

As the media always thinks, there aren't any players except the five or four of us but this was proven wrong [when Bangladesh beat New Zealand].



Shakib Al Hasan



'Test cricket needs Bangladesh to thrive'

AFP, Christchurch

Ross Taylor saluted Bangladesh for their triumph in the first Test but warned Friday that a green Christchurch wicket was much more in New Zealand's favour as he looks to bow out of Test cricket with a bang.

Bangladesh's eight-wicket win over New Zealand in Mount Maunganui this week was "good for world cricket", the 37-year-old Taylor said. "We were outplayed the whole time. But for this game of Test cricket to survive, we need Bangladesh to be a thriving nation and I think they will get a lot of confidence from that win." The hosts are desperate to save the two-Test series to get some momentum in the defence of their world Test crown following two losses and a draw in their first three matches.

The second match against Bangladesh, starting on Sunday, will be the farewell Test appearance for Taylor, New Zealand's most prolific run-scorer.

Different challenges await Tigers in Christchurch

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh finally found the resolve, mental depth and proper approach to overcome a 20-year-old hurdle and win a first match in any format in New Zealand, clinching the first Test at Mount Maunganui on January 5.

Having accomplished an unbelievable task, the Tigers head to Christchurch to find something really special from the two-Test series.

In 2019, Christchurch was the scene of a terrorist shooting, which the Tigers were lucky to escape unharmed. Following the incident, the rest of the series was called off, with the Christchurch Test cancelled. That means the Tigers have played only one Test at the Hagley Oval till date.

The only time Bangladesh played there was in 2017 and there will be specific challenges that are different from Mount Maunganui.

Kamrul Islam Rabbi, one of the few players to have made an impact on that bleak tour by picking up six wickets with three in Christchurch, revealed the nature of those challenges. Bounce and swing will be on offer but there is a wind issue to counter, according to Kamrul.

"From what I recall, the wicket had

good bounce and was very good for pacers. Normally on Bangladeshi wickets, we bowl eight-metre lengths to get the bounce where it will clip the bails of the stumps, but there you can get the same bounce by pitching at six-metre lengths," he told The Daily Star.

"The bounce is very even," Kamrul added, which means that the uneven bounce on the fourth day at Mount Maunganui will not help Bangladesh's cause here.

However, he also outlined specific challenges Bangladesh pacers will need to overcome.

"The swing may depend on the weather and the wind. At this time of the year, it's very cold and windy. When you bowl with the wind, it's easy. But bowling against the wind from the other end was incredibly difficult. I have a side-arm action and it's difficult but it's easier for bowlers with an open-chested action. We have Taskin [Ahmed] and Ebadot [Hossain], who have open-chested actions, but for [Abu Jayed] Rahi, who has a slightly side-arm action, it will be difficult," he said.

The task will be steeper for the batters. In the Tigers' last Test at the venue, a second-innings debacle saw Bangladesh lose by nine wickets. Soumya Sarkar was

one of the batters who scored runs in both innings (86 and 36) on that occasion and he prescribed early caution.

"I think it's very important for batters to have patience in Christchurch. Since the ball gets a lot of movement initially, it's difficult for batters to adjust to the pace and bounce. Even in the second innings, when the pitch gets dry, the movement and bounce remains intact. They also have quality fast bowlers so I think if we can bat with patience for the first 30 overs, it gets a lot comfortable after that," Soumya told The Daily Star yesterday.

New Zealand's outgoing star Ross Taylor said during a press briefing yesterday that the 'bowlers will be licking their lips' while the 'batters need to apply themselves' better on what would be a regular wicket.

Meanwhile, ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, talking to the media during a commercial event in Dhaka, talked tactics.

"Everyone will be confident after the win. The toss will be important and might become the biggest factor. The wickets in New Zealand are very good on day two and three and bowling first could be the way to go," Shakib dictated, hoping confidence could come good in the second Test.

'It will be crucial to keep the process right'

SPORTS REPORTER

So the tables have turned and hosts New Zealand, for the very first time in their own backyard, are under pressure against Bangladesh following an eight-wicket defeat in the first Test as they prepare to take on a spirited Tigers side to save the series in the second and final Test, starting in Christchurch from tomorrow.

The ICC World Test Champions will undoubtedly give it their all but it will be important for Bangladesh to maintain focus, especially after raising expectations with a magnificent show in the first Test.

Although pacer Ebadot Hossain stole headlines by bagging six wickets in the second innings to become only the second Bangladeshi pacer to bag a five-wicket haul in an away Test, it was a complete team effort that saw Mominul Haque and Co. re-write history and register a maiden Test win against New Zealand.

According to team director Khaled Mahmud, the Tigers will continue to follow the processes which led to success in Mount Maunganui.

"We are yet to assess the pitch here in Christchurch. Once we do that, we will chalk out our final plans. I think expectations from the fans and everyone back home has peaked after the manner in which we won the first Test. But for us it's very important to keep the process right.

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Live from 4am (Sunday)**

It will be crucial for us to maintain that in the second Test. The boys are confident, eager to give their best and hungry to pick up where they left off in the first Test," Mahmud told The Daily Star ahead of the second Test yesterday.

The Bangladesh team spent time in the gym yesterday after rain halted scheduled training in Christchurch after the weather in Mount Maunganui favoured Bangladesh to some extent with hot and sunny conditions.

Although rain is forecast for the fourth and fifth day of the second Test, it is expected to remain sunny and warm for the next couple of days.

"We are expecting favourable conditions over the next few days here in Christchurch in a sunny atmosphere. The weather has been good enough for us to adapt and adjust. Despite the fact we were unable to train today (Friday) due to rain, we are hoping the weather will be ideal for a Test match," he added.

In terms of the combination, the team management will be forced to make at least one change to the eleven that won the first Test after young opener Mahmudul Hasan Joy -- who scored his maiden Test fifty in his second Test and batted brilliantly during a 228-ball 78-run knock in the first innings -- was ruled out after suffering a cut to his right hand while fielding.

Mahmud hinted that left-handed opener Naim Sheikh could make his Test debut as Joy's replacement.

"We have Fazle Rabbi and Naim Sheikh in the squad and are looking for a replacement for Joy. Since Rabbi normally bats at number three, I think there is a chance for Naim to open the innings with Shadman," Mahmud concluded.

'Overjoyed' Bairstow remembers father

AFP, Sydney

Nothing was going to stop an emotional Jonny Bairstow from realising his ambition of scoring an Ashes century in Australia -- not even a nasty blow on his thumb during the fourth Test in Sydney on Friday.

The 32-year-old typified the grit of a counter-punching 128-run partnership with injured Ben Stokes to raise his first Test century in Australia, and England's first on a demoralising tour with the Ashes relinquished inside 12 days. Bairstow turned the tide and gave the tourists something to cheer finally with his unbeaten 103 off 140 balls, studded with eight fours and three sixes.

There was also some emotion for this Test, which started on the 24th anniversary of his father David's sudden death. Bairstow looked to the heavens as he achieved his goal. "I'm extremely proud, I had to dig deep," he said.

But his spirited knock didn't come without pain after he suffered a nasty blow on his right thumb from Pat Cummins, which for a time threatened to cut his innings short. Bairstow was on 60 when Cummins dug one in and it crushed his thumb holding the bat.

He needed treatment from the team physio, painkillers and strapping before he bravely continued to defy Australian attempts to get him out. "It takes quite a bit to get me off the park. Yes, it was sore but the circumstances of the game, it was one of those where it was a decision I made to stay out there," he said.

"The medics can give you advice but you're playing in an Ashes Test match, New Year's Day Pink Test match at Sydney in front of a big crowd, it's going to take a lot to get you away from that."



Jonny Bairstow scored England's first century of the series as the tourists staged a fightback after a torrid start to the third day of the fourth Ashes Test against Australia in Sydney yesterday.

Djokovic thanks supporters

REUTERS

World number one Novak Djokovic on Friday thanked people around the world for their support amid a visa row over Covid-19 vaccines that has seen him being detained at a Melbourne hotel ahead of this month's Australian Open.

"Thank you to people around the world for your continuous support. I can feel it and it is greatly appreciated," the Serbian wrote on Instagram.

Djokovic was granted a medical exemption from Australia's strict Covid-19 vaccination requirement following a review by two independent panels prior to boarding his flight, but was denied entry upon landing in Melbourne late on Wednesday.

The 34-year-old is currently housed in a government detention hotel in the suburb of Carlton.