

The Tiger brand: A penchant for unwanted surprises

NABID YEASIN

Bangladesh batters have an abundance of tricks in their basket to surprise the audience.

The latest trick that they pulled out of the bag was in the first of the three ODIs against Afghanistan in Sharjah on Wednesday. Nicknamed the ‘Tigers’, Najmul Hossain and Co showcased a non-Tiger-like phenomenon – retreating from a position of strength to collapse dramatically as they lost seven wickets in the space of 23 deliveries and 11 runs, suffering a 92-run hammering.

Batting meltdowns are such a regularity in Bangladesh cricket that it takes some special ability to astound the avid fans even with such repeated mediocrity. And, Bangladesh players have a mastery on the subject, reflecting the true brand of the Tigers’ cricket as opposed to the one they usually blabber about at pressers.

In chase of a regulation target of 236 runs, the initial fear was regarding the fragile top order. However, that concern was banished when Bangladesh managed to get a decent start. They managed to cross the 50-run mark without losing more than one wicket – a rarity considering that in the 10 previous games, they had lost two or more wickets before the team hit fifty on six occasions.

While the aforementioned stat portrays the fragile nature of the top order, the fact



that the middle and lower-middle order crumbled in under four overs makes one wonder whether Bangladesh batters, regardless of their position, have a special affinity towards causing self-harm.

Till the beginning of the 31st over, AM Ghazanfar and Rashid Khan had bowled four and six overs, respectively, and were unable to inflict much harm on the Bangladesh batters despite a few close calls here and there. But from that point onward, suddenly the Afghan spin duo was made to look unplayable by the Tigers in a brief disastrous period that brought

an end to the game in a huff.

Batting collapses can happen in cricket, albeit not at the high frequency that Bangladesh experience. However, it is the manner in which a team can handle and get out when pushed to a corner that determines the true cricketing quality of a side.

The likes of Shanto, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, and Towhid Hridoy would not need to look far to get a glimpse of how game readability and sensible shot selection by batters can turn things around after a

shaky period – their opponents had done it just hours ago in the previous innings when skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi and all-rounder Mohammad Nabi scored fifties to rescue Afghanistan from the depths of 5-71 to posting a respectable total.

Following the game, Bangladesh skipper Shanto took the blame for the defeat against Afghanistan. He mentioned that he should not have gotten out the way he did after being set at the crease.

Shanto probably knew what he had done to give his wicket away after scoring 47 runs. When Afghanistan removed a player from deep square and brought in a second slip, Shanto gave in to the temptation of sweeping Nabi – just as Afghanistan had wanted – and top edged a catch to the man at short fine-leg.

Not only Shanto, but all the Bangladesh batters who threw their wickets away have played cricket at this level long enough to realise what they could have done differently – and they probably do know where it had gone wrong.

The question is why they keep on collapsing and easily fall prey to the opponents’ discernible plays time and again. As unfortunate as it may sound, it probably is the only way left for the Bangladesh batters to surprise their fans now that they keep on hitting new lows in every format.

Mushy also a doubt for WI Tests

Liton to join team in UAE

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh star batter Mushfiqur Rahim has been ruled out of the ongoing ODI series against Afghanistan in the UAE with a finger injury that also makes him doubtful for the upcoming Tests in a full series against the West Indies.

Mushfiqur suffered a fracture in the tip of his left index finger while keeping wickets in the first ODI against Afghanistan in Sharjah on Wednesday. Mushfiqur’s recovery is set to take a minimum of four weeks, making the wicketkeeper-batter a doubt for the Test series in the Windies, beginning on November 22.

“Mushfiqur’s injury is slated to take four to six weeks to recover. It will be considered when the Test team is declared,” a BCB official told The Daily Star yesterday.

Mushfiqur had opted out of West of Bangladesh’s last Test tour of West Indies in 2022 to perform Hajj.

Following two Tests, Bangladesh will also play three ODIs and as many T20Is against the Windies.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh have not named a replacement for Mushfiqur for the remaining two ODIs against Afghanistan, to be played on November 9 and 11. It was learned that batter Liton Das, who was initially left out of the squad due to fever, will be heading to the UAE to join the team. However, Liton will not be part of the ODI squad until he fully recovers.

“Liton will be there but we are not considering him as part of the ODI team at the moment. He is still not well but if anything extreme happens, a decision may be taken [on his inclusion],” a member of the selection panel informed yesterday.

Part of the initial 15-member squad for the Afghan ODIs, spinner Nasum Ahmed and pacer Nahid Rana, who had faced visa complications and could not travel earlier, had left for the UAE yesterday.



‘India series fortunate IPL platform’

REUTERS, DURBAN

A four-match T20I series against India comes at an opportune time for South Africa’s cricketers as it provides an additional stage to highlight their skills before the Indian Premier League auction later this month, said captain Aiden Markram.

South African cricketers have been dotted around IPL franchises over the years but those who have not secured contracts can enhance their chances of being hired for next year’s competition if they impress when the two countries meet in their week-long series, starting in Durban on Friday.

“As we all know, a lot of things can fall into place for players and we’re fortunate that we play in a series against (India) pretty much just before the auction happens,” Markram told a press conference on Thursday.

“So that would pretty much be the bonus of doing well, firstly, collectively and for the individuals that put their hands up.

“I don’t think it’s your motivation to do well when you play for your country but it’s the bonus that potentially could follow.”

The IPL and other T20 competitions worldwide have proven a lucrative revenue source for cricketers.

Faulty electronic timer leaves swimmers frustrated again

ANISUR RAHMAN

The 33rd National Swimming Championship is set to begin on Saturday at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur and for the fourth straight edition, the electronic timer installed at the venue in 2019 will remain unused as the authorities are yet to mend the malfunctioning device.

The timer was installed in late 2019 at a cost of around Tk 4 crores but is yet to be used in any event, triggering much frustration among the swimmers.

Some 550 swimmers from 52 teams are expected to take part in the four-day championship which will feature 38 events and the timings will be recorded using hand timers, an unusual practice in the modern sports.

Due to the use of hand timers, chances are that many national records will be broken like in the previous editions, the swimmers will not get to know their precise timings and subsequently struggle at international meets.

The swimming federation lodged many complaints about the electronic timer to the National Sports Council, the body responsible for its installation, and had also appealed to the parliamentary standing committee on youth and sports, but the matter did not get resolved.

Just like in the official press briefings

before the last three editions, the organisers were asked yesterday whether the competition was going to feature the electronic timer and the answer, just like the previous three times, was ‘no’.

“We have talked to the sports adviser about the electronic timer and handed a letter to the secretary of National Sports Council. At the moment, we see no solution, so we are going to hold the



national championships using hand timing this time too,” acting general secretary of Bangladesh Swimming Federation Selim Mia said at the official briefing at the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) auditorium yesterday.

Thus, leading swimmers are preparing to take part in the championship with an eye on improvement and with disappointment in their hearts about the absence of an electronic timer.

Soniya Akter, Olympian and the best female swimmer of last edition, said, “We

time and again express our disappointment about the electronic timer, the media also writes about it every time, the federation has been trying to fix it for years but we don’t know why it is not fixed yet.

“The reporters may know the difference between electronic timing and hand timing but the general public might not. So, when the media writes about good and bad results based on hand timing, we feel uncomfortable seeing the reaction of the people,” said Soniya, who last season bagged six gold medals, created one national record and also improved her timing in the Paris Olympic Games.

Samiul Islam Rafi, also an Olympian and national record holder in three events, said, “We usually focus in the national championships to improve our timing as well as create records but we are not getting the real timing and it is always disappointing.”

“Using hand timing is a disadvantage for us because we can’t improve our timing,” the 19-year-old swimmer from Bangladesh Navy said, “The rankings of swimmers and the federation could have improved if we could have inserted our electronic timings in the national championship in the FINA website. Thus, we are also not making a good impression at the international arena.”



‘Free Palestine’ banner slammed

REUTERS

French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau on Thursday criticised the unveiling of a giant ‘Free Palestine’ banner at PSG’s Champions League fixture against Atletico Madrid, saying it was “unacceptable.”

Asked if he would seek sanctions against PSG, Retailleau told Sud Radio: “I am not ruling out anything. I will demand explanations from PSG.”

European soccer’s governing body UEFA, however, said Paris St Germain will not face disciplinary proceedings.

On Wednesday night, fans from PSG’s Auteuil Kop unveiled the banner before kick-off, eight days before France take on Israel in Paris in a Nations League game.

“War on the pitch, but peace in the world,” a message underneath said.

Inter’s defence ‘a source of great pride’ for Inzaghi

REUTERS, Milan

Inter Milan coach Simone Inzaghi praised his side’s defending after they shut out Arsenal in the Champions League on Wednesday, just as they did against Manchester City earlier in the competition.

A controversially-awarded penalty converted by Hakan Calhanoglu on the stroke of halftime proved enough for a 1-0 victory that left Inter on 10 points from four group games.

What is more they are yet to concede a goal – a feat only matched by Serie A rivals Atalanta.

“We had a great performance, zero goals conceded to Arsenal and City. It’s a source of great pride but now we need to continue like this,” Inzaghi said.

Arsenal had 21 goal attempts to Inter’s seven but rarely looked like

scoring as Inzaghi’s side performed a defensive masterclass with Yann Bisseck outstanding.

“Bisseck was very good but he doesn’t have to prove anything to me,” Inzaghi said. “I know how good he is

know how good he is.”

Inter, beaten in the final by Manchester City in 2023, were under siege in the second half but showed great resilience to put themselves in a healthy position in the table.

They are one of four teams on 10 points behind leaders Liverpool who have a maximum 12 points.

“The best thing about this match is the three points, then the team spirit and the desire to fight that we put out on the pitch,” Inter skipper Lautaro Martinez said.

“These matches are very important for the league table. We didn’t concede any goals, and this is positive because in the (domestic) league

we conceded too many.

“We must continue to raise the level. We want everything, the history of this club says so. I want to win everything.”



and he has played two great games against teams like Man City and Arsenal this season. His only problem is that we have other great defenders so he cannot play all the time, but I

Lewandowski one away from 100 UCL goals

Striker Robert Lewandowski scored a goal in each half to help Barcelona secure a comprehensive 5-2 win at Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League on Wednesday. It was another commanding victory for LaLiga leaders Barcelona who are in an imperious vein of form, scoring 24 goals in six successive wins in all competitions, including thrashings of Bayern Munich and Real Madrid. Barca climbed to sixth place in the 36-team Champions League table with nine points. Red Star languishing in 35th spot with no points from four games.

Robert Lewandowski is just one goal away from reaching a century of goals in the UEFA Champions League after he netted a brace against Red Star Belgrade yesterday.

Only Cristiano Ronaldo (140) and Lionel Messi (129) are ahead of the 36-year-old on the list of most goals in the competition’s history.

With five goals – the joint-most so far – across the opening four matchdays of the ongoing season of the Champions League, Lewandowski took his total UCL goal tally for Barcelona to 13. That means that he is just the second player in Champions League history to score 10+ goals for three different clubs after Cristiano Ronaldo.

Barca winger Raphinha, who netted once against Red Star Belgrade, took his tally to five goals in Champions League and also has two assists to his name so far.

