

Stokes' outburst and a draw worse than defeat

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

"You want to get a Test hundred against Harry Brook? If you wanted to score a century, you should have batted like you wanted to get it!"

Exhaustion coupled with frustration can make people do funny things. In the case of England captain Ben Stokes, it made him utter these two lines at India's Ravindra Jadeja in the final hour of the riveting fourth Test in Manchester on Sunday, and inadvertently reveal what actually led to his righteous rage that soured what otherwise was a brilliant game of cricket.

Stokes said this right as he handed the ball to Brook, a part-time off-spinner, for the 139th over of India's second innings following a row with Jadeja and his partner Washington Sundar after the duo refused to accept the draw with one hour of play to go.

Jadeja and Sundar, having batted for 50 overs to ensure the draw, were unbeaten on 89 and 80 respectively and with 15 overs left in the day, were in with a chance to reach the triple-figure mark.

England were not amused by this. Having already bowled 138 overs at a stretch, it meant they had to continue their pointless struggle with India leading by 75 runs.



So, handing the ball to Brook for the first time in the match made sense as Stokes later explained after the match, "It got to that point where there was obviously only one result and there was absolutely no chance I was going to risk any of my big fast bowlers."

Stokes' post-match explanation behind bringing in Brooks is creditable enough. Unfortunately for him though, his taunt at Jadeja for having to complete his century against a part-timer was caught on the stump mic.

Firstly, this sledge was nonsensical, as Jadeja did not bring Brooks into the attack, Stokes did. England's top bowlers had already thrown everything they had at the pair but could not break their resilience.

Jadeja and Sundar forced Stokes and Co to accept a draw, which for them, is worse than a defeat.

Under coach Brendan McCullum and captain Stokes, England have adopted the Bazball approach, and have practically sworn off against draws.

Since Stokes took over as Test captain in June of 2022, England have won 16 out of their 23 home Tests, lost five and drawn only twice, including the one against India.

The previous draw had come against Australia in 2023, also in Manchester, but that was a rain-induced stalemate.

This is the first time Bazball has failed to produce a result at home, something that did not sit right with Stokes, who himself had an incredible match as an all-rounder, with a century and a five-wicket haul in the first innings.

Stokes' taunt to Jadeja about not going for a century earlier was based on the frustration of India's ultra-defensive approach to save the Test.

But what Stokes in his indignation forgot, is that for India, drawing the Test and keeping the series alive at 2-1 heading into The Oval was the main goal, and Jadeja and Sundar's hundreds were the icing on the cake. Stokes' outburst at the end was nothing but misdirected anger, which he would be better served to use in the upcoming series decider.

FIH JUNIOR WORLD CUP SQUAD Sabit the lone outsider

SPORTS REPORTER

With domestic competitions irregular and district leagues long dormant, Bangladesh's national hockey teams at various levels have increasingly come to rely on current and former students of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP). In that landscape, Nazmus Sabit Mahmud stands out.

A centre forward, Sabit is the only non-BKSP player included in the preliminary U-21 national squad for the upcoming FIH Junior World Cup. A product of the Ostad Fazlul Haque Hockey Academy in Old Dhaka, Sabit captained Armanitola High School in the inter-school tournament and emerged as both top scorer and best player in the 2023 Second Division Hockey League.

Now a 12th grade student at Kabi Nazrul Islam College, Sabit is chasing a place in the final squad. Aware that every other player comes from BKSP, he sees the challenge clearly but says he's "mentally prepared for the fight."

"I know I am the only player who has been called up beyond the BKSP and I know it is going to be very competitive for me," Sabit told reporters before starting training on the second day at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Sabit also has hockey in his blood. His father, Hazi Mohammad Selim Mahmud, played for Mauthtuli Club, and he shares a family



connection with national forward Rasel Mahmud Jimmy. The relationship goes beyond inspiration: Jimmy often gives him technical advice, especially for penalty corners.

Mehrab Hossain Samin, who captained the team at the AHF Junior Asia Cup, is equally eager to begin World Cup preparations.

"We're really excited to start preparing for the FIH Junior World Cup. We grew up watching our cricket team play on that stage, so it feels like a huge achievement for hockey to finally reach the World Cup too."

"We are practising wearing the jersey which has a photo of the World Cup trophy. This photo is fake but it has been a big thing for us," said Samin, adding that starting camp four months in advance will help build team chemistry, but match exposure remains crucial.

To strengthen their campaign, the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) plans to arrange at least eight practice matches abroad.

General secretary Lt Col (rtd) Rizaul Hasan informed discussions are underway to tour Pakistan for four matches, followed by another four in a European country, but "nothing's finalised yet."

The BHF general secretary further informed Dutch coach Seigfried Aikman is expected to arrive in the first week of August to sign a memorandum of understanding before taking charge of the U-21 side in early September.

"Just speechless to win a fourth Tour de France. Six years in a row on the podium and this one feels especially amazing, and I'm super proud that I can wear this yellow jersey."

Slovenian rider TADEJ POGACAR after winning the Tour de France title for the fourth time



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Afra's quiet punch behind Afeida's football fame

ANISUR RAHMAN

Within Bangladesh's sports fraternity, Afeida Khandokar's name now stands out with prominence.

The captain of the Bangladesh women's football team has earned her recognition on her own terms, leading the team to international successes, including a historic qualification for the Asian Cup in Australia.

Yet, while Afeida shines brightly in the limelight, her elder sister Afra Khandokar has been quietly scripting her own story -- one that, until now, has largely remained out of the public eye.

Afra is not a footballer like her younger sister. Instead, she chose a different battleground: the boxing ring.

For years, she has been a consistent performer, winning gold medals in the Women's Junior Boxing Championship, Bangladesh Youth Games, Victory Day, and Independence Day tournaments.

But despite her steady success, boxing seldom draws the same media spotlight in Bangladesh as football or cricket.

That has begun to change during the 31st Men's and 7th Women's National Boxing Championships, where Afra's performances, coupled with the fame of her footballing sister, have finally brought her deserved attention.

Representing Bangladesh Ansar, Afra is now a semifinalist in the Women's 52kg weight category.

Afra's journey is intertwined with that of her sister's. While she is immensely proud of Afeida's achievements, her own path to sports began with a twist of fate.

"I wanted to be a footballer initially," Afra recalled. "I tried to get admitted to BKSP for football but couldn't. Later, through a talent hunt program and 15 days of training in Dhaka,

graduate in physical education and sports science, she believes in boxing's untapped potential in Bangladesh.

"Football and cricket dominate here, but boxing is progressing," Afra said. "If we get long-term training, we can bring results from abroad too."

Afra's determination reflects in her steady climb. After a silver medal in her debut national



I was admitted to boxing. At first, I regretted not playing football, but now there's no regret -- I'm doing well in boxing."

Their father, Khandaker Arif Hassan Prince, has been instrumental in nurturing their sporting ambitions. Their parents routinely travel to Dhaka from their hometown to support their daughters, whether it's on the football field or inside the boxing ring.

While Afeida leads Bangladesh's football revolution, Afra dreams of leaving her mark in boxing -- not only as a fighter, but eventually as a coach. A

women's championship, she's now within striking distance of gold.

For Afra, her younger sister's fame also illuminates her journey. "It's a matter of pride for me and my family. We are really happy for Afeida," she said.

In many ways, the Khandokar sisters represent two sides of the same coin -- one basking in mainstream glory, the other quietly punching through barriers in a less celebrated sport. But together, they embody a family's relentless passion for sports, rooted in Satkhira and reaching national prominence.

Deshmukh wins Women's Chess World Cup

FIDE

Divya Deshmukh, the 19-year-old International Master from Nagpur, Maharashtra, etched her name into chess history by defeating Grandmaster Humpy Koneru 1.5-0.5 in the tiebreaks to win the Women's World Cup in the Georgian city of Batumi on Monday.

She now follows in the footsteps of GM Alexandra Kosteniuk (2021) and GM Aleksandra Goryachkina (2023) as the third-ever winner of this prestigious title.

With this remarkable win, Divya Deshmukh is now not only the 2025 Women's World Cup Champion, but also one of the most exciting young stars in the world of chess.

Divya also not only secured the USD 50,000 first prize, but also automatically earned the Grandmaster (GM) title -- the highest title in chess.

She is now India's fourth woman to become a grandmaster, which is significant because before the event started, she had none of the three norms required to become a grandmaster.

After the final game, an emotional Divya embraced her mother before giving a short interview: "It's hard for me to speak now. Of course, this definitely means a lot, but there is a lot more to achieve, so I am hoping that this is just the start," she said.

12-year-old swimmer hailed as 'phenomenally talented'

AFP, Singapore

The 12-year-old schoolgirl Yu Zidi was labelled "phenomenally talented" by her rivals after narrowly missing out on a medal at swimming's world championships on Monday.

China's Yu finished fourth in the women's 200m medley in Singapore in her first world championships final, as Canadian star Summer McIntosh took gold.

Yu finished the race in 2min 09.21sec, missing out on bronze by 0.06sec.

American Alex Walsh, who took silver, said Yu was "phenomenally talented at such a young age".

"I think it will be interesting to see how she takes this meet and translates it into the future swims she has because she's definitely got a really bright future," said Walsh.

Yu was fastest off the blocks and she was in third place before fading towards the end of the race.

She will also compete in Singapore in the 400m medley and 200m butterfly.

Canada's Mary Sophie Harvey, who beat Yu to the bronze, said the Chinese swimmer can be a force at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"She might have more pressure by the end of the meet because she's been swimming really well so far," said Harvey.

"I used to be a junior and I used to think that it's just gaining experience for the future, and I think going into LA we're probably going to see her a lot more."

Yu discovered swimming as a six-year-old in order to cool off in China's boiling-hot summers.

The minimum age at the world championships is 14 but younger swimmers can compete if -- like Yu -- they meet the qualifying standard.

Hampton's 'fairy tale' hour in 4k clarity

STAR SPORTS DESK

Finals make heroes. Penalty shootouts carve legends; especially out of goalkeepers. But Hannah Hampton's story peels back like an onion: layered; stinging; unexpected.

She was never meant to become immortal with gloves: not with an eye condition that still affects her depth perception; not after being sidelined for months; not with the weight of Mary Earps' legacy hanging over her hands.

Yet on a cool July evening in Switzerland, she stood tall on the biggest stage in European football, saving penalties and hearts alike as England beat reigning world champions Spain to retain the UEFA Women's Euro title on Sunday.

Once a striker in her youth, Hampton's journey to becoming England's No. 1 was anything but conventional.

Born with a serious eye condition (strabismus) that affects her depth perception, she was advised early on to stay away from football. But her family's move to Spain at age five ignited something deeper. Living there for five years, she picked up the language, joined Villarreal's academy, and fell in love with the game.

It wasn't long before she returned to England and made waves. A switch from striker to goalkeeper during her development at Stoke City led to a meteoric rise.

By 16, she was in Birmingham City's



first team, dazzling with her feet as much as her hands. "Her passing range is second to none," recalled Ellen White, her former team-mate.

Technically gifted and fiercely determined, Hampton made her senior England debut in 2022; fittingly against Spain. That same year, she celebrated the Euro win from the sidelines but was soon dropped due to behaviour concerns.

The road back was hard; but she made it. "You can't let all the media scrutiny win," she had said after her recall in 2023, when manager Sarina Wiegman noted she had "sorted out personal issues".

There was additional pressure coming into this tournament. Mary Earps, a two-time FIFA Best Goalkeeper and England icon, had announced her surprise retirement five weeks before the Euros.

Hampton, still young and still fighting

to prove herself, stepped up and left no doubt.

Against Sweden in the quarters, she saved two penalties. And in the final, she denied two-time Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati before sealing the win with a crucial stop from Mariona Caldentey.

"In 120 minutes, the team worked so hard for us all," Hampton said after the final. "So the penalty shootout was my moment to say thank you."

Coach Wiegman, beaming with pride, summed it up best: "Her journey has been incredible. It's a little bit like a fairy tale to stop those penalties in a Euros final."

At 24, with imperfect eyesight but perfect composure, Hampton -- on the biggest stage of her career -- verified the notion that fairy tales are written by those remain defiant.