

Football's dream fulfilled

ATIQU ANAM

Bangladesh outplayed Afghanistan 4-0 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday to win the football title of the 11th South Asian Games for the second time. Two goals in each half gave the hosts the gold in the most lopsided of finals in the 26-year history of the Games.

Bangladesh's second triumph came in their sixth final appearance and after a long wait of eleven years since Kathmandu in 1999. This victory will go some way in mitigating the scar of the SAFF Championship two months ago.

The boys under a new Serbian coach Zoran Djordjevic, have looked immaculate throughout the competition, and it seemed that they had saved their best for the final. They did not give the opposition an iota of a chance in ninety minutes of play. The Afghan booters, who themselves had looked very organised and professional up to the final, never looked like a decent opposition in the match.

Overwhelmed by the occasion and in presence of a capacity partisan crowd, the Afghans failed to produce anything in terms of either individual skill or team effort. Their long-ball game took them only as far as their own half, and they also failed to make their superior physical presence count. The prolific Afghan striker in the tournament Belal Arezou was closely marked down by the impregnable Bangladesh defence. On the other hand, Bangladesh's beautiful passing, movement and near-precise shooting was a reflection of superior skill and strategy.

Bangladesh made most of the running from the very beginning and got on the scoresheet just 17 minutes into the match through Atiqur Rahman Meshu. It started with a mazy run towards the box by Nasirul Islam where he was brought down by an Afghan defender. After a double-dummy, Wali Faisal took a swerving

freekick on which a host of Bangladesh players converged. Meshu leapt high from an unmarked position and headed into the net past the keeper's outstretched hands.

Bangladesh's prolific striker Enamul Haque had been targeting the opposition net for some time. He tried an acrobatic bicycle kick from the edge of the box, but it missed the target.

The second goal came on the half hour mark after a delightful one-two between Enamul and Shakil Ahmed. Enamul provided the ball on the right side of the goal to which the Afghan keeper Bashir Ahmad did not make an advance. It fell to Shakil who provided a lob for Enamul. The in-form striker was not to miss with an open net and the scoreline became 2-0.

His partner Zahid Hasan Ameli though missed one when he was left unmarked in front of goal, but his headed went skywards.

Afghanistan made some pressing early in the second half and Bangladesh custodian Aminul Haque had to make a brilliant diving save to deny them an opening.

After a brief period in which Afghans looked in some rhythm, Bangladesh again took the exerted their dominance. Twenty four minutes into the second half Abdul Baten Mojumder Komol, who had substituted injured Md. Yousuf earlier, made it 3-0 for Bangladesh. From a Meshu freekick, the ball fell for Komol in the goal mouth melee, he took position and instead of going for power, slotted it modestly into the top corner of near post. Bangladesh had the title firmly in their grasp by then, but to their credit, they never put the feet off the gas. And an inevitable fourth goal came two minutes before end of regulation time from Tawhidul Alam Sabuz, the scorer of the winning goal against India in the semifinal. A goalbound shot from Komol was half stopped by the keeper and an attempted clearance from a defender feel kindly to the head of Sabuz who had the easiest job of poking it in. Soon enough,

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PARTY BEGINS! The triumphant Bangladesh booters go on a victory lap at the end of their 11th South Asian Games men's football final against Afghanistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The hosts won the gold with a 4-0 drubbing of the Afghans.

Boxers come good once more

SPORTS REPORTER

Whenever Bangladesh hosted the South Asian Games, it saw its boxers presented gold and this time too the local boxers did not frustrate the nation as they grabbed two of those on the concluding day of the competition in the 11th edition of the regional sporting extravaganza at the newly-built Mohammad Ali Boxing Stadium yesterday.

Jewel Ahmed and Abdur Rahim wrote their names beside gold medalists Musharaf Hossain and Mozammel Haque, who won gold in 1985 and 1993 respectively when Bangladesh hosted the second and sixth editions of the then SAF Games.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's two gold-winning boxers in the South Asian Games Jewel Ahmed (L) and Abdur Rahim (C) take a ride on their jubilant teammates' shoulders during a victory lap along with their Thai coach Bandwana (wearing Rahim's medal) at the Mohammad Ali Boxing Stadium yesterday.

Jewel outplayed Nepal's Ajit Gurng in the final of the lightweight 60kg category while Rahim defeated Sri Lankan Sisira Kumarasinghe in the light welterweight 64kg category to win gold medals.

There was a hope on Rahim, who moved into the second round in the World Boxing Championship in Italy beating a Bosnian boxer before being eliminated in the next round, though there was no hope on Jewel, who stunned all to win the final convincingly with a massive 31-17 points.

Jewel from Rajshahi fell in love with boxing at the age of six after having watched a boxing competition in his home town and took admission to the Rajshahi Boxing Club.

"Joy Bangladesh," were the first words from Jewel after the

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Hosts' hope dashed in archery

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hope of clinching gold in archery was dashed when teenage archer Sajib Sheikh went down to Indian Tarundeep Rai in the individual 70m recurve bow final of the 11th South Asian Games at Bangladesh Krira Shikkha

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MEDALS TABLE

Country	G	S	B	Ttl
India	88	53	28	169
Pakistan	19	25	36	80
Bangladesh	18	23	55	96
Sri Lanka	16	34	52	102
Nepal	7	9	18	34
Afghanistan	7	9	16	32
Bhutan	0	2	3	5
Maldives	0	0	2	2

Masbah rises to occasion

IQBAL SIDDIQUI from Sylhet

Saturday.

On the first day of the taolu, Masbah led the table with 9.07 and in the last part of the competition he scored 9.15



The only fear for him was S Somorjid. The Indian's earlier performances talked for itself that he would be the one to pose any threat for Masbah Uddin. Everyone's eyes were roving between the battle of Masbah and Somorjid and the scoreboard. But as soon as the duel finished, everybody heaved a sigh of relief.

No wonder! Masbah has won! And that too by a small margin of 0.02 point. He has presented the nation with another gold medal after Eti Islam in wushu of the 11th South Asian Games at the Sylhet BKSP on Monday.

Eti won gold in the competition's under-52kg event on



MASBAH UDDIN

yesterday. He aggregated 18.22 to win the gold while Somorjid amassed 18.20 and Sri Lankan

R Ruvindra Silva scored 18.0

for the bronze. Expectations were already high with Masbah in taolu (men's nanquan and nandaou all round) event and the man from Barisal rose to the occasion by overcoming the challenge from Somorjid to make sure that Bangladesh's national anthem is played at the winner's podium once again.

However Masbah was not excited as Eti who was crying after her success. Rather the experienced campaigner, who clinched two gold medals in last year's third SAF wushu, was talking about the sport's future in the country.

"Definitely it feels great because nothing is sweeter than being able to do something for the country. I believe it's possible for our players to bring more success for the

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SPEED IS SRI LANKA: Sri Lanka's sprinter Shehan Saearuwan Abeyepitita leaves the pack in his wake to win the men's 100m sprint gold of the 11th South Asian Games in 10.46 seconds at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Naseem, Shehan the speedsters

SPORTS REPORTER



Shehan Saearuwan Abeyepitita, the 20-year-old boy from Colombo, beat his more experienced and illustrious competitors to become South Asia's fastest man while a 23-year-old unknown quantity from Karachi named Naseem Hameed turned the table upside down to become the fastest woman in the 11th South Asian Games yesterday.

The baby-faced Shehan, who had won gold in the 4x100m relay and silver in the 200m sprint, won the ultimate prize at the showpiece event of the competition after clocking a time of 10.46 seconds ahead of India's Qureshi Abdul Najeem (10.56 sec) and Liaqat Ali (10.63 sec) of Pakistan.

The boy from the Lankan capital said he was ecstatic with his achievement. "It's a great feeling to officially become the fastest man in South Asia. I was confident I would win because I had finished ahead of all other South Asian participants in the Asian meet in South Korea last year."

Shehan's success keeps the title of South Asia's fastest man firmly in Sri Lanka's grip as the previous fastest man Surendra Das, whose timing was 10.52 seconds, was also from Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh's Masudul Karim came eighth while the country's fastest man Golam Mortuza failed to even qualify for the finals.

Shehan, whose favourite sprinter is the current Olympic and world champion Usain Bolt whom he met at the World Athletics Championships in Italy last year, said his next target is to become the fastest man in Asia.

Sri Lanka however surrendered their supremacy in the race for South Asia's fastest woman to Naseem of Pakistan. The Karachi lass created a piece of history when she became the first Pakistani woman to win gold in this event. Naseem clocked a time of 11.81 seconds to win gold ahead of two Sri Lankans -- Pramila Priyadarshani (11.93 sec) and Achala Shalika Diaskath (12.12 sec).

Naseem, overwhelmed with emotions by becoming the fastest woman in the region, said she was yet to come to terms with what she had just achieved. She described it as the best moment of her life.

On the day, four of the seven gold from track went to India, two went to Sri Lanka and one to Pakistan. India took gold in the men's high jump, men's 5,000-metre and both men's and women's 4x400m relay, Sri Lanka took gold in the men's 100m sprint and women's long jump. Pakistan grabbed the women's 100m sprint gold.

Bangladesh's only medal on the day from the track events was a bronze that came in women's 4x400m relay. Bangladesh girls -- Ishrat Jahan Iva, Khurshida Khatun, Rowshonara Putul, Jasmin Akhtar -- recorded a timing of 3:52:59 seconds to finish third behind Indians' 3:38:62sec for the gold and Sri Lankans' 3:44:81sec for silver.



THE QUEEN IS A PAKISTANI: Naseem Hameed of Pakistan crosses the finish-line to claim the women's 100m sprint gold of the 11th South Asian Games with a timing of 11.81 seconds at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

India follow on

Cricket

AFP, Nagpur

South Africa were eyeing victory after Dale Steyn picked a career-best 7-51 to trigger a dramatic India collapse on the third day of the first Test on Monday.

The right-arm quick polished off the last six India wickets for 12 runs in 7.4 overs after tea to bundle them out for 233 and help the visitors enforce the follow-on at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur.

Following on, India were tottering at 66-2, trailing South Africa by 259 runs on first innings with eight wickets in hand.

Murali Vijay was batting on 27 with Sachin Tendulkar on 15 when stumps were drawn for the day.

Steyn struck again in India's second innings, sending back Virender Sehwag for 16 while

Morne Morkel pegged back the off-stump of the other opener, Gautam Gambhir (one).

India's slide began with the dismissal of skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (six) in the first over after the tea break.

Subramanian Badrinath's resistance in his first Test appearance was cut short in the next over when he chipped Steyn straight to short mid-wicket. His 56-run innings came off 139 balls and included seven fours.

The other debutant, Wriddhiman Saha was out off the first ball he faced from Steyn. Zaheer Khan and Amit Mishra played on to their stumps before Harbhajan Singh was trapped lbw, giving Steyn his 13th five-wicket haul in 37 Tests.

The only positive for India was the 109-run knock by Sehwag who hit 15 fours and also shared 136 runs for the fourth wicket with Badrinath after India were reeling at 56-3.

But Sehwag was dismissed shortly after reaching his 18th Test century when he sliced a

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Tigers crash again

Cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's abysmal batting performance continued in New Zealand as they suffered a five-wicket defeat in the second one-dayer at the University Oval in Dunedin yesterday. With this win New Zealand clinched the three-match series.

It was a painful experience for the ardent fans in the country who had switched on their TV sets in the early hours as the game was all but over with the scoreboard reading 46 for 6.

The pathetic top order batting was a complete embarrassment for the visitors after their meek surrenders in the lone T20 and the first one-day match but a record 101-runs seventh wicket partnership between Mushfiqur Rahim and Nayeem Islam enabled Bangladesh to recover from the ruins to score 183.

Wicketkeeper batsman Mushfiqur slammed

86 off 107 balls that contained eight fours and three sixes while Nayeem contributed 43 off 81 balls that featured four boundaries.

The total ultimately was not enough as New Zealand rode on Ross Taylor's belligerent 52-ball 78. Taylor hit six fours and five big sixes as New Zealand stormed to the target in 27.3 overs.

CricInfo adds: Having been kept to 183 by New Zealand's tidy bowling attack, Bangladesh were drubbed by the broad bat of Ross Taylor. Another cheap Brendon McCullum dismissal and Martin Gupthill's wicket inside the first ten overs would have given Bangladesh some hope, but Taylor's belligerent innings confirmed what most had expected from this Dunedin match.

This win, however, had been sealed in the first half of the day by New Zealand's bowling attack. A familiar Bangladesh collapse at the top saw the home team take a firm grip on proceedings following an excellent new ball spell from Andy McKay, who was supported

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