

## 'I believed that I would bowl the perfect yorker'

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite not being in the running for the final, Bangladesh ended their Asia Cup on a high by beating India in a tight Super Four game in Colombo's R Premadasa Stadium yesterday. After Shakib Al Hasan's 80 rebuilt the innings, the Tigers needed to overcome a compact Shubman Gill ton as some pride was restored. Youngster Tanzim Hasan Sakib, making his debut, got the new ball talking in a way which should keep selectors on their toes while his cool effort in the final over ensured a six-run win - Tigers' second in the Asia Cup history against India.

Earlier, skipper Shakib and Tawhid Hridoy's 101-run fifth-wicket stand, turned things around after early collapse. Nasum Ahmed and Sheikh Mahedi made important contributions with the bat in the lower middle-order as the score climbed to 265.

On his debut, the 20-year-old Sakib, removed Rohit Sharma in just the second delivery of the innings. Even the confident and in-form Gill had to persevere during Sakib's spell. In his next over, Sakib took the top of Tilak Varma's off-stump with one that moved in after pitching, with the batter leaving the delivery alone only to find himself



Bangladesh pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib made a promising ODI debut, providing the Tigers two early breakthroughs in their final Asia Cup Super Four game against India in Colombo yesterday. With India already through to the final and Bangladesh out of the competition, the game was a dead rubber but Sakib's exuberant bowling display eventually helped Bangladesh to a six-run victory. [Bottom] Earlier, skipper Shakib Al Hasan scored an 85-ball 80 as Bangladesh posted 265 for eight.

PHOTO: AFP

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh:** 265 for eight in 50 overs (Shakib 80, Hridoy 54, Nasum 44; Thakur 3-65, Shami 2-32)

**India:** 259 all out in 49.5 overs (Gill 121, Patel 43; Mustafizur 3-50, Tanzim 2-32, Mahedi 2-50)

**Result:** Bangladesh won by six runs  
**Player-of-the-match:** Shakib Al Hasan

castled. The youngster bowled six overs on the trot with the new ball, giving away just 15 runs.

"Rohit bhai was my dream wicket, my debut wicket. I just concentrated on line and length and maintained it and that's how I got the early success. I am always prepared for bowling longer spells when my team needs me. I am always ready to bowl," he said at the post-match ceremony.

Despite being taken for 12 runs in the 39th over by Gill, Sakib was entrusted to bowl the last over with India requiring 12. He mixed his deliveries and then bowled a yorker in the penultimate delivery where a run-out secured the win.

"That ball, I was once again thinking of the bowlers but it was very tight with two balls and eight runs. So I went for the yorker. I believed that I would bowl the perfect yorker and that's what happened," Sakib added on his death over bowling performance.

It was not just Sakib but also Mustafizur Rahman's death bowling that came to the Tigers' rescue. The left-arm paceman saw the back of dangerous Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel, bagging three for 50 in eight overs.

Yet, with just two pacers in the armoury, the Tigers' spin attack had to do the bulk of the bowling. Shakib himself was economical and effective, also bagging Suryakumar Yadav's scalp while Mahedi and Mehedi Hasan Miraz took crucial wickets.

"After the last couple of games here, we thought spinners will do well," Shakib said after the match.

Mahedi had given the important breakthrough earlier with KL Rahul's wicket before his death over efforts kept things tight while also removing Gill after a 133-ball 122 that really put the pressure on India. With the World Cup to come, the win should serve as a morale-boosting one.

"A lot of players are injured and some going in and out, that didn't help us. I think we will be a dangerous side in the World Cup," Shakib said.

## Shakib shows avenue for better batting plan

SPORTS REPORTER

When Shakib Al Hasan came to the crease yesterday in the fourth over, the top-order was once again struggling; this time at 15 for two. Shakib may not have found the hundred he would have been desperate to get, but during a crucial 101-run stand with Tawhid Hridoy, he batted to a plan to bring much-needed respite for Bangladesh in their Asia Cup Super Four fixture against India in Colombo.

After missing out on a single, the stump mic caught him telling Hridoy, "You know how much further we have to go?" It was a reminder of the task ahead. And as the only veteran in the playing eleven, it was much needed.

Judging from his remarks before the game, he was acutely asking his players to take up their end of the bargain. He demonstrated how he does his bit. "Here experience or inexperience or new and old doesn't come into the equation," he had said. It was the scenario the Tigers' veterans and youngsters have to play if the team are to find rhythm at the upcoming World Cup.

With Anamul Haque Bijoy once again failing to impress and Mehedi Miraz departing soon after, the Tigers' batting recovery hinged on Shakib and Hridoy's partnership.

Shakib, was comfortable in shot-making from the onset but impatience was showing as well. He had to gradually settle down with wickets falling around him. It had been 36 innings since his last ODI ton; in fact, he has not reached three figures in any format since his blistering 124 not out against the Windies at the 2019 World Cup.

But as he has shown many times, he often does not worry about the numbers as long as he is contributing. He has scored fifty 11 times, crossing 90 twice since that ton against Windies. The unbeaten 96 against Zimbabwe was the closest he got to a hundred since then.

When he came on, it felt like he needed some luck

on his side to play a bigger innings. He had got going against Pakistan in this Asia Cup too, but did not make enough to really make an impact. This time against India, despite it being a dead rubber, Shakib needed some confidence to carry to the World Cup. It is after all, his individual responsibility to shine with the bat at the World Cup.

That rub of the green came in the 19th over, when off-spinner Tilak Varma troubled him and got the outside edge but only for KL Rahul to drop a difficult chance behind the stumps.

Shakib would then get the wake-up call. With the spinners introduced, he found negotiating Varma difficult. But when India wanted to squeeze the run-rate, Shakib had finally found his preferred matchups in Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja.

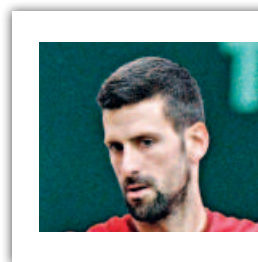
While risks could not assure favourable results with a lot of rebuilding to do, Shakib and Hridoy were calculative. Thus, Hridoy went after Varma, the right-arm off-spinner, hitting two sixes in the 23rd over. Shakib picked the cue for acceleration and hit Patel for two through mid-wicket.

As spinners were trying to go through their overs fast, Shakib faced 20 deliveries from Patel, hitting 27 runs and picking 22 from the 17 deliveries he faced against Jadeja. Hridoy had taken Varma for 15 off the nine he faced against his favourite matchup. When it looked assured that Shakib would convert the 80 to a ton, he fell to a careless shot, at a time the team needed a bigger contribution from him. Hridoy's fifty would ensure at least 200 on the board before Nasum Ahmed and Mahedi Hasan finished well.

Despite the lacklustre state of the batting department, some nuance shown by the skipper and others after yet another top-order struggle should set the Tigers on a better plan for their batting department.



## Djokovic looking forward to Paris Olympics



REUTERS, Valencia

Chasing an elusive Olympic gold medal will be one of Novak Djokovic's main goals for next season even though the 24-times Grand Slam champion knows he will have to be physically and mentally

ready to cope with a crammed schedule.

Djokovic won bronze in Beijing 2008 and fell short in London 2012, Rio 2016 and Tokyo two years ago, but the Serbian who will turn 37 before the next Games begin is still fighting to be fit after claiming three Grand Slam titles in 2023.

The world number one also made the Wimbledon final earlier this year, where he was beaten in five sets by Carlos Alcaraz, and he is in no mood to slow down.

"My plan for now is to play the Olympic Games, so I'm hoping that I will be able to play, that I will be ready physically and mentally," Djokovic told reporters in Valencia, where he turned up to play in the Davis Cup just days after his U.S. Open triumph.

"It's going to be a very congested and challenging schedule next year, with Roland Garros on clay, Wimbledon on grass, the Olympics on clay and then the U.S. Open and the tournaments before that on hardcourts.

"It's going to be challenging for players, but my plan is to play the Olympics, because it's one of the most important events in the history of the sport. That's where you also represent the country and the feeling of being part of it is a huge honour."

Djokovic missed Serbia's 3-0 victory over South Korea in the Finals group stage this week as he was travelling, but is likely to feature against a Spain side missing Alcaraz on Friday.



South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen leaps into the air after reaching 100 off just 57 deliveries during their fourth ODI against Australia in Centurion yesterday. The wicketkeeper-batter did not stop there as he went on to smash an 83-ball 174 during a whirlwind of an innings that saw 13 fours and as many maximums and helped South Africa post 416 for five -- their third highest in ODIs. His 94-ball 222-run fifth-wicket stand with David Miller, who remained unbeaten on 82 off just 45 deliveries, is now the fastest double-century stand in the format.

PHOTO: AFP

## Zampa's day to forget

STAR SPORTS DESK

Adam Zampa became part of an unwelcome record yesterday as the Australia leg-spinner equalled the most expensive figures bowled in ODI cricket history.

At the SuperSport Park in Centurion, after being pummelled by South Africa's middle-order batters Heinrich Klaasen and David Miller, Zampa conceded 113 runs from his 10 overs - equalling the figures of compatriot Michael Llewellyn Lewis, who was taken apart by the same opponents in 2008.

Zampa became one of 16 bowlers to concede more than 100 runs in an ODI as the Proteas amassed a mammoth 416 for five. Australia, in reply, were bowled out for 252 in 34.5 overs.

## Verstappen hits back at Mercedes boss

REUTERS, Singapore

Max Verstappen hit back at Mercedes Formula One team boss Toto Wolff on Thursday after the Austrian said the Red Bull driver's record run of 10 wins in a row was irrelevant and just for Wikipedia.

Wolff made his comments after this month's Italian Grand Prix, where Mercedes were beaten by both Ferraris as well as the two Red Bulls.

Asked at the Singapore Grand Prix for his reaction, Verstappen said he was not disappointed. "They had a pretty shit race, so probably he was still pissed off with their performance," the 25-year-old Dutch driver told a news conference ahead of a race that could bring his team a 16th successive victory.

"He almost sounds like he's an employee of our team sometimes, but luckily not."

Verstappen, who is 145 points clear of team mate Sergio Perez in the championship and set for a third title well before the end of the season, suggested Wolff should focus on his own team.

"That's what we did in the past as well, when we were behind them and when they were dominating," he said.

"I think you should be able to appreciate when a team is doing really well. Which I think we've done in the past, because it worked also as a kind of inspiration. To see someone that dominant, it was very impressive at the time."