

SPORT

TAIJUL DOES THE TRICK AGAIN

» Taijul Islam's seven-wicket haul for 116 is now ranked as the best figures by a Bangladeshi in Tests against Pakistan, surpassing Shakib Al Hasan's six-for in 2011 in Mirpur.

» He is the country's first bowler to have taken seven or more wickets in an innings on two occasions following the eight-for against Zimbabwe in Mirpur back in 2014, which still remains Bangladesh's best bowling figures in Tests.

» Taijul also became the leading wicket-taker for the Tigers against Pakistan with 19 wickets in four Tests, surpassing another left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique's tally of 17 wickets in three Tests.

» Pakistan innings' five leg-before-wicket dismissals all resulted off Taijul, who is in a league of his own as the only Bangladesh bowler to have scalped four lbws in one innings; whereas he has done it twice.

» And with his ninth five-wicket haul, the 29-year-old is now behind Shakib in the list of Bangladesh's most number of fifters in Tests.

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram



Many may be unable to recall that Taijul Islam had taken five wickets in the last Test that he played for Bangladesh just over six months ago against Sri Lanka in Pallekele.

A humble character who does not seem to want the limelight, Taijul once again did his job silently as a magnificent seven-wicket haul against Pakistan helped Bangladesh take an all-important first-innings lead of 44 runs on the third day of the first Test in Chattogram yesterday.

It was virtually a contest between Taijul and the entirety of the Pakistani batting line-up, but the left-hand spinner did not disappoint, returning staggering figures of seven wickets for 116 runs -- the best bowling figures by a Bangladeshi against Pakistan.

The situation looked really difficult for the hosts as Pakistan began their innings with a 145-run opening-wicket stand between Abid Ali and Abdullah Shafique, who saw out the second day.

But Taijul broke that stand after the pair added just one run on the third day, trapping debutant Abdullah Shafique leg before with an armer off just the fifth ball that he bowled in the morning.

Taijul found himself on a hatrick after removing Azhar Ali with his next ball, squaring the batter up and employing late turn to hit his back leg and have him trapped leg before, bringing the sparsely populated Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium to life.

Patience has been Taijul's biggest strength over the years and the cricketer from Natore once again received rich dividends for sticking to the basics and bowling at the stumps on a consistent basis.

"Taijul's strength is his patience and accuracy. The best part of his bowling was that he didn't allow the Pakistani batters any scoring opportunities and used his pace variations really well. When you don't use your feet as a batsman, you

are in trouble against Taijul because he will keep asking questions by bowling a consistent line. I think he deserves what he got and he is undoubtedly a world-class spinner," fellow left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr. said.

Taijul scalped his third and fourth wickets in the first session as well. Fawad Alam was totally deceived by a delivery that spun and also bounced in sharply from the footmarks before kissing his gloves on the way through to Liton Das, who grabbed a smart catch.

Another example of how accurate Taijul was yesterday is the fact that five of his seven wickets were leg before. He trapped centurion Abid Ali after lunch when the ball held its line after pitching in the middle stump and skidded through onto his front leg.

The 29-year-old not only filled the vacuum left by the absence of Shakib Al Hasan in the spin department, but played two vital roles by both containing runs and also picking up wickets. His economy of just over 2.5 runs per over says the rest.

"Since Shakib bhai is not there, I had to play his role in the team. There is also the issue of containing runs but at the same time you also have to pick wickets. I had to play both roles," Taijul said after the third day during a virtual press conference.

Taijul went on to pick his ninth five-wicket haul when he showed a glimpse of his vast experience after being struck for a six and a four by Hasan Ali. Off the very next ball, Hasan Ali came down the track for another heave but this time Taijul dragged back the length and turned the ball away from the batsman, allowing Liton to complete a simple stumping.

He also went on to break a 29-run last-wicket stand, dismissing Faheem Ashraf as Bangladesh, like on many an occasion in the past, rode on Taijul's mature shoulders to get into a better position in a Test match.

Ebadot can afford to follow his own example

NABID YEASIN

To the regular followers of Bangladesh cricket, Ebadot Hossain has made his name synonymous with the gesture of salute that he brings out after picking a wicket. That has been his trademark celebration since his inception.

While it is usually Ebadot who is the one saluting, it would not be exaggerating to say that the right-arm pacer deserves to be on the receiving end of one, considering his impressive display on the third day of the Chattogram Test between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

If only figures are to go by, only left-arm spinner Taijul Islam's exploits and Bangladesh's amazing turnaround in yesterday's play would come to the fore. Pakistan, who had started the day with 145 for no loss, could only add 141 more runs on the day. And undoubtedly, it was Taijul who turned the destroyer-in-chief with his laudable seven-for to instigate a roaring comeback for Bangladesh.

But it would also be wrong to ignore the supporting role Ebadot played in enabling such an astounding comeback that saw Bangladesh go into their second innings with a 44-run lead, that too from a situation where it seemed a resurgence was improbable.

Ebadot, who had a modest outing at best on the previous day as he remained wicketless by giving away 31 runs in his 12 overs, seemed a totally different beast yesterday, especially when skipper Mominul Haque handed him



SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH

1st innings: 330 all out in 114.4 overs and Second innings: 39 for 4 in 19 overs (Shadman 1, Saif 18, Najmul 0, Mominul 0, Mushfiquir 12 not out, Yasir 8 not out; Afridi 3-6, Hasan 1-19)

PAKISTAN

1st innings: 286 all out in 115.4 overs (Abid 133, Abdullah 52, Babar 10, Faheem 38, Hasan 12, Afridi 13 not out; Ebadot 2-47, Taijul 7-116, Miraz 1-68)

the new ball following lunch.

With the ball just an over old, Ebadot resumed the innings post-lunch with a maiden. However, the specialty of that over was not in conceding any runs but in the way he set Mohammad Rizwan up for an eventual leg-before in his next over.

Just a day before, the same player who had been struggling with his accuracy, considered as one of his strengths alongside the ability to

bowl quick, Ebadot was able to extract off-the-pitch movement instantly.

For four deliveries in that over, Ebadot had maintained an impeccable line outside off and swung the cherry away from the right-hander Rizwan, beating his outside edge on one occasion. And the final delivery of that over that Ebadot moved inwards, beating the inside edge off Rizwan's willow, was perhaps an indication of what was to follow.

The first delivery of the very next over, Ebadot had Rizwan plumb in-front, striking the back leg of the right-hander who was probably anticipating the ball to move away, just as it had been doing for most occasions.

Ebadot was rewarded with another wicket on the day and ended with figures of two for 47 in 26 overs, including seven maidens. But even though his figures might not be as glowing as that of Taijul, his impact in the entire game could hardly be forgotten.

For the seven overs he bowled on the trot in that spell, the right-armed gave away just 11 runs, constantly keeping the pressure up from one end that only made Taijul's work easier at the other.

Ebadot showcased how bowling partnerships work and the way a bowler can complement his partner from the other end. The only thing that Ebadot needs to do is to not make this only a one-time wonder and turn it into a habit by following the example set by himself.



Pakistan struck back in spectacular fashion in the final session of the third day with pacer Shaheen Afridi dismissing Shadman Islam (1), Najmul Hossain (0) and Saif Hasan (18) to finish the day with 3 for 6, reducing the hosts to 39-4 at stumps. Hasan Ali dismissed Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque for a duck as the first Test remained delicately poised in Chattogram. Earlier, Abid Ali made 133 off 282 balls, holding one end for Pakistan for a long stretch after Taijul's double blow in the day's first over.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



West Indies look to bounce back

APP, GALLE



Sri Lanka are favourites in the second Test against the West Indies that begins on Monday after a resounding victory in the first game, but if the tourists win the toss and get Dimuth Karunaratne early they are in with a chance.

The West Indies top order fared badly in the first Test in Galle, managing just 100 for six in the first innings and slumping to 18 for six in the second. "Everyone has the ability to play spin. We have to be more precise on our footwork," Nkrumah Bonner, the lone hero of the second innings with an unbeaten 68, said ahead of the final match in the series, also in Galle.

"The key is for the batters who get a start to go on. I am confident we will do well in the second Test," the Jamaican said.

It didn't help in the first game, which Sri Lanka won by 187 runs -- a margin that actually flattered the visitors -- that the West Indies lost the toss and Sri Lanka enjoyed the best batting conditions on day one. "The toss is crucial in these conditions. The first day it didn't spin as much when they batted," Bonner said. He said they know they have to target Karunaratne when bowling after his masterful 147 and 83 in the rain-affected first match.

Karunaratne is the world's third highest run-getter this year with over 850 runs in six Tests including four hundreds. One more 50 will see him equal a world record of seven consecutive half-centuries in Test cricket.

"Karunaratne is the batsman we need to target," Bonner said. "We need to make sure that we take those chances and get him out early." The West Indies need to win to remain seventh in the ICC rankings. Sri Lanka will push them down to eighth with a win or a draw.

'All three results are possible'

REUTERS, New Delhi



India's Shreyas Iyer once again

dazzled on his debut Test, hitting his second 50-plus score of the match to put his team in charge of the opening Test against New Zealand on Sunday.

New Zealand claimed four wickets in the morning session to nose ahead on the penultimate day of the see-saw contest at Kanpur's Green Park Stadium.

Iyer followed his first-innings hundred with a crucial 65, forging 50-plus stands with Ravichandran Ashwin and Wriddhiman Saha to revive India who declared their second innings on 234-7.

Chasing a daunting victory target of 284 on a worn-out track, the tourists were four for one when bad light stopped play.

New Zealand opener Will Young was given lbw to Ashwin, which could have been reversed but the batsman was late to review the decision.



India's Shreyas Iyer raises his bat after scoring a half-century during the fourth day of the first Test against New Zealand at the Green Park Stadium in Kanpur yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP