

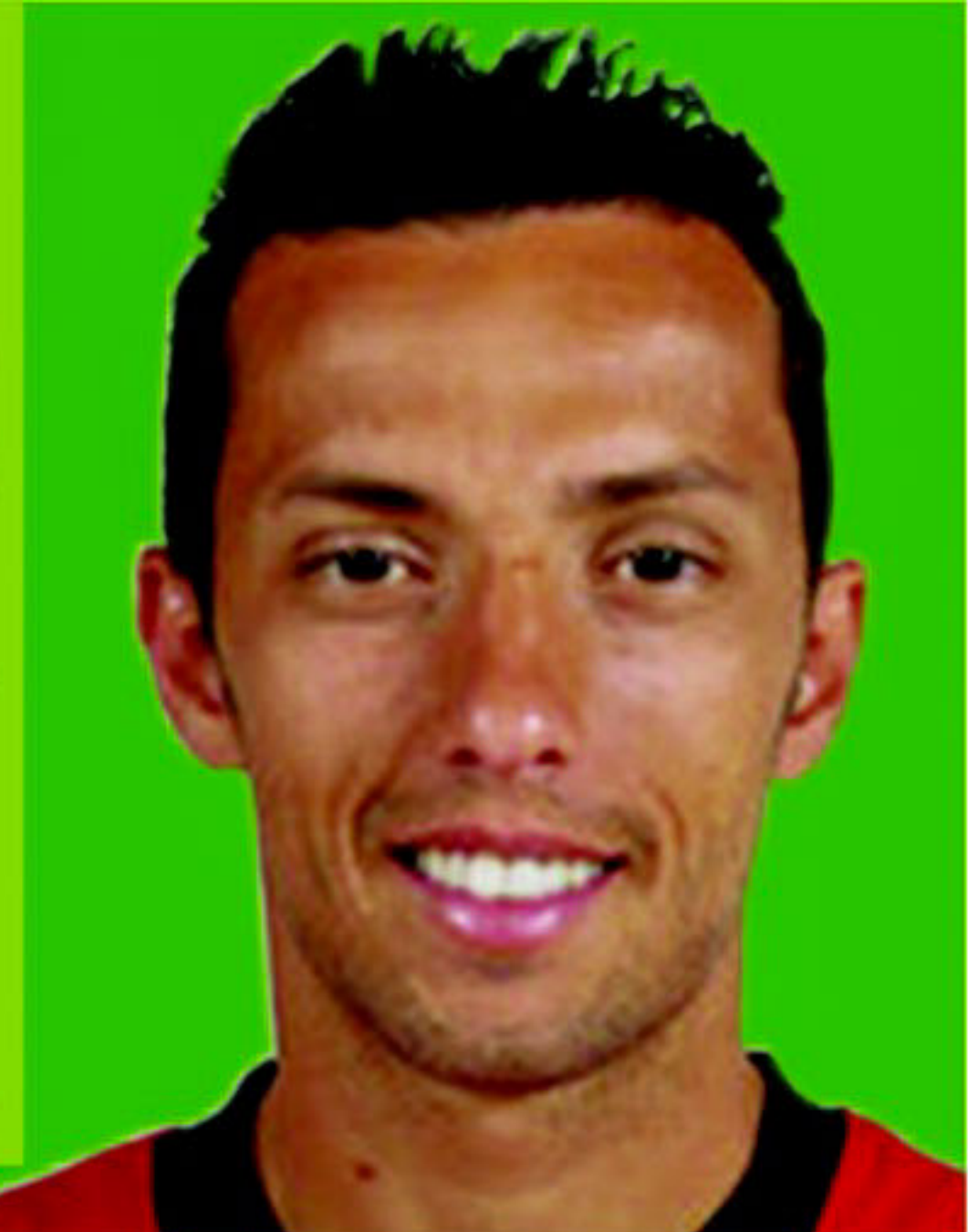
Star SPORT

DHAKA SATURDAY OCTOBER 15, 2011, E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net

Nene considers French switch

Paris St Germain midfielder Nene is so desperate to play in the 2014 World Cup on home soil that he says he could give up his hopes of playing for Brazil, switch nationalities and play for France instead. Nene, 30, who represented Brazil at junior level but has never played for the senior side, produced some brilliant performances for PSG last season but was overlooked for the senior Brazil team. He has dual Brazilian/Spanish nationality, and said he could acquire French nationality as well.

-REUTERS



Tigers fight for their lives

Mushfiqur's 100th ODI today

SPORTS REPORTER

On the eve of today's crucial second day-night one-day match, the pitch has become the centre of discussion following Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim's disappointment over the surface of the first game which the home team lost by 40 runs.

The Tigers go into the second one-day match against West Indies today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur with a must-win situation to stay alive in the three-match series and with a hope that the wicket will favour the local slow bowlers in the do-or-die battle.

The second match is going to take place at the same pitch where the lone T20 international match between the two sides was held four days back. The Bangladeshi bowlers did well in the T20 match which they won by three wickets and it is expected that the slow bowlers will get some turn from the

pitch. If that is indeed the case then Mushfiqur, who raised questions about the behavior of the pitch after the defeat in the first match, will definitely be a happy man.

"It was important what Mushfiqur (Mushfiqur Rahim) said after the match. The ball didn't turn in the first half and virtually it made the difference between the two teams. The second match will be held in the pitch where we played the T20 match and in that case it will not be easy for the West Indies batsmen to bat comfortably against our spinners," said Shahriar Nafees, who didn't play the first match and looks set to be overlooked again as the team think-tank preferred an unchanged playing eleven.

There had been however also different opinion regarding the pitch issue among the players. "It was a very good wicket for the one-day cricket and we must play good cricket in this kind of surface. I think there is no point to talk about the pitch as the reason for the defeat rather we should concentrate on our own performance," observed a player, who didn't want to

mention his name.

For a positive result, Bangladeshi bowlers must keep their discipline unlike in the first game and players like Tamim Iqbal must come up with his best. Tamim was below par during his 38-ball 21 in the first game and that might be the reason the dashing opener along with some other players, who were not part in the playing eleven in the first game, appeared in the nets yesterday despite optional practice.

It also seemed that coach Stuart Law had a special session with the left-hander in the indoor nets.

West Indies didn't turn up at the ground yesterday for practice rather they stayed at the hotel but the good news for the visitors is that captain Darren Sammy has been recovering well from an upset stomach and is most likely to play the important second match.

It's a crucial match for Mushfiqur to keep the series alive and nothing can be better for the wicketkeeper batsman if he can win his first one-day game as a captain in his 100th ODI match.



Tamim Iqbal relaxes at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Members of the triumphant Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club celebrate with the trophy of the Walton Women's Football League after beating Mohammedan Sporting Club 2-0 in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Jamal win women's league

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club clinched the title of Walton First Women's Football League handing a 2-0 defeat to Mohammedan SC in the final at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Defender Farhana Khatun gave Sheikh Jamal a first-half lead before top-scorer Sabina Khatun sealed the victory in the second half of the entertaining encounter in front of some one thousand spectators.

The Dhanmondi-based outfit were the overwhelming favourites for the title, especially with the way they stormed into the final scoring 59 goals in four matches. The side with studded with national players held lion's share of possession and hardly allowed Mohammedan SC to break.

It was pleasing to see that both sides completed some passes as well as launched some planned attacks, although the ball was mostly confined in midfield due to lack of combination among the players.

Sheikh Jamal created the first opportunity in the ninth minute when Aung Mra Ching Marma rattled the crossbar with a 35-yarder and four minutes later Mohammedan goalkeeper Sabina Akter thwarted a close-range effort from Nubai Ching.

But Sabina could not save her side in the 27th minute as defender Farhana Khatun found the back of the net from a free-kick to give Sheikh Jamal an expected lead.

Mohammedan nearly found an equaliser five minutes before the break as Bilkis floated in a vicious free-kick which Sheikh Jamal goalkeeper Moly managed to grip in second attempt.

Mohammedan once again came close to pulling back a goal five minutes into the second half but this time Oditi, who scored a hat-trick in the first match, failed to convert a Sui Nu free-kick despite having the net at her mercy.

Afterwards, Sheikh Jamal re-organised to launch several attacks and found the second goal in the 65th minute when Nubai Ching put a ball from the right for Sabina, who dodged past a defender to place the ball on the left-hand side of Mohammedan keeper to raise her goal tally to 25.

"Actually the girls were trained for a long time and the understanding among the players is very good, which is why they won every match they played," said Sheikh Jamal coach Mosharrar Badal.

"Sheikh Jamal are virtually the national team but we played better compared to our strength. The result might have been different had the girls availed two chances they found," lamented Mohammedan coach Poniruzzaman.

Sabina rises above all

Football

SAVEEM SHAMA and AARONY ZADE

Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club were crowned on Friday as champions in the first ever Walton Women's Football League with a 2-0 win over Mohammedan Sporting Club in a largely one-sided encounter.

The opening goal came from Farhana Khatun and star striker Sabina Khatun sealed the victory with the second goal to take her tally for the tournament to an astronomical 25 goals in 5 games.

Sabina's tally included a quadruple hat-trick in a group game against Arambagh and she also plundered a double hat-trick in the quarterfinal against Wari.

Such feats are unheard of in modern football but national striker Sabina took the achievements in her stride.

"I came into this tournament hoping to perform my best and I'm happy to say that's what I did. Although I wanted to become the top scorer, my first goal was always to help the team win the title."

There has been a lot of talk about the one-sided nature of the tournament and many people have voiced their concern about a lack of quality. But Sabina brushed aside those concerns and stated that it was more a case of Sheikh Jamal being strong than the opponents being weak.

"We (Sheikh Jamal) are very strong and organized. It is not that the opponents are weak. It should be our credit that we are playing so well," she insisted.

The yawning gap in quality between Jamal and the rest of the teams was clearly visible even in the final as Sheikh Jamal totally dominated Mohammedan in possession, rarely letting the opponent have the ball.

But while Sabina will grab all the headlines for her heady

No respect in a loss

Bangladesh-West Indies 2nd ODI today

MOHAMMAD ISAM

Thursday was exactly the sort of evening Bangladesh cricket had yearned for years.

Chasing a huge total, the Tigers fell 40 runs short making a respectable 250-plus score against the West Indies in the first ODI. Two batsmen got half-centuries; one sauntered and the other battled his way. The perennial under-achiever made the opposition fast bowler look a few notches quicker while the other batsmen merely filled up the scorecard which generally told a run-of-the-mill story.

But Thursday came after a gutsy Twenty20 win on Tuesday, against the same opponents and at the same ground -- the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. That victory came on the back of an effective hour and a half in the field followed by some late heroics from the new skipper.

The Tigers these days are evidently prepared, skilled and made to believe

of more Tuesdays than Thursdays. The concept of a "respectable loss", especially at home, is on its way to the museum, one is told.

But statistics tell a different story. In the course of Bangladesh's ODI history, only thrice have they chased down a target of more than 250 and none of them have come in the last two years and never has it happened at home. At the Mirpur itself, India, Sri Lanka and England have won chasing 250-plus on six occasions out of which Bangladesh were at the receiving end five times.

Mushfiqur Rahim admitted an error in judging the wicket after he decided to bowl first having won the toss, but if a flat wicket is enough to make the Tigers give up that easily, the new men in charge have a lot of work in hand.

None of the fielders showed energy when Marlon Samuels and Lendl Simmons dominated the attack on the unresponsive pitch and they only roused from slumber when Keiron Pollard's big-hitting was hurting their collective egos.

What also stood out was how rigid the Tigers were when their plans got altered slightly. Imrul Kayes hurt his ankle and had to bat at No 3. Hastily, Naem Islam had to open but the all-rounder looked anything but ready.

Naem has opened till his Under-19 days and has established himself as a No 4 for Rajshahi and the various Premier League clubs he's played for but international cricket gave his ambitions of playing in the top-order a wake-up call. Batting out 82 deliveries for a half-century is not half as bad if the innings flourishes near the end but at no point did he look comfortable against Ravi Rampaul & Co.

With Tamim Iqbal hitting fielders more than the gaps and importantly missing out on strike, it was a disaster waiting to happen. The left-handed opener gave Devender Bishoo a bonus of a wicket, edging a long-hop. For the Chittagonian to flourish like he did in 2009 and 2010, Law must give him the freedom to express himself. Imrul too was effective but has to carry on

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India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni hits one through the square during the first ODI against England in Hyderabad yesterday. Dhoni scored 87 not out as India set up 300 from fifty overs.

PHOTO: INTERNET

India start in style

STAR SPORTS DESK

India exacted some measure of revenge for their chastening tour of England with a massive 126-run win over the same opponents in the first one-day-international of their return tour at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday.

Batting first, India put up a challenging total of exactly 300 for the loss of seven wickets in their stipulated 50 overs thanks mainly to captain MS Dhoni's aggressive 87 not out. Dhoni's fourth half-century in as many games took India from a slightly troublesome position of 139 for four after 34 overs to post a tough target on a pitch that was rapidly deteriorating. Dhoni was ably supported by the left-handed Suresh Raina who scored an equally punchy 61 from 55 balls. England initially

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