

Ashwin’s T20 approach tips the scale against Tigers



PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS REPORTER

Ravichandran Ashwin emerged as Bangladesh’s chief tormentor on the opening day of the first Test in Chennai yesterday, catching the Tigers off guard with his counterattack and putting India in a position of strength heading into the second day.

Ashwin, a local lad, came to the crease in the second session when India were six down for just 144, and joined Ravindra Jadeja, Chennai’s adoptive son through his lengthy association with Chennai Super Kings.

The duo remained unbeaten for the rest of the day, adding 195 runs for the seventh wicket – the most ever at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, a venue that has been hosting Tests since 1934 – and pushed India’s total to 339-6.

Ashwin, who completed his sixth Test century and remained unbeaten on 102 off just 112 balls, said his recent stint with the Dindigul Dragons in the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL), a local T20 competition which ended in August, helped him figure out a way to score runs.

“It helps that I have come here at the back of a T20 tournament [TNPL], worked quite a bit on my batting,”

Ashwin said after the day’s play, referring to his recent stint with Dindigul, where he made 252 runs – the fifth-highest in the season – at a strike rate of 151.80.

The 38-year-old also said that playing positively was the best option to score on the surface.

“On a surface like this with a bit of spice, if you’re going after the ball, you might as well go after it really hard. It’s an old Chennai surface with a bit of bounce and carry. The red-soil pitch allows you to play a few shots if you are willing to just get in line and give it a bit of a tonk when there’s width.”

Ashwin also credited his partner Jadeja, who is unbeaten on 86 off 117 balls, for his support.

“He [Jadeja] was of real help. There was a point in time where I was really sweating and getting a bit tired, he noticed it quickly and guided me through that phase.”

Ashwin also believes that the surface still has enough in it for the pacers, and that spinners will come into play later in the match.

“The wicket will start doing its tricks much later in the game. There’s enough in it for the quicks – good carry, good bounce if we present the seam nice and hard.”



U-17s aim to overcome India challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

With the SAFF U-17 Championship title in their sights, Bangladesh are aiming for a strong start against a formidable India in the tournament opener at Changlimithang Stadium in Bhutan today. The match kicks off at 6:00pm (Bangladesh time).

A win against India would all but secure Bangladesh’s place in the semifinals from Group A, which also includes Maldives.

In their most recent meeting, during last year’s SAFF U-16 Championship, Bangladesh lost twice to India – once in the group stage and again in the final. This time, the Nazmul Huda Faisal-led side are eager to reverse the trend.

“We will try to give our best against a strong India and minimise mistakes, as the team that makes fewer mistakes will come out on top,” said Faisal at the pre-match press conference yesterday.

Head coach and technical director AKM Saiful Bari Titu wants to “show our quality against India”.

“Playing against India brings pressure, but we have prepared accordingly. The players have worked hard so that we can overcome the pressure, because our target is to get points and show our quality against India,” he said, adding that his charges would face difficulties due to the high altitude in Bhutan.

Hasan earns Chepauk’s admiration through simplicity

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Chennai*

When he arrived in Chennai for the first Test against India yesterday, Bangladesh pacer Hasan Mahmud’s Test career was three matches old. From an unknown entity to earning the appreciation of the proud cricket-loving fans of Chennai, Hasan has certainly created a mini ripple.

India had already regained the stronghold in the game by the time it was close to stumps on Day 1 at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, known simply as Chepauk to its cricket crazy locales, as Ravichandran Ashwin had just notched his sixth Test ton and Ravindra Jadeja was assertive at the crease in their rescue act. Yet, when Hasan stood at the ropes just in front of the press box side, the fans in the crowd cheered ‘Hasan! Hasan!’ as if they were calling one of their own hero.

The irregularity of the gesture – given that a number of fans in that crowd were donning the Indian team’s jersey with ‘Kohli’ printed on their backs – could only be unravelled by the meticulous spells Hasan put in during the day, bagging first four of the Indian wickets to fall.

Hasan left India skipper Rohit Sharma up in a knot a couple of deliveries early in his spell before he finally got the nick off his willow. The channel and the length he hit were precise from the beginning –



PHOTO: WALTON

SCORES IN BRIEF (DAY-1)

INDIA

First innings-339-6 in 80 overs (Jaiswal 56, Pant 39, Rahul 16, Jadeja 86 not out, Ashwin 102 not out; Hasan 4-58, Nahid 1-80, Miraz 1-77)

enticing enough for drives but not so full as to be played comfortably.

The movement off the seam was deliberate. Yashasvi Jaiswal, who applied himself staunchly, tried to walk across to negotiate Hasan’s movement and was the most successful batter during those first two sessions that Bangladesh dominated with pace.

Hasan would soon get Shubman Gill out for duck when the batter chased a delivery down the legside and edged one back to the wicketkeeper.

The usually composed Virat Kohli went

for a drive to find the edge as the ball zipped away. Rishab Pant, meanwhile, was late to his shot, not quite judging the length to get a faint outside edge through to the wicketkeeper.

None of Hasan’s four wickets were unforced errors, and the simplicity of his execution saw him do what he wanted.

Although India would recover, the skill that he possesses and the simplicity of execution was a point of discussion amongst Indian media.

Unwilling to celebrate his wickets, Hasan made no secret in mentioning that

his skill of moving the ball in or out is what kept the batters guessing.

“Since I use it, it’s my skill. I can do that and I try to do it better. Credit goes to those who worked hard on me. At the same time, it also happened through my own effort,” Hasan said at the press conference yesterday when his attention was drawn to both the indippers and the outswingers he managed.

Like he was singled out by the crowd at Chepauk, this skillset of Hasan could see the 24-year-old stand out among his peers as well.

India did fight back in the end through an unbroken 195-run seventh-wicket stand between Ashwin and Jadeja.

But Hasan finished the day at 58 for four, with the chance of being the first Bangladeshi bowler to claim a fiver in a Test in India still in the offing.

“My plan was very simple. I bowled to my strength with the new ball. I wanted to do what I do well and I got the results,” he said.

A simple plan sufficed for Hasan because he knew that he was in his element. “I was in my zone,” he had added on exploiting the conditions.

It indeed was quite a memorable day for Hasan, who was able to garner the attention of a cricket-crazy nation simply by being in his zone, and his smile at the presser certified it later in the day.

SHORT CORNER

Swadhin Bangla football team member Bimal Kar passes away



Bimal Kar, a member of Swadhin Bangla football team, passed away at a city hospital today. He was 83. Kar, who played Azad SC before joining the Swadhin Bangla football team during the liberation war and then played for Victoria SC after liberation, had also been involved with Chittagong Mohammedan SC and Chittagong Referees Association a few years back.

Bangladesh slip to 186 in FIFA rankings

Bangladesh have fallen two places to 186th in the FIFA rankings, the latest published on Thursday, while reigning world champions Argentina retain their top position despite a 2-1 defeat to Colombia.

Playing Nadal is ‘kind of a nightmare’: Alcaraz

Carlos Alcaraz has admitted to being starstruck when he first faced Rafael Nadal, saying that facing the 22-time Grand Slam champion was “kind of a nightmare”. Speaking in Berlin on Thursday ahead of the Laver Cup, the 21-year-old Alcaraz reflected on his on-court battles with fellow Spaniard Nadal.

Read full stories on The Daily Star’s website.

Guardiola, Inzaghi share points and sentiments

AGENCIES

Both Inter Milan manager Simone Inzaghi and Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola shared the same sentiment following a 0-0 draw to open their Champions League campaign on Wednesday night.

While Inzaghi said the Italian champions produced a “giant performance” to leave Manchester City frustrated, his counterpart Guardiola was more than happy with his players’ performance at the Etihad Stadium.

“I said ‘well done guys’ to my team in the dressing room. They put in a giant performance,” said Inzaghi following a game that had a lot of hype built up for it being a repeat of the 2023 final, won 1-0 by City.

But the game did little to set the pulses racing as Inzaghi also rued the missed opportunities that could have helped Inter inflict a first home European defeat in six years for Guardiola’s men.

“The players did really well, we knew the quality of our opponents, but we worked well and could have hurt them more in some situations.

“We did this and had some good chances too. I fell into a state of despair when Mkhitarian didn’t score,” Inzaghi added.

Henrikh Mkhitaryan had City fans breathing a huge sigh of relief when he missed a late chance, launching a rocket just over the bar from about



eight metres out, then holding his head in disbelief.

But it was Marcus Thuram who had the visitors’ best sight of goal in the first half and sidefooted wide from the edge of the box.

City have started the defence of their Premier League title in relentless fashion with four consecutive wins but failed to hit their stride as Inter comfortably held out.

The Italians caused problems with their defensive formation and attacked in numbers in what proved to be a tricky opening Champions League test.

“We faced a really, really difficult team, the champions from Italy,” said Guardiola.

“They are physical and they have [strength in] all departments.

“They build up from Sommer and Bastoni, playing on the transition. I am really satisfied for the game we played.

“They are masters of defending deep. They help each other unbelievably so you cannot expect to create a lot of chances. We created some chances.

“We played much better than two years ago in the final of the Champions League. I like everything from my team today. We would prefer to win but still seven games, see what happens.”

Erling Haaland, however, found Inter a far harder nut to crack than he has faced in scoring nine times in four Premier League games this season.



New Zealand batter Kane Williamson walks back to the pavilion after being dismissed by Sri Lanka off-spinner Dhananajaya de Silva in the final session on Day 2 of the first Test between the sides in Galle yesterday. Williamson hit four boundaries and a maximum for his 55-run knock and put together a 73-run stand with Tom Latham (70) to propel the visitors to 255 for four in reply to the Lankans’ 305-run first-innings total.

PHOTO: AFP