



# Miraz channels fear into bold play

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

Bangladesh produced two of their finest days in Test cricket on day three and day four of the second Test in Jamaica, capturing imaginations with a tooth-and-nail fight yesterday to secure their first Test win in the Caribbean since 2009.

The ambition shown to wrest back control after losing the first Test in Antigua by 201 runs, and in the absence of regular faces such as Mushfiqur Rahim and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, highlighted the team's ability to inspire with a bold and pronounced approach.

As for the architects of this momentous win, several players had pivotal roles, but Mehedi Hasan Miraz stood out. Rallying his troops with grit, controlling emotions, and leaving a tactical sparkle, Miraz achieved a dreamy start to his first Test series as the stand-in skipper.

Few would have believed Miraz when he spoke of a comeback after the first Test. The greater challenge lay in making his teammates believe in the process. The decision to bat first was a significant departure from Bangladesh's usual preference to bowl first and assess conditions. Even as the batting faltered in the first innings, Miraz ensured his side did not retreat into a shell.

Facing a verbal barrage from the Windies quicks, who targeted his discomfort against short deliveries, Miraz rose to the challenge. His 42 in the second innings may appear modest in terms of runs, but its impact was profound. With Alzarri Joseph and Jayden Seales breathing fire early in the second innings, energised by Bangladesh's first-innings struggles, Miraz counterattacked.

Coming in at number four after Mominul

Haque fell ill, Miraz joined Shadman Islam in taking the game on. In the space of 12 deliveries, following Shahadat Hossain Dipu's dismissal after a promising start, the pair smashed 33 runs. Shadman's powerful cut against Alzarri set the tone before Miraz unleashed, striking Seales for four consecutive boundaries. Six fours came from seven deliveries, and Miraz capped the sequence with a near six off Seales. This counterattacking surge liberated Bangladesh's batters, who had been cowering against the short-pitched barrage.

A 70-run partnership in such a short time provided the counterpunch the visitors needed. Miraz shared after the match, "I told them to play positively. With Mominul bhai feeling sick, the atmosphere inside the team wasn't great. I told Dipu he could take on their bowlers from the first delivery if he wanted. When I went to bat, I played the same way."

Miraz's contributions extended beyond his batting. His tactical nous as captain shone, with bowling changes tailored to match scenarios. When Kraigg Brathwaite attempted to steady the home side in their first innings, Miraz introduced Nahid Rana, whose short-pitched deliveries proved decisive. Brathwaite's discomfort against Taijul Islam was exploited in the second innings as well.

There was no haste or lack of patience in Miraz's captaincy. He used Rana's pace in short bursts and rotated Taskin Ahmed and Hasan Mahmud effectively. His foresight in the fourth innings, utilising Taijul Islam -- who is the leading wicket-taker in fourth innings Tests over the past 12 months -- ensured the fields and match scenarios aligned perfectly for success.

# Jaker's moment under the sun

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

"You deserve all the credit," wrote veteran Bangladesh cricketer Mushfiqur Rahim on Facebook, praising Jaker Ali Anik's heroic 91 off 106 balls in the second innings of the final Test against the West Indies in Jamaica on Tuesday. Despite the bowling unit stealing the spotlight after the Tigers secured a massive 101-run win, Jaker's valiant knock will be etched in Bangladesh's cricketing folklore, given the stakes involved.

Playing only his third Test, the 26-year-old seized the moment when his team needed him most. Even as partners fell at the other end, Jaker stood firm, helping Bangladesh level



"I was 11 years old back then. I didn't miss a single match of that 2009 series. I used to stay up all night watching Bangladesh play. One day, my father woke up and found that I was watching the game. He just stared at me, but didn't scold. Fifteen years later, I am playing for Bangladesh in the same series. If Abba were alive, he might have stayed up all night watching me play. Anyway, this is for you, Abba,"

The 26-year-old Jaker wrote on Facebook.

the series and end their 15-year wait for a Test win on Caribbean soil.

Setting a target of 287 runs and leaving the hosts with a record run-chase at the venue, Jaker stayed undeterred. His defiance, demonstrated by clearing the Windies bowlers five times over the ropes, will linger in the memories of Bangladesh fans.

The wicketkeeper-batter scored 62 of his team's 75 runs on the fourth day after the visitors resumed on 193 for five. His efforts paved the way for Taijul Islam to spin the Windies batters into disarray, as they

were bowled out for 185, with Taijul claiming five for 50.

"I know you will do the most epic things," Mushfiqur also said of Jaker, whose selection for Tests had drawn criticism. However, Rajin Saleh, Jaker's former Sylhet teammate and the team's current head coach, described it as "a quite familiar innings, as he often plays this kind of knock in the National Cricket League."

Jaker has already scored fifties in each of the three Tests he has played, becoming the first to achieve such a feat. Rajin believes he should have received his Test call-up before his T20I debut.

"In my observation, Jaker Ali is firstly a good Test player, then a good ODI player, and lastly a T20 player," Rajin told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Doing something like this against the West Indies, in the West Indies, is definitely a big achievement. I think it was difficult for him to score runs from the position he came in. It was a pressure situation, but he stood firm," he added.

Regardless of whether Jaker establishes himself as "a genuine Test player," as Rajin suggested, what is undeniable for now is that he has shown promise in providing a crucial safety net to the batting order during moments of crisis.

Second innings specialist Taijul [Islam] got five wickets. He was excellent. He has been very good for the last 10 years.

Bangladesh captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz

Taijul Islam picked up his 15th five-wicket haul in the format and fourth abroad.

The 2023-25 cycle of the World Test Championship was Bangladesh's best in terms of matches won. The Tigers clinched four matches (lost eight in 12 matches) -- the highest in any cycle of the competition. Before this, they won a solitary match in the previous cycle.

Bangladesh have now won three Tests in the West Indies -- the most they've won in any country. The Tigers won two away Tests in Pakistan and Zimbabwe and one each in New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

Jaker Ali became the first Bangladesh player to hit half-centuries in each of his first three Tests. His 91 in the Jamaica Test was his third fifty in the format and also his career-best score.

# JUNIOR ASIA CUP HOCKEY Bangladesh finish fifth with win over China

SPORTS REPORTER

Forward Rakibul Hasan and defender Amirul Islam scored hatricks to steer Bangladesh to fifth position in Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup with a comprehensive 6-3 win over China in their place-deciding match in Muscat, Oman yesterday.

The men in red and green, who secured a maiden FIH Hockey Junior World Cup berth on Tuesday after beating Thailand, will return home today with their best-ever finish among 10 teams in the last 16 years.

China had given Bangladesh a run for their money in their last pool match which had ended in a 1-1 draw, allowing Bangladesh an opportunity to face Thailand in the first place-deciding match.

This time the charges of Moududur Rahman Shuvo did not give spirited China much room by taking the lead in the very first minute through with a strike from Rakibul. China, however, equalised in the first quarter and took the lead early in the second.

But penalty corner specialist Amirul, who converted three penalty corners in a span of nine minutes, made it 4-1 before half-time.

China pulled one back in the third quarter before Rakibul completed his hatrick with two goals from open play in the last quarter to ensure Bangladesh's third win in six matches in this.

## SHORT CORNER

### Stokes fit for 2nd New Zealand Test

Captain Ben Stokes was named Wednesday in England's team for the second Test, starting on Friday, against New Zealand in Wellington, allaying concerns over his fitness. The visitors won the first Test in Christchurch by eight wickets inside four days and have stuck with the same XI for the next clash starting on Friday.



### Pakistan recall Babar for SA tour

Pakistan recalled former skipper Babar Azam on Wednesday for the away Test series and white-ball matches against South Africa starting next week, but there was no place for spinner Sajid Khan. The 30-year-old star batsman Azam was dropped following defeat in the first Test against England in October and rested for the ongoing limited-over series against Zimbabwe.

### West Indies duo fined for behaviour in Bangladesh loss

West Indies cricketers Jayden Seales and Kevin Sinclair were both fined Wednesday for breaching the International Cricket Council's code of conduct during the second Test defeat by Bangladesh. Fast bowler Seales was fined 25 percent of his match fee "for making aggressive gestures" towards the Bangladesh team after taking a wicket. He also received one demerit point for the offence. All-rounder Sinclair, who was not in the original XI but came on as a substitute fielder, was docked 15 percent of his match fee for sledging.

\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

# SA push for WTC final

REUTERS, Gqeberha

South Africa's push for a place in the World Test Championship final continues on Thursday when they host Sri Lanka at St George's Park, where victory would be a giant step towards the decider at Lord's next year.

If South Africa win the second and final Test in the series, and both home fixtures against Pakistan starting later this month, they are guaranteed a place in the final.

They thumped Sri Lanka by 233 runs in the first Test in Durban, bowling them out for their test record low of 42 in the first innings, but the wicket in Gqeberha may be more to the visitors' liking.

Traditionally lower and slower, the coastal venue provides more opportunities for spinners and was the scene of a historic eight-wicket victory for Sri Lanka in 2019 when they became the only sub-continent side to win a Test series in South Africa.

The hosts have lost all-rounder Wiaan Mulder and fast bowler Gerald Coetzee to injury, and have called up 18-year-old

speedster Kwen Maphaka as a replacement for the latter.

Whether he makes his debut remains to be seen, but he has a good chance with Dane Paterson the other seamer option in the squad. South Africa could play an extra batter as a replacement for Mulder, or go with spinning all-rounder Senuran Muthusamy.

The first Test win had several impressive individual performances. Coach Shukri Conrad praised the mentality of his side after they claimed a fourth Test win in a row.

"We get on with things and what we continually tell the guys is that they need to be themselves on and off the field," Conrad said. "They're just a great bunch who get on with it, they train hard, enjoy each other's company away from the field."

Sri Lanka needed to improve with the bat after their woeful first innings in Durban and did so by scoring 282 in the second.

Sri Lanka can also reach the WTC final but will have to win in Gqeberha and beat Australia in two home Tests starting in January to stand a chance.



## T20 SERIES TEEING OFF IN TEA TOWN

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty and her Irish counterpart Gaby Lewis, wearing traditional attire of tea leaves pickers, unveil the T20 series trophy at the historic Malnichera Tea Estate in Sylhet yesterday. Having won the ODI series 3-0, the hosts will look to emulate the success in the T20 series, beginning today.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR