



Bowlers weighed down by batters' deadweight

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

Claiming that the second day of the Chennai Test between Bangladesh and India yesterday was almost evenly matched may seem absurd, but this notion is not totally out of place, at least in one department.

India ended the day on 81-3 in their second innings, extending their lead over Bangladesh to 308. Earlier in the day, the Indian bowlers bundled out the Tigers for just 149 in reply to their first innings score of 376, earning a 227-run lead for the hosts.

The match is now heavily tilted in favour of India, and it will take almost a miracle for Bangladesh to save themselves from a crushing defeat, which would be their fourth straight Test loss in Indian soil.

But even on a day when Bangladesh were seemingly overpowered by India, the Bangladesh bowlers put up a decent account for themselves, almost matching their counterparts in the bowling metrics.

Overall, the ball ruled over the bat at the MA Chidambaram Stadium yesterday, with a record 17 wickets falling in the day,

the most in a single day at the venue, which has been hosting Tests since 1934.

On Friday, Bangladesh pacers claimed four wickets with the new ball to close out India's first innings in the morning session. Taskin Ahmed claimed three wickets and Hasan Mahmud struck once to complete his second five-wicket haul in Tests.

The Tigers conceded just 37 runs for the four scalps, ensuring India didn't cross the 400 mark after resuming the day's play on 33-6.

The Indian attack, led by Jasprit Bumrah who took the highest four wickets, then laid waste to Bangladesh in just 47.1 overs.

After having bowled 91.2 overs in the first innings, the tired Bangladeshi bowlers had to return to the field, with slumped shoulders and all, after a break that barely lasted one and a half sessions.

The bowlers seemed a bit demoralised, understandably, after a shocking performance from the batters. But nevertheless, they soldiered on and got rewarded for their efforts, claiming three wickets in 23 overs, with Taskin, Nahid Rana and Mehedi Hasan Miraz claiming one wicket each.

Now, adding up the numbers from both innings, Bangladesh bowled a total of 34.2 overs on Day 2, conceded 118 runs for seven wickets.

Bangladesh's bowling average on the day was 16.86 and strike rate stood at 29.43.

Compared to that, the Indian bowling attack's average on the second day was 14.9 and strike rate was 28.3, both only slightly better than Bangladesh's.

Even though bowling wise both teams were almost evenly matched on Friday, the scoreboard shows that India are in a much stronger position in the match after the second day than they were at stumps on Day 1.

The biggest difference between the two sides so far in the match has been one partnership, the mammoth 199 run stand for the seventh wicket between Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja in the first innings.

India were six wickets down for just 144 when they got together on Thursday. The duo first rescued the hosts from a precarious position and then gradually put them in the driving seat of the match.

Although India's top-six failed to make it big in the first innings, they hung around for a while, with the sixth wicket falling in the 43rd over, softening up the ball which made things easier for Ashwin and Jadeja.

Bangladesh's top order, by comparison, could neither put up a big score nor play out too many deliveries, as they were six wickets down inside 29 overs in their first innings.

The frailties of the Bangladesh batting line-up were evident even during the series in Pakistan, which they won 2-0 last month, when they were 26-6 in the second Test before a rescue act from Liton and Miraz saved their blushes.

But the Indian attack is head and shoulders above the one they faced in Pakistan, and in their first trial, the Tigers have failed to show the grit to survive through a tough period against a quality attack.

The batters will get a chance at redemption in the second innings and without a change in application and a good hard look at the mirror, chances of a turnaround look slim at best.

Verstappen punished for swearing

AFP, Singapore

Formula One world champion Max Verstappen was on Friday punished for swearing in a Singapore Grand Prix press conference by governing body the FIA.

The Red Bull driver is now obliged "to accomplish some work of public interest", said a panel of FIA stewards, after the Dutch driver used the F-word in Thursday's drivers' press conference which was being broadcast live.

Verstappen was summoned to appear before stewards after the first practice session in Singapore on Friday and the audio transcript was reviewed.

Verstappen was deemed to have used language "which is generally considered 'coarse, rude' or may 'cause offence' and is not considered suitable for broadcast," read the stewards' decision.

The stewards noted that the language was not directed at anyone or any group... the driver explained that the word used is ordinary in speech as he learned it, English not being his native language," it continued.

"While the stewards accept that this may be true, it is important for role models to learn to be mindful when speaking in public forums, in particular when not under any particular pressure.

"Verstappen apologised for his behaviour."

The punishment comes just a day after drivers were asked to tone down their use of foul language over team radio during races.

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem told Autosport.com in an interview that motorsport was not "rap music" and drivers should mind their language, especially as children might be watching.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton did not like Ben Sulayem's comparison with rap music.

"I don't like how he's expressed it, saying 'rappers' is very stereotypical. And most rappers are black," said Hamilton. "That was the wrong choice of words. There's a racial element there."

Bangladesh lose to India in SAFF U-17 opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-17 team suffered a 1-0 defeat to India courtesy of a stoppage time goal in the tournament opener of the SAFF U17 Championship at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu, Bhutan yesterday.

Sumit Sharma headed home a well-directed chip from substitute Manbhakupar Malngiang in the stoppage time of the second half to give the defending champions a winning start. Bangladesh's fate in the tournament now depends on their second and final Group A match against the Maldives on Sunday.

India were on the offence for the majority of the first half, with Bangladesh content to hang back and ensure they do not concede an early goal.

The boys in red and green started cautiously while India dominated the proceedings early on. A few defense-splitting passes from the Indians exposed the Bangladesh backline at times, however, the defenders did well enough to cancel out the threats.

India created the first real chance to break the deadlock in the 15th minute when Samson Ahongshangbam's glancing header narrowly went wide, much to the relief of Bangladesh goalkeeper Nahidul Islam.



Bangladesh started making runs at the opposition half as the match progressed and looked dangerous in set pieces.

Nazmul Huda Faisal's low-drive from a scramble following a corner narrowly missed the target with a deflection of an Indian defender in the 26th minute.

Two minutes later, Mursheed Ali's curling free kick was fisted away by Indian goalkeeper Suraj Singh Aheibam.

After half-time, India played high-pressing football and created some good chances in the last 20 minutes. Bangladesh goalkeeper

Nahidul made a good save in the 75th minute and an Indian attempt rattled the Bangladesh crossbar in the next minute.

India made four changes at the 77th minute and the substitutes piled on more pressure which ended up being too much for Bangladesh to withstand in the end.

Substitutes Hemneichung Lunkim and Malngian's attempts went wide in the 80th and 85th minute respectively before Sumit separated both sides with a header inside the box two minutes into the five-minute added time.

Kompany, Alonso call for action on player workload

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Vincent Kompany and his Bayer Leverkusen counterpart Xabi Alonso on Friday joined the growing chorus calling for action on player workload, amid talks of strikes.

Kompany said a cap should be introduced on the amount of games a player can play each year, while Alonso said players must have greater involvement in decisions about the fixture calendar.

Concern about the load on players has grown in recent years, particularly as the number of fixtures has been increasing.

This year's Champions League adds fixtures while FIFA's expanded 32-team Club World Cup will take place this summer, a time when players would normally have a break from games.

Top clubs with European and domestic cup commitments could play up to 75 games this season.

At a press conference ahead of Saturday's trip to Werder Bremen, Kompany said that "it was already a theme during my (playing) career" and labelled it "a very important topic".

"To play 75, 80 games, it gets to a point where it's not realistic anymore," he said.

"The solution I've always wanted is to put a cap on the amount of games a player can play as an individual. Put a cap, put a compulsory period of holidays (for players)."

Rodri, the current midfield general of Manchester City where Kompany spent many years as a player, said on Tuesday the "general opinion of the players" was that "we are close to a strike".

"If it keeps going this way, there will be a time when there's no other option," the Spaniard added.

Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson and Real Madrid goalie Thibaut Courtois have made similar statements in recent days.

Speaking before Leverkusen host Wolfsburg in the league on Sunday, Alonso told reporters: "I understand Rodri and the other players."

"Professional players must be involved in these decisions because we

want to see good football."

"The schedule is very tight. They have to be heard."

Kompany has previously spoken out on the issue and was a member of the FIFPro players union during his time on the pitch, where he captained Manchester City and the Belgian national team.

The 38-year-old said the cap would be "the best of both worlds" as it would "take away the pressure on the clubs".

He also said the model should "always include exceptions for finals -- we can't take that away from players".

Kompany promised squad rotations in the coming weeks as Bayern manages midweek football commitments.

"We are talking about a crowded schedule and stress on the players. Our squad is not a luxury, we need it to achieve our goals."

The coach said a decision on whether veteran captain and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer would be fit to face Bremen "would be made after training".

The goalie was subbed off at half-time in Tuesday's 9-2 win over Dinamo Zagreb after falling on his back.

Kompany said Bayern "did not want to take any unnecessary risks", but added that "it looks good (for Neuer)".



Real Madrid forward Rodrygo jumps over an obstacle during a practice session ahead of tonight's LaLiga clash at home against Espanyol. The defending champions are four points adrift of league leaders Barcelona and will look to the Brazilian's form to solve the goal-drought despite having some of the biggest names in world football in their squad.

PHOTO: REAL MADRID