

'When you lose after scoring 300, 250 looks like 200'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal was pleased with batter Afif Hossain and paceman Ebadot Hossain, who made his debut and lent a helping hand to his side in the dead-rubber third ODI at Harare yesterday as the series ended 2-1 in Zimbabwe's favour.

Bangladesh lost three wickets inside 10 overs after being asked to bat for the third time in the series and, during the course of Anamul Haque Bijoy's 71-ball 76, the innings started taking shape. However once Bijoy departed, Mahmudullah Riyad in particular struggled to get the scoring rate up during a partnership with Afif.

However, Afif's 81-ball 85 proved instrumental to Bangladesh posting 256 for nine in the 50 overs.

"At one point I thought they were struggling. The way Afif batted was pleasing to see. He was timing the ball well. He batted extremely well," Tamim said at the post-match presentation.

Ebadot, flown in as a recent addition to the squad, scalped two wickets off back-to-back deliveries in the sixth over to deal the crucial blow to Zimbabwe's hope of achieving a clean sweep, disturbing in-form Sikandar Raza's stumps for naught.

After losing the first two ODIs despite scoring 303 and 290 respectively, Tamim was glad his side got five wickets early.

"When you have lost games after scoring 300, 250 looks like 200. Luckily, we got five wickets early and that was good for us. We have been carrying him [Ebadot] for a long time. I was surprised he wasn't included in the playing XI. Luckily, he was available for this last game and he delivered," Tamim said after 105-run win.

"It's nice to be on the winning side, obviously. I think we played really well, but we need to improve our bowling. Will rest and be back for the Asia Cup soon."

Player of the match
Afif Hossain

Meanwhile, Raza, coming off consecutive tons, was a little disappointed not to leave a mark with the bat in the final ODI. "It would have been nice to win the game again. But I didn't get the runs, I'll work hard and look forward to the next series," Raza said.

Zimbabwe too had to deal with injuries to key players during the series with Bangladesh but Raza praised the atmosphere in the dressing room.

"It has not been easy as we missed the big guns in the dressing room. [Richard] Ngarava bowled well, [Luke] Jongwe too. There are a lot of good things happening in the dressing room. This result wouldn't have been possible without the love and support of the crowd," he said.



Bangladesh players converge to celebrate a wicket on their way to a 105-run victory over Zimbabwe in the final ODI at the Harare Sports Club yesterday. [Below] Meanwhile, Ebadot Hossain uproots the stumps of Sikandar Raza, the hero for Zimbabwe in the first two ODIs, to dent the hosts' hopes of another comeback.

PHOTO: TWITTER/AFP

Promise of fearlessness breeds more fear

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh left for Zimbabwe with the aim to play fearless cricket but after dismal performances saw the visitors lose both three-match T20I and ODI series, it seems the Tigers will return home laden with fear.

A fear of failure among the players, lack of consistency or clarity from selectors and a whole lot of confusion within the Bangladesh think-tank ensures some hard times for the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in the coming days.

There was a buzz when the BCB decided to use the Zimbabwe series as a platform for relatively younger players to come out of the shadows of the seniors. The board even opted to rest regular skipper Mahmudullah Riyad and named Nurul Hasan Sohan as the skipper for the T20I series.

Selectors also rested experienced campaigner Mushfiqur Rahim and were without Shakib Al Hasan, who officially took a break from the Zimbabwe tour, forming a new-look team with the hope of changing the nation's T20I fortunes.

Disappointingly, there were hardly any positives to take home when it comes to performance and approach from the Tigers as they went on to lose 2-1.

More importantly, the Bangladesh think-tank took a U-turn from their actual purpose of bringing change to the shortest format and there was once again a visible lack of confidence from the team management.

After injury ruled Sohan out ahead of

the third and series-deciding encounter, the board included Mahmudullah as a replacement but surprisingly named Mosaddek Hossain captain for the third

the first time in nine years. Tamim Iqbal and his troops were undone by the fighting approach from the hosts, especially Sikandar Raza who



SCORES IN BRIEF
BANGLADESH: 256 for 9 in 50 overs (Afif 85 not out, Anamul 76; Jongwe 2-38, Evans 2-53)
ZIMBABWE: 151 all out in 32.2 overs (Ngarava 34 not out, Nyauchi 26; Mustafizur 4-17, Ebadot 2-38, Taiju 2-34)
Result: Bangladesh won by 105 runs
Player-of-the-match: Afif Hossain
Player-of-the-series: Sikandar Raza

game.

Injuries also came as huge setbacks for Bangladesh throughout the tour and the growing list of injured players affected the morale of the team while dismal performances kept selectors in a dilemma when it came to forming a squad for the upcoming Asia Cup and the ICC T20 World Cup later this year.

In the ODIs, the format that the Tigers' favour, the team management was hoping to continue their stranglehold against Zimbabwe. But there was a huge reality check in store as they went on to lose an ODI series against Zimbabwe for

struck hundreds in the first two games and helped the hosts chase down targets of 304 and 291 runs in the first two games respectively.

The Tigers looked helpless in defence of big totals courtesy of a bowling attack that lacked bite along with some poor fielding.

However, Bangladesh did manage to conclude their African safari on a positive note with a convincing 105-run win in the third and final ODI to regain some confidence against a spirited Zimbabwean side who were clearly the better unit in the series.

With or without Shakib is the question

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) are unable to decide what to do about Shakib Al Hasan's contract with Betwinner News, which is reportedly a sister concern of betting site Betwinner.

It was learned that Shakib had not budged from his position, which is that he considers Betwinner News a news site separate from Betwinner.

Shakib was in pole position to take over captaincy for the Asia Cup, but the BCB had to postpone their squad announcement for the tournament following an injury crisis and the present standoff with Shakib.

The BCB has so far maintained that they will not accept Shakib's deal with Betwinner since it goes against their stance. The BCB had on August 2 communicated their EOI to the franchises for the BPL, where it was stated that companies related to tobacco, alcohol and betting could not feature.

"There is no chance of giving any leeway to Shakib regarding this," BCB president



Nazmul Hassan told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to BCB sources, the contract Shakib signed with Betwinner was a big-money signing, which is why it has become so difficult to find a solution.

However, with one day until the deadline to announce the squad for the Asia Cup, the BCB are in a quandary over who they will name captain. Their plans had revolved around Shakib with the T20 World Cup not very far away.

On one hand, the BCB are concerned about what might happen if they cannot announce Shakib as captain or even as a player for the upcoming tournament.

On the other hand, they are concerned whether resolving the situation by bowing to Shakib's demands will set a bad example.

At this point it has become a no-win scenario for the BCB as they ponder what to do regarding the whole Shakib affair. With or without Shakib in the Asia Cup? That is essentially BCB's current predicament at the moment.



Timo Werner was given a warm reception by his teammates as the Germany international returned to his former club Leipzig following a disappointing stint with Chelsea. The 26-year-old, delighted to be back where he made a name for himself, said, "I'm really pleased to be back in Leipzig. The last 24 hours have been really exciting and it's been a lot of fun to see so many familiar faces again."

"Ultimately this decision is about my wife Gert and our three young boys. Family has always been the biggest motivator for me and I feel comfortable with putting it first and preparing ourselves for life after cricket."

TRENT BOULT
who asked to be released from his central contract with New Zealand Cricket.



Boomers to play against Nepal, Cambodia

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team will play two friendly matches against Cambodia and Nepal in September's FIFA Window, informed a high official of Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

The men in red and green will take on Cambodia in the first of two away matches on September 22 while the second match is away to Nepal on September 27.

"We had a meeting of the National Teams Committee and a decision was made that the national team will play two international friendly matches against Cambodia and Nepal in September's FIFA window," BFF vice-president and chairman of NTC, Kazi Nabil Ahmed, said in a video message yesterday.

The residential camp for the booters will get underway on August 26 in Dhaka under the guidance of Spanish coach Javier Cabrera.

'She definitely changed the game'

AFP, Toronto

Teen stars Coco Gauff and Emma Raducanu hailed Serena Williams as an inspiration and a game-changing tennis legend on Tuesday, hours after the 23-time Grand Slam champion revealed impending retirement plans.

World number 11 Gauff, inspired to play tennis by Williams, said she was shocked to hear her say the "countdown has begun" to departure for an icon who can motivate another generation of superstars.

"The legacy that she has left through her tennis career is something that I don't think any other player can probably touch," Gauff said.

Williams became an African American icon in a mostly white sport, just as Gauff is starting to do with two titles at age 19, and Gauff reminded fans that Williams is far from fading away even if her days in competitive tennis are nearing an end at age 40.

"She definitely changed the game," Raducanu said.

Qatar WC to start a day early

AFP, Doha

The opening match for this year's World Cup, between hosts Qatar and Ecuador, will be brought forward by one day to November 20, World Cup sources told AFP on Wednesday.

The move, which should be approved by the FIFA Council before the 100-day countdown starts this week, will retain the tradition of the first match featuring the host country.

Under the existing arrangement, Senegal and the Netherlands play the first game on November 21, followed by the official inauguration match between Qatar and Ecuador later that day.

The World Cup sources said that confirmation of the change was expected soon. FIFA and the Qatari organising committee declined to comment.

For fans who have tickets for the November 21 game, "any disruption will be dealt with so impact is minimal", another tournament source told AFP.