

## SPORT



## 'Hopeful of better wickets in future'

SPORTS REPORTER from Abu Dhabi



The result was familiar and so was the post-match press conference as a sorry looking Taskin Ahmed walked in with a tense face to address the media after the Tigers crashed to their fourth consecutive defeat in the Super 12 stage of the ICC T20 World Cup in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

There was once again a plethora of ifs and buts from the losing party and Taskin tried his best to remain calm and answer the barrage of questions that were being flung his way.

Regret of not putting enough runs on the board from the batters was a factor after Bangladesh were bundled out for just 84 runs -- their sixth-lowest total in T20s -- before South Africa got home with six wickets to spare.

"It could have been a different story if we made even 120 or 125. I think today's [Tuesday's] wicket was different. The ball was seaming. There was off-the-pitch movement in both innings. They took nearly 14 overs to score 85 runs so it suggests the pitch was good for seamers," Taskin told the media.

Despite posting a small total, Bangladesh did manage to show some fight and had reduced the Proteas to 33 for three in the

Powerplay. Taskin was probably the only positive for the Bangladesh team yesterday, picking up two wickets and exploiting the seam-friendly Abu Dhabi track.

"We started well but a score like 84 is never good enough against this batting line-up. It is the same for most teams, so we have to bat better. We encountered sporting wickets in the World Cup, much different from Mirpur. We are hopeful of better wickets in the future. It will improve our bowling and batting. Regardless of the result, it will help us ahead of big tournaments," he said.

With one game left in the Super 12 stage against Australia on November 4, Taskin pleaded for blessings from the media and fans so that the Tigers could take something and end the disastrous campaign on a positive note.

With the morale in freefall following a string of defeats, Taskin was even asked whether it was tougher to play in the middle or face the media.

"When you don't perform well as a team, everything becomes difficult as a player. It is obvious that when you don't play well, there will be a lot of talk. Players are under pressure. We didn't play well overall, but we are hoping things will improve in the future," said a dejected Taskin, who appeared to breathe a sigh of relief as he walked out of the press conference area.

## Tigers' batting brings back memories of early 2000s

NABID YEASIN

From 22 for no loss to getting bundled out for a meagre 84 in 18.2 overs -- the entire scenario brought back memories of the regular batting woes of Bangladesh in the early 2000s. This happened in Abu Dhabi yesterday in a game that the Tigers lost to South Africa by six wickets, officially ending Bangladesh's bid for their maiden T20 World Cup semifinal quest with still a game remaining.

Unlike most of the matches of the tournament, yesterday's pitch provided ample help to seamers with a lot of bounce, carry and elements for swing off the pitch. That saw the Proteas quicks -- Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje and Dwaine Pretorius -- corner the Tigers to a place from where bouncing back to the game seemed improbable, just like in the early days of Bangladesh cricket.

When one falls, the others follow -- it was a common saying surrounding the Tigers back in the days. The adage rang true yesterday when Bangladesh batters, especially the top order, had no answers to South Africa's pace prowess as most of the batters surrendered meekly.

It started with Mohammad Naim, who

himself was to be blamed for his downfall as his attempted slog across the line only gave an easy catch to Reeza Hendricks at midwicket.

Soumya Sarkar followed suit in the very next delivery. An inswinging fuller-length delivery from Rabada caught the left-hander by surprise, having him trapped in front in the very first ball.

Nortje and Rabada then kept on piling up the pressure, with deliveries aimed at the body of the batters. That attacking strategy got the better

of Mushfiqur Rahim and skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, both undone by bouncers cramping them up for room and forcing edges off the bat which were taken at gully and point. It was as if the haunting days when Bangladesh batters struggled to find answers to deliveries clocked at 140kmph or above were back.

If the wickets of Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur were not enough to send the fans down the aching memory lane, Afif Hossain's poor judgement at a precarious situation probably did the trick. One would think Bangladesh being in the international cricket arena for over 20 years would have injected some sense into the players and the cricketers would know better than to charge down the track and lose the stumps trying to play a wayward shot across the line.

However, Afif proved it wrong and departed in this exact fashion leaving the Tigers five down and on the brink of humiliation.

Can Bangladesh play out the 20 overs in its entirety? Just like the old times, this was the question that probably was lingering in the minds of the fans. And as it often happened back in the days, Bangladesh failed in that regard and were bundled out even before the overs could be completed.

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## SCORES IN BRIEF

**BANGLADESH**  
84 all out in 18.2 overs  
(Mahedi 27, Liton 24;  
Rabada 3-20, Nortje 3-8,  
Shamsi 2-21)

**SOUTH AFRICA**  
86 for 4 in 13.3 overs  
(Bavuma 31 not out,  
Dussen 22; Taskin 2-18,  
Nasum 1-22, Mahedi  
1-19)

**RESULT**  
South Africa won by 6 wickets.

**PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH**  
Kagiso Rabada.

## 'We feel betrayed'

MAZHAR UDDIN from Abu Dhabi

A seemingly landslide turnover by the Bangladeshi supporters in the Tigers' first three games of the Super 12 stage saw a significant dip when it came to the fourth and penultimate game against South Africa at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Prior to the South Africa game, the Bangladeshi expats in the UAE had arrived buzzing in numbers and played the role of the twelfth man with their signature-style unconditional support despite having been on the receiving end of disappointments, one after the other.

During the second Super 12 game against England, the majority of the twenty-thousand seats of the Sheikh Zayed Stadium were occupied by the ever-enthusiastic Bangladeshi supporters, who, however, had struggled to keep their heads high throughout the game and returned home with an embarrassing eight-wicket thrashing.

Inevitably or otherwise, the script had flipped yesterday, as not even 30 percent of the stadium was occupied by the Bangladeshi fans. This came as quite a shock to many, including the ICC volunteers who were assigned on the ground.

Even the small number of Bangladeshi crowd who made it to the game yesterday had struggled, like finding a needle in a haystack, to find something to cheer for their beloved team as the Tigers continued their lacklustre display in the ongoing mega event and were bundled out for a meagre 84 runs in 18.2 overs in the process.

Not only the latest batting disaster ended up becoming the sixth lowest-ever total in T20s for

## 'Exploiting home conditions won't give a long-term benefit'

MAZHAR UDDIN from Abu Dhabi

Bangladesh's poor performances in the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup have raised many questions about the methods that the team management employed to improve in the shortest format of the game.

Many opined that preparing slow and low pitches at home had an adverse effect on the Tigers' game while others blamed a lack of skills and a poor approach from the players for continual disappointment.

Bangladesh were totally outplayed once again as they crashed to a fourth consecutive loss in the Super 12 stage, this time being bundled out for just 84 runs by South Africa en route a six-wicket defeat.

South Africa pace-bowling legend Dale Steyn, who closely monitored yesterday's game from the commentary box, opined that Bangladesh needed to play more matches away from home to improve in the shortest format of the game.

"Look I can't remember the last time Bangladesh played T20s against South Africa away from home. If you want to improve as a team in this format or any format, you have to play more matches away from your home," Steyn told The Daily Star after the game yesterday.

"If you keep playing in the comforts of home and exploiting home conditions, it won't give you a long-term benefit. When Bangladesh play outside their comfort zone, they will gain more experience and exposure and will realise what to do in such situations."

The 38-year-old also believes Bangladesh have the potential to become a better unit.

"Bangladesh are a very good side no doubt, but things are not going their way this tournament. Obviously, it's a huge disappointment for the fans. You have got some very good players and I believe Bangladesh can be a better T20 team in the coming days."



## Pakistan ease into semis

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Pakistan became the first team to reach the Twenty20 World Cup semi-finals after beating Namibia by 45 runs, with brilliant half centuries from Mohammad Rizwan and skipper Babar Azam in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Rizwan finished with a slow-to-fast 50-ball 79 not out while Babar notched his 23rd Twenty20 international fifty with a 49-ball 70 to lift Pakistan -- who won the toss and batted -- to 189-2 in their 20 overs. Namibia tried their best to match their opponents with David Wiese notching 43 not out and Craig Williams scoring 40 but Pakistani bowlers never allowed them a free hand as they managed 144-5 in 20

overs. With four wins in as many games, Pakistan became the first side to reach the last four from Group 2. This will be their fifth semi-final in Twenty20 World Cup history -- the most by any team.

Williams knocked five boundaries and a six before he holed out to spinner Shadab Khan while Wiese smashed two sixes and three boundaries in his 31-ball knock.

Opener Stephan Baard scored 29. But Rizwan and Babar were the stars once again, like they were in Pakistan's win over arch-rivals India, which gave them a kick-start to the event. The pair added 113 for the first wicket after Pakistan were slow out of the blocks, scoring just 59 in the first ten overs but ended with a flurry in the next ten, taking 130 runs.

Veteran Mohammad Hafeez scored a brisk 16-ball 32 not out with five boundaries. Pakistan's total is the second-highest in this tournament, behind Afghanistan's 190-4 against Scotland in Sharjah. Babar hit seven boundaries before he holed out to David Wiese in the 15th over while Fakhar Zaman was smartly caught by keeper Zane Green for five.

Rizwan reached his tenth half century with a pulled six off Wiese in the 19th over before hitting four boundaries and a six to take 22 off JJ Smit's final over.

Rizwan's knock included eight fours and four sixes. Pakistan next face Scotland in their last match in Sharjah on Sunday. Namibia will meet New Zealand, also in Sharjah two days earlier.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**PAKISTAN**  
189 for 2 in 20 overs (Rizwan 79 not out, Babar 70, Hafeez 32 not out; Wiese 1-30)

**NAMIBIA**  
144 for 5 in 20 overs (Williams 40, Wiese 43 not out; Imad 1-13, Hasan 1-22)

**RESULT**  
Pakistan won by 45 runs  
**PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH**  
Mohammad Rizwan



Bangladesh but it manifested at a time and at a stage where even the hardcore Tigers' loyalists still had some residual hope left to witness an act of resurgence, or some form of fighting spirit, from their team when all eyes were upon them.

"To be honest, we feel betrayed. We still had high hopes from our team even after losing the first three games, in which two of those against Sri Lanka and West Indies came as a huge shock to us," said Rashidul Hasan, who travelled all the way from Dubai to watch the game with his friends, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Despite the fact that we are virtually out from the contention for the semi-final spot, we wanted to support our team. But the manner in which our players played today [yesterday] was disappointing," he added.

While the string of poor performances remained as one of the biggest reasons for the decline in numbers of the Bangladeshi fans in the stadium, the controversial statements from the cricketers at the post-match press conferences following defeats had added insult to the fans' injury. "Look, win and loss are part of sports, but the manner in which the Bangladeshi team are losing isn't acceptable. You can sense from the body language of the players that they are not giving their best," said Mamunul Islam, who works as mechanic in Dubai.

"And on top of poor performances, some of the senior players, including Mushfiqur Rahim, did not shy away to answer the critics in an unprofessional manner, which is even more disappointing," he added.

"Being a Bangladeshi, we will support our team in both good and bad times but it's just not fair on us if the players don't feel our pain."