

## Does Liton also need better communication?

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

Both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka captains attended yesterday's press conferences following the latter's 328-run win in the first of two Tests in Sylhet, and while they discussed Liton Das and Sadeera Samarawickrama, respectively, it highlighted the cultural gap in how the two teams handle their struggling players.

Because, after all, good management is a requirement to extract performances from players, not just sweet words. A clear message is given through words coming from selectors, team management and the captain before it is shown with action.

In Samarawickrama's case, he had enjoyed a purple patch with his white-ball performances in two major tournaments last year: Asia Cup and World Cup. His recent form, however, especially in the ODIs, was a cause for concern among Sri Lankan team management. Test skipper Dhananjaya de Silva spoke openly about what they were thinking of the player's exclusion from the first Test, where Kamindu Mendis took full advantage of playing his first Test appearance since 2022, hitting tons in each innings.

"Sadeera, he's been given opportunities as well but I don't think he's made the most of them as of late. On top of that, in the ODIs he didn't score that many, so the thinking was to give him a break. He hasn't been dropped," Dhananjaya said.

The message would be clear to Sadeera, if it was not already, that he would have to work on his flaws and "refresh his mindset" to get back in touch.

"The plan is for him to work on his flaws and then give him a chance to come back into the team. That will also refresh his mindset. More than that, Kamindu has been in very good form so the idea was to get the most out of him," added the player of the match.

On the other hand, the manner of Liton Das' dismissal on Sunday – as he charged Vishwa Fernando in the very first delivery of his innings, while the ball was still new, but only to play across the line, leading to his downfall – had caused an uproar among fans and the media.

In Liton's case, though, he had just been given one 50-over match worth of break before he came to play the Test series. Form is form, but cricket, however, is cricket. If someone is not doing well in one format, the chances of him regaining mojo in the other could be a difficult prospect in the rigours of international cricket.

Liton has a history of losing concentration, while his temperament has been difficult to fathom recently. If he has some issue to sort out, the team management knows it better than anyone else. If there is a message to be sent, it has to be concrete too.

"When he didn't play the last ODI, we were thinking of giving him a break. He is an important player for us. One of our best batters. He hasn't had a great time lately but we should be with him during this time," came Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto's reply on Liton.

Najmul's remarks reveal a key difference in culture. While Samarawickrama is being asked to correct something while still being with the squad, Liton would work with a batting coach outside the national camp.

If the objective is to see Liton return to form, it should also be discussed where he can start. The mindset aspect should have been communicated clearly. Dropped from the last ODI, confidence may already have been shaky. If he needs a proper break, in order to "refresh his mindset", it should not be because of formats only, but because he is performing to expectations.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh tail-ender Khaled Ahmed (R) walks back to the pavilion as Sri Lanka pacer Kasun Rajitha (2nd from R) celebrates one of his five wickets in the second innings of the first Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. (Bottom) Mominul Haque's unbeaten 87 was the only positive in an otherwise insipid performance from the hosts, who lost the match by 328 runs.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

#### SRI LANKA

First innings 280 all out in 68 overs and second innings 418 all out in 110.4 overs (Kamindu 164, de Silva 108, Karunaratne 52; Miraz 4-74, Tajul 2-75, Rana 2-128)

#### BANGLADESH

First innings 188 all out in 51.3 overs and second innings 182 all out 49.2 overs (Mominul 87; Miraz 33; Rajitha 5-56, Fernando 3-36, Kumara 2-39)

Result: Bangladesh lost by 328 runs

#### PLAYER OF THE MATCH

Dhananjaya de Silva

- Sri Lanka's 328-run win ranks second in their list of largest victories by runs in the format.
- This is the third instance where Sri Lanka pacers have accounted for all 20 wickets in a Test match.
- It is also the third time that pacers of an away side have taken all of the 20 wickets in Bangladesh.

## Batters forced back to 'LEARNING' PHASE

SPORTS REPORTER

The fourth day of the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Sylhet on Monday was just about completing mere formality – at least that's what was ensured by the recklessness portrayed by Bangladesh batters the previous day.

Sri Lanka needed just five wickets while the Tigers were still 464 runs behind a daunting target of 511. Bangladesh eventually could only manage 182 in 49.2 overs in their second innings, succumbing to a massive 328-run defeat.

While the materialisation of the inevitable outcome seemed only a matter of time, the way the surface later aided batting should have made Bangladesh batters realise how badly they had thrown the game away without even showing any intention to put up a fight.

Overnight batter Mominul Haque reached his 17th fifty in the format, remaining unbeaten on a 148-ball 87. The left-hander looked swift, comfortable and in control almost the entire time he batted yesterday, smashing 12 boundaries and a maximum altogether. He played cover drives off pacers Kasun

Rajitha, Vishwa Fernando, and even used his feet against Lahiru Kumara – all three of whom who seemed unplayable to Bangladesh's top-order.

Even Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who scored a 50-ball 33 and had a 66-run seventh-wicket stand with



Mominul, played with ease till he nicked one back to the slip cordon off a Rajitha delivery.

The demons of a greenish Sylhet surface that terrified the Tigers' batters to the point of forcing them to throw their wickets away when the cherry was new and shiny,

perished eventually as the day progressed as it was supposed to.

But only the Sri Lankans seemed to have been aware of this widely common phenomenon of Test cricket as their batters Dhananjaya de Silva and Kamindu Mendis struck centuries in both innings while Bangladesh batters repeated their buffoonery.

"In both the innings, the top-order failed. It's not that only we suffered. The top-order of both sides struggled in the game. However, this can't be an excuse," Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said after the day's play in Sylhet yesterday.

It is true that the Sylhet surface had enough in store for bowlers early in the innings that the top-order of both sides struggled. But the difference was that Sri Lanka batters had the temperament to capitalise and play their natural game when things slowly swayed to the batters' favour.

Bangladesh skipper Shanto was on the money to say that, if thought carefully, they will have a "lot to learn" from this Test. There is probably nothing better to do after surviving a total of just 100.5 overs the entire Test.

## First win for Brothers, first loss for Rupganj

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union opened their account in the Dhaka Premier League, beating Gazi Tyres by two wickets in their fifth round match at BKSP Ground three yesterday. On the other hand, Legends of Rupganj fell to their first defeat of the season, losing against Mohammedan Sporting Club by six wickets.

Gazi Tyres posted 229-5 following Ashraf Alam's 69 and Iftekhar Sajjad's 47. Rahmanullah Ali picked up three wickets for Brothers.

In reply, Brothers reached the target in 41.2 overs with two wickets in hand on the back of Mahmudul Hasan's unbeaten 56. Imtiaz Hossain's 39 at the top and Rahatul Ferdous' 32 were the other notable contributions for the Gopibagh outfit.

At Fatullah's Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium, Legends of Rupganj were bowled out for 178 despite an 80-ball 59 from Shamim Hossain and a 21 from Mashrafe Bin Mortaza.

Left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed and Asif Hossain picked up three wickets apiece for 30 runs. Rony Talukdar's unbeaten 114-ball 92 and Mahidul Islam Ankon's 59 helped MSC chase down 179 in 41.4 overs with six wickets in hand.

Shinepukur Cricket Club notched their third win, beating Partex Sporting Club by 128 runs at BKSP-4.

Khalid Hasan's 85 and Irfan Shukkur's unbeaten 48-ball 66 saw Shinepukur reach 257 for 9. Zahiduzzaman Khan hit a team-high 53 but Partex were bundled out for 129.

Hasan Murad grabbed three wickets while Jawad Royen picked up three wickets as Shinepukur eased to a 128-run victory.

## Wounded Bangladesh up against Palestine again

SPORTS REPORTER

Smarting from a 5-0 drubbing at the hands of Palestine in Kuwait, Bangladesh are hoping against hope to secure some points in their home leg match of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers against the same opponents at the Bashundhara Kings Arena today.

The match will kick off at 3:30 pm and T Sports will telecast the match live.

On March 21, Bangladesh suffered their biggest ever defeat against Palestine which was also their sixth straight loss against the opponents after the first meeting between the two sides had ended in a 1-1 draw in 2006 in the AFC Challenge Cup in Dhaka.

Bangladesh had managed to keep a clean sheet till the 42nd minute of the match but conceded twice in space of four minutes to go into half-time trailing 2-0.

Coach Javier Cabrera's charges couldn't keep up in the second half against the technically and physically superior Palestine team, who are ranked 97th in the FIFA rankings, and conceded three more goals without giving any back.

"We need to think forward and that's why we can't be negative. We need to be realistic and responsible. We lost 5-0 but we can do better [today]," Cabrera told the reporters at a pre-match conference at the Kings Arena yesterday.

The Men in Red and Green are yet to suffer a defeat at the Kings Arena, having drawn twice against Afghanistan, once against Lebanon

and won against Maldives in the four international matches held at the venue so far.

Cabrera hoped that playing in front of the home crowd will inspire his charges to overcome the Palestinians.

"We know how important it is going to be for us to play in front of our people. We expect a very good atmosphere once again at the



Kings arena where we still remain unbeaten.

"The result of the first match was the disappointing for many people but also that there were many positives in the first half. We were able to compete at a very high level. Going through that experience, we now need to focus and adjust and give something good for people and hopefully get some points."

The match will be played on Bangladesh's Independence Day and captain Jamal Bhuiyan wanted

to do something special against Palestine to mark the day.

"It is a special day for Bangladeshi people and we want to give a gift to them. Of course, we want to win it," said Jamal.

Since their first encounter in 2006, Palestine have taken on Bangladesh in Bangladesh twice more in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup and handed the home side identical



2-0 defeats on both occasions.

Palestine coach Makram Daboub said that they are here to earn three more points against Bangladesh and take another step in fulfilling their goal of securing a berth in the third round.

"Coming here to play against an improving Bangladesh is not an easy job and this match will be a bit difficult. But we are here to win the match to secure three points because our goal is to qualify for the third round of World Cup Qualifiers."

## Spain brace for Brazil at Bernabeu

AGENCIES

The iconic Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid will host a mouth watering FIFA friendly as five-time world champions Brazil take on Spain tonight.

Spain come into the contest on the back of a shock 1-0 defeat against Colombia in London as they ramp up preparations for the European championships in June, while Brazil, who have two more friendlies against Mexico and USA before beginning the Copa America on June 25, are fresh off a 1-0 win over England at Wembley on Saturday.

This will be Spain's first clash with Brazil since the Confederations Cup in 2013, when the South Americans ran out 3-0 winners, while the last friendly between the two nations finished 0-0 in November 1999. The two sides met nine times overall, with Brazil winning five of those fixtures against two by La Roja.

Brazil coach Dorival Jr couldn't have hoped for a better start as manager. The win put a stop to Selecao's three-match losing streak. Seven-year-old Endrick scored the winner in the 80th minute of the game.

প্রিমিয়ার ব্যাংক  
সেবাই প্রথম

অর্থনৈতিক সমৃদ্ধিতে  
স্বাধীনতার ৫৩ বছর

অর্থনৈতিক সমৃদ্ধির জন্য নিরলসভাবে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা। তাঁর সুদক্ষ নেতৃত্বের কারণে বাংলাদেশ আজ উন্নয়নশীল দেশের কাতারে। দেশকে উন্নয়নের পথে এগিয়ে নেওয়ার জন্য আপনাকে ধন্যবাদ। আর এই পথচলার অন্যতম সহযোগী হতে পেরে পবিত্র প্রিমিয়ার ব্যাংক।

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