

Taskin makes instant impact ON COMEBACK

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh speedster Taskin Ahmed made an instant impact on his return to Test cricket after 14 months as he came up with a sensational bowling performance on the second day of the second Test against Pakistan in Rawalpindi yesterday.

Taskin finished with 3-57, helping his side bowl out the hosts for 274 runs in their first innings within a day after the game finally started on the Day 2 after the opening day's play got washed out.

Taskin had taken a break from the longer format earlier this year citing injury issues but after the end of the last ICC T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA, he changed his mind and made himself available for selection for the Pakistan Test series.

The selection panel also showed faith on the experienced pacer as they picked him for the second Test squad but before that, they wanted to see how Taskin fared in the longer version.



Bangladesh's Mehedi Hasan Miraz (C), Pakistan's chief tormentor in the first innings with a five-wicket haul, is all smiles after Taskin Ahmed (R) claimed the wicket of Saud Shakeel in the second session of the second day in the second Test in Rawalpindi yesterday. [Below] Miraz points at his figures of 5-61 in the honours board of the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

PHOTO: AFP/PCB

And for that, they played him in the second four-day match against Pakistan Shaeens where he bowled 15 overs and also dismissed Imam-ul-Haq in the first ball of his opening spell.

Similarly, the 29-year-old, who previously played 13 Tests since his debut in this format in 2017, tasted success almost immediately, going through the defences of Pakistani opener Abdullah Shafique with a splendid in swinger in the last ball of the first over of the game after Bangladesh chose to field first.

Taskin, who came in as a replacement

for the injured Shoriful Islam, set up Shafique brilliantly as he bowled his first five deliveries outside off, moving away from the batter, before finally pitching the ball on a good length and bringing it back sharply into the batter, hitting the top of stump.

"That wicket [Shafique's] was really enjoyable for me. First, I set him up with away moving ones and then in the last one I brought it back into him. That was intentional," Taskin told the reporters in the press meet after the end of the second day's play.

Taskin didn't get any more successes in his first spell where he bowled four overs but kept the pressure on Shan Masood and Saim Ayub, who went on to score fifties, and when he came back to bowl his next two spells, he carried on from where he had left off.

At one time, Saud Shakeel, the middle-order batter who scored a hundred in the opening Test, hit him for back-to-back boundaries. But Taskin had the last laugh, as he knocked over Shakeel's stumps in the same over to send him back to the pavilion.

Bangladesh kept taking wickets at regular intervals from the second session onwards. With Pakistan quickly running out of wickets, Salman Agha, the No.7 batter, decided to try and hit some boundaries against the second new ball and smashed Taskin for two sixes in consecutive overs.

Taskin, however, kept baiting Salman, who made 54, into going for big shots and eventually his plan worked as the batter mishit a pull shot and got caught at fine leg by Shakib Al Hasan and Mehedi Hasan Miraz soon wrapped up the innings by completing his 10th five-for in Tests.

"Overall, our bowling unit has done really well. We could have done better. I'm working on everything, as I have been playing for a long time, to adapt to the format quickly. It's my responsibility as an experienced and senior bowler.

"We have to bat really well. We have to come back well in the second innings. Nothing is over yet but it was a good day for us which could have been even better."

Sports adviser stresses on change in constitution of sports bodies

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Asif Mahmud Sajeeb Bhuiyan, the Adviser for Youth and Sports to the Interim Government, has pointed out several issues he has had to encounter since being sworn in for the role on August 8. Asif explained his take on the current issues and the solutions he intends to provide. He



Boomers undergo 'demanding' training in Thimphu

SPORTS REPORTER

One of the two concerns for Bangladesh football team ahead of their two FIFA friendly matches were the altitude in Thimphu, where the matches will be held on August 5 and 8.

Bangladesh initially wanted to host these matches at home, with an aim of improving their FIFA ranking ahead of the draw for the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers. However, in light of the current situation in the country, the Bhutan FA declined to send their team, instead desired to host Bangladesh for the two matches.

With Thimphu situated 2,400 metres above sea level, Bangladesh team needed to adjust to the conditions quickly, having landed in the Himalayan nation on Friday. With that aim in mind, Javier Cabrera took his charges for a two-hour hike to the Buddha Point and back, which the players said they enjoyed.

Defender Bishwanath Ghosh said it was a unique experience for him and he enjoyed the trip thoroughly.

"It was a new experience for me. I had never done hiking before," Bishwanath said in a video message sent by the BFF from Thimphu. "Initially it was bit laborious, but once we got into the groove and got to the highest point, it was easy."

Coach Cabrera said, "It was quite important for us to adapt to the altitude. So we felt hiking and activity was to be more demanding in terms of cardio work for the players to adapt better to the environment," said the Spaniard, further informing on-pitch training will begin today, leaving the team with four sessions before the first game to be played on artificial pitch of the Changlimithang Stadium.

Mizanur urges more 'A' team tours

Bangladesh 'A' team's long-awaited Pakistan tour ended abruptly on Friday after rain played spoilsport in the final one-day match. And despite the whole series -- consisting of two four-day encounters and three one-dayers -- was mostly hampered by rain in Islamabad, 'A' team head coach Mizanur Rahman Babul pointed out several positives from the tour to The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How do you evaluate the tour?

Mizanur Rahman Babul (MRB): If you play against teams like Pakistan or any other strong side, you will face top cricketers from the opposition... We have some weaknesses against pace bowling, but when you play against such teams, you must handle swing and reverse swing; not only from their regular bowlers but also from their net bowlers. It seems like they have mastered this art from birth. We can't get this experience in other places. So, I think this ['A' team tours] should be continued.

DS: This was Bangladesh 'A' teams first tour since 2022 in the West Indies. What has been the positives?

MRB: If you ask about the positive aspects, the national team players gained insights into the conditions before the start of the Test series [in Rawalpindi]. Mushfiq [ur Rahim] played in the first four-day match; although he didn't



get the chance to play the full game, he batted in one innings. Mominal [Haque] and Hasan Mahmud played as well. So, there were some advantages, as they could get an idea of the wicket by playing here; and against those pacers who have represented Pakistan at the national level.

DS: How do you rate the performance of Taskin, who played a first-class match after a long time?

MRB: We had planned to give him at least 14 to 15 overs to bowl in full rhythm. It's a good sign that he bowled really well here and with full effort. I think it will certainly help him in the Test series.

DS: Which players impressed you the most?

MRB: Jaker Ali [Anik] played a brilliant knock of 172. Saif [Hassan] also made a hundred [in the second four-dayer] and

played a good innings in the opening one-day match; his performance was significant among all batters.

DS: How do you see Tanzim Hasan Sakib as an all-format prospect for Bangladesh?

MRB: Sakib played brilliantly, too. He saved the opening four day contest for us by facing 70 balls for his unbeaten 11 runs... Whether it was four day or one-day cricket, his effort, line, and length were outstanding. I hope he will serve Bangladesh for a long time, as he has the ability, fitness, and mindset.

DS: How do you see the overall facilities in Pakistan?

MRB: Our preparation was interrupted due to the political situation in Bangladesh. When we arrived here, we had some facilities, but we couldn't use them due to rain. Players worked on their fitness in the hotel gym. There were no other training options for us during the series since only Lahore has indoor facility in Pakistan.

Root sets new ENGLAND RECORD

AFP, LONDON

Joe Root set an England record of 34 Test centuries when he reached three figures for the second time in the second Test against Sri Lanka at Lord's yester.

Root, who made 143 in the first innings to move level with the previous England record of 33 hundreds held by the retired Alastair Cook, went to a century on Saturday's third day when he cut Lahiru Kumara for the 10th four off 111 balls faced.

It meant Root surpassed his fellow former England captain's mark. It is Root's 145th Test compared to Cook's career tally of 161 matches.

He was last man out for 103 in England's second-innings total of 251 on the third day. Sri Lanka faced a mammoth target of 483 to level this three-match series at 1-1.

Root's seventh Test hundred at Lord's also gave him sole possession of the



record for the most Test centuries at the 'Home of Cricket' he had shared with the England duo of Graham Gooch and Michael Vaughan, who both managed six apiece.

Root also became the fourth batsman to have scored hundreds in both innings of a Test at Lord's, joining the West Indies' George Headley (1939), Gooch (1990) and Vaughan (2004).

Gooch's combined tally of 456 runs against India at Lord's in 1990, comprising innings of 333 and 123, remains a record for the most runs scored by a single batsman in any Test.

Root's latest century also moved him into joint-sixth place in an all-time list of Test century-makers headed by India great Sachin Tendulkar, who scored 51 hundreds in 200 Tests from 1989-2013.

The 33-year-old Root is the only batsman in this group who is still an active Test cricketer.

'OUT OF GAS'

Djokovic's Slam drought continues

AGENCIES

Defending champion Novak Djokovic admitted he had played "his worst tennis ever" as he slumped to his earliest exit at the US Open in 18 years yesterday, sparking more questions over his long-term future in the sport.

The 37-year-old Djokovic, a four-time champion in New York, lost 6-4, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 in the third round to 28th-ranked Alexei Popyrin of Australia. Djokovic paid a heavy price for failing to convert five break points in the sixth game of the opening set, ending

success," said a despondent Djokovic, who remains marooned on 24 Slam titles with Margaret Court. "I have played some of my worst tennis ever."

The only consolation for Djokovic in a frustrating year was winning Olympic gold in Paris earlier in August. That title -- the 99th of his career -- may turn out to be his last defining moment in the sun.

Djokovic admitted that the effort and aftermath of the feat impacted his lacklustre New York campaign.

"I spent a lot of energy winning the gold... but because it's the US Open, I gave it a shot... I didn't have any physical issues. I just felt out of gas."

"Life moves on," added the Serb. "I'll try and recalibrate and look for what's next."

At the Arthur Ashe Stadium, fans expected another drubbing, considering the former number one had already beaten Popyrin this year in the second round of the Australian Open and third round at Wimbledon. Popyrin, however, had other ideas.

"Today was something that I kind of thought I could do," Popyrin said.

"My two experiences against him earlier this year in the Australian Open and Wimbledon kind of gave me the confidence to go out there tonight and believe that I could win and actually do it and believe it."

"I've had the capability of winning a big match but not being able to back it up. So, when I did it, it kind of felt that kind of proved me right," he told reporters.

"Hopefully I can continue it this week because this is probably the biggest win of my career so far ranking-wise. To be in the fourth round of a Grand Slam by beating the greatest of all time is unbelievable."

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