

SPORT

OLYMPICS MEDALS TABLE (TOP FIVE)

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
China	34	24	16	74
USA	29	35	27	91
Japan	22	10	14	46
Australia	17	5	19	41
ROC	16	22	20	58

Fizz the main hurdle in Australia's challenge to adapt

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

"Man, he is a difficult customer. He is really good," Ashton Agar said while wearing a smile that recognised that his side had its work cut out in dealing with Mustafizur Rahman's cutters. Even for a spinner like Agar, it was something different.

"If you watch it in slow motion, [you will see] he pretty much does it with his wrist and his fingers," he said yesterday having faced a delivery in the second T20I that jumped out from nowhere and gained on him. Agar left the pitch shaking his head.

The Bangladesh batsmen had found life difficult in the conditions too, but in Fizz's cutters there was something to really look into and indeed learn from for Australia. Without making fuss, Australia were aware of being able to learn or indeed gain knowledge of a different kind of trait in different conditions.

Australia's Mitchell Marsh felt the Tigers were a bit smarter while both him and Agar felt that Fizz in particular had something anyone could learn from. Run-making had been Australia's problem in both T20Is on a slow surface very alien to them, but adaptation was key.

"Thought they were a bit smarter than us to be honest," Henriques said after a gritty 30-run knock in the second T20I.

Nasum Ahmed's four wickets in the first T20I had made them think, but Fizz had always been on

Australia's minds and even then, there was room for surprise.

"Tonight, Mustafizur showed how quickly he adapts. I think he bowled 23 slower balls. He didn't bowl pace on and he doesn't do that in the IPL. Credit to him.

The amount of revolutions he gets even on a good wicket, is hard to play, let alone on something like that.

We have to find a way in a very short turnaround," Henriques elaborated after the second T20I.

Speaking to cricket.com.au, Henriques added: "It's one thing to be able to do that with your body but to keep hitting the right length like he does [is difficult to face]."

Australia's bowlers tried variations too. In fact, slower deliveries became part and parcel of the T20Is so far but there was something more to Fizz's action.

His flexible wrist action had Aussie batters quite flummoxed. The cutter to castle Josh Philippe pitched somewhere that should have been a length delivery. The batsman found himself playing another shot entirely while the ball disturbed his leg stump.

Australia had taken the game deep in batting first in the last T20I but the last few overs from Fizz got them wrapped in a tangle. With the matches not being broadcast in Australia -- and even Glen Maxwell taking to Twitter to ask for streams -- Agar felt people were missing out on something.

"For people who love the game, different conditions create different learning opportunities. For kids watching these games, they are seeing something they didn't before. Bowling stars that aren't seen in Australia...bowling slowers like Mustafizur."

There was something that can be learned from the visitors' mentality too. Enjoying the game you love, and playing cricket with the spirit to learn different skills is why they too have been successful in their cricket culture.



Can youngsters capitalise on momentum?

BISHWAJIT ROY



"Maturity doesn't mean age; it means sensitivity, manners and how you react."

Nazmul Abedeen

Fahim, renowned coach and mentor to many of Bangladesh's star cricketers, posted this famous quote on Facebook with a glowing picture of Afif Hossain to praise the 21-year-old's sensible knock in the second T20I against Australia on Wednesday.

"The message is actually for everybody. I don't like the tag of 'big players', I believe that anyone can play their role in the team, like Afif did, no matter how big of a star he is," Fahim elaborated yesterday.

Bangladesh will go into the third T20I today with a 2-0 cushion in the five-match series and Fahim believes that players who have the potential to propel Bangladesh cricket to the next level can make a strong statement in the remaining games.

"I think Afif just showed glimpses of his talent in the second match. Now we will look forward to seeing how he capitalises on this momentum. I can tell you confidently that he is the most talented player among the current players on either sides. I am

looking forward to seeing how players like Afif react in the remaining games," he said.

"[Nurul Hasan] Sohan is also a brilliant batsman but Afif represents a different generation, one that has positive intent in everything. It looks like Afif is internally motivated. The arrival of Tamim [Iqbal],

batsman Moises Henriques did not hesitate to say after the second match that the tourists were outsmarted by Bangladeshi bowlers.

Yes, the Australians were left perplexed by the conditions and humidity in the first two games, but Bangladesh's bowlers were smart to set a platform for their batsmen and their experience with conditions also helped them execute their plans.

Bangladesh's batsmen however have been less dominant, but in both matches the top order has been able to stitch together enough runs for a winning score.

Will the Tigers' batting be equally as smart in execution as their bowling unit is in these trying conditions?

"Yes, there are questions about difficult conditions and Australia's comparatively weaker batting line-up but I must say we played smart cricket so far. Playing good cricket against a team like Australia is always a good sign irrespective of what kind of team is playing if you consider their cricketing culture," said Fahim.

"However, I think there is a scope for our batting department to play more sensibly in these conditions. I am sure they already worked on what should be an ideal approach here."

I think there is a scope for our batting department to play more sensibly in these conditions. I am sure they already worked on what should be an ideal approach here.

NAZMUL ABEDEEN FAHIM

Shakib [Al Hasan] and Mushfiqur [Rahim] in 2007 had completely changed our cricketing vision and I believe our Under-19 World Cup success and the arrival of cricketers like Afif will take us to new heights, but it may take time. As I always say, it's also important how you give new talents much-needed exposure," he continued.

Australia felt that the Tigers had bitten them in 'alien' conditions, but visiting



Sheikh Kamal National Sports Council Award winners pose for a photo at Shaheed Sheikh Kamal Auditorium in NSC Tower yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who virtually joined the award-giving ceremony as the chief guest from her official Ganabhaban residence, for the first time handed over Sheikh Kamal National Sports Council Award, marking the 72nd birth anniversary of Shaheed Captain Sheikh Kamal. A total of 10 persons including sportsmen, journalists, organisers and two organisations received the award for their outstanding contribution to the sports arena.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mohammedan and Police play out a stalemate

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club surrendered a lead to play out a 1-1 draw against Police FC in Bangladesh Premier League encounter at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

With the sixth draw in 19 matches, the Black and White outfit are currently in the fifth position with 33 points though a win over Police could have taken them to the fourth position, a place Chattogram Abahani is occupying with 34 points. Police, on the other hand, remained at the eighth place with 19 points with three consecutive draws.

Mohammedan, who beat Police 1-0 in the first-leg match, took the lead at the 17th minute through Jafar Iqbal before Shahed Hossain rattled Police's crossbar three minutes from the break.

After resumption, Christian Kauakou Yao levelled the margin with a header in the 86th minute for Police after availing a feeble clearance from defender Kamrul Islam.



Belgium players celebrate after winning their first Olympic men's hockey title, beating Australia 3-2 in a penalty shootout following a 1-1 draw in regulation time yesterday. India took the bronze earlier after a thrilling 5-4 victory over Germany, giving the country its first Olympic medal in the sport since the 1980 Moscow Games.

PHOTO: REUTERS



England pacer James Anderson celebrates after taking the wicket of India captain Virat Kohli during the second day of the opening Test at Trent Bridge yesterday. India were 125-4 replying to England's first innings total of 183 when rain stopped play.

PHOTO: REUTERS

What to WATCH

BTV, T SPORTS & GTV

Bangladesh vs Australia Third T20I

Live from 6:00 pm

BTV

Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

Live from 7:15 am & 11:00 am

TEN 1, TEN 2, TEN 3 & SONY SIX

Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

Live from 8:00 pm & 4:00 am (Saturday)

SONY SIX & TEN 3

India vs England First Test (Day 3)

Live from 4:00 pm



American Katie Nageotte overcame a nervous start to win the women's pole vault gold at the Tokyo Olympics on Thursday. The 30-year-old arrived in Tokyo in red-hot form with two world-leading marks of 4.95 metres and 4.93, but she needed a third and final attempt to clear the opening height that was set at 4.50 for the final at the Olympic Stadium. Nageotte's clearance of 4.90 was enough for the night, as Anzhelika Sidorova and Britain's Holly Bradshaw finished at 4.85.



GARDINER TAKES 400M GOLD

Steven Gardiner of the Bahamas won gold in the men's 400 metres at the Olympic Stadium on Thursday, running a finely balanced race to shut out the Americans once again in an event they once dominated. Anthony Zambrano of Colombia, the silver medallist at the 2019 world championships in Doha and third-fastest this year, took the silver. Kirani James of Grenada, the 2012 gold medallist and the silver medallist five years ago in Rio, grabbed bronze.

PHOTO: REUTERS