

Ranji Trophy: Shardul Thakur's five-for puts Mumbai in command vs Bengal

Kolkata: Mumbai pacer Shradul Thakur's third successive five-wicket haul left hosts Bengal staring at another humiliating defeat at home in their Ranji Trophy cricket Group 'A' fixture at Eden Gardens today.

Fresh from his nine-wicket match haul in their win against UP, Thakur (5/37) triggered the collapse as Bengal, despite playing with eight batsmen, found themselves in tatters at 130 for six on day two, still trailing by 284 with four wickets in hands, to Mumbai's first innings total of 414.

Bengal still require 135 runs to avoid a repeat of follow on for second successive match, as Mumbai will now press for a bonus point win.



Mumbai bowler Shardul Thakur appeals for a wicket during the second day of the Ranji Trophy match against Bengal in Kolkata on Monday. Pic/PTI

Amid the ruins, Manoj Tiwary stood tall with a well-made 63 off 78 balls with 40 runs coming in boundaries as his elegant stroke-making was the only bright spot in an otherwise Bengal's gloomy day.

Having begun with three consecutive boundaries, Tiwary completed his 50 from 64 balls with the team on 66 for four that summed up Bengal's batting plight. But Thakur produced the gem of a delivery to dismiss Tiwary, who was beaten by the pace and bounce to take a thin inside edge behind stumps as Bengal's batting crumbled once again.

Thakur then castled Shukla (11) for his fourth five-wicket haul and third in three matches to take his tally to 23 from four matches this season.

Leading the pace attack in absence of Zaheer Khan and Dhawal Kulkarni, Thakur said: "I took it up as a challenge and all my hard work is giving results. I did not have a good debut season, a couple years ago. But I'm confident now as I'm bowling in the right areas."

The 23-year-old pacer had taken six wickets against Railways, and against UP he had six wickets in the first innings and three in the second.

Poor fielding and and dropped catches once again became the order of the day for Bengal as Mumbai propped up by a 43-run last wicket partnership by Siddhesh Lad (64) and Kshemal Waigankar (13 not out) posted a commanding 414 in their first innings.

There were three more dropped catches on the day, taking their total count to six in Mumbai's first innings, as the match seemed to be slipping out of Bengal's hands much like what had happened against Karnataka when they had lost by nine wickets.

Resuming at their overnight score of 306 for four, Mumbai skipper Suryakumar Yadav was dropped on 26 by Subhojit Banerjee, who failed to hold on to a low catch, letting down bowler Ashok Dinda big time.

The Bengal pace spearhead tested the Mumbai skipper with his accurate off stump line and generated swing to create pressure from the club house end, something that helped Pritam Chakraborty bag his maiden first-class wicket in Yadav (36).

Bengal captain Laxmi Ratan Shukla is clean bowled on the second day of the Ranji Trophy match against Mumbai in Kolkata on Monday. Pic/PTI

Restricted at the other end, the Mumbai skipper threw his bat at a wide delivery only to get a thin edge behind the stumps to give Bengal the first break at 324 for 5 in 94.5 overs.

Continuing his fiery spell, Dinda claimed the scalp of young Sarfaraz Khan. The 17-year-old, who had become the third youngest Indian first-class debutant, was out leg before for 1.

Wilkin Mota (4), Shradul Thakur (2) and Iqbal Abdulla (7) went in quick succession as they were 371 for nine, but poor catching once again meant Mumbai hurried past the psychological 400-mark.

Bengal could have easily bowled out Mumbai for 391 but Lad got a reprieve on 47 as Abhimanyu Easwaran dropped a sitter at deep point boundary as the Mumbai batsman posted his fourth FC half-century in his comeback innings.

Lad was again dropped on 60 with Sudeep Chatterjee putting down an easy catch at slip but the damage was done for Bengal by that time.

For Bengal, skipper Shukla and Veer Pratap claimed three wickets each, while Dinda and Chakraborty got two apiece.

Brief Scores:

Mumbai: 414 in 121.2 overs (**Siddhesh Lad 64**; Laxmi Ratan Shukla 3/58, Veer Pratap Singh 3/114, Pritam Chakraborty 2/82, Ashok Dinda 2/107).

Bengal: 130 for six in 46 overs (Manoj Tiwary 63; **Shardul Thakur 5/37**).