



'It's a big opportunity to make a statement'

SPORTS REPORTER



Third time is indeed the charm for Bangladesh women's cricket team as they will play the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup for the first time in New Zealand next year.

Since gaining ODI status in 2011, Bangladesh women's team, holders of the latest Asia Cup, failed to qualify in the 2013 and 2017 editions of the mega event but Nigar Sultana Joty's troops made it happen this time.

Alongside Bangladesh, Pakistan and the West Indies will progress to the upcoming

World Cup in March-April next year by virtue of their rankings up until September 30 this year. And now the Tigrisses are set to join hosts New Zealand, Australia, India, England and South Africa as the women's cricket World Cup qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe has been abandoned after the discovery of a new Covid-19 variant in South Africa.

Bangladesh team players and officials expressed their happiness after the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the cancelation of the qualifiers after Saturday's game between the West Indies and Sri Lanka had to be called off when a member of the Sri Lankan support

staff tested positive for Covid-19.

"We are really happy and excited. It's our hard work that made it possible. We just got the news earlier than expected because of the abandonment of qualifiers. Personally, I am happier than anybody as I captained the team for the first time and got the good news. Now our target would be to continue good performance in the World Cup," said Joty.

Nazmul Abedin Fahim, a well-known name in Bangladesh cricket fraternity, said that: "We are going to play against the best of the bests. So, it's an opportunity and as well as a big challenge for us to make a

statement on the world stage."

"We have to take the challenge with progressive planning because we are going to face a tough challenge against the quality sides. It will be a big boost for our women's cricket if we can perform well there," the veteran coach, who guided the women's team earlier, added.

"We must make sure that we play some quality cricket at home and get some international exposure before the mega event. I think we have a good ODI side, so we would just need some proper planning so that it creates a good sense of pride among our women athletes," Fahim concluded.

'Starting from zero is always a challenge'

ASHEAQ UL MUSHFIQ

It was the second over of the first session of Day Two yesterday, where Liton Das was standing on 114 runs as he was about to face Hasan Ali's last ball of the over. Anticipating yet another outswinger delivery, Liton was completely taken by surprise as an inswinger, this time, went past the inside edge of his defensive prod and struck him on the back thigh pad. Liton's spectacular innings came to an end early in the day as it only opened the portal to the demise of Bangladesh's first innings. Mushfiqur's dismissal set the Tigers further on the backfoot as the tail-enders could not take the team beyond 330 or the lunch interval.

But looking back at the feat Liton pulled off on the first day, his elegant display with the bat created a refreshing aura, not only for Bangladesh cricket but also for Liton as an individual. Even though the Tigers could not reach an amassed total, it takes nothing away from Liton's maiden Test century on the first day.

Great sportsmen around the world are remembered not only for their great performances but also for their comebacks when chips are down. Liton had been called into question since his disappointing run in the recent T20I World Cup, which had consequently left him out



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH 1ST INNINGS

330 all out in 114.4 overs (Liton 114, Mushfiqur 91, Mehedi 38; Hasan 5-51, Afridi 2-70, Faheem 2-54)

PAKISTAN 1ST INNINGS

145 for no loss in 57 overs (Abid 93 not out, Abdullah 52 not out)

MUSHFIQUR RAHIM'S NERVOUS 90S

95, against England, Chattogram, 2010

93, against Zimbabwe, Harare, 2013

92, against Sri Lanka, Chattogram, 2018

91, against Pakistan, Chattogram, 2021

Impact of genuine fast bowling showcased again

MAZHAR UDDIN FROM CHATTOGRAM



Irrespective of pitch and conditions, the possession of potent attacking fast bowlers keeps a team invariably in the hunt and the Pakistani frontline pacers proved that yet again by utilising the new ball perfectly to dismantle the Bangladesh batting line-up.

Despite managing to stage a dramatic comeback, courtesy of a magnificent 206 run fifth-wicket stand between Liton Das and Mushfiqur Rahim, Bangladesh went on to add no more than 77 runs to their overnight score of 253 and lost six wickets to be eventually bundled out for 330 in the first innings at the



stroke of lunch on Day 2 at the Zahir Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The performance of the Bangladeshi seamers was in stark contrast to their Pakistani counterparts, who made the ball talk and wreaked havoc in the early morning of the first two days. Since then, the likes of Abu Jayed and Ebadot Hossain posed no real threat as their lack of pace or swing made the visitors' openers Abid Ali and Abdullah Shafique negotiate the attack comfortably as Pakistan ended up on 145 without loss at day's end, trailing by 185 runs. Bangladesh are certainly missing some fire power from the likes of Taskin Ahmed.

Much like the first session of the opening day, where the likes of Shaheen Afridi, Hasan Ali and Faheem Ashraf rattled through the Bangladesh top-order to reduce the hosts to 49 for 4, the seamers repeated the trick for the

visitors again once they had the second new ball in hand yesterday morning. The fact that the three Pakistani pacers ended up bagging nine wickets among themselves, clearly reflects their domination against Bangladesh batters.

Pakistani fast bowlers displayed outstanding skills with the new ball, especially Ali who managed to swing the new ball both ways and ended up bagging his sixth five-wicket haul in the longest format.

It was a classic fast bowlers' trap set by Ali to dismiss Liton, batting on 114, where he started off by bowling a few deliveries moving away from the right-hander from a good length before surprising the centurion with an in-swinging delivery on the length that came in sharply. The right-hander was undone playing for the outward movement but the ball went through his defence, leading to a leg-before dismissal.

Afridi had relentlessly hit the deck hard and pushed the batters on the back foot while Ashraf asked questions bowling at the stumps alongside Hasan who kept the batters guessing with his art of swing — the trio complemented each other and offered variety from both ends.

Mushfiqur at the other hand, remained overcautious since resuming the day on 82 and probably it was down to some brilliant bowling by the Pakistani pace front. Having managed to score only nine runs in 35 balls on the second day, Mushfiqur fell by edging to the wicket-keeper off Ashraf's delivery. It was Mushfiqur's fourth time in getting out on the nervous nineties in Tests and arguably he was intimidated by some fine demonstration of pace bowling from the Pakistanis with the shiny red cherry.

Vaughan says sorry to Rafiq but denies racism

AFP, LONDON



Former England captain Michael Vaughan denied making a racist remark when he was skipper of Yorkshire but told the BBC on Saturday he apologises to his accuser ex-team-mate Azeem Rafiq if he was "responsible for any of his hurt".

English cricket has been rocked by revelations of racism from Pakistan-born Rafiq.

He gave harrowing testimony to lawmakers this month in which he said his career had been ended by the racist abuse he received while at leading English county Yorkshire.

These have included an allegation Vaughan told the now 30-year-old Rafiq and other Yorkshire players of Asian origin there were "too many of you lot, we need to do something about it" during a county match in 2009.

Then Yorkshire paceman Rana Naved-ul-Hasan, a former Pakistan international, and current Yorkshire and England leg-spinner Adil Rashid have backed Rafiq's version of events. The fourth player in the group — bowler Ajmal Shahzad — has told the Daily Mail he had no recollection of the event and "the senior guys were really good to me".

Vaughan — who has been dropped by the BBC from their broadcasting team for the forthcoming Ashes series in Australia — was adamant he never uttered those words saying "No I didn't. No."

Vaughan — who played his entire domestic career at Yorkshire from 1993 to 2009 — was distraught for Rafiq. "It hurts deeply, hurts me that a player has gone through so much be treated so badly at the club that I love," Vaughan said.

"I have to take some responsibility for that because I played for Yorkshire County Cricket Club for 18 years and if in any way shape or form I'm responsible for any of his hurt, I apologise for that."

'It's been a dream, no doubt'



REUTERS



Patel would never disrespect Test cricket by calling it an easy game but the India left-arm spinner accepts he is living a dream after producing another stellar performance in the opening Test against New Zealand on Saturday.

Patel completed figures of 5-62 to collect his fifth five-wicket haul in seven innings since he made his Test debut against England this year.

Left-arm spinner helped India grab a handy 49-run first-innings lead.

The home side suffered a setback, however, with Shubman Gill's late dismissal as they finished day three on 14-1 at Kanpur's Green Park Stadium. Kyle Jamieson bowled Gill for one and troubled Cheteshwar Pujara who remained unbeaten on nine.

Patel is yet to play a Test match abroad where pitches would be less conducive to his craft and even at home he remains under the shadow of senior spinners

Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja in the game's longest format.

The 27-year-old, who claimed 27 wickets in three matches in his debut series against England, overshadowed both his spin colleagues on Saturday to help India take a 49-run first innings lead at Kanpur's Green Park Stadium.

"It's been a dream, no doubt," the wiry all-rounder said.

Asked if he wondered what all the fuss was about test cricket, Patel said: "Not at all, test cricket is definitely not easy."

"When New Zealand were going strong at 120 for no loss yesterday, it certainly did not feel easy."

Replying to India's total of 345, New Zealand were 151 for no wicket on Saturday before Patel wrecked their middle order and the tourists eventually folded for 296.

"I just try to enjoy the game whenever I play," Patel said. "When playing alongside Ashwin and Jadeja, I honestly don't think who is the lead spinner among us."

"When I have the ball in my hand, I'm too pre-occupied assessing the pitch and my bowling plans to think of these things."