



After Bangladesh set a 509-run target for visiting Ireland on Day 4 of the second and final Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday, Taijul Islam trapped Ireland skipper and opener Andy Balbirnie in front in the sixth over -- making him his 247th Test victim, one more than Shakib.

## MOST WICKETS IN TESTS FOR BANGLADESH

Name	Matches	Wickets
Taijul Islam	57*	249
Shakib Al Hasan	71	246
Mehidy Hasan Miraz	56*	209
Mohammad Rafique	33	100
Mashrafe Bin Mortaza	36	78

"I would say that whoever was playing in their time was the best. Taijul is the best right now. Rafique bhai was the best in his time. Shakib is world-class... Taijul's importance is very high, especially when playing in Asia. Everyone views it that way."

Bangladesh specialised batting coach Mohammad Ashraful

## Failure to convert: A tedious routine

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are in pole position to whitewash Ireland in the ongoing two-match Test series, which is hardly surprising when playing at home against a new Test side.

Having won the first match in Sylhet by an innings and 47 runs, Bangladesh have dominated the visitors in the second game in Mirpur as well, with Ireland needing 333 more runs to win and only four wickets in hand on the final day.

While the result seemed almost predetermined even before the series began, what would trouble the Tigers most is the number of missed opportunities by the batters.

Bangladesh held off declaring in the second innings of the ongoing Test because Mominul Haque was close to his 14th Test hundred -- which would have made him the holder of most hundreds in the format for Bangladesh.

But his innings ended on 87 with a soft dismissal, prompting skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto to declare



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

immediately after setting a 509-run target.

This was not the only instance of Mominul getting close to such milestones. He missed out on a hundred in the National Cricket League just before the Ireland series, was dismissed for 82 in the only innings in the first Test in Sylhet, and fell for a well-made 63 in the first innings of this Test -- making it three consecutive innings of falling just short of the three-figure mark.

It is not just Mominul. Several batters have failed to capitalise on good starts. Shadman Islam has missed out on two centuries in this series. Mahmudul Hasan Joy looked set for a double ton in Sylhet but fell for 171.

"He probably doesn't worry much about the runs. However, my personal opinion is that when I used to talk to [Sachin] Tendulkar, he would also take a lot of time to score those last 10 runs," Bangladesh specialised batting coach Mohammad Ashraful said about Mominul.

Ashraful also appeared displeased with the manner of Mominul's dismissal -- a simple catch at silly mid off -- in the second innings.

"What's important is whether his process is correct or not. Is his process right? For example, he got out in the first innings; you can't say anything about that. It was totally unlucky," Ashraful added.

According to the former Bangladesh skipper, the mental required to convert starts into bigger knocks must be developed in domestic cricket.

Ashraful believes that reminding players about the importance of building an innings will be a key part of his coaching role. Skipper Shanto has five fifties and eight hundreds in Tests -- a conversion rate of 61 percent after reaching fifty -- and Ashraful feels others need similar reminders.

"Like Shanto's rate -- his conversion rate is 61 percent after a fifty. If you can just remind each player that your rate of scoring a hundred after 50 is 61 percent, meaning the hard work you do to score 30 to 50 makes it easier afterwards... it will be possible to perform," he said.

Joy, Mushfiqur Rahim, and Shanto all got centuries in this series, but there could have been more. In terms of conversion, the Ireland Tests serve as a harsh lesson to improve the mental side of batting.

## What to WATCH

T SPORTS  
Bangladesh vs Ireland  
2nd Test, Day 5  
Live from 9:30 am  
STAR SPORTS 1  
India vs South Africa  
1st Test, Day 2

Live from 9:30 am  
SONY SPORTS 1  
Asia Cup Rising Stars final  
Bangladesh A vs Pakistan  
Shaheens  
Live from 8:30 pm  
STAR SPORTS SELECT

HD1  
Premier League  
Leeds vs Aston Villa  
Live from 8:00 pm  
Arsenal vs Tottenham  
Hotspur  
Live from 10:30 pm

# HEAD SERVES

## England their own 'Bazball' medicine

AGENCIES

Makeshift opener Travis Head blazed an 83-ball 123 to propel Australia to an eight-wicket victory over England inside just two days in the Ashes opener at Perth Stadium. The frenetic contest, the shortest Ashes Test by overs since 1888, kept the crowd of nearly 50,000 enthralled.

England, having set Australia a target of 205 after being bowled out for 164 in their second innings, looked poised to defend the total. Scott Boland starred with four for 33, triggering a collapse that claimed nine wickets after tea.

**"It's got to be right up there. Wow. That was incredible to witness. That innings from Travis Head was out of this world. He played some outrageous shots and even when he mistimed a few, they still seemed to find the gap."**

Australia stand-in skipper Smith

**"Little bit shell-shocked, it was pretty phenomenal from Head,"** Stokes said. It's pretty raw, pretty emotional, but that was some knock. We tried three or four different plans to get him, but when he's going like a train he's very hard to stop."

England captain Ben Stokes

The tourists had earlier posted 172 in their first innings.

Head, stepping in for Usman Khawaja, who left with back trouble, greeted England with an

Travis Head smashed a 69-ball century, the third-fastest by an Australian, matching David Warner's 69-ball ton in 2012, and behind Adam Gilchrist (57 balls, 2006) and Jack Gregory (early 1920s). The fastest century of all time is Brendon McCullum's 54-ball masterpiece in Christchurch against Australia in 2016.

aggressive display, giving them a taste of their own 'Bazball' medicine in the third session. He smashed Brydon Carse for six over third man to bring up 50 and added four boundaries off Ben Stokes' second over.

Marnus Labuschagne contributed a rapid 51 from 49 balls, while debutant Jake Weatherald managed 23 before falling to Carse. But Head stole the show, bringing up one of Australia's fastest centuries with a daring upper-cut. His innings included 16 boundaries and four sixes, culminating when he lofted Carse to Ollie Pope at deep midwicket, leaving Labuschagne to complete the chase.

Stand-in captain Steve Smith, unbeaten on two, sealed the win with a single, completing a thrilling chase that highlighted both explosive batting and incisive bowling from Mitchell Starc, Boland, and debutant Brendan Doggett.



Wow, what a couple of days. It's been unbelievable. We'll celebrate, it's an Ashes series, we're 1-0 up, it's a fantastic start.

Travis Head

PHOTO: REUTERS



## WOMEN ENSURE MAIDEN WORLD CUP MEDAL

Bangladesh players break out in unbridled joy after beating Thailand by 40-31 points to book a place in the semifinals and confirm a maiden medal in the Women's Kabaddi World Cup at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. With three wins from four matches, Bangladesh emerged second in Pool A and will meet Pool B winners Chinese Taipei in the second semifinal today. Defending champions India, meanwhile, will square off against Iran in the first semifinal.

PHOTO: BKF



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

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## ASIA CUP RISING STARS

### Bangladesh A take on Pakistan Shaheens in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Akbar Ali-led Bangladesh A will take on Pakistan Shaheens in the final of the Asia Cup Rising Stars tournament at West End Park International Cricket Stadium in Doha today. The match would get underway at 8:30 pm Bangladesh Time.

U-19 World Cup winning captain Akbar Ali is yet to find a way through to the national team even as many of his peers have made the step up. Yet, under his captaincy, the A side are now hoping for silverware, especially after beating tournament favourites India in a thrilling game on Friday.

The task, however, is not expected to be easy as Shaheens have come to the final unbeaten. Batter Maaz Sadaqat has been in fine form with 235 runs, batting at a strike rate of over 180 this tournament. Sufyan Muqeem, the left-arm wrist-spinner, has claimed seven wickets and will be vital to Shaheens' bid to win the tournament.

Ripon Mondol, the highest wicket-taker in the tournament, held his nerve in a crucial Super Over performance against India, and Bangladesh would be hoping he leads the charge with the ball.

Habibur Rahman Sohan played an important hand in the semi-final against India, alongside SM Meherob who hit an 18 ball 48. Along with Jishan Alam and others, the onus will be on the batters to continue their good run of form if Bangladesh A are to achieve something significant on Sunday.



Dinajpur district team footballers celebrate their thrilling 3-2 victory over Sirajganj district team in following an extra-time winner from Yeasin Ali in the final of the National Football Championship at the Birshreshtha Shaheen Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. Sagar Mohanta and Prodip Soren had given Dinajpur a 2-0 by the hour-mark but Uzzal Hossain and Hassan Ali scored to force the match into extra time where Yeasin sealed the deal for Dinajpur. Yeasin was adjudged the player of the final while Sirajganj goalkeeper Abul Kashem was named best goalkeeper of the tournament.

## SHORT CORNER

### AFC U-17 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

#### Bangladesh make flying start

Bangladesh made a commanding start to their AFC U-17 Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers campaign with a resounding 5-0 victory over Timor-Leste in their opening Group A match in China on Saturday. Bangladesh will play their second match against Brunei on Monday.



#### Soumya hits career-best 186

Khulna Division opener Soumya Sarkar smashed a career-best 186 to lift his side to 328-6 against Mymensingh Division on Day 1 of the fifth round of NCL. In the same match, all-rounder Shuvagata Hom, who trapped Soumya lbw -- reached 300 wickets, becoming only the second Bangladeshi to achieve the double of 300 first-class scalps and 6,000 runs. Meanwhile in Cox's Bazar, Dhaka Division's Marshall Ayub became the fourth Bangladeshi to enter the 10,000-run club in first-class cricket, reaching the milestone en route to his 28th century.

\*\*Read The Daily Star website for full stories.