

VVS LAXMAN

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When the respective teams for the T20I series were announced, I felt Bangladesh had a great chance of putting it past India, given their all-round experience – apart from their pace bowling -- and the fact that Virat Kohli had been rested. All that has changed in the last few days. The visitors will be without their most experienced and versatile player, skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who has been suspended from international cricket. They will also miss pedigreed opener Tamim Iqbal.

It will be a test of their character now. How they come to terms with these debilitating blows remains to be seen. One thing is for sure, they are a formidable white-ball force and will be no pushovers, despite the recent setbacks which could prove decisive.

India will be disappointed at not being able to win the series against South Africa. These three matches are another exercise in preparation for next year's Twenty20 World Cup, and India will look to get into the winning habit because momentum is of huge value in this format.

In Virat's absence, I believe KL Rahul should bat at No. 3, making it a straight fight between him and Shikhar Dhawan to be Rohit Sharma's opening partner when the captain returns. This series will also offer Rishabh Pant a great opportunity to showcase his mettle. Away from public glare during the South Africa Test series, he would have had time to reflect on and fine-tune his game plan. He is an impact player and a proven match-winner, and once he cracks the code of making runs at the top level, he will be a different force altogether.

India's middle-order might look a little inexperienced, but they have proved their worth in the IPL, and I see no reason why they can't translate that at the international grade. I will watch Shivam Dube's progress with great interest. He is a rare breed in Indian cricket, a hard-hitting batsman who can bowl medium-pace. He must be persisted with to see what he can offer, having got his chance because of Hardik Pandya's injury.

Despite the return of Yuzvendra Chahal, the bowling is shy on experience. Rohit will face a big challenge handling the resources, but given how much white-ball cricket lies ahead, it is essential to have back-ups, especially for regular pacemen Jasprit Bumrah and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. Ravindra Jadeja's absence means there will be greater onus and responsibility on Krunal Pandya's left-arm spin, and he will be eager to grab his chances with both hands.

Gameplan

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While Mushfiqur Rahim and Bangladesh deserve a lot of credit for their first win in nine attempts against India in Twenty20 Internationals, there are plenty of lessons that the hosts can garner from their second successive loss in this format.

Especially when batting first on tacky surfaces like in New Delhi against Bangladesh and in Bengaluru against South Africa in September, it is important to pace the innings properly. Equally, the set batsman must bat deep, into the 17th or 18th over for the team to post a competitive total. Neither happened in India's case.

While all this is groundwork with the Twenty20 World Cup in mind, the younger players in the side must not look at every match as an audition for the main event. That will inevitably lead to tentativeness and a veering away from their natural game that has served them well and brought them to this level. There were glimpses of brilliance from KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer but they didn't last long enough. Shikhar Dhawan was just about shedding off a shaky start when he was run out after a mix-up with Rishabh Pant.

I was impressed with the heart and skill shown by Aminul Islam, the young leggie. He was not afraid to flight the ball on a responsive surface, and was rewarded with the important scalps of Rahul and Shreyas. Indeed, India would not have reached 148 if it was not for the heroics of Krunal Pandya and Washington Sundar, who has worked very hard on his T20 batting and is reaping the rewards. The momentum was with India at the break and they started well with the ball, but there were thwarted by a master class from Mushfiqur. In Shakib Al Hasan's absence, he was always going to be the key man, and he showed how to bat on the tricky pitch by playing strokes mainly behind square. To the spinners, he played either the conventional or the reverse sweep, while to the quicks, he went deep into the crease and played the ball late. Admittedly, he was lucky to be dropped once by Krunal Pandya and also in the second over of Chahal when India didn't review leg before decision, but that was no more than he deserved.

Chahal was India's best bowler on his T20 return, but Mushfiqur settled the issue by getting into Khaleel Ahmed's head in the 19th over with four successive boundaries. Bangladesh have thrown the gauntlet down. It is up to India to respond going into the second match in Rajkot.

VVS LAXMAN

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India can look back on an excellent come-from-behind series win against a competitive Bangladesh unit with pride, and in the knowledge, that their quest to identify prospects for next year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia is on the right track.

After the defeat in New Delhi, the established duo of YuzvendraChahal and skipper Rohit Sharma stood out in the Rajkot victory. Come the decider, and the younger guns put their hands up, which was particularly heartening given the pressure and the occasion.

KL Rahul provided another glimpse of why he is rated so highly with an excellent knock on a tricky surface in Nagpur. He did so by sticking to his strengths and playing conventional strokes, relying more on timing than power. Equally impressive was ShreyasIyer, who has gone a long way towards establishing himself as the elusive No. 4. When KL was blazing away, Shreyas was content to play second fiddle. Once he became the lead partner with a struggling Rishabh Pant for company, he took over the lead role, shifting gears effortlessly. Not only did he showcase his ability, he also showed intelligence by targeting the sixth bowler. That's a great combination to possess at No. 4 where, depending on the situation, you will have to embrace different avatars.

India were a bowler light after leaving out Krunal Pandya. That, combined with the heavy dew, meant 174 wasn't as many as they appeared, and Bangladesh seemed to have things in control at 110 for two when Rohit showcased his leadership skills. He used his resources beautifully and his strong words in the team huddle after Mithun's dismissal galvanized his troops. ShivamDube, in only his third international and more of a batting all-rounder, started to mix his pace up and was rewarded with three wickets, but the real star was Deepak Chahar, who picked up a hat-trick on his way to the best ever T20I figures.

Chahar's evolution has been fascinating to track. At one stage an out-and-out swing bowler, he has added more weapons to his repertoire and is now capable of taking wickets at any stage of an innings. He has the rare knack of getting into the minds of batsmen and therefore anticipating their moves. He also showed great heart in embracing the lead bowler's role, and his exploits will have gladdened the think-tank more than anything else.

Bangladesh will rue lost opportunities, especially in Nagpur, for not being able to build on their win in Delhi, but India seized the key moments, reflected in their 2-1 victory.