

Trott laments bowling effort

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan head coach Jonathan Trott rued the wayward bowling effort from his side, which allowed Bangladesh to be at the drivers' seat at the end of the first day of the one-off Test in Mirpur yesterday.

Afghanistan bowlers gave away too many extras, including 15 no balls, one of which gave Najmul Hossain Shanto a reprieve when he was on 143.

"I don't think we bowled as well as we should have. I think there's a bit in the wicket. We saw that when we got the ball in the right areas consistently for long enough, we created chances. All the things we need to do well in Test cricket, to do things relentlessly and to be accurate and precise. It was a good lesson for the guys," Trott told a post-day press conference.

Trott, however, was looking to turn things around on Day 2.

"Get five wickets for 10 runs, and then get 500. It would be nice (to get them bowled out before Lunch). We have the new ball again in one over. Then hopefully Nijat and the seamers can bowl well tomorrow. The guys learned about the extreme heat today," the Englishman said.



Najmul Hossain Shanto (L) raises his bat as Mahmudul Hasan Joy looks on during the opening day of the one-off Test against Afghanistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The two batters put on a 212-run second-wicket stand before (bottom) an unbeaten 72-run stand between Mushfiquir Rahim and Mehedi Hasan Miraz for the sixth wicket made sure the hosts ended the day on top.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers to begin new WTC cycle against Kiwis

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia will begin their ICC World Test Championship (WTC) defence with a five-match Ashes series against England after winning the second edition with an emphatic 209-run victory over India in the final at The Oval.

Meanwhile, the 2023-2025 WTC cycle will see Bangladesh play six series, three at home and three away from home.

All of Bangladesh's matches in the third cycle of the WTC will be two-match series. India, Australia and England will play five-match series while Pakistan, the West Indies New Zealand, India, England and Australia will play three-match series.

Bangladesh will host New Zealand, South Africa and Sri Lanka before travelling to assignments against India, the West Indies and Pakistan.

The Tigers will begin the new WTC cycle in November-December when they host New Zealand.

Bangladesh were able to win just one from 12 matches in the last cycle, finishing bottom of the table with 16 points. But it was still an improvement on the maiden WTC cycle, when the Tigers were unable to at all.

New Zealand won the first WTC before Australia clinched the last one. India finished runners-up on both occasions.

Shanto identified 'what needs to be done'

SPORTS REPORTER

"No, I am happy with whatever I have done," a nonchalant Najmul Hossain Shanto said at yesterday's press conference when asked if he was feeling the pangs of missing out on what could very well have been an even bigger innings. The question placed by the media about there being some sort of 'disappointment' stemmed from the ease with which Shanto asserted himself against Afghanistan yesterday.

The drives, flicks and pulls in front of square all came out during a mammoth innings of 146. Only the way his innings ended, holed out at deep mid-wicket trying to go for a big shot, could be termed as disappointing. However, there was nothing disappointing about the way Shanto has been answering his critics recently.

Since the start of the year, he has averaged over 50 in all three formats and came up with important knocks in the England T20Is at home during a 3-0 clean sweep. He clinched his maiden ODI ton in a sumptuous chase against Ireland in England just recently. Form-wise, he is Bangladesh's best batter and in the one-off Test, the challenge was to overcome heat, exhaustion and keep grinding for bigger knocks.

He defeated those first two challenges and made it look easy even though he himself did not feel so. He denied the insinuation as clearly as he dispatched some of the Afghanistan bowlers to the boundary yesterday. He talked about batting to a clear plan and on the field, it showed in the clarity of his strokeplay.



SCORES IN BRIEF
Bangladesh vs Afghanistan
Only Test, Day 1
Bangladesh: 362 for five in 79 overs (Shanto 146, Joy 76; Miraz 43 not out, Mushfiquir 41 not out; Masood 2-67, Hamza 1-85)

"No, I didn't feel it was easy out there. I tried to execute according to the plan I was batting to. I had a clear mind about what I needed to do. Maybe it seemed easy to you, but from the beginning I faced difficulties," he said.

Having been deemed unfit for the national team by a large portion of fans for so long, Shanto assumed that his hard work and belief that was born from hours

in the nets were paying off.

"There is no difference [between the bad times and the good times], I always believed in my practice pattern and hard work and identifying what needed to be done. I had the belief that I was going in the right direction and I was giving effort in practice. When you are not scoring, a bad feeling comes about, but I didn't overthink, or worry about the outcomes. It's very true for me. I didn't focus on the negatives. The main thing was focusing on where I was lacking. I didn't get results then, but now it is coming and I would like to continue," he said.

Shanto had paced himself for a flowing knock from the off. His intent and aggression also took the greenish pitch out of the visitors' minds. Afghanistan's bowlers may have lacked discipline, but Shanto argued that he has not faced a weak opposition in international cricket till now.

"Whatever international cricket I have played, no opposition felt weak. It was difficult to score against every side," he said when it was suggested the Afghanistan attack appeared weak compared to current international standards. "Their spinners bowled some good overs. All the credit goes to our batters for the way they negotiated the spinners."

It was Shanto's maiden ton on home soil and, if there was any disappointment, it is Shanto himself who has to work things out. "It's true the innings could have been bigger and when an opportunity comes, I will look to make such innings even bigger," he said.

Cabrera looks for 'perfect preparation'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera will make his last attempt to figure out the right combination and fine-tune playing eleven before the upcoming SAFF Championship when his charges take on hosts Cambodia in Phnom Penh today.

The FIFA friendly match will get underway at 6:00pm BST.

"We are getting ready for the SAFF Championship here. We know we have tough competition tomorrow (today) but we are excited because it's going to be a great atmosphere against the quality of Cambodia. It will be a perfect preparation for us," Cabrera told reporters at a pre-match conference yesterday.

The Spaniard added that his charges would play the same way as they did against Cambodia last September, where a Rakib Hossain strike separated the two sides in a FIFA friendly encounter.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan echoed his coach's sentiment, saying, "Our main target is the SAFF Championship. We played a warm-up match against a local team, which was a good test for us but tomorrow (today) is the main test. I'm sure it will be a good match because Cambodia have some quality players. We are looking forward to the match."

Cabrera will now have more options to assess as defenders Bishwanath Ghosh and Isa Faisal joined the squad after the first warm-up match. The 37-year-old Spaniard will definitely want to stabilise his backline through today's match.



Australia coach wants to stop Messi

AFP, Beijing

Australia said Wednesday they have maximum respect for Lionel Messi but will do everything they can to stop him when they meet Argentina in a Beijing friendly.

The two sides clash in the Chinese capital on Thursday in a re-run of their last-16 clash at the World Cup, where skipper Messi scored and terrorised the Socceroos in a 2-1 win. Messi and Argentina went on to win the World Cup.

"Regarding Lionel Messi, how could you not respect someone who's done what he's done in football?" Australia coach Graham Arnold told reporters at the 68,000-capacity Workers' Stadium.

"Of course we respect him, but at the same time we're looking to stop him and make sure our focus is on our performance, make sure that we get out there and play right, and put in a great performance against the world champions."

The 35-year-old Messi said last week that he will join MLS side Inter Miami following the end of his two-year deal with Paris Saint-Germain.

Tickets for Thursday's game have sold out rapidly despite soaring prices, with Chinese fans desperate to see Messi in the flesh.

What went wrong with India second time around?

ASRAR CHOWDHURY

When India won the toss and chose to bowl in the final of the World Test Championship against Australia at the Oval in London on June 7, it was the right decision at the right moment. Australia would have done the same. At Stumps on Day 1, with Australia at 327/3, the familiar question started to ring bells: are India going to lose another ICC knockout? In hindsight, the answer is now known.

India did not reach the two Test finals in 2021 and 2023 on fluke. They reached on merit. They defeated Australia, England and South Africa in their backyards. They made comebacks to make their supporters and opponents know that they are no pushovers.

The IPL was not a contributing factor. In 2023 India did not have time to adapt in between the IPL and the Test final. In 2021, they had sufficient time to adapt. Yet they lost in both finals.

What went wrong with India?

The scorecards of the two finals

show an interesting pattern. It was almost the same team, both times around. Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gil, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Shami were in both the finals.

India's first problem was that their top-order failed to give their bowlers something to defend in both the finals.

India's second innings collapses is where they went wrong. In 2021, India lost Kohli at 3/71. The team was bundled out for 170 and lost the final. In 2023, India lost Pujara at 3/93 going into stumps on Day 4 at 164/3. The final morning is history. Another second

innings collapse and another loss in the final.

Did India start Day 5 with a wrong approach? Yes and No.

The pitch was still good for batting. India's run-rate was not that bad. It was possible to chase the target. This is where India probably got it wrong. They set out to chase the target.

Day 5 was in India's hand. India needed to bide time and take the

game deep. The deeper India could have gone, the more a draw would have become possible. The trophy could have been shared between India and Australia. An ICC trophy has been shared in the past. The 2002 Champions Trophy was shared between India and Sri Lanka.

By chasing, India committed the cardinal sin of Test cricket. India let Australia breathe. Once Australia can breathe in a Test, Australia will make a comeback.

What can India do now?

India need to go back to the Ranji Trophy. That is where all their greatest Tests players have come from. India need to seriously explore why they collapsed on the second innings in both the finals.

The month of June cannot be accepted as a reason. India last won an ICC Trophy on June 24, 2013, defeating England in the Champions Trophy in England and Wales. India also first won an ICC Trophy on June 25, 1983, when Kapil's Devils conquered the West Indies, again in England and Wales.

A nation's glory in sport lies in its silverware. India will soon enter a second decade with no new silverware. It is time for India to ask, what goes wrong?



Organisers and participants pose for a photograph after an event titled 'Celebrating 10 years of Goal in Bangladesh' at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. Goal, a flagship programme within Futuremakers by Standard Chartered, teaches life-skills based on education through sports for the low-income girls within the age bracket of 12-18 years and enhances their confidence, communication and leadership quality. In Bangladesh, approximately 50,000 adolescent girls have been reached in the last 10 years and Goal aims to empower and equip them with knowledge and skills they need to be integral economic leaders in their families, communities and societies.

PHOTO: STAR