

## ‘Bailing team out more important than milestones’

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh might feel that they were in a position from which they would have been able to restrict India to a smaller total but courtesy of a crucial partnership between Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant, India eventually took an 87-run first-innings lead on Day 2 of the second Test in Mirpur yesterday.

India, at one point, were struggling at 94 for four in reply to Bangladesh’s 227 in the first innings before Iyer and Pant steadied the rocking ship for the visitors. The duo added 159 runs for the fifth wicket that eventually helped India post a commendable 314 in their first innings.

However, both Iyer and Pant were denied hundreds. Pant was dismissed by Mehedi Hasan Miraz after a 93-run knock while Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan accounted for the wicket of Iyer, on 87.

“Definitely, it hurts as a batter (missing out on a hundred) but at the same time, I look at it in a positive way as I went out in a tough situation and I bailed out my team. That is more important for me than getting to a landmark score,” Iyer said after the day’s play.

“I thought that I was pretty decisive today and yes, their bowlers maintained a good line and length. At the same time, Rishabh also took on the bowlers from the opposite end and it was phenomenal to see that as it eases the pressure,” Iyer heaped praise on Pant’s aggressive knock that included seven boundaries and five maximums.

Bangladesh will resume Day 3 on seven without loss, trailing by 80 runs in their second innings. Asked if the game would proceed till the fifth day of the Test, Iyer informed that it was too early to predict the fate of the game.

## Rehan left out for NZ series

AFP, London

England have decided against taking teenage rising star Rehan Ahmed to New Zealand for their next Test series despite the 18-year-old leg-spinner’s dramatic introduction to international cricket.

Ahmed became England’s youngest men’s Test cricketer when he made his debut against Pakistan in Karachi last week, breaking a 73-year-old record set by Brian Close, and went on to become the youngest Test debutant from any country to enjoy a five-wicket haul as Ben Stokes’ men completed a 3-0 series win.

Ahmed will instead play in the United Arab Emirates T20 league scheduled to start in January.

## England’s ‘Bazball’ exciting for cricket, says NZ coach

AFP, Karachi

A style of cricket named for one of New Zealand’s most successful players will be at the back of Kiwi minds when they take on Pakistan in a two-match Test series beginning next week, their head coach said Friday.

England humiliated Pakistan 3-0 in a series that ended Tuesday playing “Bazball” — an aggressive style named for their imported coach Brendon “Baz” McCullum, who played 101 tests for New Zealand.

The Kiwis are next to take on Pakistan, with the first Test starting in Karachi on Monday, and the second in Multan on January 3.

“I think there’s no doubt that England are changing the face of Test cricket a little bit,” New Zealand coach Gary Stead told a press conference Friday when asked about “Bazball”.

“I think all teams will be thinking a little bit around how England play and the successes that they’ve had in this past year. “So that’s exciting for them and, I think, it’s exciting for Test cricket.”



Despite Pakistan’s thrashing at the hands of England, Stead said they would not treat the home team lightly.

“We are certainly not underestimating Pakistan at all in their home conditions,” said Stead.

“I think spin will take a bigger part than we are probably used to normally, and reverse swing will also be there.”

New Zealand have only won two of 22 Tests in Pakistan, but have won their last three series — once at home, and twice on neutral ground in the United Arab Emirates.

Stead backed fast bowler Tim Southee to be an able replacement as skipper for Kane Williamson, who resigned from the captaincy ahead of the tour but is still in the squad.

“Tim’s got a great cricketing brain and we’re looking forward to the way that he manages the side through the series,” he said.

“Kane will still be a great leader in our group.”

The teams will also play three one-day internationals on January 10, 12 and 14 — all in Karachi.



Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam jumps in the air to celebrate one of his four wickets on the second day of the second Test against India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The 30-year-old took four wickets for 74 runs to restrict India to an 87-run lead in the first innings. (Bottom) Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant had forged a 159-run fifth-wicket partnership to bail India out of a difficult situation earlier in the day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Taijul cites value of spin partnerships

SPORTS REPORTER

Taijul Islam’s efforts of taking the lion’s share of bowling in Tests is often overlooked, but his performance again proved crucial to Bangladesh’s cause in their ongoing Test series against India.

The left-arm spinner kept the visitors guessing throughout the opening session of the Dhaka Test’s second day yesterday and ended up with a four-wicket haul, after he did the same in Chattogram.

Taijul and his skipper Shakib Al Hasan both picked a four-fer to bring the Tigers back into the match with their three-spin attack after fielding let them down in the first innings of India.

There was no big turn on offer and pacers did not manage to get the awkward bounce that was seen on the opening day in Mirpur. Taijul became key to the morning session in terms of making inroads into the star-studded India batting lineup.

The 30-year-old kept the stand-in skipper KL Rahul guessing with his flight and the arm delivery, forcing batters to play forward and bring the bat-pad dismissals into play.

India openers had seen off seven overs of the morning session before Rahul failed to pick up the arm-delivery, coming down the wicket to negotiate the turn but having to bring pad first. The umpire did not give out but Taijul was certain, forcing a review to get his man.

He would go on to bag the next two



wickets as well, trapping opener Shubman Gill in front before scalping Cheteshwar Pujara’s wicket. Those three wickets saw Bangladesh get back into the game after a disappointing effort with the bat.

“I think, everything is going ok,” Taijul said about his bowling at the press conference yesterday. “When you play against a big side, not all five of your bowlers will do well, but on average everyone is doing well,” he said about taking up the responsibility of the attack as a bowling unit and cited the value of spin bowling in partnerships.

“Since we are playing against a big side, in that respect, I am doing well,” the mild-spoken Taijul remarked.

Big moments came when Virat Kohli was let off after he nicked a Mehedi Miraz drifter which hit Nurul Hasan Sohan on

the pads behind the stump. Rishabh Pant then presented a half-chance which a leaping Liton Das could not latch on to.

Taskin Ahmed, however, got the prized scalp of Kohli after Lunch and the Tigers were firmly on the front foot. But the mistakes on the field compounded issues as Shreyas Iyer was let off twice, one being a straightforward stumping. Pant, as an aggressor, had taken the opportunity against match-ups Taijul and Shakib, with Miraz off the field for a certain time with injury.

India put on 140 runs in the second session with Pant and Iyer on fire. “The middle session was pretty expensive. We didn’t pick up wickets, but had we curtailed the run-scoring, we would have been in a better position,” Taijul said addressing the second session.

The partnerships with the ball ultimately proved to be the key for Taijul and Bangladesh as they got the Tigers back in the match in the third session. Miraz and Shakib thwarted tons of Pant and Iyer and India were restricted to 314.

“When a good bowling partnership happens, there is more chance of getting wickets. There were perhaps mistakes after Lunch, which is why wickets didn’t arrive and runs flowed. Our plan was to bowl dots,” he said.

Bangladesh will now look to make amends for their first innings total. Taijul said that a lead of 250 will not be a bad thing since India will have to bat last.

It’s big pressure for all of us to get into the top four. We want to be in the top four and fighting for trophies that’s our aim.

Manchester United coach ERIK TEN HAG



## KKR fetch Shakib, Liton

AGENCIES

Bangladesh opener Liton Das and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan were bought by Kolkata Knight Riders during the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction in Kochi on Friday ahead of the 2023 season.

Both Shakib and Liton were acquired by Kolkata for their base prices of rupees 50 Lakh and 1.5 crores, respectively, after they remained unsold initially. Kolkata were also the only bidder for Liton and Shakib.

“Swagoto Litton da,” which translates to ‘Welcome brother Litton’, wrote KKR from their official Facebook page right after acquiring the batters’ services. KKR also did not forget to welcome back all-rounder Shakib as they wrote: “Shakib da (brother) comes home.”

After being overlooked in the auction of the previous edition of the money-spinning franchise-based league, Shakib returned to KKR and will be joined by teammate Liton, who has been picked by an IPL franchise for the very first time.

This edition of IPL will feature three Bangladeshis for the first time ever with Mustafizur Rahman already retained by Delhi Capitals earlier.

Overall, Liton became only the seventh Bangladeshi to be picked by an IPL side after Mohammad Ashraful, Abdur Razzak, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib, Tamim Iqbal, and Mustafizur Rahman.

However, aside from Liton and Shakib, pacer Taskin Ahmed also went under the hammer in



this auction, but there were no takers for the tall pacer.

The franchises were not eager to bid for Taskin, who had a base price of 50 lakh rupees. A total of four Bangladeshi players were named in the IPL auction among the 405 cricketers. Afif Hossain, also drafted at 50 lakh rupees base price category, did not go under the hammer.

Meanwhile, England all-rounder Sam Curran became the most expensive ever buy in the players’ auction. Curran returned to the Punjab Kings for the staggering sum of 185 million Indian rupees (\$2.23 million) following a fierce bidding war involving the Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians.

The left-arm quick and attacking middle-order batter was among a selection of the world’s top cricketers going under the hammer in this auction.

His purchase set a local currency record, surpassing South African all-rounder Chris Morris who was snatched up by Rajasthan Royals for 162.5 million rupees in 2021.

The all-rounder debuted in the IPL with Punjab in 2019 and then had a successful stint with Chennai Super Kings but parted ways after a back injury and missed the 2022 edition.

Curran has a strike rate of nearly 150 and was placed in the top band of the auction list alongside big-hitting compatriot Ben Stokes and Australia’s Cameron Green.

Green was the second-most expensive buy after Mumbai Indians forked out 175 million rupees (\$2.11 million) following an intense bidding war.

England Test skipper Stokes was bought by Chennai Super Kings for 162 million rupees (\$1.96 million).



Manchester City’s Norwegian striker Erling Haaland scores the opening goal in their 3-2 win over defending champions Liverpool in a fourth-round fixture of the English League Cup at the Etihad stadium in Manchester on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP