

Crisis man Mushfiqur delivers yet again

SPORTS REPORTER

A display of sheer determination and focus from Mushfiqur Rahim underlined why the experienced wicketkeeper-batter is still rated as one of the best Bangladeshi batters in the longest format of the game.

Mushfiqur yet again emerged as the crisis man for the Tigers when the hosts found themselves in a spot of bother after resuming the second day of the lone Test against Ireland. But the 36-year-old stood strong and registered a magnificent century to help Bangladesh take a healthy first-innings lead and eye a win by the end of the third day.

The dependable Mushfiqur registered his tenth Test hundred with a mix of composure and aggression.

After losing Mominul Haque early in the day, the hosts were struggling on 40 for three. Mushfiqur and skipper Shakib Al Hasan then steadied the ship for Bangladesh. Although Shakib played the role of the aggressor, Mushfiqur was rock solid at the other end with his temperament and bided his time.



However, he also made sure to dispatch deliveries according to the merit of the ball. Whether it was an on-drive to pacer Mark Adair or his sweeps and reverse sweeps to disrupt the rhythm of the spinners - Mushfiqur showed an array of strokes across the ground.

While Shakib missed out his hundred and was dismissed for 87, Mushfiqur went on to reach his century off 135 deliveries.

"It was amazing. Again, we were in a little bit of trouble with him at the other end and, Mushy generally comes good when the chips are down. He sticks in there and makes sure he gets his call for us and got the score going nicely," Bangladesh batting coach Jamie Siddons said yesterday.

"Again, he was aggressive when it was required. When the bad ball was there, he put it away. But very disciplined around his defence and his leaving game. So, I was really happy with that. In Test cricket, we need to have that." Mushfiqur made sure the Tigers had taken a substantial lead and gained a measure of control on the visitors before being dismissed for a 166-ball 126 that featured 15 fours and a six.

It was Mushfiqur's third hundred in the last year. With ten centuries, he now equals Tamim Iqbal as the Bangladeshi with the second-most centuries in Tests. If he continues to perform in this manner, it is only a matter of time before Mushfiqur surpasses Mominul's eleven hundreds in Tests.



It was another Shakib Al Hasan masterclass on the second day of the one-off Test against Ireland in Mirpur yesterday as the premier all-rounder starred with bat and ball to help his side take control of the match. The Bangladesh captain scored a 94-ball 87 and followed it up by taking two quick wickets late in the day.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers happy about progressing game quicker

SPORTS REPORTER

Taking the game forward or progressing the game quicker was the idea and Bangladesh put a strong foot forward in that regard on the second day of the one-off Test against Ireland.

The Tigers have been looking to make an impact with aggression in all three formats and the Ireland Test provided them with a platform to go forward with that line of thinking in Tests following forays in ODIs and T20Is.

The combination tried to have a positive impact in said approach, picking six batters and three spinners along with three pacers. Mehedi Hasan Miraz at number seven allowed the team management to try the combination and three spinners allowed them to take advantage of the conditions in Mirpur without overlooking the effect of providing pacers with Test experience on home surfaces.

Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Liton Das and Mehedi appeared to embody the approach of scoring runs quickly.

A155-run lead following a first innings total of 369 put Bangladesh in a commanding position to go and win the match on the third day, having already picked up four wickets on day two.

When Mominul Haque was uncharacteristically bowled down his leg side in the 12th over, there was a bit of bother but Bangladesh appeared to take on the challenge through the intent they were trying to portray.

Shakib dispatched the very first ball through the covers, one knee on the

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh vs Ireland
Only Test, Day 2

IRELAND:
First innings 214 and second
innings -27 for four in 17 overs
(Moor 10 not out; Shakib 2-11,
Tajjul 2-7)

BANGLADESH:
First Innings-369 all out in 80.3
overs (Mushfiqur 126, Shakib 87;
McBrine 6-118, Adair 2-64)

ground in a picturesque shot. He reached his fifty off just 45 deliveries, playing some brilliant shots, helped by Ireland's inexperienced attack which gave him room.

"He scored quickly but he didn't hit the ball in the air a lot. I thought he was the pick of our batsmen today. He was very disciplined and when we lost three wickets, he held up really well and put a big partnership together which put us in a really good position at the end of the day," batting coach Jamie Siddons said of Shakib's innings yesterday.

Shakib tried a reckless sweep from well outside his off stump to be denied his ton. While Mushfiqur Rahim stuck to his approach, he too tied to dictate terms

and did so successfully to pick up his 10th Test ton. Liton's approach was closer to Shakib's and he missed out on what would have been a quickfire fifty.

In particular, Shakib and Mushfiqur's counter-attacking approach proved the catalyst for progression and that aggressive approach.

Asked to remark on the approach from the batters, Siddons was careful in separating fast scoring from the loss of wickets, especially the last five wickets falling for less than 50.

"Yeah, pretty aggressive I thought. We were served up a few bad balls so it was good that the boys were really involved to put them away. The scoring rate went up quickly, which took the game forward pretty fast. Happy with the way we batted. One got a hundred but four players probably should have.

"Five for fifty in the last session probably the only downer on the day," he said.

Asked to comment on the roles of the six batters, Siddons reminded that Mehedi is now a 'proper all-rounder'. "As an all-rounder, he's sitting beautifully at number seven. I think that's what's happening underneath that makes that look little bit thin."

That means the tail needed to wag more to validate the approach. "We need to get better, Tajjul [Islam] needs to be a better player than that if we're going to only play seven batsman," he said about the longer tail. But in terms of progressing the game, Tigers will find merits in being able to dominate proceedings.

'One of my greatest achievements'



SPORTS REPORTER

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday became the first cricketer from Bangladesh to be handed honorary lifetime membership by the prestigious Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the custodians of the game's laws.

The honour had previously been bestowed on former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury and former BCB general secretary Raisuddin Ahmed.

Prominent former cricketers such as MS Dhoni, Eoin Morgan, Kevin Pietersen, Yuvraj Singh, Dale Steyn and Ross Taylor were named in the new list. "Mashrafe Mortaza enjoyed a 19 year career with Bangladesh as an impactful bowling all-rounder," MCC quoted in the press release.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) also congratulated the former captain for being the 'first international cricketer of the country to have been bestowed with the privilege.'

Mashrafe posted on Facebook that it was one of his greatest achievements.

"MCC's honorary lifetime membership is one of my greatest achievements in cricket," the speedster who is still going strong in domestic cricket, wrote. "Being in the same list as Dhoni, Kevin Pietersen, Yuvraj Singh, Dale Steyn, Ross Taylor and Eoin Morgan is a matter of great happiness. It is also recognition for Bangladesh cricket. I hope everyone will pray that I can uphold Bangladesh cricket's values in the future as well."

19 cricketers were named on this year's list, including representatives from eight of the 12 Test-playing nations. "The names that have been announced today are some of the greatest international players of modern times, and we are privileged to now count them as valued members of our club," the MCC statement read.

KKR sign Roy to fill Shakib and Iyer void

REUTERS, New Delhi

Kolkata Knight Riders have signed England opener Jason Roy for the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL), the organisers said on Wednesday, to bolster their batting lineup weakened by the absence of Shreyas Iyer and Shakib Al Hasan.

Kolkata captain Iyer has been ruled out of entire IPL with a lower back injury which would require surgery and keep him out of the World Test Championship final against Australia in June as well.

All-rounder Shakib, currently leading Bangladesh in a one-off test against Ireland in Mirpur, has also conveyed his unavailability citing national team commitments.

Kolkata spent \$341,671 to buy Roy, who played the 2021 season for Sunrisers Hyderabad, the IPL organisers said in a statement.

'History repeats itself' as Lukaku racially abused

AFP, MILAN

Romelu Lukaku said Wednesday that history was repeating itself in Italian football after the Inter Milan striker was subjected to monkey chants by Juventus fans during the two teams' stormy cup clash.

Lukaku scored a stoppage-time penalty which secured Inter a 1-1 draw in Tuesday's first leg of the semifinal between Italy's most widely supported clubs, a game that ended with three players sent off and the two teams at each other's throats.

One of those red cards was for an incredulous Lukaku, who was dismissed for a second booking for his celebrations following his dramatic equaliser, before which he was abused by a small number of home supporters.

The Belgium striker held his finger to his mouth as he has after scoring for his country and told Juve supporters to "shut up" while being mobbed by his joyous teammates.

On Wednesday Lukaku said on Instagram: "History repeats itself. Been through it in 2019... and 2023 again..." referring to when three-and-a-half years ago Inter's hardcore ultras told him that monkey chants



directed at him by Cagliari fans were not racist.

A star-studded list of names from across the globe have come out in support of Lukaku, sending him their best and offering messages of general support.

It was not initially clear that he

had been abused and neither Inter coach Simone Inzaghi nor his Juve counterpart Massimiliano Allegri mentioned racist chanting while discussing a post-match row which led to Samir Handanovic and Juan Cuadrado also being dismissed and continued as the players headed into the tunnel.

That led to Juve goalkeeper Mattia Perin labelling Lukaku's shushing of the Bianconeri supporters behind the goal as a mark of disrespect.

"We have to be the first to set an example, but in these games it's difficult to hold back," Perin told Sky Sport Italia. "It's a lack of respect to celebrate under the Curva of the opposing team."

However, Michael Yormark, the president of Roc Nation Sports International who represent Lukaku, demanded late on Tuesday an apology from Juve for "hostile and disgusting racist abuse" the 29-year-old received from some home supporters "before, during and after the penalty".

Juve said they were working with police to "identify those responsible" while Serie A put out a statement condemning "all instances of racism" after yet another weekend featuring offensive chanting from supporters.



Lionel Messi, who returned to Paris Saint-Germain training yesterday ahead of their away fixture against Nice on Saturday, has the media busy speculating on whether he would move out of PSG next season. The Argentine was jeered by home fans in PSG's 1-0 defeat to Lyon in their last game on Monday, leading to French World Cup-winner Emmanuel Petit advising Messi to "get out" of the Parisian club, while compatriot Thierry Henry said, "Messi should return to Barcelona and finish his career there."

PHOTO: TWITTER