

All eyes on Mushy, but Ireland hope to spoil party

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Ahead of Bangladesh's second and final Test against Ireland, beginning today in Mirpur, veteran Mushfiquur Rahim's landmark hundredth Test has taken centre stage, leaving everything else aside.

The veteran is the longest-serving international cricketer currently active and, as Bangladesh play their 156th Test on Wednesday, Mushfiquur reaching the landmark 100 Tests, becoming Bangladesh's first, would be a testament to how essential he has been in the Test circuit over a period of 20 years, holding the baton of Bangladesh's middle order in the toughest format.

A glowing Mushfiquur stepped out from the dressing room yesterday, shaking hands with members of the media before a photoshoot with journalists at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium turf. Some of the members of the media who lined up for a photo opportunity have seen

BCB will mark Mushfiquur's 100th Test match with a 10-minute program after the toss of the second Test, featuring several activities, including the presentation of a special Test cap, a commemorative cap casket, a special crest and an autographed jersey for the 38-year-old batter.

BCB announced on Tuesday that students and teachers from schools, colleges, universities and madrasas will receive free entry for the second Test.

Mushfiquur from the beginning, some are new, but Mushfiquur's durability has astounded all.

Bangladesh have played very little compared to the big sides in Test cricket, but Mushfiquur's longevity is even more pronounced because of this facet. To put into context, Ian Bell, who was playing just his second Test when Mushfiquur made his debut at Lord's, went on to retire after 118 Tests in 2015.

At yesterday's pre-match presser, Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons said on Mushfiquur: "I think first of all, we have to acknowledge his professionalism and his longevity and just his desire to play cricket for Bangladesh.

"Because to get 100 Test matches, Bangladesh doesn't play 15 a year, so it's taken him a period of time and we must appreciate that."

Mushfiquur's attention to detail has kept him ahead of the curve, outlasting the other four of the Big Five of Bangladesh cricket.

"At this level, you cannot be stagnant... you have to always try and get better," Simmons said, adding that Mushfiquur has "evolved many times".

Simmons said his simple advice to the veteran has been to enjoy the game. "You need to be enjoying what you're doing... once you're performing, you determine how long you want to play," he told Mushfiquur during the South Africa Test.

Simmons acknowledged that fitness, performance and the "desire to continue" are things Mushfiquur already has; now only he determines when he brings down the curtain. Bangladesh's Test side would certainly hope that time is still far away.

There is a feeling that the Mirpur Test may not proceed for the whole of five days, given Mirpur's spin conduciveness. Simmons said that the wicket appears to be looking good for batting for two to two-and-a-half days. Mushfiquur might be taking note, while Ireland middle-order batter Harry Tector joked there would be "certainly not any freebies".

"I don't think he needs any freebies. He's such a good player," Tector said.

For Ireland, there is an opportunity to spoil the party. "Hope so, yes," head coach Heinrich Malan said.

"We're preparing the same way that we always do... you've heard Harry speak about trying to level the series. We go into it with the same mindset."

MORSALIN ENDS Bangladesh's long wait



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh fans erupt as Sheikh Morsalin scores in the 11th minute to give the hosts the lead over India in a 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifier at the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

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Sheikh Morsalin ended Bangladesh's long wait for a victory against India with an 11th-minute strike, as the hosts secured their first win of the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign with a 1-0 triumph in front of a roaring capacity crowd at the National Stadium in Dhaka on Tuesday.

The Bangladesh No. 7 scored his seventh international goal, expertly

threading the ball between the legs of a hesitant Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, following a superb square pass from Rakib Hossain on a quick counter-attack. The goal evoked memories of 22 years ago, when Bangladesh had last defeated India at the same ground, courtesy of a golden goal from Matiur Rahman Munna in a SAFF Championship semifinal.

Despite the early lead, there was plenty of time left on the clock, and with

Bangladesh's history of conceding late goals against India, the home side had little room to relax. Under the watchful eye of Hamza Choudhury, who was influential across the pitch, the home side defended their slim advantage with determination.

Hamza, who scored two breathtaking goals against Nepal last week, came close to doubling the lead just before half-time, sending a powerful left-footed volley

narrowly over the bar in the 43rd minute.

India pressed hard in the second half, but their lack of clinical finishing kept the Blue Tigers at bay.

Bangladesh also had to cope with injuries to defenders Tariq Kazi and Zayyan Ahmed, but the team's collective effort -- including defensive contributions from wide forwards Rakib and Faysal Ahmed Fahim -- helped secure a momentous victory.

'Can't make 180 million people happy anywhere else'

ANISUR RAHMAN

Sheikh Morsalin may have delivered the decisive strike against India last night, but it was Hamza Choudhury who anchored Bangladesh's resistance, marshalling the backline and helping end a 22-year winless run against their neighbours.

The Leicester City midfielder credited the team's collective mentality, noting how both he and Shami Shome had tried to raise the group's standards since joining the squad.

"I feel really really happy because we won. I just joined and Shami joined late. We just try and add a bit of quality, a bit of mentality. Today we showed we have that mentality," Hamza told reporters in the post-match presser after his side's penultimate fixture of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers.

He reflected on recent matches where Bangladesh dominated possession but faltered late -- leading to elimination before yesterday's match -- and contrasted that with last night's



display: "Today we showed the complete opposite... maybe not so good with the ball, but we showed we can be resilient."

Even without the captain's armband, Hamza was a vocal organiser at the back, guiding the team through India's pressure spells. Asked to place the achievement alongside his English FA Cup win with Leicester City, he replied that the significance was incomparable.

"There are 180 million people that we all make happy today... you can't really compete with that anywhere else. So, yeah, it's definitely right up there."

For Hamza, the fixture carried the weight of a final. "Twenty-three years people wait to qualify

for tournaments or win big games. This is our biggest game," he said.

He admitted the win against India fulfilled a personal ambition too. "You can have more than one dream," he said, adding that he remained confident Bangladesh would one day qualify for a major tournament.

Head coach Javier Cabrera shared the credit widely, choosing not to highlight individuals. Instead, he praised the collective effort from starters to late substitutes.

"It's been everyone... absolutely every single player performed well today," Cabrera said, adding that even for himself, recovering from earlier setbacks had not been easy.

BPL in limbo over missed bank guarantee

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Chaos seems to have become synonymous with the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), and the 12th edition is no exception.

Despite a five-day extension to secure mandatory bank guarantees from all five franchises, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) remains off track.

On November 13, the BPL governing council extended the deadline for submitting the BDT 10 crore guarantees to November 18 after several teams requested more time.

However, by the final day, only three franchises -- Dhaka Capitals, Rajshahi Warriors and Rangpur Riders -- had

submitted guarantees, with one reportedly depositing less than required.

Chattogram Royals and Sylhet Titans have yet to provide any guarantee.

BPL governing council secretary Iftekhar Rahman Mithu told The Daily Star yesterday that the board might need to extend the deadline again.

"If any franchise fails to provide the bank guarantee, their franchise fee of BDT 2 crore will be forfeited. But proceeding without the guarantee risks repeating past issues. Teams can also submit a Fixed Deposit lien, which we can break at any time," he said.

The players' auction is scheduled for November 23, but further delays in guarantees could postpone it.



Hosts Bangladesh clinched their second straight win in the Women's Kabaddi World Cup, defeating a relatively inexperienced Germany 57-27 at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. They had earlier started their campaign in style on Monday with a 42-22 victory over African champions Uganda.

PHOTO: BKF

