

Familiar methods bring face-saving win for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Reapplying tried and tested methods in Chattogram after the defeat in Sylhet worked wonders for Bangladesh as they made easy work off Zimbabwe in the second Test, rolling them over by an innings and 106 runs inside three days and levelled the two-match series 1-1 yesterday.

In the first Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, which Zimbabwe won by three wickets, spin and pace had almost an equal say in the proceedings, as the fast bowlers took 18 wickets while spinners claimed 19 across four innings.

In Sylhet, Bangladesh had hoped that its three-pronged pace attack would rattle the opposition, however, it was the Zimbabwean pace trio led by the impressive Blessing Muzarabani that outshone the local quicks and outfoxed the host batters.

In Chattogram, however, spin ruled over pace and with their superior spin attack, the hosts ran circles around the tourists.

Bangladesh bundled out Zimbabwe twice in three days, and out of the 20 wickets they took, only one fell to a fast bowler, the debutant Tanzim Sakib in the first innings.

The three Bangladeshi spinners claimed 17 wickets – Taijul Islam taking nine wickets which included a five-wicket haul in the first innings, Mehedi Hasan Miraz took five in the second innings and Nayeem Hasan snapped up three – while the remaining two wickets were run-outs.

Like Bangladesh, Zimbabwe also bulked up their spin bowling for the match, dropping medium pacer Victor Nyauchi and handing a debut to leg-spinner Vincent Masekesa.

Although Masekesa claimed five wickets on debut, he couldn't stop Bangladesh from posting an imposing 444 in their first and only batting innings in the match.

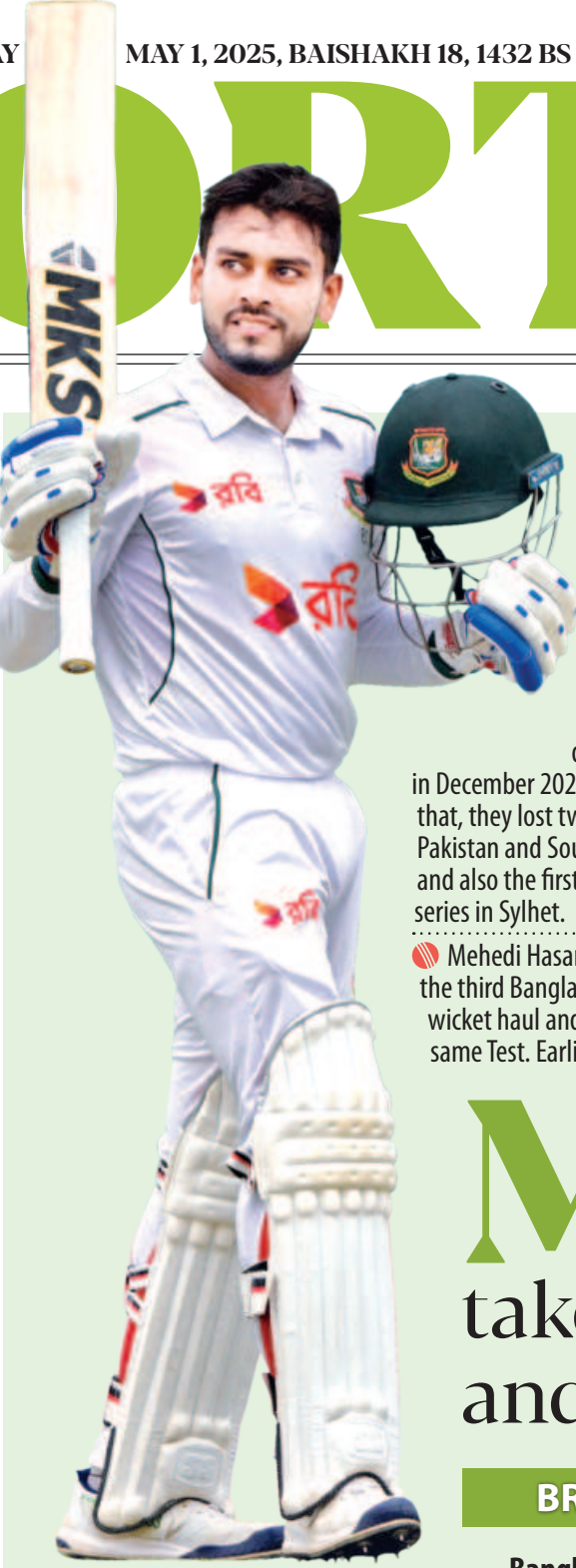
Pacer Muzarabani, who was player-of-the-match in the Sylhet Test with nine wickets in total which included a 6-72 in the second innings, didn't look half as threatening at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium in Chattogram, toiling for 26 overs for just one wicket.

Meanwhile, the other pacer Richard Ngarava went wicketless in his 14 overs.

The conditions took the sting out of Zimbabwe's pace attack, which aided Bangladesh to form a century opening stand after 33 innings with Shadman Islam and the returning Anamul Haque making 118 runs together.

Anamul's comeback knock ended on 39 but Shadman took full toll of the situation and notched up his second Test ton.

The middle-order failed to cash in on the excellent foundation but Miraz's century and crucial contributions from Taijul (20) and Tanzim (41) more than made up for it. Spinners taking wickets in bulk and lower order contributions, both were missing in the first Test for Bangladesh. Both these factors returned in Chattogram and the Tigers also returned to winning ways.



● Bangladesh ended their six-match losing streak in home Tests with the win over Zimbabwe in Chattogram. This streak began with a four-wicket defeat to New Zealand

in December 2023 in Mirpur. After that, they lost two Tests each against Pakistan and South Africa last year and also the first Test of the Zimbabwe series in Sylhet.

● Mehedi Hasan Miraz has become the third Bangladeshi to claim a five-wicket haul and score a century in the same Test. Earlier, Shakib Al Hasan did

it twice, first against Pakistan in 2011 and then against Zimbabwe in 2014. Sohag Gazi did it against New Zealand in 2013.

● Bangladesh have eclipsed Zimbabwe in head-to-head count in Tests with the win. This was the 20th Test between the two sides, the Tigers have won nine of them to Zimbabwe's eight. The remaining three Tests have ended in draws.

● Mehedi Hasan Miraz completed the double of 2000 runs and 200 wickets in Tests. He reached the milestone in 53 Tests, the sixth fastest to do so, behind Ian Botham (42), Imran Khan (50), Kapil Dev (50), Ravichandran Ashwin (51), and Ravindra Jadeja (53). He is also the second Bangladeshi to do complete the feat after Shakib Al Hasan (54).

MIRAZ

takes on the challenge and pulls it off

BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe 1st innings: 227 all out in 90.1 overs (Williams 67, Welch 54; Taijul 6-60) and **2nd innings:** 111 all out in 46.2 overs (Curran 46; Miraz 5-32, Taijul 3-42)

Bangladesh:

444 all out in 129.2 overs (Shadman 120, Miraz 104; Masekesa 5-115)

Result:

Bangladesh won by an innings and 106 runs.

Player of the match:

Mehedi Hasan Miraz

Player of the series:

Mehedi Hasan Miraz

Bangladesh post 444 in their first innings and take a 217-run lead, Miraz shone with the ball as well. He led the charge with the ball, bagging a lifer in the second innings to help the Tigers bundle Zimbabwe out for 111 in 46.2 overs to wrap up the game with two days to spare.

"Yes, definitely. It feels good," Miraz did not sugarcoat his feelings when asked if he enjoyed the best day of his career.

For Miraz, this game seemed to have been a platform to rectify his past mistakes.

"I scored a hundred and got three [four] wickets against the West Indies [in 2021]. I missed out on a fiver by a small margin, and we lost that match

at this venue. I remembered that game. Now, we won this game, so it feels good," Miraz added.

Bangladesh were in a spot of bother, having lost seven wickets on Day 2. But Miraz held his own with only tailenders for company, producing partnerships of 67 and 96 with Taijul Islam and Tanzim Hasan Sakib to score just his second Test ton.

He became just the third player from Bangladesh to get five wickets and hit a ton in the same Test, matching the feats of Sohag Gazi and Shakib Al Hasan, who attained the feat twice.

Miraz also attained the feat of becoming the fifth-fastest to 2000 Test runs and 200 wickets. His Test batting may not have garnered as much praise as his bowling, and while he is often being compared to Shakib, the all-rounder felt that his batting has improved out of necessity.

"The thing is that Shakib bhai has achieved a lot, and this question [comparison with Shakib] is asked a lot. Shakib bhai played his role, and when I started my career, I started as a bowler. With hard work, I was able to bring my batting up to a certain position. I improved my batting since I understood that it would help the team," he said.

Miraz, however, was not altogether enjoying a purple patch with the ball since the Test in Rawalpindi last year. Three filters in this series alone significantly established his effort to contribute equally with bat and ball.

Now, with Shakib and a few other seniors out of the scene, the important thing for Miraz would be to deliver on the challenge of "taking more responsibility" in the coming days, especially after he reiterated the same thing once again yesterday.

SHORT CORNER

Brazil deal off as Ancelotti refuses Madrid exit terms



Carlo Ancelotti will not be taking charge of Brazil, according to multiple reports. The Real Madrid manager had reportedly agreed to take over the Selecao in June and even travelled to London on Tuesday for what was expected to be the final meeting to sign the contract with the Brazilian Football Federation (CBF). While Ancelotti had agreed to start before the Club World Cup, Real Madrid -- with whom he is contracted until 2026 -- refused to release him unless he forfeited the €11m (£9.4m) still owed to him. Hence, Ancelotti backed out of the deal.

Asian Games to retain cricket event in Japan next year

Mixed martial arts will make its Asian Games debut next year in Nagoya, Japan, while cricket will remain on the programme after its controversial return at Hangzhou, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) said. Cricket was approved for the 2026 programme in a win for organisers after India sent a men's team to Hangzhou.

***Read full stories on The Daily Star's website*

Bilbao will give 'soul' to beat Man United

AFP, Bilbao

Athletic Bilbao winger Nico Williams said his team will give their "soul" to beat Manchester United on Thursday and reach the Europa League final.

The Spain international and his teammates are dreaming of playing in the showpiece at their own San Mames stadium on May 21.

The winger said the team has been following his brother and teammate Inaki Williams' advice during their Europa League run this season.

"From the start, we have been keeping a low profile -- my brother said it last year, 'keep it low-key,'" said Nico Williams.

"I understand the excitement of the fans, but we need to be 100 percent focused on the game and on our job.

"We will give our souls to reach that final at San Mames."

Athletic host Ruben Amorim's United at San Mames on Thursday in the semifinal first leg, before the return at Old Trafford next week.

Nico Williams said it was hard not to get excited about the clash with the Premier League heavyweights, despite the Red Devils' poor domestic form this season.

"United is a great team with great players, such as Bruno Fernandes," continued Nico Williams.

"There is a lot of excitement in the dressing room, as well as throughout the city and among the entire Athletic family."

Athletic have never won a European trophy but have twice lost a Europa League final, including in 2012 when they beat United along the way.

Athletic coach Ernesto Valverde warned his players that no matter what they accomplish on Thursday, it will only be half-time in the tie.

"Whatever happens, the tie will be decided in the second leg. It is an important match for the season and also in the club's history," he said.

'Locals key to Fed Cup success'

After leading Bashundhara Kings to Federation Cup title defence as captain, central defender -- even becoming the joint-top scorer -- **Tapu Barman** was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The 30-year-old had also claimed best-player honours in the season-opening Challenge Cup final. In an interview with **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman**, Tapu reflected on his personal form, Kings' turbulent season, and the state of domestic and national football. Excerpts from the interview are given below:

The Daily Star (DS): Despite a rocky season after the Challenge Cup win, how did Kings manage to retain the Federation Cup?

Tapu Barman (TB): We lost all three matches in the AFC Challenge League... but we gained good experience in Bhutan. We made a good start in the domestic season by winning the Challenge Cup. We also had a flying start in the league but could not maintain the momentum... So, it has been a challenging season for Kings, but we proved that we are still the best by lifting two trophies.

DS: How did the signing of foreign players mid-season help Kings following the withdrawal of the FIFA transfer ban?

TB: Those who were signed in the mid-term window are not of the same level as Brazilian Miguel Ferriera... Without the effort of the local players, it was not possible to win the Federation Cup.

DS: What caused Kings' inconsistent performance in the Bangladesh Premier League?

TB: The league is a long race, and you have to show consistency in every match... Now, our target is to finish second in the league.



DS: Did the departure of coach Oscar Bruzon affect the team's performance?

TB: We had foreign players like Robson, Dorielton and others during Oscar's tenure, unlike this time. In my opinion, Valeriu Tita is also a good coach.

DS: Did the withdrawals of Sheikh Jamal DC and Sheikh Russel KC reduce the league's competitiveness?

TB: Of course, the competitiveness has been reduced while a lot of players had to suffer financially. It has also been a big setback for the country's football.

DS: Did you accept a pay cut after the political changeover on August 5?

TB: We still stick to the contracts we had before August 5. Despite the crisis moments from the start of the season, the club management tried their level best to provide the facilities.

DS: With the domestic season ending soon and the national team's Asian Cup qualifiers ahead in June, what are your thoughts?

TB: There was huge uncertainty over the start of the domestic season, but in the end, it has been a big prize for the footballers because the season is still going on.

The arrival of Hamza Choudhury lit up Bangladesh football and it is a positive wave for the country's football. Securing all three points against Singapore is very important for us if we want to qualify for the next round. I believe we can do it because we grew in confidence after Hamza joined the squad.

DS: How do you view the potential inclusion of expatriate players like Shamit Shome and Cuba Mitchell in the national team?

TB: I think the national team is the highest place to play, and the best players will represent the nation. It is good news that they are interested in representing Bangladesh. The inclusion of them will strengthen the squad further, and the local players will also learn more by playing alongside them.



Dembele shines as PSG swap glamour for graft

PSG produced a performance with coach Luis Enrique's stamp all over it on Tuesday as an Ousmane Dembele goal helped them eke out a slender 1-0 advantage over Arsenal to take back home for the second leg of their Champions League semifinal. The French club have never won the Champions League despite massive spending down the years on the likes of Kylian Mbappe and South American duo Lionel Messi and Neymar. With those having all moved on, the current PSG team, while still possessing many outstanding individuals such as Ousmane Dembele and Desire Doue, can roll their sleeves up and graft. Dembele scored a superb team goal in the fourth minute, but after that, it was PSG's resilience and calmness under Arsenal pressure that stood out.

● This is the first time that PSG beat Arsenal in European competition, having failed to do so in their five previous attempts.

● This is also Arsenal's first defeat in 18 home European matches.

● Ousmane Dembele's opening goal for PSG (03:15) was the earliest Arsenal have conceded in the knockout stages of the competition.



"It's only half-time, we take positives,"

Arsenal goalkeeper **David Raya** insists they can still reach the Champions League final.