

Babar-Rizwan’s maxim for Liton

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Liton Das was in excellent touch during a 42-ball 69 against Pakistan yesterday but he might have been disappointed to get out in the 15th over after an 88-run stand with Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

Liton was later seen speaking to Pakistan openers Mohammad Rizwan and skipper Babar Azam in a video posted by the Pakistan Cricket Board on Facebook, titled ‘Learning never stops’.

Liton had a few queries, especially relating to mentality, after the two Pakistani batters put on a 101-run stand to help their side to a seven-wicket win against the Tigers in Christchurch yesterday.

It appeared Babar Azam had a few sharp pieces of advice for Liton. “The less you listen and do what you feel, it will be right. Because even if you don’t want, you will start doubting yourself listening to everyone,” the Pakistan skipper was heard telling Liton.

Rizwan, currently the number one-ranked T20I batter, divulged tips for a few mental aspects too. The Pakistani duo had built their innings calmly and prescribed confidence in one’s own abilities.

“You may score zero, 10 or even a century, but nothing is possible



Captain Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das stitched an 88-run third-wicket stand to help Bangladesh to a decent total but Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam once again set the platform with a 101-run opening stand to see Pakistan secure a seven-wicket victory in Christchurch yesterday.

PHOTO:AFP

Could Hathurusingha tonic work on Soumya again?

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When Soumya Sarkar came onto the international scene, his impact was felt fairly quickly. His ability to dictate terms and put fear in the opposition ranks were traits that best showcased his attributes.

Eight years down the line, the carnage that he wrought against the likes of South Africa and Pakistan seems to be missing a few punches. The definitive factor is the confidence level that the left-hander has portrayed, oftentimes being moved down the order for the purpose of the team or following off-colour performances.

Sri Lankan coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who oversaw the Tigers as head coach from 2014 to 2017, was able to get the best out of Soumya with a tonic of confidence. It appears current technical consultant Sridharan Sriram might replicate such a remedy.

Chandika was known as a strict professional, micro-managing various details during his tenure and keeping a tight leash on things. However, he had a simple message regarding the left-hander’s approach. “You may get out, but don’t change your approach” was the gist of that message.

Soumya, given the licence to play his natural game, was able to become a match-winner for the Tigers during that period.

So, with limited options and a crisis at the top becoming apparent even to the team management at this point, Soumya made a return to the Tigers’ line-up in the tri-nation T20I series in New Zealand despite only making the squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup as a standby player.



He started well in the New Zealand game despite struggling with the pace and bounce on offer, but he was keen on his own approach. In the second game against Pakistan yesterday, when Bangladesh slumped to a seven-wicket loss, he got just four runs. But Sriram defended his intent.

“He played a shot and got out. That’s intent. I think he was selfless and played for the team. He tried to get going in the first few overs when we got only six or seven runs. He tried to force the pace and got out, but it happens. He played a good knock at number three in the last game so I think there are good signs. With a player like him, we need to really instill confidence,” Sriram said after the game yesterday.

It is evident that Soumya is being backed to go about his natural game. Whether that confidence boost can work its way to him making the T20 World Cup squad remains to be seen, but Sriram was open to change.

“We still have time. We have two more days. There will definitely be discussions and I said this earlier, we’re open to changes but we’re very clear in our heads as to what we want. We will let you know in a few days,” he said about whether there were any impending changes to the World Cup squad.

“We do have trust. This is our best group. Those who are here with us are the best from Bangladesh and we have complete faith in that.”

The Tigers finished without a win in the tri-nation series but played both Soumya and pacer Shoriful Islam, both of whom are stand-by options for the T20 World Cup, leading to Sriram maintaining that combinations were still being worked out.

He clarified that the opening slots and batting position did not matter because they would keep “modifying” and “adapting” according to conditions and scenarios. There is every bit of chance of changes taking place, especially with Sabbir Rahman not having produced the necessary impact. For Soumya meanwhile, the Sriram tonic could be a chance to revive his game.

The Tigers will head to Australia and play two World Cup warm-up matches on October 17 and 19 against Afghanistan and South Africa respectively. They take the positives of skipper Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das’s form at the top. Soumya’s fast hand could just add that X-factor.

India, Sri Lanka seal final berth

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India were a class apart against Thailand as the six-time champions won by a whopping 74-run margin while Sri Lanka edged past Pakistan in a one-run thriller in their respective semi-final encounters of the Women’s Asia Cup 2022 in Sylhet on Thursday.

The first match of the day saw India post 148 for six after being put into bat and Thailand ended their innings at 74 for nine.

While it was a sheer one-sided contest in the first match, the second semifinal saw the most dramatic of finishes.

Batting first, Sri Lanka managed to tally 122 for six, riding on Harshitha Samarawickrama’s 41-ball 35.

During the chase, Pakistan openers were off to a flying start before skipper Bismah Maroof’s 42 and a run-a-ball 26 from Nida Dar took Pakistan on the brink of victory; with 18 runs off 18 balls needed for victory, and that too with seven wickets in hand.

However, the Lankans clawed their way back and Pakistan eventually fell a run short. Player-of-the-match Inoka Ranaweera continued her brilliant run of form to grab three wickets for 17 runs.

The two-week-long tournament is all set to reach its grand completion with India and Sri Lanka locking horns at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on October 15.

Sylhet, Dhaka Metro clinch wins in first round

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Sylhet and Dhaka Metropolis won their respective fixtures as the first round of the ongoing National Cricket League came to a close on Thursday.

Spinners ruled the roost at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, where Sylhet registered an easy nine-wicket victory against the hosts Chattogram.

Having resumed the fourth and final day on 169 for four, Chattogram could only add 52 more runs on the board as they were bundled out for 221, setting an easy 51-run target for Sylhet.

Sylhet off-spinner Nayeem Ahmed was the destroyer in chief yesterday, bagging the crucial wickets of Parvez Hossain Emon, and Chattogram skipper Irfan Sukkur on way to scalping a fiver. He finished with figures of five for 42 in 35 overs in the second innings.

Left-arm spinner Nabil Samad, who bagged a fiver in the first innings, accounted for four wickets in the second innings as he finished with match figures of nine for 105 in 62.4 overs to help Sylhet’s cause.

Chasing the paltry target, Sylhet lost opener Imtiaz Hossain early but Taufiq Khan and Amite Hasan remained unbeaten on 35 and 15 to see their side get over the line with ease.

At the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, Dhaka Metro were able to register a two-wicket victory over hosts Khulna in a thrilling game.

Chasing a 167-run target, Dhaka began the final day on 128 for six. They lost overnight batters Zahiduzzaman Khan and Rakibul Hasan after adding just 11 more runs on the board but Abu Haider Rony (18* 34) and Kazi Anik Islam (11* 28) held their nerves to see Dhaka win.

Meanwhile, the game between Barishal and Rajshahi at the Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium ended in an expected draw.

‘Champions League is being very cruel to us’

REUTERS, Barcelona

Robert Lewandowski scored two late goals to earn Barcelona a point in a breathless 3-3 draw with Inter Milan on Wednesday which kept alive their faint hopes of reaching the Champions League last 16.

Barcelona are still facing elimination at the group stage of the competition for the second consecutive season but Lewandowski’s stoppage-time equaliser gave them a slim chance of progressing with two games left.

Inter need a home win over Viktoria Plzen next week to join Bayern Munich in the last 16.

“It’s bad, I think this Champions League is being very cruel to us,” Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez told Movistar Plus.

“Now it is out of our hands. What is left for us is to turn our attention quickly to Sunday’s El Clasico (against Real Madrid), bounce back and focus on LaLiga because the Champions League became very difficult and complicated for us.”

Until last year, Barca had advanced to at least the round of 16 in the Champions League in every season since 2001, but are now facing the prospect of slipping into the Europa League for the second season in a row.

Roared on by their fans in a sold-out Camp Nou, Barcelona started strongly, with Raphinha the focal point of their attack and Inter goalkeeper Andre Onana made three fine stops from strikes by the Brazilian.

But just like last week in Milan, Inter were strong on the counter-attack in the first half and went close to scoring on three occasions.

Edin Dzeko thundered a close-range strike off the post in the 17th minute, Henrikh Mkhitaryan had a long-range shot denied by Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who also denied Denzel Dumfries in a one-on-one from a counter-attack.

In a move started by Raphinha on the right touchline, the Spanish side took the lead through a close-range strike by Ousmane Dembele from a Sergi Roberto cross five minutes from halftime.

But it all changed after the break when Nicolo Barella levelled in the 50th minute with a volley from Alessandro Bastoni’s cross after ghosting in behind the Barcelona defence.

A Lautaro Martinez strike from the edge of the area that bounced off both posts before going in put Inter ahead 13 minutes later and they could have extended their lead at least twice but were denied by Ter Stegen.

With Barcelona in all-out attack mode, Lewandowski equalised from a rebound in the 82nd minute.

Inter regained the lead one minute from time when Robin Gosens finished off a counter-attack but Lewandowski’s bullet header three minutes later rescued Barca who are third in the Group C standings on four points, three behind Inter and eight adrift of Bayern Munich.

“Soccer is a game of mistakes and we can’t afford those in situations like this,” Xavi said.

“This is the Champions League and you pay a high price for each error you make.

“You need to win, to defend well, to score. We needed to play the entire game like we did in the first half. That intensity. Now it’s hard because we are not in control anymore.”



Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah came off the bench to score the fastest hat-trick in Champions League history in a 7-1 demolition of Rangers at Ibrox on Wednesday. The Egyptian’s treble arrived in just six minutes and 12 seconds to beat the previous record held by Bafetimbi Gomis in Lyon’s 7-1 win over Dinamo Zagreb in 2011.

PHOTO: REUTERS