

"We keep things simple. It was a good batting track, we thought we were 10-15 short despite playing well. Some of the boundaries are big here. But we are playing the ball on the merit. Without a plan, it becomes difficult."

MOHAMMAD RIZWAN,
Pakistan wicketkeeper batter



Mustafizur needs Fizz back

SPORTS REPORTER

With the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia approaching at the end of the month, Bangladesh's concerns in the pace bowling department seem to have deepened, with a special focus on the most experienced of the lot: Mustafizur Rahman.

The left-arm seamer has been missing his 'Fizz' lately, evident again in the first game of the tri-nation series against Pakistan yesterday, and that is surely a headache for the team management.

The 27-year-old looked ordinary on a seaming Christchurch pitch, which behaved similarly to the pitches expected during the World Cup in Australia, and was unable to extract that extra pace and bounce, even compared to the other Bangladeshi seamers.

Mustafizur simply could not live up to his reputation, going wicketless and conceding 48 runs from his four overs, both in the Power play and death overs.

Although Bangladesh made a positive start with Taskin Ahmed conceding just one run off the first over after skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan opted to



Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman looks dejected as Pakistan's Iftikhar Ahmed and player-of-the-match Mohammad Rizwan run between the wickets during the first match of the tri-nation Twenty20 tri-series at Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday.

We are disappointed. The wicket was good and the bowlers did well. We need to improve in a few areas though. Wickets in the middle while batting cost us. Liton [Das] and Yasir [Ali] batted well, but as I said, we need to improve there.

Bangladesh T20I vice-captain
Nurul Hasan Sohan

bowl, Mustafizur's two overs in the Powerplay cost 19 runs. More importantly, it handed the momentum to Pakistan despite the bowlers at the other end managing to keep things tight.

The left-arm pacer was wayward with his line and length from the start of the game, but Sohan had no alternative to the experience that Mustafizur offered in the death overs.

Unfortunately, the Fizz - known for lethal cutters and yorkers as well excelling at the crucial task of keeping runs in check at the death in the early stages of his career - was a shadow of his former self yesterday.

When Nurul handed the ball to the Fizz in the 17th over, the scenario remained unchanged. The left-arm seamer was guilty of bowling too wide or short, which allowed batters to go after him. He ended up conceding 16 runs from the over.

He also bowled the final over of the innings, giving away 13 runs, including a six and a four, as Pakistan posted a competitive 167 for five, which was ultimately enough for them to seal an easy win.

Makeshift openers make for makeshift approach

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's approach to T20s and everything relating to it has been so oft-repeated that one might venture to think they have brought about some seminal change to how the game is being played.

Following the opening match of the tri-nation series against Pakistan, questions about 'impact' and approach would have been pondered because of the very absence of those phrases in Bangladesh's batting plan.

All the big teams send out openers capable of not only taking advantage of field restrictions, but also constructing their innings in a way where they can power on towards a bigger total in case they get through to the end overs.

So it becomes perplexing, especially so with the T20 World Cup around the corner, when the Tigers continue to send in two makeshift openers in the form of Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Sabbir Rahman. It also raises questions about the effectiveness of the think-tank's planning.

Pakistan go in with an entirely different idea, where openers Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam both anchor the team due to a fragile middle-order and there is evidence their plan works. Both Babar and Rizwan are prolific T20I batters and the latter, having bided his time to construct innings, accelerated in the death overs as Pakistan posted 167 for five.

There is nothing wrong with either Mehedi or Sabbir's approach, especially considering that Bangladesh have been unable to score runs while also losing



wickets in the Powerplay. Mehedi and Sabbir both look to see off the initial exchanges and the former has found runs while the latter's return has shown that adjusting to international cricket after a long time away is difficult.

The problem arises because neither is expected to carry on after a lukewarm approach in the Powerplay. Even when Babar and Rizwan start with caution, they

are capable of building on that. Miraz is the definition of makeshift opener and is not the pinch-hitting kind either while Sabbir may be the pinch-hitting kind, but has not been able to make his bat talk.

It is expected from most teams' tacticians to reserve the greatest number of deliveries for their more aggressive batters, who are capable of scoring big runs.

Bangladesh's batting, as it turned out yesterday, was dependent on Liton Das and Afif Hossain taking the attack to Pakistan.

However, in their attempt to protect an established opener such as Liton by sending him in at number three, the team management is putting pressure on the very batters that have to do the majority of the heavy lifting.

Neither can Liton make an impact in the few Powerplay overs that he does get, nor do Bangladesh take adequate advantage of the first six overs in the way Liton can.

When Liton and Afif were trying to accelerate yesterday, they were doing so with the knowledge that the pressure had once again been put on the Bangladesh batting lineup.

The makeshift opening stand has perhaps added some solidity, but the approach in T20Is is of aggression and the Tigers' choice of openers does not reflect such a mindset.

Those in charge of the team, have often made changes without accountability. Sabbir may well be put away after a short foray much like others have in the past. But without actual merit of planning and approach, no solution can be a stable one.

England's first black player to receive posthumous cap

AFP, London

The first black player to receive an England call-up is to be given a posthumous honorary cap after being denied an appearance due to the colour of his skin, the English Football Association said Friday.

Jack Leslie, who scored 137 goals in 400 appearances for Plymouth Argyle between 1921 and 1934, was called up to the national team in 1925.

But when selectors discovered his heritage, Leslie was robbed of the chance to represent the Three Lions due to racial discrimination.

"Jack Leslie is a true football legend who, through his own adversity, has positively shaped attitudes and behaviours to identify and remove discrimination from football," the FA's chair Debbie Hewitt said.

"The FA is awarding Jack a posthumous honorary cap, to recognise his unique contribution and set of circumstances - and to right the historical wrong."

Leslie died in 1988 and is to be immortalised by a statue that will be formally unveiled outside Plymouth's Home Park on Friday.

His granddaughter Lesley Hiscott told the BBC: "The whole situation to us is like a dream, we have to keep pinching ourselves to make sure it really is happening and to actually see the statue there."

"At long last grandad's getting the recognition he deserved."



High-flying PSG make green gesture

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain will travel to Reims by bus, manager Christophe Galtier said on Friday, a month after provoking controversy by mocking a suggestion his team should stop taking short-haul flights.

"We will travel by bus, even if the bodies are tired. It is close to home, we will be very comfortable on our bus," Galtier told PSG TV ahead of the visit to Reims for a Ligue 1 game on Saturday evening.

Last season, PSG went to Reims, 150 kilometres (93 miles) from the capital, by plane.

On September 5, Galtier was asked why PSG had flown to Nantes which is 380km west of Paris but located on a high-speed train line.

The side - owned by an investment fund of major gas producer Qatar - boasted on social media after the game that they had made the round trip with shirt sponsors Qatar Airways.

Asked whether the club was taking its carbon footprint seriously, Galtier replied with sarcasm.

"We had a chat with our travel organisers earlier to see if we can travel by sand yacht," he said, referring to sail-powered buggies that are popular on some French beaches.

He later pleaded "misplaced humour" but insisted that he was personally "very conscientious" personally to favoured trains over planes when travelling.

Bangladesh hope to get past India hurdle

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan successfully defended a modest total of 137 for six, bundling India out for 124 in 19.4 overs at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium to get their first-ever win against their cross-border rivals in the Women's Asia Cup yesterday.

Despite being tied on six points from four games each, Pakistan are behind top-placed India in the table by virtue of net run-rate.

Bangladesh, who are third in the table with two wins from three games, will take on India in their fourth game today, hoping to cash in on India's dented momentum. However, batting will remain an area of concern for the hosts, especially after they were bundled out for just 70 runs by Pakistan.

Opener Murshida Khatun, who scored a fifty against Malaysia, believed there was a chance if the Tigresses could play according to their plan.

"Whenever we play against India or Pakistan, our energy level is at its peak. They [India] are stronger than us since they play a lot of matches and recently played in England. But we are also in good shape

and some of our batters are in good touch. If we can play according to the process, we can expect a positive result. We are the defending champions and we will be playing at home," Murshida told the media ahead of the game against India yesterday.

In yesterday's affair, Pakistan were bolstered by an all-round display from Nida Dar, who top-scored with 56 runs and also scalped two crucial wickets.

Pakistan were in a spot of bother after electing to bat and were struggling on 33 for three before Nida and skipper Bismah Maroof added a 76-run fourth-wicket stand to take them to a competitive total.

Maroof was dismissed after making 32 off 35 balls, but Nida remained unbeaten on 56 off just 37 balls, hitting five fours and a six.

In reply, India failed to continue their brilliant batting performance and were tottering on 91 for seven.

Richa Ghosh, coming in at number eight, returned to the pavilion due to heat-related issues before returning in a blistering mood. She struck 26 off just 13 balls, but it was always going to be a difficult task. After her dismissal, it was all over India.



Mohammad Nazimuddin jumps in the air after giving Bangladesh a 10-minute lead with a brilliant header during their 2-0 win over Bhutan in the AFC U-17 Championship Qualifying encounter at Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday. With two successive wins, Bangladesh joined leaders Yemen, who thrashed Singapore 6-0 in the day's first match. Now, Bangladesh and Yemen will lock horns in the Group E last match tomorrow at the same venue to decide the group winners.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED