

PLANNING, EXECUTION, PROCESS coming together for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Quite a few aspects like planning, execution, and process – things that Bangladesh players resort to while stating their expectations ahead of a game – came through in their thrilling two-wicket win over Sri Lanka at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Dallas yesterday.

While the bowlers largely took the stage in an impressive display to restrict the Lankans to 124, the batting unit, despite several hiccups, eventually stumbled over the finish line with an over to spare.

The Tigers deservedly have had to endure copious amounts of criticisms in their build-up to their tournament opener but appeared to have brushed it all aside come game time and produced a mighty impressive display, particularly while fielding in the first innings.

A switch seemed to have suddenly turned the Tigers on as they were aggressive in their approach while fielding and rarely put a foot wrong as a unit in the lion hunt in Dallas. Najmul Hossain Shanto's troops were buzzing like



PHOTO: AFP/BCB

bees from the onset and looked like a team hell-bent on pulling off a result in their favour.

PACERS SIZZLE

Bangladesh initially struggled to keep a lid on things despite getting the ball to beat the Lankan batters on several occasions. The Tigers conceded nine fours and a six as the Lankans raced off to 53 for two at the end of the Powerplay, with opener Pathum Nissanka in full groove. But Mustafizur Rahman used his expertise to great effect to dismiss the right-handed opener for a 28-ball

47 with a delivery angled across. That particular wicket pulled things back for the Tigers as it significantly slowed down the rate of scoring. Before that, he got the better off Kamindu Mendis in the Powerplay after Taskin Ahmed had sent back Kusal Mendis in the third over. The Fizz scalped another one at the death to cap off an impressive evening as he returned three for 17.

His pace partners Taskin and Tanzim Hasan Sakib also shone in different phases of play, with the former picking up two for 25 while Sakib showed masterful execution

at the death, nailing his yorkers as well as slowers to further merit his inclusion in the eleven.

X-FACTOR RISHAD

One of the aspects that stood out was the faith shown in leg spinner Rishad Hossain by the team management as well as the captain. He bowled one over in the first 10 and three in the next, including an over in the last five. The leggie is not known for turning the ball, but on the night, managed to give it a rip more than anyone else. The meters displayed that he extracted 3.6 degrees of turn – the most in that

regard in the tournament so far. The 21-year-old played to his strengths, relying on drift and accuracy and when he had the addition of the ability to turn the ball, Rishad turned the match on its head by dismissing Charith Asalanka and Wanindu Hasaranga in the same over, leaving the Lankans five down for 103 after 15. In his final over, the 17th of the innings, he bowled a ripper to outfox Dhananjaya de Silva.

LITON SHOWS COMPOSURE, AND HRIDOY UNLEASHES HIMSELF

A dismal Powerplay may have sent

jitters in the Tigers' camp but Liton Das stood tall. His tally, a 38-ball 36, might not reflect the gravity of the knock but it demands appreciation in the context of the game. The right-handed batter tackled Sri Lanka's Pandora's box with graceful ease and held up one end expertly in the chase in a 63-run stand with Towhid Hridoy, who smacked a 20-ball 40. Hridoy conjured up a tornado in the 12th over against Hasaranga as he powered three maximums to potentially seal the match for the Tigers as they required 34 off the last 48 balls. However, he left the job undone, perishing in the same over after which the match swung like a pendulum and turned into a thriller.

MAHMUDULLAH AT IT AGAIN

With the match still in the balance, Mahmudullah was gifted a juicy full toss by Dasun Shanaka in the penultimate over and the veteran batter responded promptly. He had to weather through a turbulent few overs, watching partners at the other end throw it away, and also rode his luck in a run-out situation but held his nerve and got the job done in the end.



A rare 'high-voltage' treat in store

AFP, QUEENS

At the cultural crossroads of the world, New Yorkers will experience a thrilling first on Sunday – a World Cup cricket match hosted in a US city between Asian powerhouses: rivals India and Pakistan.

However, roughly 10 miles from the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, a pop-up stadium at Eisenhower Park on Long Island, fans interviewed in the bustling Little India neighborhood of Queens said they won't be able to attend the game in person, as tickets on the resale market are going for at least \$800, with the 34,000 seats in the stadium sold out for months.

Beyond the Indian and Pakistani communities, the face-off is eagerly anticipated by immigrants from other South Asian countries where cricket is popular.

Many of the businesses and restaurants in Little India are run by Bangladeshis, many of whom lined up behind Pakistan, from which Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971.

"Even if I am not Indian, not Pakistani, I am going to watch it because this is a high-voltage match," said Faros Ahmed, a 58-year-old restaurant manager of Bangladeshi origin, who supports Pakistan and will broadcast the game for his customers.

Although both countries are cricket powerhouses, head-to-head matches are rare between the nations.

The two sides do not meet outside of official competitions of the ICC, the international cricket federation, and the last test match between them was in 2007.

Sunday's meeting is crucial for Pakistan,



who risk elimination in the first round after a surprising loss on Thursday to the United States, ranked 18th in the world.

New York-based Pakistani journalist Wajahat S. Khan said he had "never been more excited or terrified about a cricket match at the same time."

The US win over sixth-ranked Pakistan has boosted interest in cricket in the country, where the sport remains well outside the mainstream.

"India-Pakistan is the game everyone would like to watch, and... it's happening in our backyard," Ajith Shetty, president of two local cricket leagues, told AFP.

This first cricket World Cup hosted in the United States is in the T20 format. Beyond the month-long tournament, Shetty hopes it brings "better infrastructure" for players in the New York area.

In the past eight T20 World Cups, India and Pakistan have faced each other seven times, with India emerging victorious in five of those encounters. One match ended in a tie, which India won through a bowl out in the 2007 inaugural edition.

Overall, in 12 T20 Internationals, India have defeated Pakistan eight times.

Their most recent T20 meeting was at the 2022 T20 World Cup, which witnessed a memorable match-winning innings by Virat Kohli at the packed Melbourne Cricket Ground in Australia.

Alcaraz eyeing history against Zverev

AFP, PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz says he is hoping to join the long list of Spanish French Open champions when he bids to become the youngest man to win Grand Slam titles on all three surfaces in the final against Alexander Zverev on Sunday.

The 21-year-old defeated Novak Djokovic to win Wimbledon last year and also lifted the US Open trophy as a teenager in 2022.

Alcaraz downed incoming world number one Jannik Sinner in five sets in the semi-finals and will be a slight favourite against Zverev, who is still yet to win a Grand Slam tournament.

He is aiming to emulate his childhood hero and 14-time Roland Garros champion Rafael Nadal –



who won his first French Open when Alcaraz was only two years old – by lifting the trophy, as well as his coach Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Alcaraz has been widely tipped as one of the successors to the reigns of Nadal, Djokovic and Roger Federer at the top of men's tennis since he broke onto the scene as a teenager. He is comfortably living up to that mantle.

Sunday will see the first new winner of the title since Djokovic in 2016, and it will be the first showpiece match in Paris with two first-time finalists since Nadal won his maiden crown against Mariano Puerta in 2005.

RASHID HAILS 'one of the greatest performances'

REUTERS

Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan praised the team's collective display after they claimed an emphatic 84-run victory over New Zealand in the Twenty20 World Cup on Friday.

Openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (80) and Ibrahim Zadrou (44) combined for 103 runs to power Afghanistan to a total of 159, before Rashid and Fazalhaq Farooqi took four wickets apiece as New Zealand were skittled out for just 75.

"One of the greatest performances from us in T20I cricket against a big team. It is a great team effort," Rashid said after the win at the Providence Stadium in Guyana.

"Great win for Afghanistan and it is a privilege to be leading this side and winning against New Zealand... It started from the batting, with how Ibrahim and Gurbaz were running.

"We have to give 100% effort, losing or winning does not matter (to me). That is how we prepare. If we don't give 100%, we will be missing something. I don't care about the result a



lot but it is about the effort."

Gurbaz, named player of the match, echoed his captain's sentiment, adding: "Nothing is more special.

"We were waiting for this victory for three years. We finally beat them. The trust and the belief was there from the very start. We have the belief that we can beat any team on this surface."

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson admitted that his side had been outplayed "in all facets", but stressed that they could not afford to dwell on the result.

"To get a total like that on a fiddly surface, they kept wickets in hand and played it beautifully," Williamson said.

"Not good enough from us. Quick turnaround, we have to regroup quickly and onto the next challenge. The boys were focussed and were working hard in preparation for this game but it was not our best performance."

New Zealand next face co-hosts West Indies on June 12, a day before Afghanistan take on Papua New Guinea.



Iga Swiatek was over the moon after extending her French Open reign yesterday, sealing a third successive clay court Grand Slam title, as the world No.1 thrashed Jasmine Paolini 6-2, 6-1 in the final which saw only 68 minutes of action at the Roland Garros Complex in Paris.

PHOTO: AFP