

‘The team didn’t click’

SPORTS REPORTER

Compared to the first ODI, Bangladesh were hardly able to put up a fight in the second match as the hosts were blown away by some clinical cricket from England, who sealed the three-match series with a game to spare in Mirpur yesterday.

Nothing seemed to go right for Bangladesh since skipper Tamim Iqbal opted to field, a decision that raise some eyebrows, as England piled on 326 for seven courtesy of a brilliant Jason Roy hundred. In reply, the Tigers surrendered helplessly and were bundled out for 194.

According to Tamim, the decision to bowl first on a comparatively better Mirpur surface was a collective call from the team. He also admitted that the reason for their downfall was an inability to play as a unit.

“I think it was disappointing how we started with the ball. There was some swing for the first 4-5 overs and we had a few opportunities with run-outs but we couldn’t take them. When you lose a game like this, you can point fingers at a lot of people. But I think we didn’t do well as a team; we didn’t click,” Tamim said at the post-match presentation.

Concerns regarding batting also continued to rise during head coach Chandika Hathurusingha first assignment. Chasing a huge target, Bangladesh were reeling on nine for three inside three overs before Tamim and half-centurion Shakib Al Hasan tried to reduce arrears. But the Tigers eventually succumbed to the pressure of the required run-rate.

“When you lose three wickets in the first two-three overs, it becomes very difficult. Shakib and I tried to give ourselves time. My shots didn’t come out today, but I felt that was the right approach when chasing over 300. The intent Shakib showed was good, but sadly it didn’t work out. We will try to finish the series on a high now,” he said.

The defeat not only snapped Bangladesh’s seven-series win streak in ODIs at home but was also a reality check for Tamim and Co. as they look ahead to the 2023 ODI World Cup in India.

From ‘Bazball’ to baseball

AFP, Miami

England cricketers Harry Brook and Issy Wong have been named Major League Baseball Europe ‘ambassadors’ ahead of June’s games at London. Brook is to join the St.Louis Cardinals for their spring training in Florida.

“I’m really excited for this partnership and can’t wait to try my hand at hitting some home runs,” Brook said in an MLB press release.

“I’m intrigued to see how different it is to cricket and what similarities there are too - will a home run feel as good as hitting a six?” he said.



Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan tried to rebuild the innings following (bottom) an early three-wicket burst from England pacer Sam Curran. But the departure of the two stalwarts left the home side a mountain to climb as the Tigers suffered a ...run defeat and a rare home series defeat.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers lack solutions as they step out of comfort zone

SPORTS REPORTER

England are a side hardened by battles in many different conditions, forged through extraordinary defeats and dazzling success. Bangladesh have a new-found confidence in ODIs and they had gone seven consecutive series without losing at home.

When England came, Bangladesh knew they were up against a different kind of team. Usually against such battle-hardened opponents, especially if they are from outside the subcontinent, Bangladesh’s go-to strategy had been to resort to low and slow wickets that befuddle teams.

This time, they wanted to test themselves and it was one of the biggest risks they had taken at home in recent years.

margin – on a flat track at Chattogram and that they needed improvements on these kinds of surfaces was also suggestive of that performance.

“We have been discussing about playing better on true wickets. You will see a



reflection of our thinking, starting from this series,” skipper Tamim Iqbal had said before the start of the series. He had been open to short-term failures in favour of long-term gains with the World Cup to come and felt success would follow in two-three months’ time.

“When I spoke about true wickets, I said that we couldn’t be result oriented all the time. When we win games in Bangladesh, it doesn’t mean that we have won on bad wickets; we have also won on true wickets. When you are trying to change these things, many things will happen – you will win and lose –and you have to take it as part of the process,” the skipper said yesterday after England won the series with 132-run victory in the second ODI.

That a big part of Tigers’ improvement must now come from individual improvements in particular areas was apparent. Chattogram will host the third

and final ODI of the series and only a constructive effort in all three departments will help avoid a series whitewash.

The bowlers have done well in the first ODI but were made to toil under the sweltering sun by Jason Roy and Jos Buttler. Taskin Ahmed held up his end of the bargain with early wickets but the bowlers all ended up on the expensive side. Performances from key pacer Mustafizur Rahman were abysmal. He lacked threat with the ball and while his defensive abilities were once again key to his selection, he too ended up on the expensive side.

The spinners will have a role to play at the World Cup, but on sporting tracks, they are not expected to hold the sway they have in Mirpur. Adil Rashid picked up four wickets and the Tigers team management must answer to the puzzle of how to handle leg spinners better on surfaces where turn is available.

Pace was not a problem during the tour of South Africa, but swing has always been a thorn for the top-order, and that was once again emphasised by Sam Curran’s devastating early spell. The England pacer bagged three early wickets to peg Bangladesh back and he used the new ball to his advantage, getting the ball to move.

The biggest task is perhaps reserved for Bangladesh’s top-order, with Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim not been amongst the runs lately while Mahmudullah Riyad and Afif Hossain amble on with scores in the 20s and 30s.

When the task was to chase down a considerably big total, Bangladesh showed there are gaps they need to plug to be ready for subcontinental tracks.

Smith savours rare Aus win in India

REUTERS, Indore

Steve Smith knows how difficult it is to win a Test in India so Australia’s stand-in captain was thrilled to bits after guiding his team to a nine-wicket victory in the third Test in Indore on Friday.

Outplayed in Nagpur and Delhi, Australia bounced back in the four-Test series with a comprehensive victory well inside three days of the spin-dominated low-scoring contest.

Leading the side as regular skipper Pat Cummins flew home to be with his ailing mother, Smith marshalled his bowlers well and took a stunning catch to dismiss Cheteshwar Pujara whose second



innings 59 was the only half-century by an Indian in the low-scoring match.

“They are pretty hard to come by,” Smith told reporters, referring to wins in India, after only the second Australia has notched up in their last 18 attempts.

“For us to get on top in this game, particularly after losing the toss ... it shows the talent in this group and the belief we’ve got in ourselves.”

Arsenal look to pull clear

AFP, London

Arsenal aim to pull further clear of Manchester City in the Premier League title race this weekend. The Gunners are hot favourites to see off Bournemouth at the Emirates, while City face a Newcastle side hoping to put the bitter disappointment of their League Cup final defeat behind them.

Tottenham must bounce back quickly from an FA Cup exit to maintain their advantage over Newcastle and Liverpool in the race for a top-four finish.

Arsenal’s bid for a first league title in 19 years looked to be on shaky ground last month when they took just one point from three games, including a 3-1 home defeat to City.

But Mikel Arteta’s side have responded in style with three straight wins to carve out a five-point lead at the top of the table.

More of the same will be expected from Arsenal against a relegation-threatened Bournemouth side.

City face a tougher test on paper with the visit of Newcastle, but there is little for the champions to fear in the Magpies’ form of late.

Newcastle have slipped outside the top four after winning just once in the Premier League in 2023 so far.

A big week for Tottenham got off to the worst possible start with defeat in their FA fifth-round match against Championship side Sheffield United.

Spurs, who have not won a trophy since 2008, have to overturn a 1-0 first-leg deficit when they host AC Milan in the Champions League last 16 next week.

World aquatics boss promises support

SPORTS REPORTER

World Aquatics president Husain Al Musallam promised to support Bangladesh in their efforts to develop swimming after the Qatari organiser watched a few events and distributed prizes among swimmers during the Sheikh Kamal 2nd Bangladesh Youth Games at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Al Musallam and Vinod Kumar Tiwari, the president of International Kabaddi Federation, paid a short visit to Bangladesh to grace the Bangladesh Youth Games upon invitation from the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA).

Vinod attended the closing ceremony of the Kabaddi event on Thursday while Al Musallam attend the closing ceremony

following the swim events after meeting with BOA president and Army Chief SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, BOA secretary general Syed Shahed Reza and Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) president and Navy chief Admiral M Shaheen Iqbal.

“I feel at my home in these amiable surroundings. Bangladesh has a deep legacy in sports and we are here to extend our full support to Bangladesh” Al Musallam told reporters in Mirpur.

“I can say that World Aquatics will support Bangladesh through three steps. The first will

be in expanding the sport at the grassroots level. Secondly, we will help swimmers develop technically and tactically with advanced training. Another priority is to raise the standards of coaches and the judges,” Al Musallam, also the director general of the Olympic Council of Asia and secretary general of the Kuwait Olympic Committee, said.

BSF general secretary BM Saif added that the World Aquatics president had also promised to provide them with a 25-meter pool as well as arrange a coach for the national swimmers.

Around 16 swimming events concluded, with Dhaka Division topping the medals table with 13 gold medals followed by Khulna and Chattogram, who won three and two gold medals respectively after the boy’s 50m breaststroke was shared

by two swimmers.

The multi-sport extravaganza is set to conclude today and the e boys’ and girls’ 100m sprints are scheduled to be completed during the closing ceremony at the Army Stadium in Banani.

When this report was filed, defending champions Dhaka Division were leading the table, featuring eight divisions, with 46 gold medals, followed by Chattogram Division and Khulna Division, who were second and third with 39 and 35 gold medals respectively.



Paris Saint-Germain forward Kylian Mbappe (R) tries to juggle the ball as Lionel Messi and Gianluigi Donnarumma look on during a training session in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on Friday, on the eve of their L1 fixture against Nantes. Mbappe will be looking for the goal that will put him out on his own as the club’s all-time top scorer.

PHOTO: AFP