama.
Player-of-the-series: Dimuth Karunaratne.
Series result: Sri Lanka won the two-match series 1-0.

their composure in the second innings to eventually draw the first Test.

These were the only positives from the series to take for the visitors.

Bangladesh's consistency and hunger to push the limits in tough conditions eventually came to a 'breaking point', according to head coach Russell Domingo, after spending a significant amount of time on the field under hot and humid conditions.

Tigers fumbled badly in the second Test as their batsmen surrendered against a debutant left-arm spinner and an off-spinner who was playing his second Test, the pair accounting for 17 wickets.

After being bundled out for 251 in the first innings, Bangladesh's batting approach in the second innings was questionable as they were set a target of 437 on the fourth day. The top five batsmen tried to charge the Lankan spinners on a pitch which was offering much assistance to the two spinners.

Maybe the batsmen followed instructions of the coach, who had



A TEST SPIRIT governed by fear

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

There was no display of effort, perseverance or mental grind befitting of Test cricket by the Tigers in their defeat to Sri Lanka in the second Test in Kandy yesterday, and the sphere of their failures has a lot more to it than the margin of defeat inflicted by the hosts.

While a 209-run defeat is a big one, the basic criteria of lacking the crucial elements of the very nature of Test cricket is what stands in obscure darkness about the Tigers' performances in the longest format. Essentially because a Test is what it often has been, a 'true Test of character', Bangladesh team's entity now is shrouded in fear. They have indeed even turned the meaning of 'positive intent' the other way round, into something borne out of fear.

"We are under a great deal of pressure and the fear of failure is tremendously existing on the team and the individuals," Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, a mentor to some of the most recognised stars in the Bangladesh team, told The Daily Star as he reflected on the second Test.

He did not cite a lack of ability as cause for the latest defeat. "Their [Sri Lanka] players face more difficult game circumstances than our players. We have turned out from easier scenarios or challenges."

Being inside this 'bubble' of facing incompetent challenges, having to bat in batting friendly pitches, bowling well on turning pitches, all lack the ingredients of creating that Test character.

"We didn't have a clear strategy of



Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne congratulates left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama, who claimed a match-haul of 11 wickets in a fairytale debut in the second Test against Bangladesh in Pallekele. Jayawickrama's figures of 11 for 178 made him the first Sri Lankan to claim a 10-wicket haul on debut and the first bowler to take a 10-wicket haul on debut since Australia's Jason Krejza, who did it in 2008-9. He is also the first bowler since Narendra Hirwani in 1988 to pick up two five-wicket hauls in his debut match.

"I was short of runs before this series, and I had to put my hand up here. I did well here, and so did all the other batters. Everything went well, winning the toss, batting first, the spinners bowled really well. Praveen was fantastic and Ramesh too, but I think they need to play Test matches regularly, build confidence, and if they do that, they will fill the shoes of Dilruwan and Rangana for sure."

Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, who won the player-of-the-series award for his scores of 244, 118 and 66 in three innings.

previously stated that he was barely happy with a draw.

Despite losing wickets at regular intervals, Bangladeshi batsmen kept charging the bowlers and were eventually bundled out for 227 on the fifth morning to face a thrashing 209-run defeat.

"I don't think we performed as

a batting group except for Tamim (Iqbal) bhai in the first innings. He made a good start but we couldn't capitalise on it. If we could have batted for three or four sessions, things would have been different. We batted six sessions in the first Test," Mominul said after the match.

"You can neither be too defensive on these wickets, nor can you be

"I think the most important thing in this Test match was the toss, in my view. First two days there wasn't anything for the bowlers. Almost 50% of the Test match was decided by the toss. Obviously there are a lot of positives to take [from this series]. I lost the series but that doesn't mean I lost everything. Obviously, there will be criticism from you people and everyone else but I think there are a lot of positives to take."

Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque

too attacking. You have to find a low-risk method. We had to take calculative risks like as a left-hander I can attack the left-arm spinner or the right-hander can attack the right-arm spinner," added the Bangladesh captain.

Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, who himself had a great outing with 428 runs in two Tests, was all praise for left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama, who bagged a record eleven wickets on his debut. Karunaratne also said that their batsmen worked on their patience and mindset for Test cricket which paid dividends. "In West Indies, we did a lot of good things. It's not an easy place to bat, with the Dukes ball being used. But we fixed our mindset and worked on our temperament and patience. I think that's why we were able to make big scores in this series-Dhananjaya de Silva's 166 [in the first Test], and Thirimanne's 140. We knew that we needed a big score on the board in the first innings to win a match, so that was playing on our minds. We took responsibility," said Karunaratne.



whether we were playing for a draw or trying to win," Faheem reminded.

Tigers had five-and-a-half sessions to bat in order to get at least a draw but they lacked adaptability.

"No, they didn't play for a draw but there is nothing wrong with that either. If we look at the wicket's nature, only defending for five or six sessions was not the option. If you look at Liton [Das], he tried to stay low profile but it spelled trouble since the ball he got out to, he could have easily turned it to square-leg or swept it. If you allow the bowler to pitch that much further up, it's trouble. There has to be a mixture of offence and defence.

"Every action is a reflection of your mind and when you see someone play, you know who is in control and who is

not," Faheem said.

Mushfiqur Rahim resorted to reverse-sweeping in the second innings and Mominul Haque got out to a full-toss in the first innings. Such instances culminated from that governing fear. "You can play a delivery to send a message to the bowler that you are comfortable, which creates pressure on the bowler. In the longer format, if a bowler is hit for even four boundaries, he can get that moral victory and believe that he can get the batsman out."

Joe Root had employed the sweep, getting out of his comfort zone in England's recent series there and scoring big runs. Tigers let inexperienced Lankan spinners dictate terms. "You have to be ready when the ball turns out of the line of the stumps and the requirement is very quick thinking in these situations, agility of playing a fast bowler. Players need to find their limitations and work on it. People have scored runs in far more difficult conditions and it's high time to watch those innings to compare where our batting is," he reflected.



'Conte has justified wages'

REUTERS, MILAN

Inter Milan CEO Giuseppe Marotta insists that Antonio Conte is worth every penny of a salary that makes him the highest-paid coach in Serie A.

Inter won their first league title in 11 years with four games to spare on Sunday, two years after the arrival of Conte who reportedly earns 12 million euros net per year, almost five times as much as the next highest-paid coach in Serie A.

"He was a winner as a player and as a coach, and he managed to transmit these values to the players, since none of them had ever won a title except Arturo Vidal at Juventus," Marotta told Sky Italia.

"It is better to sign one less player but have a good coach. He has a salary that reflects the honours he has won."

Inter's triumph ended Juventus' nine-year reign as Italian champions, an era of dominance Conte played a major part in by leading the Turin club to the first three league titles of that run between 2011 and 2014.

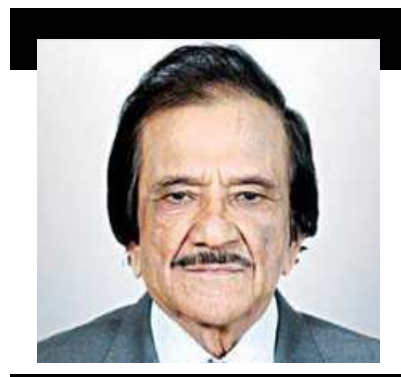
The 51-year-old also won the 2016-17 Premier League with Chelsea, and enjoyed a glittering playing career with Juve.

The former midfielder won five Serie A crowns, the Champions League, the UEFA Cup and the Coppa Italia among other honours in Turin.

Departure of a cricket pioneer

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Kamal Ziaul Islam, better known as KZ Islam, passed away at his residence in Dhaka yesterday afternoon. He was 86.



Islam left behind his wife, four sons, their wives, children and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at the Azad Mosque in Gulshan in the evening and he was later buried at the Banani Graveyard.

Islam pioneered Nirman School Cricket, a popular school tournament of the country in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the most important components behind the rise of cricket in Bangladesh in the pre-Test era was the Nirman School Cricket Championships, popularly known as 'Nirman Cricket'.

It all started in the early 1980s and gradually became a household name for more than a decade over which Nirman Cricket produced future stars such as Javed Omar Belim, Khaled Mahmud and Mehrab Hossain.

In the late '90s when the number of participating schools rose to over 400 as Nirman Cricket emerged as the first step for cricketers chasing the dream of one day representing the

national team. Islam served as the BCB president from January 30, 1983 to February 18, 1987.

The BCB expressed deep bereavement at the passing away of its former president.

BCB's current president Nazmul Hassan paid his tribute to K Z Islam, saying: "He was a pioneer and Bangladesh cricket will forever be grateful to him for his vision and belief. He patronised and encouraged age group cricket with the Nirman School tournament during a period when the game was far from being a professional sport. Because of resourceful personalities like him so many budding players could dream of becoming cricketers and cricket reached every corner of the country. On behalf of the board, I extend deepest condolences and sympathies to the family of K Z Islam."

As mark of respect to the late K Z Islam, the BCB flag will fly at half-mast today.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Can PSG's star power deny City's first final?

AGENCIES



With Istanbul firmly in their sights, Manchester City gear up for the second leg of their Champions League semi-final showdown with Paris Saint-Germain at the Etihad on Tuesday night.

After a loss in the first leg, PSG will have to do much more in the rematch to eliminate City and prevent them from appearing in their first-ever final.

An exemplary second-half showing from Pep Guardiola's men saw them emerge 2-1 winners from last week's first leg at the Parc des Princes, during which Marquinhos's header was cancelled out by strikes from Kevin De Bruyne and Riyad Mahrez.

Both sides boosted their chances of domestic success at the weekend,

as Man City overcame Crystal Palace 2-0 and are mere inches away from yet another Premier League title and may well win the league crown next weekend while PSG kept their title hopes alive with a 2-1 win over Lens.

Both teams have exceptional players in their ranks but Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said earlier this season 'We don't have a specific player to win games', to explain his side's consistency in a more congested season than ever before. "We have to do it together."

City's strength as a collective was evidenced in Saturday's 2-0 win at Crystal Palace that took them to the brink of a third Premier League title in four years.

City's depth won out over PSG's stardust in the first leg. After a bright first 45 minutes, Neymar and Mbappe were reduced to frustrated

spectators as the visitors dominated possession and got their vital away goals from De Bruyne and Mahrez.

Keeping the ball will key to Guardiola's plan for the second leg on Tuesday to minimise PSG's threat on the counter-attack. "We are good playing in a certain way, we cannot do it another way," said the Catalan coach on how his side cut off the supply to Neymar and Mbappe in the second-half a week ago.

Mbappe alone has scored five goals in PSG's last two away trips to Guardiola's former clubs Barcelona and Bayern. But with the French World Cup winner an injury doubt due to a calf strain, the much-maligned PSG supporting cast may need to step up if they are to deny City a first ever Champions League final as reward for their careful squad construction over many seasons.

HIGHLIGHT

Manchester City struggled to assert themselves for much of the first half during first-leg match but found their rhythm after the interval and secured a 2-1 advantage courtesy of second-half goals from Kevin De Bruyne and Riyad Mahrez. Paris's Idrissa Gueye was sent off late on.

