



Without Shakib [Al Hasan] and Tamim [Iqbal], the team feels half empty. Mominul [Haque] motivated the team from that point and won the match. This is an amazing thing. Hat's off to Mominul!

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza



Tigers land in Christchurch for 2nd Test

SPORTS REPORTER

A day after securing a historic away Test win over New Zealand at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui, the Mominul Haque-led Bangladesh arrived in Christchurch on Thursday for the second Test, scheduled to begin on January 9.

"Next two days is now the process of getting the guys ready for the next Test," Bangladesh's Strength and Conditioning Coach Nicholas Lee said in a video message to the media yesterday after arriving in Christchurch.

"This morning [Thursday] some of the fast bowlers did some work in the gym just before we took the flight [to Christchurch]. Tomorrow [Friday], we will start looking at the rest of the players and decide how we can get them ready for the next match," Lee added.

After an eight-wicket victory in the first Test, Bangladesh now lead the two-match series 1-0.

The irony in Tigers' GREATEST WIN

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

For the first time, Bangladesh put a real meaning to the nickname 'Tigers' in red-ball cricket away from home and it was all thanks to a sudden uprising from the pace unit in favourable conditions.

Ebadot Hossain scalped one, two and then three, all in the third session of the fourth day at Mount Maunganui, playing the pivotal hand in Bangladesh's first win in Kiwi soil against the hosts.

The fight, determination and application while honing in on the right modus operandi session after session to edge forward has never been shown by a Bangladesh side in Tests. And the fuel that ignited the fire came from the pacers, who all bowled to a theme like never before.

Ironically, the very same pacers -- who provided the spark and played crucial roles in Bangladesh cricket's greatest-ever moment -- are shunned year after year when home Tests come around.

A lot has been said about Bangladesh's dependency on spin. And while spin can be the favoured weapon in the subcontinent, looking at the likes of

Pakistan and India -- two of major forces in the continent -- reveals that their threat in the longest format is reliant on pacers. Bangladesh, despite adequate evidence of a lack of proper world-class spinners, still bank on an archaic strategy of leaving pacers out of the squad in home Tests.

So, while there is a real menacing air of a Tiger on the prowl about the Bangladesh team's attack, what will happen to the very same attack when the next home Test comes around? The idea that a pace attack is relevant has not been apparent in Bangladesh conditions.

Bangladesh have had a number of tours to New Zealand over the years. So, what worked this time?

They took a big step in banking on their pace attack to bowl first on day one of the first Test. The three pacers in Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot and Shoriful hit the good length at an average of 54.84 percent.

Shoriful was so accurate in fact that he accrued 66.3 percent good-length deliveries to both left and right-handers. Ebadot sprayed it around and went for runs but overall the line and length of the two other pacers kept the Kiwis on a tight

leash.

However, hitting such a line or length would not have worked at home. At best, they would be able to contain. The philosophy of containment is one that Bangladesh have almost always favoured. Thus, spin and not pace is the rainmaker at home.

However, Mount Maunganui still provided Mehedi Hasan Miraz with plenty in a surface where pace dictated.

The question remains how Taskin will hone his swinging deliveries if the surfaces here are docile for pacers? Again, what happens when the next home Test comes around?

Even for batters, playing on such pitches will not develop the technique needed in South Africa or Australia for instance. The field settings, patience and strategies on display at Mount Maunganui may well be a one-off. And if Bangladesh truly want to excel, they need better nurturing of wickets and their pace battery. Mominul Haque acknowledged the media for their role in crying out for pacers in home Tests. Now, it's up to the cricket structure to get in the game.

Djokovic in limbo

AGENCIES

World number one Novak Djokovic's Australia visa was canceled upon arrival in Melbourne on Thursday amid a storm of protest about a decision to grant him a medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination requirements to play in the Australian Open. Now the 34-year-old Serbian star finds himself detained in an Australian immigration hotel fighting deportation.

Here's how it has played out so far and what may happen next:

DJOKOVIC SAYING HE HAD BEEN EXEMPTED

For months there had been speculation about whether Djokovic would play in the January 17-30 tournament, given Australia's rigid border rules.

He has refused to reveal his vaccine status, but has previously voiced opposition to being jabbed.

Then this week a jubilant Djokovic boasted on Instagram that he had scored an unexpected medical exemption to play.

Tennis Australia, the sporting body which runs the Australian Open, confirmed the top seed had been granted medical exemption by two independent medical panels organised by Tennis Australia and Victoria state.

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC REACTION

Djokovic's announcement of securing exemption prompted widespread outcry in Australia, where many residents have been unable to travel or



welcome family from overseas for the last two years. And that led to a change in Australia Prime Minister Scott Morrison's position. Under additional pressure from soaring Covid case numbers and the collapse of the once-excellent testing system, Morrison defended revoking Djokovic's visa at the last minute. "Rules are rules and there are no special cases," he said.

DJOKOVIC BEING TURNED AWAY AT AIRPORT

Djokovic had jetted into Australia on Wednesday hoping to defend his Australian Open crown and to bid for an unprecedented 21st Grand Slam title.

Instead of a conquering champion's welcome, he was questioned at the airport overnight before having his visa revoked and being transferred to a Melbourne immigration detention facility pending deportation.

The tennis player had failed to provide evidence he was double vaccinated, or had a legitimate exemption to that, Mr Morrison said. He also explained that a recent Covid-19 infection, or one in the past six months, was not a valid reason under federal rules.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR DJOKOVIC?

The player launched an appeal against his visa cancellation immediately after he was held.

A hearing at the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia has been scheduled for Monday, so he can stay in the country at least until then.

Shuvagata's ton steers Central to BCL glory

SPORTS REPORTER

A scintillating century from Central Zone's skipper Shuvagata Hom Chowdhury guided his side to a thrilling four-wicket win over South Zone in the final of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

A resilient batting display by South's tail on day four had given them a fighting chance, with 217 runs to defend. And chasing a tricky total, Central found themselves in trouble, losing quick wickets early on the fifth and final day, and were five down before reaching 50.

Then came Shuvagata at seven, a player on a mission in this game, having already scored a century in the first innings. The Central's skipper went on to score an astounding unbeaten knock of 114 off only 121 balls, laced with 13 boundaries and two sixes.

From 68 for six, Shuvagata found a trusty companion in wicketkeeper-batter Jaker Ali Anik, who was 41 not out, as the two stitched an unbeaten 153-run partnership to bring Central home.

Nasum Ahmed and Mehedi Hasan Rana each bagged two wickets while Farhad Reza and Kamrul Islam Rabbi scalped one apiece.

This exciting BCL encounter witnessed a double century of Mohammad Mithun, Shuvagata's two centuries and Rishad Hossain's valiant 99, which were brilliant batting displays on a challenging wicket.



Jubilant Walton Central Zone players hold aloft skipper Shuvagata Hom, who struck centuries in both innings in the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) final against BCB South Zone in Mirpur yesterday. His unbeaten second-innings ton ensured a third BCL title for his side.

Rahmatganj KO MSC

SPORTS REPORTER

Rahmatganj MFS confirmed their second Federation Cup final berth in three seasons by knocking out Mohammedan Sporting Club in the first semifinal at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

The Old Dhaka outfit came from behind to hand a bitter 2-1 defeat to a 10-man Mohammedan.

Even though Mohammedan dominated the first half after taking an early lead, courtesy of a tap in from Razib Hossain in the 5th minute, they ended up paying the price for failing to convert chances ahead. It all went downhill for the Black and Whites when Macedonian defender Jasmin Mecinovic was sent off in the 67th minute, after which Ashraf Islam equalised in the 78th minute before Sunday Chizoba struck the winner in the 88th minute.

PHOTO: BCB