

BIJOY BLUNDERS AGAIN

Bangladesh opener Anamul Haque Bijoy is not making things easy for himself. The right-hander's woes in international cricket deepened as the 32-year-old registered another duck despite benefitting from a reprieve while being on nought, playing one onto his stumps on a batting-friendly Colombo pitch during the first session on Day 1 of the second Test against Sri Lanka yesterday. Since his return to the national fold in April, Bijoy's only notable knock was a nervy 39 at home against Zimbabwe after which he registered scores of 0, 4, and 0, offering little to justify his place. After his failure on a similar batting-friendly surface in Galle in the first Test, many thought his short trip to international cricket was over. Yet he retained his spot in the second Test, only to disappoint again. A prolific run-scorer in the domestic circuit, and savvy on social media where he has a large following, Bijoy has repeatedly struggled to translate any of that reputation or pedigree into the international arena. And this time, he has failed to find any sort of compatibility with the big stage. If Galle didn't seal his fate, Colombo may well have unless he can find a way to turn his fortunes with something extraordinary in the second innings.

PHOTO: AFP



Mirpur to host all three Pak T20Is

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday announced the itinerary for the upcoming Pakistan series, and as expected, the three T20Is are scheduled to take place on July 20, 22, and 24.

Pakistan are set to arrive on July 16 before they depart on July 25.

The series will be played as part of the build-up to next year's World Cup, to be co-hosted in India and Sri Lanka.

Pakistan's tour will be a reciprocal one after they hosted Bangladesh for three T20Is in May/June this year, all won by the home team and played in Lahore.

All three T20Is will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur and begin at 6:00pm Bangladesh time.

From Bangladesh, Pakistan team will fly to the West Indies to play three T20Is and as many one-day internationals, the schedule of which will be announced later.



16 July - Pakistan men's team arrival
20 July - First T20I in Mirpur
22 July - Second T20I in Mirpur
24 July - Third T20I in Mirpur
25 July - Pakistan depart for West Indies

Batters fail to capitalise on starts and dropped catches

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh batters could not capitalise on their starts, nor did they take advantage of the dropped chances offered by Sri Lankan fielders on day one of the Colombo Test, which saw the hosts in the driving seat at Sinhalese Sports Club Ground yesterday.

Bangladesh ended a rain-interrupted day at 220 for eight, and the feeling was that things could have been much worse.

Except for Anamul Haque Bijoy, who has failed to find his feet since his return to the Test side after a three-year gap through the Zimbabwe series earlier this year, the majority of the batters got starts and spent time at the crease.

But that was about it from the batters, as not even a single Bangladeshi batter managed to hit fifty.

Bijoy was lucky when he got an edge that just fell short before being dropped by the wicketkeeper while still on nought. The right-handed batter would not see his score change, departing for a nought when pacer Asitha Fernando got the better of him with an in-dipper that took the inside-edge and crashed onto the stumps.

More disappointing was the manner of the dismissals of experienced campaigners Mominul Haque and Mushfiqur Rahim. After an early wicket, Mominul and opener Shadman Islam were looking comfortable rebuilding from scratch. Mominul produced a nick that fell short, but the alarm bells still did not ring for the left-hander.

Although Mominul looked fluent



for a while, just like his two dismissals in the first Test in Galle earlier this week, a loss of concentration saw him get out to Dhananjaya de Silva by tamely pushing a wide delivery straight to the man at mid-off, departing for 21.

Last Test's twin centurion -- skipper Nazmul Hossain Shanto -- bided some time at the crease during his 31-ball eight. But the batter fell prey to a nagging length from Vishwa Fernando, producing an edge that Kusal Mendis easily took behind the stumps.

Shadman looked solid during his 46, but when he slashed hard after lunch, he

left Bangladesh in a spot of bother at 76 for four.

Both Litton Das and Mushfiqur survived dropped chances as they strung together a 67-run stand. With not much batting left after them, both were required to take Bangladesh out of danger on a sporting pitch that had something on offer for bowlers, while the ball also came onto the bat nicely.

Litton, having contributed 34, saw a sharp chance taken behind the stumps.

Mushfiqur had been dropped at square-leg once. He slashed another just away from the diving fielder at slip as the ball raced away for four. Yet, having managed to get in, he would pick out the only fielder manning the deep mid-on region, succumbing to his tendency for ill-timed sweeps.

Mushfiqur's departure for 35 meant Mehidy Hasan Miraz had to put up a rearguard resistance with Nayem Hasan. Miraz would poke a Vishwa Fernando delivery to be caught at slip after a 37-run stand with the tailender.

Nayem's gritty 25 before falling to a terrific delivery from Asitha Fernando saw Bangladesh end the day with two wickets in hand in their first innings, with Ebadot and Taijul Islam at the crease.

The Sri Lankan bowlers had got the ball to zip off the surface with both pacers getting movement during particular phases. The spinners too operated well. The Lankans' plans worked well on a batting-friendly surface, and now the onus would be on the Bangladesh bowlers to execute their own plans if the Tigers are to get back into the game.

'Not Test class': India get bashed

AFP, New Delhi

Former players, including Sunil Gavaskar, tore into India on Wednesday, blaming lower-order batting failures, poor bowling, and sloppy fielding for the chastening first Test defeat against hosts England at Headingly.

A young India team, under new captain Shubman Gill and without the retired Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, went down by five wickets as England comfortably chased what should have been a daunting 371 to win on Tuesday's final day.

Five India batters, including Gill, scored hundreds, but two collapses -- from 430-3 to 471 all out in the first innings and 333-4 to 364 in the second -- kept England in the game.

India put down several catches, with Yashavini Jaiswal dropping Ben Duckett on 97 on the final day -- and the opener went on to score 149 to set up victory.



"Full credit to England. Despite India having five centurions, they [England] seemed to have that confidence," Gavaskar said on Sony Sports.

"That is what made them take the final wickets. So that is where India also missed out because those extra runs could have made the difference," added the former captain.

"As far as the fielding was concerned, it's just not the catches, but the outfielding was pretty ordinary. Not Test class."

"Hopefully, lessons have been learned."

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah took 5-83 in the first innings, but was blunted by England during the winning chase and went wicketless.

Veteran left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja was expected to be a force on a wearing fifth-day wicket, but he took just 1-104 as Duckett mercilessly reverse-swept him for a series of boundaries, including one majestic six over deep cover.

"I'm going to be critical of Jadeja because this is a final day pitch," former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar said.

"There was rough for him to play with, and in the end, I know there were a couple of chances there, but we have to expect more from Jadeja."



Bangladesh coach Peter Butler watches as his charges go through a gym session after reaching Yangon yesterday. The team will begin their AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign against Bahrain on June 29.

PHOTO: BFF

Raducanu shoulders Britain's Wimbledon hopes

REUTERS, London

Emma Raducanu reclaimed the British number one spot this month but still looks some way from rediscovering the spark that propelled her career into the stratosphere in 2021.

Yet, despite her lowered expectations, the 22-year-old remains one of Britain's most recognisable female athletes and will arrive at Wimbledon regarded as the country's main hope for a long-awaited women's singles champion.

Few players in the history of tennis have experienced such a rapid and unexpected breakthrough as Raducanu managed in 2021, when she claimed the US Open title and became the first qualifier to win a major in the Open Era (since 1968).

Propelled into the world's top 10 after her fairytale in New York, the Toronto-born player has since grappled with a series of injuries, fluctuating form and frequent coaching changes in her search for consistency.

That remarkable US Open title remains her only trophy, but recent signs -- a quarter-final in Miami, a last-16 finish in Rome, and a strong showing at Queen's Club -- suggest the world number 38 may be



on the right track.

Mark Petchey, the former British pro who once coached Andy Murray, summed up the burden Raducanu continues to carry. "I feel as though everybody's still living in 2021... Unfortunately for Emma, she's living her career in reverse," he said.

Having faced criticism over whether her commercial commitments after the breakthrough distracted her from the day-to-day grind, Raducanu has also had to contend with off-court challenges, including a stalker and a persistent back injury in the lead-up to Wimbledon, starting June 30.

Raducanu can also expect questions during Wimbledon about her friendship with men's champion Carlos Alcaraz, after their announcement that they would play together in a new US Open mixed doubles event fuelled romance rumours.

Yet, despite all the distractions, Raducanu has the game to worry the world's best and is clearly up for the fight as she bids to better her two runs to the fourth round.

Home fans will hope that when Raducanu walks through the Wimbledon gates, the shackles will be released and the carefree tennis she showed as a teenager will return.



Auckland City FC -- against the six-time South American champions Boca Juniors, the ear-splitting noise of the Xeneizes in the stands, and astronomical odds -- pulled off one of the biggest shocks on Tuesday at the Club World Cup in steamy Nashville, Tennessee, where the group game was suspended for nearly 50 minutes due to stormy weather. But not even inclement weather could deter a group of amateurs -- in fact, the only amateur side in the competition who were already eliminated after conceding 15 goals in the first two games. Christian Gray, a physical education teacher back in New Zealand, scored Auckland's only goal in the tournament, earning them a well-deserved 1-1 draw to deny Boca a shot at qualifying for the knockout stage.

PHOTO: REUTERS