



Mominul Haque hangs his head in despair after being run-out in Bangladesh's first innings against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. (Bottom) Liton Das and Mushfiquir Rahim reflect on their tame dismissals on the way to the pavilion.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Calamitous batting approach returns familiar woes

SPORTS REPORTER

When Mehedi Hasan Miraz went down on his knees to slog sweep Sajid Khan, only to find his off-stump disturbed, the frustration of Shakib Al Hasan at the non-striker's end was apparent. Shakib slashed his bat into the air, unable to contain his anger after his partner perished to a shot at an ill-opportune moment. Before that, Shakib talked to Miraz as soon as the right-hander walked in, perhaps discussing an approach to avert looming follow-on. Miraz's approach in that shot, or lack of it, embodied the collective approach of the Bangladesh batters as familiar batting woes returned to haunt them in their first innings.

The effort from Bangladesh batters was all-together surreal; a lack of plan evident from the beginning. Shaheen Shah Afridi's first over really put opener Shadman Islam to the sword, one he did well to survive. But a lack of light resulted in Pakistan resorting exclusively to spinners from then on. In overcast conditions, the spinners were always going to be easier to nullify but Bangladesh's batters failed to devise a plan against the inexperienced Pakistan spin duo.

Debutant Mahmudul Hasan



## SCORES IN BRIEF

**PAKISTAN:** First Innings: 300 for 4 declared in 98.3 overs (Babar 76, Azhar 56, Fawad 50 not out, Rizwan 53 not out; Taijul 2-73, Khaled 1-49, Ebadot 1-88)  
**BANGLADESH:** First Innings: 76 for 7 in 26 overs (Shanto 30, Shakib 23 not out, Liton 6; Sajid 6-35, Nauman 0-33)

Joy was unsure of how to best deal with the spin. He ended up dancing forward, hoping to get to the pitch of the ball but edged it to slip after an unconvincing poke against Sajid. Shadman, who had bid his time at the crease patiently, then found a Sajid delivery slightly gaining on him. Even with enough time, his poor footwork saw

him unable to cut it away with conviction and was caught at point. From that point onwards it appeared as if Bangladesh batters felt an urgency to play rash shots to make the Pakistan spinners think.

Test batting is about letting the bowler know you are in control. Captain Mominul Haque seemed

eager to get off strike against the right-arm Sajid and ended up going for a risky single with Hasan Ali striking down the stumps with a direct hit as Bangladesh went to Tea three down for 24 runs. What transpired after tea was calamitous.

Pakistan's first innings ending on day four, and the lack of light, meant the Test was grinding towards a draw. However, the way Bangladesh batters played shots post-Tea can only be called luxurious in the format.

Having punched one through the covers for four in the 13th over, Mushfiquir Rahim, the team's core batsman in the format, decided it was time for a slog sweep the next delivery and found the man at mid-on, the shot not resembling a Test batting approach. Liton came in to hammer a Sajid delivery over mid-wicket that almost carried for six but later walloped one back to Sajid to depart for a 19-ball 6.

Najmul Hossain had been chancing his luck during a team-high 30 off 50, trying to force the issue and then perished to a Sajid drifter, caught nowhere as the ball struck him plumb in front. Pressure fell squarely on Shakib, who himself took upon a counter-attacking approach to avert follow-on. Miraz's dismissal, then left Bangladesh with a difficult task on the final day and it could have been worse had bad light not ended play 30 minutes before schedule.

# Pakistan going for the kill

SPORTS REPORTER



"Plan is to take the remaining three wickets [of Bangladesh's first innings]. And then send them [Bangladesh] to bat again, get them bundled out once again and win this game," Pakistan off-spinner Sajid Khan said with the same zeal and energy that he had bowled with yesterday against Bangladesh on the fourth day of their second Test in Mirpur.

Other than Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque's run-out, all the other six wickets of the Tigers were scalped by Sajid, who is

understandable.

It seems as if the off-spin of the inexperienced Sajid will be the crucial cog in turning Pakistan's hopes of winning the game into a reality today. And the 28-year-old was confident.

"The type of wicket it is, I was able to get turns even with the new ball. Sometimes you can get wickets with your fielding as well. And even if I don't get any turn tomorrow [Wednesday], we will try to get the wickets with our fielding," Sajid added.

Not only Sajid but the way the two captains approached the game could also go a long way to show that Pakistan's



playing only his fourth Test. And hence, it was not at all an exaggeration on the part of Sajid when he issued the warning of sending Bangladesh to follow-on, to avoid which the Tigers would require to score 25 more runs with three wickets in hand.

It seemed almost improbable for the Test, which had a whole day washed out due to rain and only 6.2 overs bowled on another day, to end in anything other than a stalemate.

However, with how things panned out on the penultimate day of the game -- Pakistan declaring after 300 for four in the first innings and Sajid's exploits coupled with Bangladesh's impetuous batting -- a win for the visitors is now definitely on the cards.

In fact, at this point, it seems like Pakistan are playing against time and elements as the bad weather and only a day left to play now present greater threats than Bangladesh. With cloud cover and slight rain in the forecast for today as well, Pakistan's rush to wrap the game up is

hunger to snatch more than just 20 points, awarded in the event of a draw, from this World Test Championship (WTC) fixture was greater than Bangladesh.

Instead of setting a more stable total, Babar Azam declared the moment his side reached the 300-run mark in the first innings, indicating the willingness to pursue a result by taking the slightest of chances on offer in overcast conditions and on a deteriorating Mirpur surface.

Moreover, even though Pakistan's strength lie in their pace threat of Shaheen Shah Afridi and Hasan Ali, Babar did not hesitate to continue playing when the umpires had deemed light to be unfit to employ pacers further after Afridi had troubled Bangladesh batters with pace and swing in the opening over of the Tigers' first innings.

On the contrary, Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque had opted to stop playing when bad light had forced the officials to put him in a similar situation post-tea on the opening day of the Test.

# 'One bad day not a reflection of our ability'

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite rain washing away almost two days of the ongoing second Test between Bangladesh and Pakistan and ushering the game towards a draw, a poor batting display from the hosts dramatically changed the complexion of the match on the fourth day in Mirpur.

In reply to Pakistan's 300 for 4 declared in the first innings, Bangladesh lost seven wickets for 76 runs in 26 overs, leaving them needing another 24 runs to avoid the follow-on.

Pakistan already have a 224-run lead and even if Bangladesh manage to avoid the follow-on, the visitors will surely want to get the hosts out to bat for their second innings in order to have a chance at a result.

With Shakib Al Hasan at the crease on 23 and Taijul Islam at the other end ready to continue on the fifth and final day, batsman Najmul Hossain Shanto said the hosts were confident they could save the match.

"I think tomorrow [Wednesday] will be an important day for us. If Shakib bhai and Taijul bhai can put up a partnership and add a few runs, then we might get into a better



# Williamson out for two months

REUTERS

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will be sidelined by an elbow tendon injury for at least two months, coach Gary Stead said on Tuesday, ruling him out of January's two-Test home series against Bangladesh.

The recurring injury also forced Williamson to miss the second Test against India in Mumbai, where New Zealand went down by a record 372 runs on Monday to lose the series 1-0.

"Kane's going along okay," Stead told reporters from Mumbai on the eve of the squad's return home. "I said right from the start, I expected it to be a sustained period of time."

"Last time ... was about eight or nine weeks. I expect it's somewhere in that timeframe again."

Stead said surgery was unlikely, but he was also reluctant to predict that Williamson would be fit to face South Africa in two tests in February and March.

"We're trying not to put a timeframe on it," Stead added. "It's all about the load on the elbow and when you're in the test arena, the extra time in training and batting as well is what tipped him over the edge, I guess."

"Kane's doing it tough, don't get me wrong. He hates the thought of missing any cricket, let alone test cricket for New Zealand."



# U-19S UNBEATEN CHAMPIONS IN INDIA

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly hands Bangladesh Under-19 skipper Rakibul Hasan the trophy after the young Tigers emerged unbeaten champions in a triangular series also involving India U-19 A and India U-19 B sides. Bangladesh thumped India Under-19 B by 181 runs in the final at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday. Thanks to Aich Mollah's 91-ball 93 and a fifty from Ashiqur Zaman, the young Tigers piled up a score of 234 all out in 41.4 overs. Afterwards, a concerted effort from the bowling department, led by Naimur Rohman Noyon who scalped a four-for, saw India Under-19 B get bundled out for a meagre 53 in just 21.3 overs. Ashiqur was adjudged player-of-the-final as he followed up his impressive batting display with two wickets, ending with figures of two for eight in four overs that included a maiden.

PHOTO: BCCI