



(Clockwise from bottom R) Mahedi Hasan's unbeaten 20-ball 30 gave Bangladesh's innings late impetus and the Tigers seemed poised to capitalise on that momentum after reducing Pakistan to 24-4 in six overs. However, an expensive 18th over from Mustafizur Rahman dashed their hopes of starting the three-match T20I series with a win.



PHOTO:
FIROZ AHMED

Mahmudullah laments top-order struggles

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite putting up a small total of 127, Bangladesh almost pulled a rabbit out of the hat and took the game into the last over before eventually falling to a four-wicket defeat against Pakistan in the first game of a three-match T20I series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In the opinion of Bangladesh skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, the continuing failure of the top-order, which on this occasion halted proceedings at the start of Bangladesh's innings and saw them add just 25 for the loss of three wickets in the Powerplay, spoke for itself.

"I think it looked a very good wicket to bat on when we chose to bat, but there was probably a bit of help for the bowlers as well. Having said that, we should not have given that as an excuse and we probably could have batted better, especially in the top order which has been lacking since the World Cup," Mahmudullah said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

Despite the small total, Bangladesh grew in belief after some brilliantly bowling that had put pressure on Pakistan and left them tottering on 24 for four in the Powerplay.

With 32 required off 18 balls, Mustafizur -- who had conceded just 11 from his first three overs -- went for 15 runs as Shadab Khan struck a six and a four to change the complexion of the game.

Shadab remained unbeaten on a 10-ball 21 while Mohammad Nawaz, who did not play a game at the World Cup, was not out on 18 off eight balls as the pair added a match-winning 36-run seventh-wicket stand.

"It would have been better if we could have set the total around 140. But despite that we got some early wickets.

Mustafizur bowled really well alongside Taskin and Mahedi did well with both bat and ball but credit should be given to the Shadab and Nawaz, who batted really well in the end," Mahmudullah added.

Interestingly, leg-spinner Aminul Islam bowled only the final over of the game when Pakistan needed just two runs and Mahmudullah justified it by saying he did not want to introduce a leggie against two left-handed batsmen.

On the other hand, Pakistan will be relieved after their lower-middle order survived its first test since a brilliant World Cup campaign. Visiting skipper Babar Azam opined that the Mirpur pitch was a bit tricky and credited Shadab and Nawaz for the match-winning partnership. However, Babar added that Bangladesh had scored 15 to 20 runs more than they had expected.

"We definitely could have bundled them out a bit earlier. I think they scored 15 to 20 runs more than we had hoped. But I think we have to accept it's a part of cricket and credit goes to our bowlers for the way they performed."



REVAMPED TIGERS SHOW promise even in defeat

MAZHAR UDDIN



It was a case of so close, yet so far for Bangladesh, who put up a great fight in defending a small 127-run total before going down to a four-wicket defeat to Pakistan in the first game of a three-match T20I series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh did not get enough runs on the board and many will feel it would have been a different story had they scored 20 more or if that 18th over of the Pakistan innings -- when Mustafizur Rahman conceded 15 runs with Pakistan requiring 32 off 18 deliveries -- had gone differently. But in the end, Shadab Khan smashed a six-to-leg spinner Aminul Islam in the last over to reach the target with four balls to spare and stamp Pakistan's authority as the better unit.

However, the Tigers can take a lot of positives from a game and the body language and intent shown by a rather young, inexperienced Bangladesh following a major shake-up after a dismal ICC T20 World Cup campaign deserves some appreciation.

The hosts got off to yet another disastrous start

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 127 for 7 in 20 overs (Afif 36, Mahedi 30; Hasan Ali 3-22, Wasim 2-24)

Pakistan: 132 for 6 in 19.2 overs (Fakhar 34, Khushdil 34; Taskin 2-31, Mustafizur 1-26)

Result: Pakistan won by 4 wickets

Player-of-the-match: Hasan Ali

after skipper Mahmudullah Riyad opted to bat, being reduced to 25 for three after six overs to record their third-worst score in the Powerplay.

Saif Hasan, who made his T20I debut yesterday, failed to make an impact and was dismissed after making just one run while the likes of Naim Sheikh (1) and Najmul Hossain also (7) dealt with the harsh realities of facing a quality bowling attack.

Young Afif Hossain showed some resilience and initiated a counter-attack, hitting the first six of the innings in the eleventh over and doing the same off the following ball from left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz to bring life back to the Mirpur stands.

The left-hander was dismissed after scoring 36 off 34 balls but the tempo he set provided the confidence that Nurul Hasan and Mahedi Hasan needed to seize the momentum and, backed by the ten-thousand strong crowd, Bangladesh went on to add 47 runs in the last five overs.

Nurul hit two sixes before being dismissed for a 22-ball 28 while Mahedi remained not out on 30 off just 20 balls with two sixes, including a scooped maximum over fine leg to Haris Rouf in the final over that brought the crowd to their feet. Mahedi was also impressive with the new ball and managed to restrict the visiting batters and ended up conceding just 17 runs from four overs and also getting the wicket of Haider Ali.

It would be too harsh to blame this young and underprepared Bangladesh unit for the defeat, especially considering they were up against an in-form Pakistan. But it will be important for the team management to provide assurances to the players and it would not be a surprise if the Tigers manage to clinch a win in the coming two games by doing the basics right.



"I would like thank Allah first of all. Obviously, it's a pleasant moment for me. My performance wasn't up to the mark in the World Cup but you have ups and downs in your career. I have been here during the BPL and I know it's generally a slow pitch. So I bowled stump to stump and got wickets."

HASAN ALI
PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH

Mushfiqur asked to maintain code of conduct

SPORTS REPORTER

Mushfiqur Rahim attended a meeting with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday following the veteran cricketer's comment, made during an interview with a local media portal, regarding his exclusion from Bangladesh's T20I squad against Pakistan.

Mushfiqur, during an interview given to an online portal on Wednesday, questioned his exclusion as he felt he was dropped, instead of being 'rested', when chief selector Minhajul Abedin announced the squad earlier. "I was asked whether I will be available for the T20 series against Pakistan or not and I said definitely. But it's not in my hands whether they include me or not as they might have thought the team doesn't need me," a seemingly frustrated Mushfiqur said during the interview.

Although the details of the meeting were not disclosed by the BCB officials, it was learned that Mushfiqur, being a contractual player of the board, has been asked to refrain from making any comment that could possibly breach the Code of Conduct concerning media protocol.



A welcome return to the scramble for tickets

SPORTS REPORTER

"Do you know where can buy a ticket?" That common phrase exemplified the fans' desperation to watch the Tigers live from the stands at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium as festivities resumed in Mirpur exactly 618 days after the Covid-19 pandemic halted sporting events worldwide.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) finally allowed fans in for the three-match T20I series against Pakistan, the first time since March 2020 that spectators have been allowed although ticket sales were restricted to half the stadium's capacity.

The scenes from yesterday reminded of the pre-pandemic days, with huge numbers gathering in front of the stadium premises hours before the start of yesterday's first T20I.

Keeping health protocols in mind, organisers made it mandatory for the supporters to present proof of Covid-19 vaccination before entering the stadium, a move that was appreciated by the

supporters.

"We are very happy to be back on the field again and supporting Bangladesh. It has been a long wait for us but we appreciated the fact that the BCB allowed fans to watch the game by maintaining health protocols and that they made it mandatory for supporters to show their vaccination certificates," Asif Ahmed, who works for a private company, told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, there was some dissatisfaction among supporters over the availability of tickets in the booths designated by the BCB.

"There were no tickets available in the booths. The authorities told us all the tickets were sold out. I even tried to buy tickets from the black market, where tickets that cost

Tk 100 are priced at Tk 500-600 and at times even more. I didn't want to miss the opportunity to watch Bangladesh play against Pakistan at home after a long time so I decided to buy a ticket at a much higher price," fan Altaf Hossain added.

Tim Paine: The fallen skipper

AGENCIES

Distraught and in tears, Tim Paine stepped down as captain of Australia's Test cricket team on Friday after revelations he had been investigated and cleared over sexually explicit text messages sent to a female colleague four years ago.

Tim Paine was hailed as Australian cricket's saviour when he took over the captaincy in 2018 after a ball-tampering scandal left the team's reputation in tatters.

A journeyman wicketkeeper-batsman, Paine was 33 at the time and considering retirement before being unexpectedly appointed to the most scrutinised role in Australian sport.

The scandal was Australian cricket's lowest ebb for generations and Paine was seen as the catalyst for a cultural change.

But he has now suddenly resigned -- less than three weeks before a blockbuster home Ashes series against England -- over what



he described as an inappropriate "private text exchange" with a female colleague.

The scandal plunged Australia's Ashes preparations into disarray three weeks before the first Test begins in Brisbane and placed the 36-year-old wicketkeeper's international career in jeopardy.

'Mr 360' hangs up his bat

AFP, Cape Town

AB de Villiers, who announced his retirement from cricket on Friday, will be remembered as one of the sport's great entertainers and one of the finest players to represent South Africa.

South African great said that the "flame no longer burns so brightly". De Villiers had retired from international cricket in 2018. Former South Africa captain Graeme Smith told AFP his long-time

former teammate was "probably the best player across all three formats that I played with or against in my career".

De Villiers was an outstanding batsman in all forms of international cricket. He earned the nickname "Mr 360" for his ability to play shots to all parts of the ground, an ability never better illustrated than when he scored a century off 31 balls against the West Indies in Johannesburg in 2014-15. It remains the fastest hundred in one-day internationals.

