



Mushfiqur Rahim animating a Tiger's roar is the apt depiction of how the opening day of Bangladesh's second Test against Sri Lanka went in Mirpur yesterday. Both Mushfiqur and Liton Das struck unbeaten tons and stitched together a record 253-run unbeaten sixth-wicket stand to help Bangladesh roar back into the Test.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'AMAZING EFFORT' salvages the day

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh were 24 for five as the early morning conditions confounded the hosts after opting to bat in the series-deciding second Test at Mirpur yesterday. Openers Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudul Hasan Joy went back to the hut for naught and captain Mominul Haque, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Shakib Al Hasan failed to put up much of a resistance. But if morning shows the day, the Tigers must count themselves lucky to have turned the innings around after such a disastrous start.

Kasun Rajitha and Asitha Fernando had run rampant in that first session as Bangladesh lost five wickets inside seven overs. The last time a team had lost five in seven overs was Australia during a 2015 Test against England. The Aussies were bowled out for just 60 in that Nottingham Test and the premonitions were there that Bangladesh might slump to similar lows that they produced in South Africa only recently, bundled out for 80 and 53.

The fact that it ultimately did not happen was only made possible by the quite surreal sixth-wicket stand between the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim and ever-improving Liton Das. The duo saw to it that Bangladesh scraped through to

lunch and set the tone with their solidity.

Bangladesh's approach in Tests is often questionable and the first five wickets had been suggestive of that lack of application or patience. While Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Mominul were late to their shots, Tamim Iqbal and Shakib were guilty of playing across the line. The Mirpur surface had enough in there for the pacers to extract that little bit of movement and Bangladesh top-order collapsed.

Grit, determination, patience and, above all, application was shown by both Mushfiqur and Liton in getting behind the deliveries, not trying to prod at anything too far away from them.

A straight bat was shown to most deliveries and they allowed the deliveries to come into their zone and then backed themselves up with good shot selection.

SCORES IN BRIEF (Day 1)

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka
BANGLADESH: First innings-277 for 5 in 85 overs (Liton 135 not out, Mushfiqur 115 not out, Mominul 9; Rajitha 3-43, Asitha 2-80)

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Russell Domingo

After lunch, Liton found that stroke of luck, dropped on 47 at fine leg after he miscued a pull off an Asitha Fernando delivery meant as a bait. Liton, instead of shying away from pull shots, put away two more short deliveries that over to reach his fifty.

Sri Lanka's short-length strategy saw most of Liton's runs come through the leg-side region. The duo broke the record for a sixth-wicket partnership after a team had lost five wickets under 25 runs as they went past Pakistan's Wallis Mathias and Shujauddin Butt 86-run

stand set in Dhaka in 1959.

Liton got to his hundred first on the last session and was followed by Mushfiqur soon after as the unbroken 253-run stand – the highest sixth-wicket stand in Tests for Bangladesh – saw Bangladesh reach 277 for five at close.

"Liton has evolved his game. He has developed a very good batting technique. He has found a good way to prepare for Tests in the last year and a half. Knowing when to do the work, and when not to do the work. He has developed a good routine," head coach Russell Domingo said at the press conference yesterday.

That routine certainly worked its charm for Liton in the recent few Tests. "It is pretty much the start of hopefully a successful Test career," Domingo added.

Mushfiqur's routine worked its charm too as he picked up his second successive ton after Chattogram. "For sure, he has worked a little bit on his technique in the last couple of games. But he knows how to get runs. It is all about supporting players who are going through a bad run," Domingo said about Mushfiqur's run of form.

"It is one of the best partnerships I have seen as a coach in Tests. We were 20 for five, under a lot of pressure. It was an amazing effort by those two batters," he said.

DAY 1: FROM CHAOTIC TO ECSTATIC

HOW THE DAY STARTED:

- Only the third time that Bangladesh lost both openers for ducks in a Test innings, and unfortunately, all three instances involve Mirpur and Tamim Iqbal as common denominators.
- Bangladesh were 24 for five in 6.5 overs, and it was the first instance in nearly seven years that a team lost their first five wickets inside seven overs.
- It was also the first time in 12 years that the first five wickets fell before lunch in Mirpur on day one of a Test match.

HOW IT ENDED:

- Mushfiqur Rahim and Liton Das stitched an unbeaten 253-run stand, which is a record partnership for the sixth wicket after a team had lost five wickets under 25 runs.
- Liton and Mushfiqur also broke a 63-year record. Previously, the highest partnership after a team had lost five or more wickets under 25 runs was the 86-run stand between Pakistan's Wallis Mathias and Shujauddin Butt against West Indies in 1959 after the team slumped to 22 for five in Dhaka.
- Mushfiqur and Liton's stand is also Bangladesh's highest sixth-wicket stand in Tests, surpassing the 191-run stand by Mohammad Ashraful and Mushfiqur, set in 2007 at Colombo against Sri Lanka.

Kings face uphill task

SPORTS REPORTER

Having kept their sights on a knockout berth, Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings are hoping for a win over Gokulam Kerala while hoping that ATK Mohun Bagan slip up against Maziya S&RC in the final-day Group D fixtures of the AFC Cup at the Salt Lake Stadium today.

All four teams have three points each after two matches and have a chance to advance to the inter-zonal semifinals, but Kings are bottom of the table due to a poor goal difference.

ATK Mohun Bagan are on top, followed by Gokulam Kerala, Maziya and Bashundhara Kings. If more than one team finish with equal points, the head-to-head record will be considered first before goals difference and goals scored among teams, to determine the group winners.

Bashundhara Kings have no option but to beat Gokulam Kerala to keep their path open and expect ATK Mohun Bagan do not beat Maziya in the day's second match.

It is going to be difficult for Kings to beat Gokulam Kerala, especially following a 4-0 defeat against Mohun Bagan. Coach Oscar Bruzon is trying to boost the morale of the players ahead of the match against the I-league champions.

"Mental preparation is important after a big defeat. The mood in the team was low until yesterday [Sunday]. We have analysed what Gokulam Kerala can do and will work towards finding a way to defeat them," Bruzon was quoted as saying on the AFC website.

Swiatek extends unbeaten streak to 29

REUTERS, Paris

World number one Iga Swiatek put on a commanding display against Ukrainian qualifier Lesia Tsurenko with a 6-2, 6-0 opening victory on Monday to kickstart her bid for a second French Open title and extend her winning run to 29 matches.

Swiatek, who won the 2020 Roland Garros title without dropping a set, arrived in Paris having won her last five tournaments, including four WTA 1000 events, and is the overwhelming favourite to lift the Suzanne Lenglen Cup again. "I just want to keep going. I am aware that someday my streak may stop," Swiatek said on court. "Basically I am just working every day to be 100% focused on my tennis, not on stats or not on some numbers." "Just playing tennis and focusing on my game and being kind of in a bubble. That's going to help me be consistent."

Man City crave Champions League legacy

AFP, London

Manchester City's latest Premier League title triumph established the champions as a burgeoning dynasty, but Pep Guardiola won't be satisfied until their domestic bliss becomes the catalyst to conquer Europe.

City's fourth title in five seasons is arguably the greatest achievement of Guardiola's glittering career as he found a way to hold off Liverpool's relentless challenge by one point.

"The magnitude of our achievement is because of the magnitude of this rival," said Guardiola. "Never ever I had a rival like Liverpool in my career as a football player or manager."

But even Jurgen Klopp's men, in the midst

This season is absolutely incredible and will not end today, it ends next week obviously. We have now five days to prepare the final (Champions League, May 28), that's what we will do. And of course, losing the league today increased the desire to put it right next week, it increased the desire.



Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp

of one of the best seasons in their history, were unable to surpass City, leaving them with just one Premier League title in 32 years.

Lauding his players' remarkable staying power, Guardiola said: "You cannot be here over the last five years if you don't have that resilience."

"We have the desire to win. To win titles, especially the Premier League, is not just how good we are with the ball."

Nothing resembled that resilience more than the manner of City's latest title triumph.

Losing 2-0 to Aston Villa with 15 minutes to go, City rallied in remarkable fashion to score three times in five minutes.

Yet, while Guardiola celebrates the ninth major prize of his six-year City reign, Klopp will be planning to add another chapter to Liverpool's rich Champions League history.

Liverpool face Real Madrid in the Champions League final on May 28 and Guardiola would dearly love to swap places with Klopp in Paris.

Since winning the second of his two Champions League crowns with Barcelona in 2011, Guardiola's relationship with Europe's elite club competition has been scarred by one agonising failure after another.

This season was no different as City crashed to a devastating semi-final exit against Real Madrid, blowing a 5-3 aggregate lead in the final seconds of normal time before losing in the extra period.

That heartache at the Bernabeu came a year after City's limp loss to Chelsea in their first ever Champions League final.



Spaniard Pep Guardiola became the most successful foreign manager in English football, in terms of league titles won, when he clinched his fourth Premier League crown on Sunday. With his latest success, the Manchester City manager moved above Frenchman Arsene Wenger and Portuguese Jose Mourinho who both have three Premier League titles to their names.

PHOTO: TWITTER