



EARLY STRUGGLES birth right ideas

SCORES IN BRIEF

South Africa vs Bangladesh 1st Test, Day-1
South Africa: 233 for 4 in 76.5 overs (Elger 67, Bavuma 53 not out, Erwee 41; Ebadot 1-58, Khaled 1-49, Miraz 1-57)

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

After a few overs had been bowled in the third session, wicketkeeper Liton Das was captured by the stump mic telling Mehedi Hasan Miraz 'don't give away runs'. It was a crucial phase of the game, with Bangladesh having taken four South African wickets after leaking runs early in the first session. The Tigers had apparently reached the right ideas, attacking with pace and defending with spin.

There were hints from the likes of coach Russell Domingo and skipper Mominul Haque before the game that the wicket in Durban was hard to read. The Bangladesh skipper felt that it might aid pacers but also be good for batting. That certainly proved to be the case in the first session, but the 'Tigers' pacers floundered in terms of line and length, perhaps getting a bit carried away by the greenish top.

The first session saw Proteas openers Dean Elgar and Sarel Erwee dictate terms with Taskin Ahmed and Ebadot Hossain wavering in their line, often bowling a bit too wide. The left-handed openers, in particular Elgar, latched onto anything wide while anything short enough was pulled or slashed. The bounce was excitable, but without the consistency of line and length, runs flowed. South Africa went to lunch at 95 for no loss.

It took a truly menacing delivery from pacer Khaled Ahmed, in for the injured Shoriful Islam, to create the breakthrough after lunch. The delivery was a bit fuller than good length on the surface, but the bounce caught Elgar, who had been flowing smoothly, off-guard. The batter tried to get out of the line of the delivery but it took his gloves and Liton took the catch to end Elgar's innings on 67.

Miraz came into the attack in that second



session and maintained the pressure and that produced another wicket as Erwee failed to meet the pitch of the delivery and dragged a Miraz delivery onto his stumps. The pitch also appeared to have a sort of subcontinental flavour to it, perhaps the reason the hosts have not enjoyed their outings at Kingsmead, managing just one win in the last nine matches here.

Taskin and Khaled managed to bring deliveries back into the right-handed Temba Bavuma and Keegan Peetersen during a tricky spell, drying up the runs enough to create pressure. That led to Mehedi effecting a brilliant run-out to remove the latter.

South Africa then lost Ryan Rickelton, out trying to pull an Ebadat delivery, that bounced a bit extra in the third session. The pace attack hit upon the right idea of hitting the pitch hard, but a few chances fell just away from the

slip cordon.

Shoriful's absence was a big loss, felt not only in terms of individual ability in the morning session. The right-arm pacers had bowled at two left-handers from over the wicket but it did not produce the rough Miraz could have later used. There was definite turn on offer and it remains to be seen whether South Africa made the right call with only two spinners, Keshav Maharaj and Simon Harmer, in their line-up.

Miraz had put in an effective showing on a pitch considered good to bat on, allowing the pace attack to keep trying to make things happen. However, if Keshav can use those footmarks in the later parts of this Test match, things could get interesting, especially with Bangladesh opting against picking left-arm spinner Taijul Islam.

Legends of Rupganj climb to second

SPORTS REPORTER

Legends of Rupganj climbed to second in the Dhaka Premier League with a 22-run win over newly-promoted City Club at the ULAB cricket ground yesterday in a match curtailed due to a wet outfield.

Skipper Naeem Islam continued his rich vein of form during a steady partnership with Chirag Jani after being sent in to bat. Chirag (51) and Naeem contributed with a 107-run stand for the third wicket to provide a great launching pad for Rupganj, but medium pacer Abdul Halim scalped both batters in the 28th and 30th overs respectively. The innings never quite got going again as Rupganj stalled and reached 225 for nine in their allotted 40 overs. Naeem's score of 52 was his lowest in a game this season.

City Club lost quick wickets at the start, struggling against the likes of Al Amin Hossain and Chirag, who scalped four wickets for 28 runs. Pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana bagged two wickets for 34 runs in his five overs as City were eventually bowled out for 203 runs.

At BKSP, newly-promoted Rupganj Tigers Cricket Club picked up their third win with a 36-run victory over Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity.

Asked to bat, Aparajith Baba's 120-ball 98 and fifties from Fazle Mahmud and Marshall Ayub propelled Rupganj Tigers to 259 for seven.

Khelaghar found the going difficult early on, slumping to 54 for four in 13 overs, but fifties from Salman Khan and Elias Sunny saw them reach solid ground.

Rupganj Tigers bowlers Nasum Ahmed, Mukidul Islam, Enamul Haque Jr, Sharifullah and Farhad Reza chipped in with two wickets each as Khelaghar were bowled out for 223 in 46.3 overs.

Women's El Clasico breaks crowd record

REUTERS, BARCELONA

FC Barcelona broke the women's attendance record as 91,553 fans watched them come from behind to beat bitter rivals Real Madrid 5-2 at Camp Nou on Wednesday and reach the Champions League semifinals with an 8-3 aggregate win.

The new record surpassed both the previous club mark of 60,739 fans set in 2019 at Atletico Madrid's Metropolitano stadium, where the hosts beat Barca 2-0 in a league match, and the official attendance record for any women's game, which was set at the 1999 World Cup final between the United States and China, when 90,195 fans were in attendance at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

Barcelona, who won the quarter-final first leg 3-1 in Madrid, came back from 2-1 behind with Aitana Bonmati, Claudia Pina and Alexia Putellas putting the hosts back in front with three goals in 10 minutes. Caroline Hansen rounded off the scoring in what was an electrifying match.

"I'm speechless. It's a dream come true. I can only answer with more work, getting better and winning games so we can give them a big spectacle," said Putellas.

"I saw a lot of girls, children with that spark in their eyes. It's amazing to be part of history."



England set up title clash against Australia

AFP, Christchurch

England continued their fairytale revival at the Women's World Cup Thursday when Danni Wyatt's century set up a 137-run semi-final thrashing of South Africa to set up a final showdown with Australia.

Wyatt's outstanding 129, aided by five dropped catches and supported by Sophia Dunkley's 60, saw England post an imposing 293 for eight off their 50 overs at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. Sophie Ecclestone then produced the best bowling figures of the tournament with six for 36 as South Africa folded for 156 in 38 overs.

After being on the brink of elimination after losing their first three matches, the defending champions have since won five in a row and will now face unbeaten Australia in Sunday's final, also at Hagley Oval. Australia cruised into the final with a crushing 157-run win over the West Indies in Wellington on Wednesday. "That was a complete performance from us today, what we've been searching for," said captain Heather Knight who rated her side as "underdogs" against Australia.

"But we're all equal on the morning of the game and what a story is written for us if we can do it." Player of the match Wyatt, who scored only 12 fours in her 129 off 125 deliveries – the third highest score of the tournament – said it was a difficult ground for batting.

"I tried to capitalise on the width provided by their bowlers. The boundaries were pretty big," she said.

"It was a weird wicket. We just said run well between the wickets and just be positive."

It was the second consecutive World Cup that England have beaten the Proteas in the semi-finals and continued South Africa's last-four hoodoo with no men's or women's team having reached an ODI or Twenty20 World Cup final.



England batter Danni Wyatt raises her bat after scoring hundred while [inset] Sophie Ecclestone celebrates one of her six wickets during a 137-run victory against South Africa in the Women's World Cup semifinal at Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday.

SL to arrive in May

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed the schedule for the Tigers' two-match home Test series against Sri Lanka through a press release yesterday.

The Sri Lankan cricket team will arrive in Bangladesh on May 8 for a series that will be part of the 2021-2023 ICC World Test Championship.

Following a two-day practice match, scheduled for May 11 and 12 at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram, the two teams will play the first Test on May 15 at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in the port city.

The teams will then travel to Dhaka for the second and final Test of the series, beginning on May 23 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The last time the two sides clashed in Tests was when Bangladesh toured Sri Lanka in 2021 for a two-match series which ended 1-0 in hosts' favour.