

Mathews lauds Tigers for 'wonderful' Galle Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lankan great Angelo Mathews received a warm reception from the Bangladesh team during his farewell Test in Galle, which ended in a draw yesterday. The visitors gave him a guard of honour during his first-innings walk to the crease and later greeted him warmly after the match.

While it was an emotional occasion for Mathews, he was most impressed by the performance of the Bangladesh team—especially captain Najmul Hossain Shanto and veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim.

"I should congratulate Bangladesh for having a wonderful Test match. Mushfiqur and Shanto batted



beautifully," said Mathews at the post-match presentation.

Shanto's twin centuries (148 and 125) and Mushfiqur's sublime 163, followed by a brisk 49 in the second innings, were standout contributions as Bangladesh began their World Test Championship cycle on a strong note.

Shanto became the first Bangladeshi captain to score twin hundreds in a Test and for his performance, he was named player of the match. "I didn't know about the record, but it feels great to contribute," Shanto said.

Addressing the timing of the declaration—criticised by some as overly cautious—Shanto explained: "Yes, but the rain came suddenly and the plan had to change. We cannot control those things."

"We didn't have enough confidence against Zimbabwe, but we had good preparation before this series and showed a lot of character in this match," he added.

In just his 13th Test, spinner Nayem Hasan claimed his maiden five-wicket haul overseas on Day 4. Taijul Islam, meanwhile, posed constant threats—removing both Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal with probing deliveries.

Shanto was full of praise for his spinners, saying, "Taijul and Nayem bowled really well. Nayem didn't get many opportunities before but his work ethic is brilliant. Today [Saturday] he showed his quality."

Sri Lanka captain Dhananjaya de Silva admitted the momentum slipped after Bangladesh's fightback. "Shanto and Mushfiqur batted really well. We got early breakthroughs but couldn't capitalise—they didn't give us a chance to get back into the game," he said.

The second and final Test will begin on Wednesday in Colombo.



Bangladesh left-arm spinner Taijul Islam celebrates with teammates after dismissing Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews, playing his final Test, in the final session on Day 5 of their first Test in Galle yesterday. Bangladesh had reduced the hosts to 72 for four at stumps on the day while in chase of a 296-run target, making one ponder if the Tigers could have gone for more than just a draw in their first game of the World Test Championship cycle.

PHOTO: AFP

25 YEARS ON, INTENT STILL MISSING

NABID YEASIN

Come June 26, Bangladesh will be completing its 25 years in Test cricket.

Unfortunately, even with so many years under the belt in the most revered format of the sport, Bangladesh still lack one trait—the hunger to push for wins, evident in the Tigers' drawn Test against Sri Lanka that finished in Galle yesterday.

Churning out a draw and sharing four points with Sri Lanka, the hosts and a team ranked two places above the ninth-

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh 1st innings:
495 all out (Mushfiqur 163, Shanto 148, Litton 90; Asitha 4-86)

Sri Lanka 1st innings:
485 all out (Nissanka 187, Kamindu 87; Nayem 5-121)

Bangladesh 2nd innings:
285 for six dec (Shanto 125 not out, Shadman 76; Tharindu 3-102)

Sri Lanka 2nd innings:
72 for four (Nissanka 24; Taijul Islam 3-23)

Result: Match drawn

Player of the match:
Najmul Hossain Shanto

ranked Bangladesh in Tests, might look like a positive way for the Tigers to start their latest World Test Championship (WTC) cycle.

However, if looked closely at the way the Tigers went about their business across the five days of their first Test against the Lankans, a discernible pattern of Bangladesh leaning towards a safety-first approach could be noticed.

Bangladesh began the fifth day on 177

for three with a 187 run lead—a sizeable advantage that should have made the team management think about at least trying for something other than the ordinary.

But, did they?

Before rain halted proceedings and forced an early lunch, Bangladesh accumulated 60 runs in 19 overs at just over three an over. This makes it apparent that even with the two most in-form batters at the crease—veteran Mushfiqur Rahim and Najmul Hossain Shanto, both of whom had already scored tons in first innings, and were batting in 40s and 80s in second innings—Bangladesh chose to stick with the traditional Test-cricket approach of spending time out in the middle.

Winning a Test that has been marred by rain is always a tough ask, but not even considering to even try to achieve it is a mindset that certainly does not go with today's fast-paced modern cricket, where the introduction of WTC has made teams lean towards churning out wins more than ever.

Just as Mushfiqur was dismissed on 49 off 102 deliveries, rain interrupted, and when the game resumed in the second session, Bangladesh batted another 11 overs. Interestingly, in the first eight overs of these 11, the Tigers managed just 19 runs.

But since then, Bangladesh suddenly upped the ante, scoring 29 in the next three overs as Shanto completed his century—becoming the first Bangladeshi captain to score two tons in a Test twice—having achieved the feat in a game against Afghanistan in Mirpur in 2023.

It was the first drawn Test at Galle International Stadium in 12 years, with the 26 previous games at the venue producing results. Interestingly, the last drawn Test in Galle was also between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in 2013.

Shanto said that they did think about declaring early before "sudden rain" forced a "sudden change in plan" for the Tigers. But by the looks of it, the plan probably never included anything other than a draw for the Tigers.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, showed urgency when they had the chance—scoring at around and over four runs an over for the most part of their first innings, having got the scope to bat on Day 3 of the match.

Just a year back, India showed Bangladesh first-hand what it is like to push for victories in the longest format. India extracted a win against Bangladesh in just 312 deliveries—the least number of balls faced by any team in two innings of a game against Bangladesh in a winning cause in Kanpur in 2024.

For Bangladesh, going about business how India would in a Test is over ambitious, but what was certainly within their capacity was to at least show the intent, like their opponents Sri Lanka did—that should be the bare minimum mindset of a side about to complete 25 years in the format.

Heat benefitting South American teams

AFP, Cincinnati

Borussia Dortmund coach Niko Kovac said Friday teams from the "south" have an advantage on European teams at the Club World Cup because of the current high temperatures in the United States.

South American teams have impressed at the tournament to this point with a few high profile victories over European teams. Brazilian side Botafogo stunned Champions League winners PSG on Thursday, while Chelsea lost against another Brazilian team in Flamengo.

Kovac's Dortmund themselves were held to a 0-0 draw against Brazilian side Fluminense in their opening match on Tuesday.

"At the moment in this tournament you see that the clubs from the south, I think they have a big advantage because of the conditions, of the heat," Croatian coach Kovac told reporters ahead of Dortmund's second match.

Temperatures were expected to rise up to 32 degrees Celsius during Dortmund's game against South African outfit Mamelodi Sundowns at TQL Stadium in Cincinnati yesterday.

Some players and coaches have complained about the heat and humidity they have been



forced to play in at FIFA's expanded competition, as well as fans who have also suffered.

"For the spectators in the stadium it is incredibly hot, (so) now you can imagine how difficult it is for the players," continued Kovac.

"(It's) 32 degrees when you're in the shade, and you're not even in the sun. So when you play inside the stadium you can assume it is 3, 4 or 5 degrees even hotter."

"These are not excuses, it's just an explanation... this is very difficult, especially for the Europeans. The players from the south, for them it's easier because they are used to these temperatures."

"Don't forget to bring sunscreen, hat, and enough water to drink," Kovac warned reporters.

Before Dortmund's match against the Mamelodi Sundowns, Kovac said his team would try to keep the ball to mitigate the effects of the sweltering conditions.

"We need to prevent them from possessing the ball, we all know that it is going to be very warm, extremely hot tomorrow," he said.

"We will play at noon tomorrow and we will play under the sunlight, we need to make sure we have the ball at all times."

"If you have to run after the ball, it will mean a lot of effort."



Substitute Wallace Yan celebrates after adding gloss to an impressive Flamengo display with a third goal in a 3-1 win over Chelsea in Philadelphia yesterday which cemented them a spot in the round of 16 of the Club World Cup. The Brazilian side trailed 1-0 before scoring twice within four minutes of the second-half to take the lead and later adding a third in the 83rd minute. Chelsea played the last 22 minutes with 10 players after Nicolas Jackson was sent off. In Miami, Bayern Munich confirmed their spot in the last 16 with a 2-1 victory over Boca Juniors. Harry Kane opened the scoring in the 18th minute and later set up Michael Olise's 84th-minute winner after Miguel Merentiel had drawn Boca level early in the second half.



SONY SPORTS 1
England vs India
1st Test, Day 3
Live from 4:00 pm
DAZN WEBSITE AND APP

Club World Cup
River Plate vs Monterrey
Live from 7:00 am
Juventus vs Wydad AC
Live from 10:00 pm

Real Madrid vs Pachuca
Live from 1:00 am
(Monday)
Salzburg vs Al Hilal
Live from 4:00 am
(Monday)

WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Changes on the cards for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are likely to make a few changes from last month's Jordan tour for the upcoming Asian Cup Qualifiers, which will be played in Myanmar towards the end of this month.

The women in red and green will start their Group C campaign against Bahrain on June 29 before taking on hosts Myanmar on July 2 and ending the campaign against Turkmenistan three days later. Only the group winners will advance to the Asian Cup, which will be held in Australia in March next year.

Bangladesh (I28) are the second-lowest ranked side in the group, with Myanmar (55) way above on 2, followed by Bahrain (92), while Turkmenistan (141) are the lowest-ranked side.

However, the recent Jordan tour, where Bangladesh held much higher-ranked Jordan and Indonesia to draws, is giving the team management confidence of getting positive results.

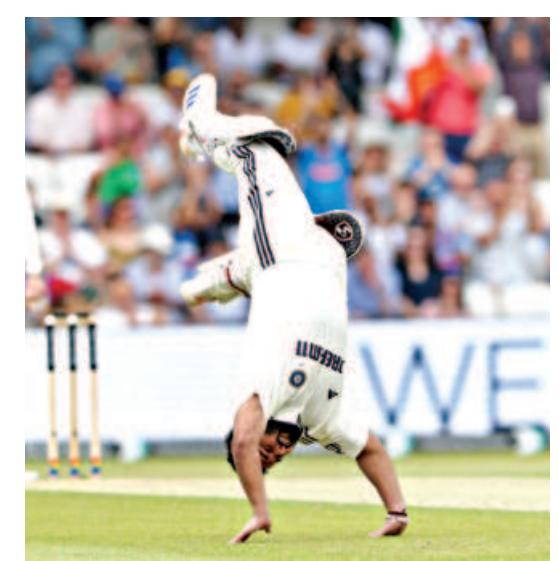
Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, a member of the coaching staff said: "The first match against Bahrain is the most crucial one. We are all focused on that match and if we can win that fixture, we will be confident of making it through to the final round."

A total of 28 players are currently training under head coach Peter Butler for the key assignment, and the squad will be trimmed to 23 members ahead of the team's departure for Myanmar in the early hours of Wednesday.

Five senior players from Bhutan have already returned to join the camp, with Shamsunnahar Sr the latest to arrive. The five other players, including former captain Sabina Khatoon and defender Masura Parvin, continue to be overlooked.

The member of coaching staff told The Daily Star that there will be a few changes from the Jordan tour with some experienced players as well as young ones, especially in defence and midfield, joining.

"This is a much more important assignment. There will definitely be a few inclusions while a few players from the Jordan tour will miss out. The final squad will only be revealed by the coach, but I can say that this squad will have more experience," the member said, asking not to be named.



India's Rishabh Pant performs a somersault following his century on the second day of the first Test against England at Headingley in Leeds yesterday. The wicketkeeper-batter's 134 helped the visitors to 471 in the first innings.

PHOTO: AFP