

Golden girls shoot to glory

BISHWAJIT ROY

Sharmin Akhter Ratna scripted history for Bangladesh in shooting when she won both the individual and team event gold in the women's 10m air rifle competitions of the 11th South Asian Games at the Gulshan Shooting Range yesterday.

The expectation was that the three Bangladeshi young prospects Ratna, Syeda Sadia Sultana and Tripti Datta would do something special in the regional showpiece event, but what the trio has done in battle of nerve, accuracy and unbridled emotion was beyond anybody's guess.

It was a day for Ratna, who transformed her years of training into near-perfection when it mattered most. The 21-year-old from Magura shattered the Games record by scoring 499.4 out of 509. The previous best was India's Radhika Varalle's 498.1 in Colombo 2006.

After scoring 398 in her first ten shots, Ratna went into the shoot-off as favourite and from there on she didn't look behind to complete a magnificent double that no other shooter of the country has achieved before in any international meet.

Sadia took the silver with an aggregate of 498.3 points, but Tripti, who score of 396 earned Bangladesh the team event gold, missed the individual bronze by a whisker.

India's Mampi Das with a total of 496.9 points, 0.1 more than Tripti, took the individual bronze in an exciting battle that kept everybody on the edge of their seats.

Mampi (394), Sruti Tushar Bhatepatil (391), Tejaswini Manojrao (390), won the silver in the team event while Nazis Khan (386), Nosheen Maqsood Ali (382) and Naheda Naqvi (379) took the bronze for Pakistan.

Ratna is very popular for her carefree approach and there was no shortage of confidence when she was talking with the reporters after her dazzling effort, which helped the hosts to make a bright start in the shooting event on the opening day.

"I always love to dream something big. I achieved my best score today and so far it's best achievement in my career also and I think self-confidence was the key behind my success apart from my coach's contributions. Now my target is to hunt gold in a bigger international stage like Olympics," said a delighted Ratna, whose efforts stunned everybody after the way she improved her previous best.

"India had the favourites tag but we had the confidence and it was just a matter for us to prove ourselves in the field. And we did exactly that today. That's it," said Ratna referring to their brilliant team effort, which almost outclassed their Indian challengers.

"Magura is known to people because of Shakib (Al Hasan) but from now on it will be known because of me also," said the smiling Ratna.

The battle of two Bangladeshi shooters Ratna and Sadia was the most exciting part in the day's event as the latter pushed the champion shooter hard but finally lost as Ratna bounced back

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

VFOR VICTORY: The golden girls of Bangladesh (L-R) Sadia Sultana, Sharmin Akhter Ratna and Tripti Datta are over the moon after winning the women's 10m air rifle team event gold at the National Shooting Range yesterday.

Bowlers call NCL shots

SPORTS REPORTER

On a day for bowlers, it was left-handed batsman Faisal Hossain who stood tall to save Chittagong from an early hiccup against Dhaka on the first day in one of the three fourth round matches of National Cricket League at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday.

Mohammad Sharif, who captured five wickets for 98 runs, initiated the early damage but experienced campaigner Faisal stopped the rot for Chittagong during his 174-ball 154 as Chittagong scored 342 for nine by stumps.

The left-hander clobbered 19 fours and five sixes while Arman Hossain added 48 and Kazi Kamrul contributed unbeaten 43 batting at number nine.

Rajshahi left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib continued his rich vein of form with six wickets for 53 runs while Sohrawardi Shuvo, who is also a left-arm spinner, claimed three wickets for 92 runs as

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MEDALS TABLE

Country	G	S	B	Ttl
India	15	3	7	25
Pakistan	6	11	4	21
Sri Lanka	3	9	5	17
Bangladesh	3	4	9	16
Nepal	0	0	6	6
Afghanistan	0	0	5	5

What to WATCH

- BTV**
SOUTH ASIAN GAMES MEN'S FOOTBALL
Nepal v Bhutan
Live from 3:30pm
Bangladesh v Maldives
Live from 6:15pm
- ATN Bangla**
SOUTH ASIAN GAMES CRICKET
India v Nepal
Live from 1:00pm
- ESPN**
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm
English Premier League
Fulham v Portsmouth
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)

Tigers open tour today

Face New Zealand in T20



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will kick off the New Zealand trip today with the only T20 International at the Seddon Park in Hamilton.

The match starts at 12pm Bangladesh Standard Time with Sky Sports beaming the live coverage.

Aftab Ahmed will make an international comeback after more than one and half year as the dashing right-hander is included in the playing eleven for the tour opener.

Bangladesh coach Jamie Siddons expressed his high hopes with the series where Bangladesh will play three one-day internationals and a Test match besides the T20 game.

"From my point of view, I expect us to win the one-day series, and win the Test match if we play well, without a doubt," said the Australian.

CricInfo adds: It can be argued that Shakib Al Hasan's young Bangladesh side is cut out for the Twenty20 format. In the recent Tests against India there were passages of play where their batsmen combined premeditated aggression with caution, often several times in the same over. The newest format of the game, however, gives them the license to not have to shoulder arms, and to throw the kitchen sink at everything - something that their cavalier batting line-up will fancy. Add the attraction of a smaller ground and the absence of Shane Bond, and Bangladesh emerge as serious contenders for the solitary Twenty20 fixture at

Seddon Park.

Even as the higher-ranked teams struggled to come to grips with the format, Bangladesh got off to a strong start in Twenty20s, winning three of their first four matches, including one against West Indies in the inaugural World Cup. Reality has caught up with them since, and the next nine matches ended in defeat.

The hosts have their own problems to address, and will hope that Mark Greatbatch's appointment as coach will end a tumultuous period that began with Andy Moles' resignation in October. One of the biggest problems New Zealand have faced in recent times, albeit in the longer formats, is their misfiring top-order. Greatbatch has already identified it as a priority area and will hope his batsmen use this platform to ease back into form.

Brendom McCullum will have fond memories of the only previous Twenty20 match at Seddon Park, when he caned the West Indies bowlers to set up an easy win. He will have equally fond memories of batting against Bangladesh, in particular his brutal, unbeaten 80 in a Queenstown ODI that ended in quick time. The Bangladesh attack, sans Mashrafe Mortaza, will need some well-thought plans for the elder McCullum.

Bangladesh may not have found a pace bowler of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's quality but in Shakib they have a strong stand-in for the captaincy. While his batting was a let-down in the Tests against India, he was more than a handful with the ball. In the past, he has opened the bowling for Bangladesh in the shortest format and his searching lines and lack

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Jolt in cricket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi



Bangladesh suffered an 18-run defeat to Sri Lanka in their second encounter of the 11th SA Games Cricket at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium here yesterday.

In front of a 20,000-strong crowd, Bangladesh were set to chase a target of 166 runs, but the top-order failed to fire except Anamul Haque who contributed team highest 42 off 40 balls that included only two fours and a six.

Sri Lanka recorded their consecutive second victory when Bangladesh were bundled out for 147 runs with one ball to spare.

Rony Talukdar made a bright start to electrify the home crowd as the right-hander began with a sweetly timed boundary followed by a six in first three balls but Lankan pacer Thisara Perera removed the opener quickly to make the inroads.

Thereon Bangladesh lost wickets at regular intervals. Nasir Hossain made the second team highest 28 off 21 balls that contained five boundaries.

The hosts' hopes were still alive with Anamul batting at one end and the crowd started to leave the ground once the opener was

dismissed with the scoreboard reading 125 for seven in the 17th over, needing 41 more runs from the last three overs.

Two new ball bowlers Ishan Jayabathne and Thisara bowled brilliantly to wrap up the Bangladesh innings. Ishan picked up three wickets for 30 runs and Thisara took two wickets for 26 runs. Sachith Pathirana also took two wickets for 32 runs.

Earlier, Dilshan Munaweera and Dinesh Chandiman laid the foundation for Sri Lanka to put up the eventual winning total. The opening pair added 50 runs in 4.6 overs. Dilshan scored 24 off 17 balls with five fours and Dinesh hit team highest 34 of 24 deliveries that included four boundaries and a six.

In the today's match Nepal will take on formidable Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

BRIEF SCORES

SRI LANKA: 165 for five in 20 overs (Dinesh 34, Ashan 25, Dilshan 24, Thisara 21, Angelo 20 not out, Lahiru 14, Sachith 8 not out; Shubashish 2-43)
BANGLADESH: 147 all out in 19.5 overs (Anamul 42, Nasir 28, Sabbir 14, Jubair 13, Emon 13, Anil 28, Rony 10; Ishan 3-30, Thisara 2-26, Sachith 2-32)
Result: Sri Lanka won by 18 runs.

BCB to have new body

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to form a technical evaluation committee for the national team and the domestic cricket structure.

The decision has been taken during an adjourned board meeting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

BCB's cricket operations committee chairman Enayet Husain Siraj has been named convenor of this new committee where Ahmed Sajjadul Alam, Jalal Yunus, Gazi Ashraf Hossain and Dewan Shafiqul Arefin are members.

The board also approved the appointment of former Bangladesh batsman Zahid Razzak Masum as member of the national selection committee led by Rafiqul Alam. It also approved the revised contract terms for the selectors.

The board adopted a condolence motion on the death of Col. Nuruddin Khawaja,

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Mahmud lifts bronze

SPORTS REPORTER

After the golden day on Monday, Bangladesh weightlifter Firoz Mahmud had to be content with a bronze medal in the weightlifting event of the 11th South Asian Games at the National Sports Council Gymnasium yesterday.

Mahmud won the bronze in the above 105kg category lifting a total of 264 kg, 34kg less than Sri Lankan silver medalist S Rapaaska. India's S Sandeep won the gold lifting a total of 345kg.

India also bagged the gold medal in the below 105kg category after Rao Srinivasa of India and Pakistan's Sajjad Amin Mallik were tied lifting equal weights of 327 kg.

The Indian lifter was declared winner because of his less body weight than his Pakistani counterpart.

Chandarath Thusitha of Sri Lanka won the bronze lifting a total of 279 kg.

Bangladesh's Biddut Kumar finished behind Thusitha.

In a bid to overcome the Sri Lankan competitor, Biddut, who won bronze medal in the Colombo SA Games in 2006, attempted to lift 159kg in his third effort but failed to clear it.

Booters eye clean sheet

Afghanistan, India in semis

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh will be looking to end the group phase as champions when they take on Maldives in the last Group A match of men's football of the 11th South Asian (SA) Games at the Bangabandhu National Stadium today.

The match will be the first big test before the semifinals for both teams as they have registered comfortable victories in their previous matches against Bhutan and Nepal. If the match ends in a draw, Bangladesh will still top the group courtesy of better goal difference.

Meanwhile, in the Group B matches in Chittagong yesterday, Afghanistan beat Sri Lanka 2-0 to top the group, thanks to a brace from Belal Arezou, while India, thriving on a hat-trick by Jeje Lalpekhlua, thrashed Pakistan 5-1 to emerge runners-up. The champions from Group A will play against India, while runners up of Group A will meet Afghanistan.

Bangladesh, having won their first two matches comfortably, will be looking to extending their winning streak and turning the table on a team they lost to in their previous meeting in the Games 11 years ago in Kathmandu.

Bangladesh's prolific striker Enamul Haque is confident they can put on another good show and make the supporters happy after their disappointing show in the recent SAFF Championship.

"We didn't perform well in the SAFF Championship and let our fans down. We have been doing good so far in this competition and will be looking to extending that with another win."

The two teams have met five times in the past in the Games with Bangladesh holding a 2-1 lead over the tiny island nation. The other two matches ended goalless.

Bangladesh skipper Aminul Haque said they are improving with every match and would look for another good performance against the Maldives.

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Girls edge Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's women footballers kept their hopes alive of playing in the gold deciding match with a solitary goal victory over Pakistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The female booters, who lost their opening game against Nepal but bounced back in their next match against Sri Lanka, dominated the whole game taking an early lead in the first half through Farhana Khatun. The local female booters created numerous scoring chances throughout the match but failed to double the margin due to their strikers misfiring.

On the other hand, the girls from Pakistan who were playing only their second international match, fought diligently but failed to make an impression on the local booters. Attired in trousers and headscarves, the Pakistani girls lagged behind their opponents both in terms of agility and precision. Bangladesh scored in the very first minute when captain Rowshanara Akter headed in from close range, but it was ruled out due to offside.

Then, ten minutes into the game Sabina Khatun made a surging run into the box only to

fire wide of the target. The hosts were a constant threat on the Pakistan defence with their three strikers creating a couple of good chances. Rowshanara and Maynu

Marma were a menace for the Pakistan defenders and they hardly managed to get the ball away from their own half.

Bangladesh took the lead in

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PHOTO: STAR

A Bangladesh booter (L) runs past her Pakistani counterpart during the South Asian Games women's football match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.