

'We expect 100s, not 50s, from the top-order'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh clinched a 50-run win over England in the third and final ODI courtesy of an all-round performance from Shakib Al Hasan at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday to avoid a whitewash, having lost both prior games.

The win kept Bangladesh's record of not facing a whitewash at home in a bilateral series since 2014 intact. More so, it was Bangladesh's biggest win over England in the 50-over format, which will certainly boost morale as they move to the T20I series.

Shakib stole the show both with bat and ball, again making and breaking a few records. He bagged his 300th ODI wicket -- the most by a Bangladeshi in the format and 14th overall to the mark.

He became only the third player with 6,000 runs and 300 wickets in ODIs after Sanath Jayasuriya and Shahid Afridi. It was the ninth time that Shakib had scored a 50 and taken at least three wickets in the same ODI -- more than anyone else in history. He was earlier level with Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Malik, who had each done so eight times.

Shakib scored 75 off 71 balls with the help of seven fours and helped Bangladesh post a fighting total of 246 after yet another failure from the top order.

The left-arm spinner remained instrumental with the ball during England's chase as well, scalping four wickets for 35 runs from his 10 overs, as the visitors were bundled out for 196 runs in 43.1 overs.

Although Shakib praised his side for showing character and fighting despite knowing the series was lost, he also pointed out a few areas that the Tigers could improve on in the coming days.

"We have been very good at home for the past 5-7 years. Unfortunately, we lost this series. But I think we showed a lot of character today (Monday) so we can take credit. We thought we were 20-30 runs short and, given the situation we were in, we could have scored more. Our bowlers spoke about stepping up and getting the job done. Luckily, they did the job for us. We expect our top-order players to score 100s, not 50s. So, I guess that's an area we can improve on," Shakib said during the post-match presentation ceremony.

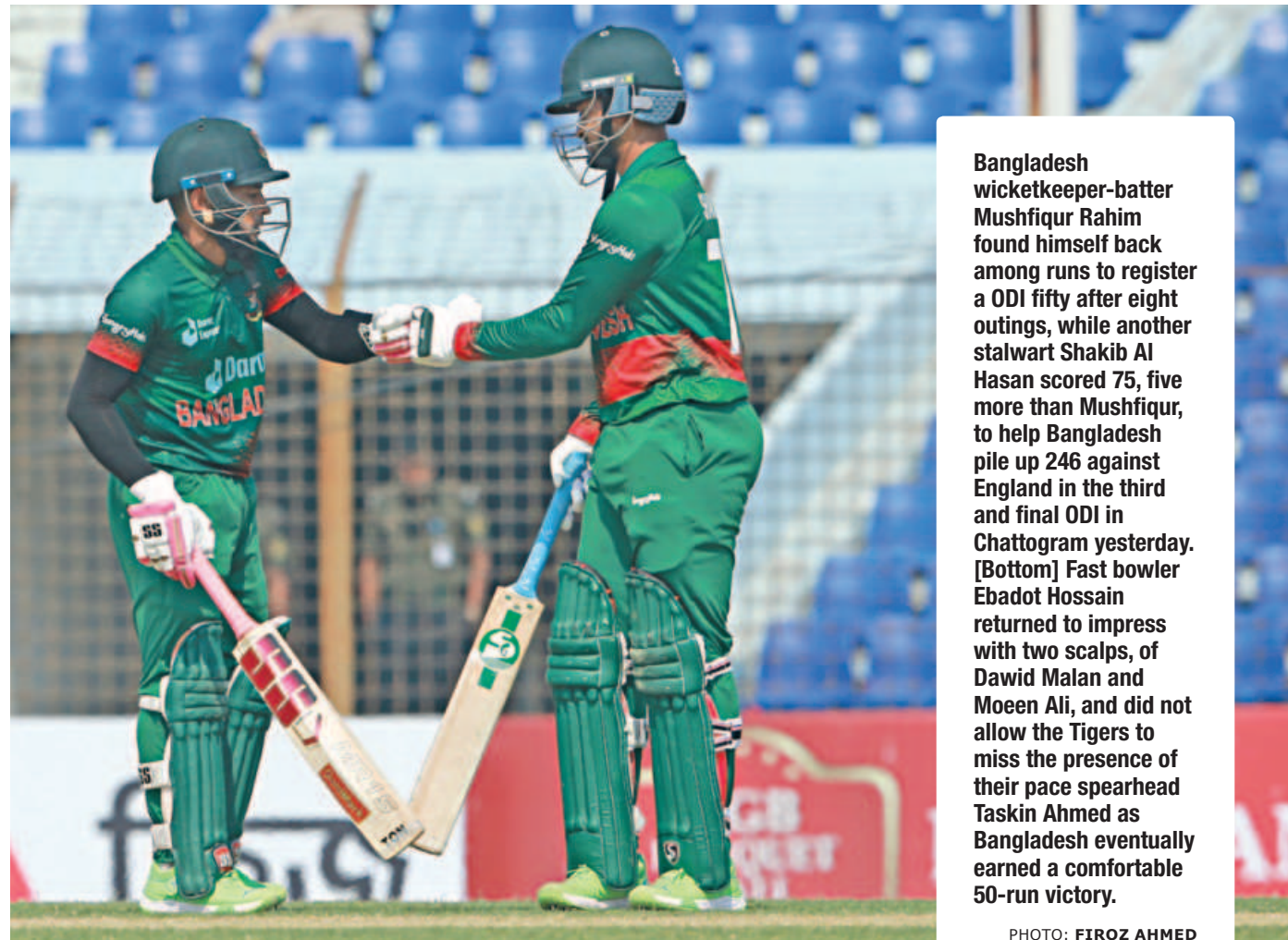
Meanwhile, skipper Tamim Iqbal was relieved to finish the series on a positive note, but he also pointed out the Tigers needed to challenge themselves and adapt to different conditions in the coming days.

"Lots of room for improvement. We are a good team in ODIs but there's a lot of room for improvement when we go overseas. We need to challenge ourselves and adapt to different conditions. There are some exciting players coming into the T20 squad and I wish them all the best," Tamim said.



"It felt good throughout the series, not just myself but I thought we bowled well as a collective unit in these conditions. [Rehan?] He's got something special about him. Hopefully as time goes on, he'll develop his game and get better."

England spinner Adil Rashid



Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim found himself back among runs to register a ODI fifty after eight outings, while another stalwart Shakib Al Hasan scored 75, five more than Mushfiqur, to help Bangladesh pile up 246 against England in the third and final ODI in Chattogram yesterday. [Bottom] Fast bowler Ebadot Hossain returned to impress with two scalps, of Dawid Malan and Moeen Ali, and did not allow the Tigers to miss the presence of their pace spearhead Taskin Ahmed as Bangladesh eventually earned a comfortable 50-run victory.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

The question regarding SHAKIB AT NO. 5

SPORTS REPORTER

In the 45th over of the Bangladesh innings, with the slog overs upon them, it looked like a platform had been set. But Shakib Al Hasan appeared stranded at one end with Taijul Islam at the other after seven wickets had fallen. It begged the question whether the all-rounder was being allowed to play through the innings to his full potential.

Shakib went on to score 75, just as the number on the back of his jersey, and was batting in a position where he has for a long time in his career. But his role in the recent past, especially since the 2019 ODI World Cup, has been at No. 3, a position currently occupied by Najmul Hossain Shanto. But as one of the team's most explosive batters that peaked at No. 3, was it damage control the team management was asking for?

Shakib lost Taijul Islam soon after and then had to stave the strike away from Ebadot Hossain by not running singles. He traded in boundaries before perishing as Bangladesh managed a total of 246, perhaps a few short of what they should have managed.

During Chandika Hathurusingha's first talk with the players in his second stint, he had reminded the players that the team's needs came first, even if that did not quite match an individual's personal preferences.



SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 246 all out in 48.5 overs (Shakib 75, Mushfiqur 70, Shanto 53; Archer 3-35, Curran 2-51, Rashid 2-21)
England: 196 all out in 43.1 overs (Vince 38, Salt 35, Woakes 34; Shakib 4-35, Ebadot 2-38, Taijul 2-52)
Result: Bangladesh won by 50 runs
Series: England won 2-1
Player-of-the-match: Shakib Al Hasan
Player-of-the-series: Adil Rashid

Thus, after five years and 29 matches, Shakib came in to bat at No. 5 in the England series. Before Chandika's arrival, he had come in at No. 4 twice during the India series. Yesterday, skipper Tamim Iqbal said: "His batting position will be four or five, it's fixed."

The team management had not

been very interested in changing Najmul's batting position and the left-hander answered their calls by managing two fifties against England, including one in the 50-run win in the third ODI.

Shakib had thrived at No. 3 regardless in recent times, most crucially during the ODI series in South Africa when he reversed the roles on the Proteas' seam attack to tactically manoeuvre a death-over scheme.

It is well known that Shakib had asked for the No. 3 slot very keenly in the 2019 World Cup and that the management had to compromise on their own ideas to accommodate the premier all-rounder. Individually, he was among the brightest lights, scoring 606 runs at an average of just over 86 and a strike rate of just a tad over 96. He has scored over 1,500 runs at an average of over 50 batting at No. 3.

The plan to employ Shakib at No. 5 raises questions about how much it benefits the team.

The idea may be to bolster a middle-order that has not found runs lately. Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Afif Hossain have not always looked commendable and Shakib may have to contend with No.5 simply to shore up the defences.

The question is whether No. 5 is the best position for Shakib. Does it help the team more if he cannot quite play to his rhythm?

Bellingham the key for Dortmund at Chelsea

AFP, Berlin

If Borussia Dortmund's remarkable 2023 run is to continue at Chelsea on Tuesday, midfield master Jude Bellingham, 19, will need to be front and centre.

Dortmund travel to London as European football's most in-form team, having chalked up ten wins from ten games to start 2023.

Nine points behind leaders Bayern Munich at Christmas, Dortmund have closed the gap and now sit second on goal difference.

A hard-fought 1-0 win in the opening tie means Dortmund will make it through to the Champions League quarter finals if they avoid defeat on Tuesday evening.

While Marco Reus' likely inclusion means Bellingham, captain in Dortmund's first leg victory, may not wear the armband at Stamford Bridge, the English teenager will unquestionably be one of the side's on-field leaders.

In what has been a breakout season for the English teenager bookending an impressive Qatar World Cup showing, Bellingham has saved his best performances for the biggest stage.

In six Champions League games this season -- two of which as captain -- Bellingham, has scored four goals and laid on an assist.

A starring performance in his Champions League debut in London, and just his third club match on English soil since arriving in Dortmund, will be the next milestone in an astonishing run for the policeman's son from Stourbridge.

Dortmund manager Edin Terzic, who brought Bellingham into a three-man leadership group alongside Reus and World Cup-winning defender Mats Hummels, has frequently described the Birmingham City junior as "the oldest 19-year-old player in the world."

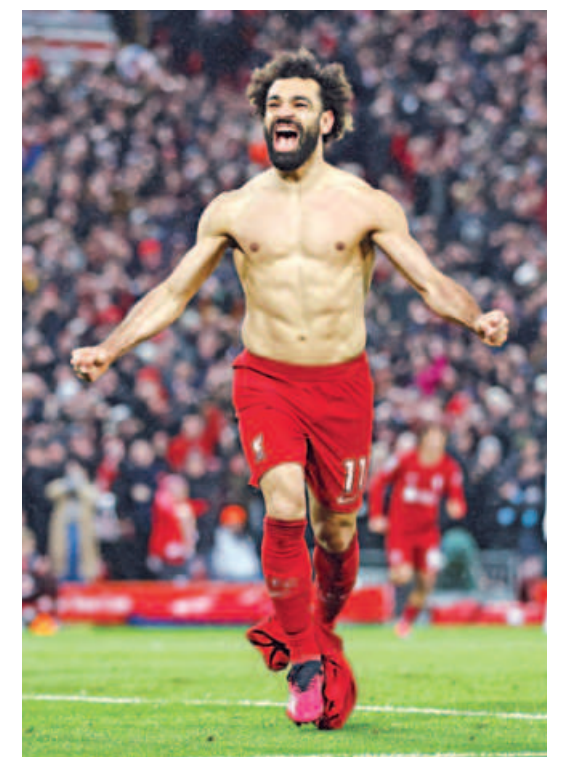


PHOTO: REUTERS

Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah became the club's record goalscorer in the Premier League with two goals during a 7-0 thrashing of Manchester United at Anfield on Sunday. Salah reached 129 goals for Liverpool in the Premier League, taking him past the mark of Englishman Robbie Fowler. "I cannot describe it. This is one of the best days of my life, and I broke the record that I was seeking from the day I came to the club," the Egyptian striker said after the match.

'Still alive' Jony now thriving on his journey

ANISUR RAHMAN

Although Mojibur Rahman Jony got into Bangladesh's 27-member preliminary squad on the back of only 10 Bangladesh Premier League matches worth of experience, the 19-year-old attacking midfielder had to face serious hurdles on his journey so far, including a death-scare.

Jony has been playing the country's top-flight football for the first time for newly promoted Fortis FC following his well-deserved performance for the BFF Elite Academy in the Bangladesh Championship League's last edition.

"As I represented national age-group teams at the international stage before, I dreamt of representing the senior team. To fulfil my dream, I joined Fortis this season after getting assurances to get some game time," Jony told The Daily Star on Sunday before flying to Saudi Arabia for the national team's preparation camp ahead of the 2023 Tri Nations Cup this month.

However, the national call-up did not surprise the promising midfielder when it eventually arrived.

"I did well in practice and got selected for the playing eleven in all 10 league matches of Fortis FC, thus I got a national call-up.



"I think this call up was not unexpected for me as my once age-group teammates like Fahim [Ahmed] and Yeasin [Arafat] have made their national debut much earlier than me," he added.

Possessing good dribbling and the capacity to hold the ball upfront, Jony is expecting to secure a place in the final squad for the tri-nation tournament at home, involving Seychelles and Brunei.

"I will try my level-best to get into the 23-member squad as well as stay in the national team for a long time," he hoped.

Jony recalled the death-scare he survived four years ago when his appendix had burst and it left his relatives to dwell on the possibility of the worst-case scenario.

"I stayed back from football a bit because of the appendix operation, and lagged further behind than others due to the distance between Dhaka and Dinajpur.

"It took me around five to six months to recover from the [appendix] operation. Alhamdulillah, I'm still alive

and playing football," he said.

Jony's journey has been far from an easy one as he once had to set aside his footballing aspirations to alleviate the poverty of their family.

"At one stage I stopped training football following the pressure from my poverty-stricken family. I started helping my mother to sell Chittoi Pitha (traditional cake) at a roadside food cart. Mizan uncle noticed my long absence in training and turned up at our home to convince my mother that I can go far playing football," said the former BKSP student.

Jony had begun playing football in 2009 before his uncle bought him his first pair of boots while his day-labour father, who worked at a rice mill, and elder brother provided everything for Jony to pursue a footballing career.

The lad from Dinajpur also participated in the NSC (National Sports Council) Cup and got selected for the advanced training in Gopalganj, Khulna, and Barishal before he got admitted to BKSP in 2017. Jony also represented national U-15 and U-16 teams in the SAFF Championship and AFC Championship Qualifiers before representing the national U-20 team in the AFC U-20 Asia Cup in 2022, in which he also struck a goal against Nepal and registered two assists in four matches.