

Litton’s near miss dwarfs team advantage

SPORTS REPORTER

Litton Das had to walk back to the pavilion at the Galle International Stadium on the second day of Bangladesh’s first Test against Sri Lanka yesterday, falling just 10 runs short of what could have been his fifth Test century.

The missed opportunity, regardless of how minor it may seem, could prove to be far more significant when viewed through a broader lens -- considering the way Litton succumbed to a clear Lankan ploy, Bangladesh falling short of a much bigger total on a batting-friendly pitch, and most importantly, how the psychological aspect of getting to three-figure mark could have further boosted confidence of a player struggling with his form across the formats.

Bangladesh had found themselves in a commanding position, with Mushfiqur Rahim and Litton batting fluently, before a rain interruption triggered a collapse late in the day.

Batting at number six, Litton had the perfect platform to play a confidence-restoring innings and notch up a century. But by the end of the day, Bangladesh were suddenly out of their comfort zone.

His role was to press home the advantage alongside Mushfiqur, and the pair were doing just that until the rain-induced break seemingly broke their concentration.

Litton has been enduring a tough time across all formats. Back in 2021-22, when

- Bangladesh accumulated 484 for nine in 151 overs on a rain-marred second day of their first Test against hosts Sri Lanka at the Galle International Stadium yesterday. This was the 30th time that Bangladesh crossed the 400-run mark in an innings of a Test, with the highest eight times being against the Lankans.
- Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das was dismissed for 90 off 123 deliveries, the third time that the 30-year-old was dismissed in the nervous nineties. However, in this regard, the Bangladesh record belongs to Mushfiqur Rahim, who has been dismissed in the 90s four times in the format.

he hit a purple patch, it was through Test cricket that he rediscovered his mojo. The Galle conditions had already seen Mushfiqur and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto take full advantage -- the former scoring 163 and the latter 148 -- as both returned to form after prolonged lean spells. What would have been the icing on the cake for Bangladesh was if Litton had gone to complete a century.

Dropped on 14 early in his innings, Litton made Sri Lanka pay with a 149-run fifth-wicket stand with Mushfiqur. But just when Bangladesh should have been eyeing a total close to 600, Litton faltered.

Asitha Fernando had been probing persistently and eventually removed Mushfiqur, trapping him leg before in the 141st over. Litton, then on 90 and the most experienced batter at the crease, was expected to carry on Bangladesh’s advantage.

Lankan spinner Tharindu Rathnayake had been bowling a leg-stump line for an extended spell. Litton had either swept or fended off most of those deliveries, but the unorthodox line seemed to have been preying on his mind, probably finding ways to score off that channel. Just an over after Mushfiqur’s dismissal, Litton opted to reverse-sweep in an attempt to dominate.

The ball brushed his glove and looped up gently as the wicketkeeper made a routine catch. In an instant, Bangladesh, who had two set batters at the crease, now had two new men starting from zero near the close of the day’s play.

The result? From 458 for four, Bangladesh stumbled to 484 for nine.

With Galle offering ample scoring opportunities, Bangladesh arguably missed out on maximising their first-innings total. Now, the bowlers will need to step up significantly to keep the team in contention for a result.

For Litton, who had gone 10 innings without a fifty, this was more than just a missed century. Not only did he miss out on a personal milestone at an inopportune moment, but his dismissal also triggered a collapse that eroded Bangladesh’s advantage.



BCB to felicitate inaugural Test members

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will accord a reception to its inaugural Test members on June 26 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium to mark the 25th anniversary of receiving Test status.

Apart from the players and officials of the inaugural Test, players who have so far represented Bangladesh in the elite format are also likely to be invited during a centralised programme titled ‘Bangladesh’s 25 years in Test Cricket Celebration’.

“Alongside the reception, they [inaugural Test players and officials] will have an interaction with the media where they will share memories of the inaugural Test. Those who are available will be invited to the event. There might be more programmes like short musical or cultural shows during the event,” AEM Kawser, BCB’s game development manager, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Kawser added that they will also have an U-12 Cricket Carnival across 64 districts and five divisional headquarters, which will be part of the celebration and it will take place between June 21 and 25.

“The U-12 Cricket Carnival will take place in 64 districts, which will be part of the main programme. Six-a-side matches among six teams in both boys’ and girls’ categories, parents’ interaction, quiz and fun activities will take place there which will be organised by respective district sports associations.

“In five divisional headquarters, similar type of programmes will be initiated and those will be organised by the board centrally,” he added.

Bangladesh got Test status on June 26, 2000, and played their first Test, at home against India from November 23 the same year.



Spanish great Sergio Ramos coming to the aid of his side with headers from floated corners is something that fans had been used to for the better part of the last decade or more -- and they got to enjoy that exact thing in Pasadena on Tuesday, as a Ramos header gave Monterrey the lead in the 25th minute of their World Cup Group E opener against Champions League finalists Inter Milan. Inter, however, levelled through a Lautaro Martinez strike in the 42nd minute. The game ended 1-1 despite Inter making a host of attacks against the Mexican side.

PHOTO: AFP

Salahuddin sees potential in response

SPORTS REPORTER

Senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin believes Bangladesh’s dressing room has found renewed positivity yesterday, after three of their underperforming batters came good in the first innings of the opening Test against Sri Lanka in Galle.

Mushfiqur Rahim (163), Najmul Hossain Shanto (148) and Litton Das (90) all returned to form, helping Bangladesh post a strong total of 484 for nine at stumps on day two.

Shanto and Mushfiqur ended century droughts after 20 and 13 innings, respectively, while Litton had gone 10 innings without even a fifty before his fluent 90 off 123 balls.

“Mushfiqur made a strong comeback, showed a lot of character and so did Shanto,” Salahuddin told reporters after the end of the second day’s play.

“They were under pressure for several reasons. Litton also scored runs after a long time. That’s a positive sign in our dressing room that those guys under pressure came forward and scored big,” he added.

Bangladesh were cruising at 423 for four before persistent rain halted play for over two and a half hours. On resumption, momentum shifted. The visitors failed to rediscover their rhythm and lost five wickets for just 26 runs, allowing the home

BRIEF SCORES

BANGLADESH

484-9 in 151 overs (Mushfiqur 163, Shanto 148, Litton 90; Milan 3-38, Tharindu 3-196, Asitha 3-80)

side to sneak back into the contest.

Salahuddin observed “the last session could have been better” but believes replicating Sri Lanka’s bowling effort could tilt the game in their favour.

“I want to take positives from their bowling. The way they bowled in the final session, we didn’t see that in the first five sessions.”

Salahuddin refused to blame the rain break for the collapse, pointing instead to poor shot selection.

“We have nothing to do with the rain. We played some bad shots and that’s why we lost the wickets,” he concluded.

Root relishes blockbuster summer

AGENCIES

As England prepare for a blockbuster home Test series against India, Joe Root says he’s enjoying the “most fun” period of his career.

The 34-year-old batting maestro is set for a busy and high-profile six months in England whites, with the India series at home followed by a much-anticipated Ashes tour Down Under.

“You can only be excited. These are the series you play for. The opportunities in front of us are epic,” Root told former teammate Stuart Broad on Sky Sports.

Since relinquishing the Test captaincy in 2022, Root has been in sublime form with the bat, scoring 3,117 runs at an average of 56.67 across 36 Tests-- the most by any England batter in that span.

According to him, this stretch has also brought the greatest joy.

“It has become the most fun time of my career. Playing the way we play, the environment that has been created. The job Ben [Stokes] and Brendon [McCullum] have done has been fabulous and so much fun has come with it,” Root said.



England begin a new ICC World Test Championship cycle against India on Friday at Headingley, a venue Root knows well. While the looming Ashes later this year is drawing attention, Root remains grounded in the immediate challenge.

“You know The Ashes is coming... but you have a job to do against a brilliant team,” he said. “India have all bases covered-- a great seam attack, talented batters, and a very strong spin unit.”

India, under new skipper Shubman Gill, are aiming to win their first Test series in England since 2007. The last tour ended in a 2-2 draw, leaving unfinished business for the visitors.

Former India head coach Ravi Shastri has spoken about team combinations for Headingley, as India look to crack the English conditions.

But Root believes England’s strong home record gives them the edge. “They are going to compete anywhere in the world but our record at home makes for a fantastic series. We’ll go into it with confidence but also with huge respect for what they will bring.”

“If you have a Test team that is strong and plays regularly, that has spin-offs for the other formats. When you have a good Test team, you’ll have good teams in (white ball cricket) because a good player is a good player.”



South Africa coach **Shukri Conrad**

A few of several thousand South Africa fans pose with photos of captain Temba Bavuma at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg yesterday to welcome the team after a historic World Test Championship (WTC) win, which ended a 27-year major trophy drought for the Proteas.

PHOTO: REUTERS