

SPORT

HIGHLIGHTS

176.2 - The second-most overs Bangladesh have batted in a Test innings, behind the 196 overs they batted out against Sri Lanka in Galle, 2013.

130 - Bangladesh's first-innings lead in this match; the highest New Zealand have conceded in a home Test since 2017. It is also the second-highest first-innings lead for Bangladesh while batting second in a Test, behind the 295-run lead against Zimbabwe in 2020.

1 - Only once before have Bangladesh bagged a higher first-innings lead in an away Test than the 130 they did here.

8 - It is the first instance for Bangladesh in Test cricket where their top eight batters survived 50 or more balls in the same innings.



What to WATCH

T SPORTS
South Africa vs India
Live from 02:00 pm
SONY SIX
The Ashes
Australia vs India

4th Test, Day 2
Live from 05:30 am
(Thursday)

A pronounced Test mentality

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

For four days, Bangladesh have managed to stay on top of a New Zealand side known for their Test capabilities and a rare excitement coursed the side, unseen especially away from home in Test cricket.

There appeared to be a belief in the Bangladesh camp that their plans were effective. In fact, during difficult scenarios, Bangladesh showed application which usually escapes them. In essence, the beauty of Test cricket was to understand its pulse, and Bangladesh, perhaps for the first time, caught the right tempo throughout the first four days. Mistakes were made and opportunities lost as it all happened on day four but uncharacteristic of Bangladesh's Test mentality, especially overseas, their shoulders had not dropped.

In fact, the other reality was prevalent. The fielders appeared to be on their toes, ears up, ready to pounce and that feeling and belief that something could happen at any moment prevailed within the whole side throughout the first Test when Bangladesh had the ball in hand.

"Listen guys, I have something to say. The bowler is working really hard. Can we support him and make some noise," wicketkeeper Liton Das was heard shouting on the stump mic, calling on the rest of the side to rally around Ebadot Hossain before he scalped three vital wickets in the final session of the fourth day yesterday.

Liton remained vocal, giving little anecdotes, suggestions and instructions to all concerned.



An excitement had taken hold of the Bangladesh camp and they did not want to give it up.

Will Young, looking solid, found a delivery from Mehedi Miraz sneaking in and nicked it through to Liton Das, who failed to hold on. Mehedi's plan to induce Ross Taylor into a mistimed sweep had worked only for Shadman Islam to drop one at mid-wicket before Taylor survived a run-out scare.

Mehedi had been working on Taylor for quite a while and when the catch was not taken in the 42nd over with the batter looking for a release shot, it could have confounded hopes like it has on so many occasions. Intensity could have waned and frustration found its way into confidence. But not this Bangladesh side at Mount Maunganui. The intensity and eagerness from fielders was unwavering, even when Kiwis found further foothold in the third session.

The true beauty of Test cricket is how the momentum shifts from one side to the other and Bangladesh's grapple to hold on produced perhaps their most stunning display in Tests so far.

There were little moments, little gestures that spoke volumes of how Bangladesh were able to stay in the game mentally.

New Zealand, with all their experience in home conditions, appeared perplexed by Bangladesh's fight. Neil Wagner resorted to Mominul Haque an earful after the latter frustrated Wagner by ducking under a few bouncers on the third day. Reviews had gone bad too before Ebadot's fiery spell late in the day reminded the Tigers that their spirit had been true. For a Bangladesh side going through a rebuilding phase, results should be secondary. But on the fifth and final day, they must now look for a result, finally having found the right rhythm in their Test mentality.

Ismail happy with long jump gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Sprinter Mohammad Ismail may have a regret of losing his 100m crown to England-based sprinter Imranur Rahman, but the four-time fastest sprinter found some solace by win gold medal in long jump event of the Shaheed Sheikh Kamal 45th National Athletics championships yesterday.

Ismail could not match his previous best of 7.51m he cleared in the Bangladesh Games last year but a clearance of 7.26m was good enough for him beat Ashraful Islam (7.22m) and Akram Hossain (6.90m) on way to winning an eighth gold medal overall in long jump event, during the second day at the Army Stadium in Banani.

"I never returned without a gold medal in individual events," said Ismail.

The 29-year-old sprinter also vowed to regain his 100m title in the next competition. "I welcome Imranur Rahman to the 100m sprint but I want to regain my title in the next competition and I am ready for hard work," said Ismail, who finished third in 100m sprint on Monday.

Pacers thrive in their natural habitat

MAZHAR UDDIN



The way Ebadot Hossain welcomed the experienced Ross Taylor to the crease, with a well-directed

bouncer that the right-hander somehow managed to survive, served as a perfect example of true fast bowling at Mount Maunganui yesterday.

Once again, Bangladesh's pacers gathered steam and gained confidence on a typically seam-friendly surface in New Zealand, showing the signs of a unit complementing each other.

This time it was Ebadot who brought Bangladesh back into the game in the last hour of the fourth day, picking up three wickets in the span of nine deliveries to gun down the hosts from a comfortable 136 for two to 136 for five in their second innings.

Operating with a cool head and consistency in going through the process correctly, Ebadot was finally rewarded by the all-important breakthrough in the 54th over. Ebadot's short of a length delivery shaped into Will Young, who misread the length and went for a pull, allowing the ball to strike timber.

Ebadot should also surely get full marks

for game awareness just a ball later, when he fired in a full and straight delivery to new batsman Henry Nicholls. He struggled to adjust and the ball went on to demolish his stumps.

In his following over, the 27-year-old again kept things simple and used the conditions to great effect to trap Tom Blundell leg before with another delivery.

It was a refreshing sight to see someone like Ebadot step up, but it will be important for the team management to make sure such performances do not remain rare one-off shows. Instead, the think-tank needs to take the next step towards consistency.

This also raises questions about the need to give seamers a platform in the domestic circuit in the form of swing and bounce in the surface that can encourage fast bowlers.

"They like bowling in conditions like these because they don't get conditions back at home that encourage them to enjoy bowling," team director Khaled Mahmud said.

The likes of Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam, Ebadot and Abu Jayed have shown potential, but because fast-bowling is a demanding task, both mentally and physically, it is also important to groom a

bigger lot by giving exposure to seamers at home.

"It is important to have ideal conditions and pitches where seamers can enjoy the art of fast bowling in domestic cricket. A fast bowler must set the placement of fielders himself and if you don't know where to bowl on different surfaces, it becomes very difficult to improve as a bowler," prominent coach Sarwar Imran told The Daily Star who has groomed Ebadot during his early days of a career in the high-performance unit.

"We still lag behind when it comes to providing suitable conditions to pacers and if seamers are not encouraged, you cannot expect them to deliver every time they travel abroad even in favorable conditions."

India can be a perfect example, given how they developed a bunch of fast bowlers by encouraging them in the domestic circuit and how having a good fast bowling group is equally as necessary as having a good batting unit for a Test team, especially away from home.

For Bangladesh, the ongoing Test match can set a trend when it comes to promoting fast bowlers, not only for this series but also to improve as a team in world cricket in the coming days.

Mithun's double ton flips the script

SPORTS REPORTER

Not too long ago, Mohammad Mithun lost his place in the national side due to inconsistency with the bat. However, following a dull phase in the National Cricket League (NCL), Mithun rediscovered his flair in the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) and the Central Zone opener turned the final against South Zone on its head by scoring a maiden double century on the third day at the Sher-e-Bangla Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Mithun and Shuvagata Hom added 115 runs to their overnight partnership, which contributed 283 runs overall after they had been reduced to 16 for four on the second day. Shuvagata hit 116, laced with 12 boundaries before departing but Mithun strung together a 75-run partnership with wicketkeeper Jaker Ali while stretching his individual tally to 206 runs off 306 balls.

The right-hander's resilient innings was punctuated with 27 boundaries and three maximums and saw Central Zone amass 438, enough for a 51-run lead. Farhad Reza and Kamrul Islam Rabbi bagged four wickets each for South Zone.

In their second essay, South Zone opener Abu Haider Rony returned for a duck but his side reached 43 at stumps with no further losses.

Pinak Ghosh was unbeaten on 22 alongside Amite Hasan, on 20.

Mithun could have achieved the milestone in his first BCL game of the current campaign, also against South Zone, but his innings ended on 176. In the current campaign, Towhid Hridoy is the only other double-century, with his 217-effort against North Zone.



Central Zone opener Mohammad Mithun celebrates after scoring his maiden first-class double hundred against South Zone on the third day of the Bangladesh Cricket League final at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Thakur's seven restricts SA

REUTERS, JOHANNESBURG

India seamer Shardul Thakur took seven wickets but South Africa managed a slender lead of 27 runs before being bowled out for 229 in their first innings on the second day of the second Test at the Wanderers on Tuesday. Keegan Petersen (62) and Temba Bavuma (51) scored half centuries in the home team's reply to India's 202.

Thakur, 30, posted career best figures of 7-61 -- the best return by an Indian bowler in a Test against South Africa -- and single-handedly removed the home top order. Thakur also took the last two wickets after the South Africa tail wagged, delivering potentially precious runs as the Wanderers wicket is expected to increasingly favour the seamers as the test progresses.