

# Mominul calculative amid testing conditions

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Kanpur*

Bangladesh batter Mominul Haque stepped into a challenging situation after opener Zakir Hasan perished following a 24-ball duck, with Jasprit Bumrah leading the Indian attack and keeping a tight grip on the Bangladesh innings on the opening day of the second and final Test in Kanpur yesterday. As Mominul faced 14 deliveries without scoring, there was anxiety perhaps creeping in.

Mominul had been induced into a sweep by Ravichandran Ashwin, who was brought into the attack straight after Mominul came in, suggesting there was an attempt at making the batter stew; for Ashwin had produced an almost unplayable delivery to get the left-hander's scalp in the first innings in Chennai.

Having gotten off the mark on his 15th delivery faced, Mominul slowly started to settle in. He was mostly calculative about his knock; he was going to take his chances here. In a stop-start game due to light and



heavy rain, along with bad light, Mominul calculated his scoring options.

His first real attacking stroke was off Akash Deep – allowed room, ball angled in, he slashed it over gully to move to six. Next over, it was Siraj's turn to be ramped for four over the slip cordon. Mominul was sticking to a plan of not letting opportunities slip when chances arrived. It could not have gone better for him. The Kanpur wickets are difficult to score off – not always difficult to defend – but with Bumrah, Siraj and Akash all on song, the pace attack is an intimidating prospect to face alongside Ashwin helping the trio.

He was beaten on occasions too, with Bumrah producing some real gems, but he survived. Again, when he drove Bumrah through cover, it was the moment of the day – almost on his knees, a cover drive of absolute beauty. Mominul had settled and he would go on to remain unbeaten on 40 off 81 balls, carrying the Tigers to 107 for three after 35 overs.

After a cover drive like that, a batter of his level

could again say that it would be a crime to waste an opportunity, as he had said after the first innings of the first Test against Pakistan in Rawalpindi last month: "As a senior player who has played a lot of Tests, I shouldn't have got just a fifty."

That tone should strike a chord again: don't let a good start fall by.

Having faced 13 deliveries for naught during a three-run stand with opener Shadman Islam, he then scored 19 off 44 in a vital 51-run partnership with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, before striking 21 off 24 in a 27-run unbroken stand with Mushfiqur Rahim. An urgency to accelerate was evident from Mominul's side. "Whenever I play, I play to score runs. Ultimately, it has become a game of runs and who scores more. That's how it is. Everyone has a role, and I feel that it's important to do the right things at the right time," Mominul had told The Daily Star after the Pakistan series, which Bangladesh won 2-0.

Here he had applied mixing patience with Nevertheless, he to start anew

calculation, precision. would have today after opening day was largely washed out.

## City's Rodri out for season

REUTERS, Manchester



Manchester City midfielder Rodri will miss the rest of the season after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament, manager Pep Guardiola confirmed on Friday in a big blow to his team's quest for a fifth consecutive Premier League title.

Rodri underwent surgery for the injury earlier on Friday, Guardiola said. "Surgery this morning, ACL and some meniscus (cartilage), next season he will be here. This season is over," Guardiola told reporters. "Unfortunately we got the worst but these things happen. We will be there to support him in his recovery step-by-step."

The Spaniard injured his right knee during the team's 2-2 draw with Arsenal in the Premier League on Sunday. Guardiola's team top the table on 13 points ahead of Saturday's clash at Newcastle United.

The injury is a cruel twist, coming days after the 28-year-old Rodri warned of strike action by players over their increasing workload. Rodri is considered a favourite to win the Ballon d'Or after leading City to an unprecedented fourth straight Premier League before being named Euro 2024 player of the tournament as Spain clinched title.

"What he gives us, we don't have a similar player. But the others can all together replace him," Guardiola added.

## Bangladesh face strong Pakistan in SAFF U-17 semifinal

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on a strong Pakistan team in the second semifinal of the SAFF U-17 Championship at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu, Bhutan today.

Bangladesh are yet to win a match in the tournament, having lost 1-0 to India and drawn 1-1 against Maldives in the group phase. They booked a semifinal spot as Group A runners-up by virtue of goal difference with Maldives, who lost 3-0 against group champions India in their last group stage fixture.

Although Bangladesh beat Pakistan 2-1 in the semifinal of the 2023 SAFF U-16 Championship at the same venue, Pakistan head into this match as favourites after reaching the semis as Group B champions.

The boys in red and green are focused to put up a better show against Pakistan than their first two matches, said captain Nazmul Huda Faisal.

"We had mixed performances in the first two matches and are now up against a strong Pakistan team in the knockout stage. We will try to give our best on the ground and correct the mistakes we made in the first two matches," said the captain after the team's final training session before the match.

Assistant coach Atiqur Rahman Meshu believes the semifinal is an opportunity for the boys to prove themselves.

"We struggled to score goals in the last two matches, so we worked on it for the last five days. The semifinal is a stage for the boys to prove themselves by rectifying the mistakes from the earlier matches," said the former national team defender.

Earlier in the day, India will face Nepal in the first semifinal.

## BCB in 'final phase' over talks for Afghanistan ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is in talks with its Afghan counterparts to arrange a three-match ODI series as part of the national team's preparation for next year's ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

The Tigers are scheduled to travel to the Caribbean islands in November to play two Tests, three ODIs, and three T20Is against the West Indies. At the moment, this is the only ODI series scheduled for the Tigers before the Champions Trophy, slated to begin next February.

To make up for the lack of 50-over fixtures before the marquee event, BCB board president Faruque Ahmed said on Thursday that the board hopes to arrange three more ODIs against Afghanistan in the UAE before the series against the Windies.

Bangladesh were scheduled to play an all-format series against Afghanistan in Greater Noida, India in July this year but that series got rescheduled. The proposed ODI series between the sides, however, is not part of that tour and will be a separate series, BCB's cricket operations in-charge Shahriar Nafees confirmed The Daily Star on Friday.

"We are in the final phase of discussion regarding the ODI series with the Afghanistan Cricket Board. This is not an FTP-scheduled series. We will play the FTP scheduled matches in two phases, next year and in 2026," Nafees said.

"We have only three ODIs against West Indies before going into the Champions Trophy. So we are planning to hold the matches to give our players enough 50 over matches before the ICC event," Nafees added.

Nafees also informed that the board will receive confirmation this week regarding the two-Test series against South Africa next month.

## Records tumble for Sri Lanka's MARVEL

AFP, Galle

Sri Lankan middle-order batsman Kamindu Mendis stormed into the record books in Galle on Friday when he became just the fourth cricketer to make 1,000 runs inside 13 Test innings.

The 25-year-old has played just eight Test matches since his debut two years ago at the same venue against Australia but has quickly made a name for himself as a star

on Thursday when he made his eighth consecutive fifty in as many appearances.

Friday's knock made it five Test centuries from 13 innings – a record that also tied him with Bradman as well as George Headley of the West Indies.

Only three batters have reached the mark faster, with Weekes managing it in 10 and Sutcliffe making it in 12 alongside Australia's Neil Harvey.

By the time Sri Lanka declared on 602-

Mendis joined Australia's Don Bradman in becoming the second-fastest player to 1000 Test runs, achieving the feat in 13 innings. Only two players - Herbert Sutcliffe and Everton Weekes - reached the milestone faster as they took 12 innings.

Mendis, however, is the fastest to have done so in 75 years. He also became the quickest to the feat amongst Asian batters, surpassing Vinod Kambli, who did it in 14 innings.

hitter.

Six of those matches have been played since March when he scored his first Test ton against Bangladesh. His unbeaten 182 against New Zealand on Friday made him equal third-fastest to the 1,000-run mark with Australia's Donald Bradman.

Only two others have surpassed him, with England's Herbert Sutcliffe and Everton Weekes of the West Indies both reaching the landmark in 12 innings.

It was another feather in the young left-hander's cap since the second Test began

5, he had notched up a 200-run partnership in Galle – where Kamindu was born and raised – alongside fellow centurion Kusal Mendis (106 not out).

Kamindu was the only cricketer to make a century on either side in the first Test against New Zealand, which Sri Lanka won by 63 runs.

He has been in excellent form this year and was also Sri Lanka's highest run-scorer in their last two series against Bangladesh and England.

# ‘Those who spoke ill, now feel proud of me’

Over the last two years, young leg spinner **Rabeya Khan** has emerged as a permanent member in Bangladesh women's team squads in white-ball cricket. Consistent performances with the ball and the ability to score runs down the order has earned the 19-year-old the stamp of approval from her skipper Nigar Sultana Joty and head coach Hashan Tillakaratne. Before the team's departure for the T20 World Cup in the UAE, Rabeya spoke with **The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan** where she opened up about her bittersweet journey in cricket and what she hopes to achieve in the upcoming tournament. Here are the excerpts:

**The Daily Star (DS):** You captained the 'A' team, which comprised mostly of national team players, against Sri Lanka 'A' in a series recently. How was the experience and do you think this was sufficient preparation before going to play a World Cup?

**Rabeya Khan (RK):** I think the preparation was really good. The opponents were unknown to us. So, it was a good place for the World Cup preparation. About captaincy, I really enjoyed it. The seniors really helped me and because of that I didn't face any difficulties.

**DS:** How did you get started in cricket?

**RK:** I'm a student of BKSP. But before my admission there, I had to go through a lot of hardships when I was pursuing cricket from my home in Barishal. People of my area used to make derogatory comments about me. My father had to endure it the most. He was the one who took me to different places to play cricket. I also played with my cousins or boys from my locality. Many asked him why I was playing with boys. But my father never said anything in reply. He always pushed me to play cricket.

My father [Md. Emdadul Hoque Khan] is a sports lover. One day in 2016, he told me about a BKSP trial and took me there. I got selected from the trial and got admitted to the BKSP in 2017. That's when my cricket career actually started.

**DS:** Cricket is a very expensive game. It must have been tough for your father to provide you all the kits and gears.

**RK:** I will give the full credit of my cricket career to my father. He is a farmer and worked incredibly hard to help me reach this far. I have three maternal uncles and an aunt,

who have helped me and my father whenever we were in need of financial support. My father takes tremendous pride in my success. Not only him, those who used to speak ill, now feel proud of me.

**DS:** Head coach Hashan Tillakaratne rates Bangladesh's spin attack as the best in the world. Most of Bangladesh's group matches will be played in Sharjah, which is known as a spin-friendly track. Will that work in favour of the team?

**RK:** We closely followed the recent South Africa versus Afghanistan matches in Sharjah to learn about the wicket. Our spin attack has always been good and it's doing well right now. So, I expect we will perform well there.

**DS:** Skipper Nigar Sultana Joty thinks you have the ability to contribute more with the bat. What are your thoughts on that?

**RK:** As a batting unit, we have a tendency of getting bowled out cheaply at times. Like the coach and the captain, I also hope that I will be able to contribute with the bat alongside my bowling. I'm doing everything I can and hopefully my efforts will get reflected in the World Cup.



# Leverkusen ready for ‘full throttle’ Bayern

REUTERS

Defending champions Bayer Leverkusen are expecting Bayern Munich to go all out when the sides meet in the Bundesliga on Saturday and they will need to produce a perfect performance to take anything from the match, manager Xabi Alonso said.

Leverkusen last season became the first team to finish a Bundesliga campaign unbeaten as they lifted the trophy and ended Bayern's run of 11 straight titles, but this time around, their Bavarian opponents are determined to reclaim their crown.

League leaders Bayern have won all four of their Bundesliga matches this season and sit top of the standings with 12 points, three more than second-placed Leverkusen.

"The anticipation is great and we want to show a good game. We need a perfect performance to take something home with us," Alonso told reporters on Friday.

"FC Bayern have made a good start to the season, it will be a challenge tomorrow. We need to play at our highest level, with and against the ball for 90 minutes. Bayern will go full throttle, we have to be ready for that."

Leverkusen have been defensively fragile this season, conceding nine goals in four league games, and they let in three in a roller-coaster 4-3 win over VfL Wolfsburg in

their last match.

After the match Alonso slammed his side's poor defending and ahead of their game against Bayern, the Spaniard once again stressed the need for discipline in defence.

"The team has to be compact, we have to defend together as a team. We have a clear game plan, we can't be too soft and we can't allow large gaps," Alonso said.



"We have a clear game plan as to how we want to play. We will give everything... If we don't defend well, it's hard for the players to win. We want to be consistent. We don't want to be up and down."

Following their league clash against Bayern, Leverkusen host Italian side AC Milan in the Champions League on Tuesday.