

## SPORT

## All square in youth football

SPORTS REPORTER

Both matches of the Airtel U-18 Football Tournament ended in draws at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

In the day's first match, Team BJMC were held to a 0-0 draw by Chittagong Abahani club. The second match of the day saw Sheikh Russel KC share the spoils of a 1-1 draw against Muktiyoddha Sangsad KC.

Tajbir gave Muktiyoddha the lead in the sixth minute of the match, which was cancelled out by Masud's strike in the 30th minute.

Both sides were reduced to ten men towards the end of the match. Muktiyoddha's Sarowar got the marching orders for seeing two yellow cards in the 87th minute before Sheikh Russel's Saker was sent off following double yellow in the 89th minute.

## Booters stun Afghanistan

ANISUR RAHMAN from Incheon, South Korea



opener at the Munhak Stadium in Incheon, South Korea yesterday.

Captain Mamunul Islam struck the decisive goal in the 83rd minute of the match to give Bangladesh their first win in 28 years and only their third win overall in the Games' history. The win brightened the prospects of qualifying for the 16-team second round for Bangladesh, who will play against group-favourites Uzbekistan on September 18 and Hong Kong on September 22.

Mamunul, who recently signed for Atletico de Kolkata franchise in the inaugural Indian Super League (ISL), scored the decisive goal with a powerful left-footed drive from outside the box to beat the Afghan goalkeeper Mansur Faqiryar at his near post, after a counter-attack initiated by Tapu Barman found

Mamunul at the end of a string of passes.

The goal ushered wild celebrations for Bangladesh players, who were dominated for much of the game by the Afghans, sitting 41 places above Bangladesh in the FIFA rankings and boasting as many as seven players playing in Europe. There was a reflection of the difference in quality in the match statistics. The Afghans enjoyed 66 per cent of possession, managed four shots on target to Bangladesh's three, earned eight corner kicks to Bangladesh's two and five free-kicks to Bangladesh's two. But in the end, the one statistic that matters the most in football was in Bangladesh's favour.

Bangladesh started the game with a cautious defensive approach with Denmark-based Jamal Bhuiyan playing as defensive midfielder ahead of a four-man backline, while midfielders Shohel Rana, Yousuf Sifat, Mamunul Islam and Hemanta Vincent played behind lone striker Wahed Ahmed.

The young Bangladesh defenders were put under a lot of pressure

by the well-built Afghans, who saw a diving header from Amiruddin go inches wide of the near post in the sixth minute while another one from Ahmed Sanjir in the 23rd minute flew over the crossbar.

Bangladesh's only notable attack came from a counter-attack in the 27th minute when Sohel Rana's long ball reached Wahed, who took too much time to finish the move and invited the Afghan defenders to clear the danger.

Bangladesh, who were relatively more composed in defending, passing and attacking in the second half, survived another scare in the 49th minute, thanks to an excellent save from goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton.

Another counter-attack in the 70th minute, initiated by Hemanta, found Wahed outside the box, but the stocky forward was too slow to shrug off his marker and his shot was well intercepted by the Afghan defenders.

But 14 minutes later, when Tapu's ball reached Wahed, he made no mistake as he teed up the ball with a back pass to his skipper

Mamunul, who found the back of the net with a low drive.

There was still time for a few more Afghan onslaughts, but the two Bangladesh centre-backs Yeamin Munna and Yeasin Khan ensured that there were no further hiccups by clearing a couple of late corners.

With the clock ticking towards the last few seconds of the four added minutes, Bangladesh almost struck a second goal when Jamal attempted a long shot from almost the half-way line, with the opposition goalie out of his box. But his shot crawled inches away from the target. However, that miss was not going to dampen the mood of the Bangladesh players and scores of Bangladeshi expatriates as Vietnamese referee Vo Minh Tri blew the final whistle.

**BANGLADESH TEAM:** Rasel Mahmud Liton (GK); Yeasin Khan, Rayhan Hasan, Tapu Barman, Yeamin Munna; Jamal Bhuiyan, Mamunul Islam, Hemanta Vincent, Shohel Rana, Yousuf Sifat (Tolkish Ahmed); Wahed Ahmed (Atiqur Rahman Farhad).



MAMUNUL ISLAM

## 'Best goal of my life'

SPORTS REPORTER from Incheon, South Korea



Bangladesh skipper Mamunul Islam termed yesterday's goal against South Asian powerhouse Afghanistan as the best goal of his career and the most significant moment of his football life.

The 28-year-old midfielder ran straight to the Bangladesh dug out and celebrated with coach Lodewijk de Kruif and the rest of his teammates after driving a powerful left-footed shot from outside the box to beat Afghanistan goalkeeper Mansur Faqiryar in the 83rd minute of the match.

"This is the best goal of my career and probably the most significant moment of my life," said the skilful midfielder who was soaked with emotions as he led his teammates into the dressing room at the end of the final whistle.

"I said before leaving home that beating Afghanistan was our first target. We have achieved that target and now we want to concentrate on the second match (against Uzbekistan on Thursday)," Mamunul told a handful of reporters from Bangladesh, who were allowed entry inside the dressing room, thanks to the revelling mood of the players and generosity of the coach. The latter credited his charges for their brave effort.

"It was a very good performance. There was a game plan that we wanted to apply against Afghanistan and we did it successfully," said De Kruif, who notched up his third win with the Bangladesh team since March 2013. Given the gulf of difference between the two sides and the dominance on the field from the Afghans – who are 41 places above Bangladesh in the FIFA rankings and boast as many as seven players who ply their trade in Europe – De Kruif considered it as a 'surprise win'.

"It is a surprise win," said the 44-year-old Dutchman at the post-match press conference. "It is a surprise result as I was only 25 per cent optimistic about the win. Our organisation in the second half was very good. Our boys gave their hundred per cent effort and they fought for the nation."

With matches coming up against favourites Uzbekistan and higher-ranked Hong Kong, De Kruif knows a win out of those two matches could catapult Bangladesh into the second round, a stage they never reached before. However, the Dutchman was keeping his feet firmly on the ground.

"It is difficult to say (whether we can qualify) because we still have two matches left. We can only think of our game plan and with a little bit of luck like today, we can even see three points," said De Kruif. "As a coach, I rely on tactics and will be happy with three points. Let's see what happens in the next matches."

De Kruif was certainly feeling a lot happier after the second match between Uzbekistan and Hong Kong, which ended in a 1-1 draw and kept Bangladesh on top of Group B.



A goalmouth action during yesterday's Asian Games football match between Bangladesh and Afghanistan at the Munhak Stadium in Incheon in South Korea.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Saqlain stands by doosra

AFP, Karachi



Retired spin king Saqlain Mushtaq on Monday defended the controversial "doosra" delivery he invented, which has come under renewed scrutiny since fellow Pakistani Saeed Ajmal's chucking ban last week.

The doosra, which means "the second one" in Urdu, turns from legside to offside -- the opposite direction to orthodox offbreaks.

It is bowled from the back of the hand with a lot of top-spin, though the bowler's wrist still moves in a clockwise direction, making it difficult for a batsman to pick.

Saqlain is credited with its invention, adding to a list of Pakistani innovations in cricket including the batsman's reverse-sweep and reverse swing bowling.

But the delivery has come to be regarded with deep suspicion by many, particularly in Australia and England, where critics charge that doosra bowlers bend their arm beyond the permissible 15 degree limit.

Saqlain, who took 208 Test and 288 one-day wickets, told AFP from London the naysayers were wrong.

"Who says doosra is illegal?" he asked. "It can easily delivered within the allowed rules. It is not an easy delivery to bowl but if a bowler becomes expert he doesn't transgress limits."

"You need to have strong muscles to bowl a doosra, then fitness matters, also grip, rhythm and follow through. If just one of these things is missing then you get out of limits," he added.

Saqlain, who comes from a humble background, recalled he discovered the delivery while playing cricket with a table tennis ball.

"I used to play with my brother and cousin at the roof of my house in Lahore and tried the doosra with a table tennis ball," he said.

"I got very excited when the ball turned the other way." "I tried and tried and perfected it and when I used to go to play club matches I would baffle the batsmen with doosra, and on winning the matches I was rewarded with sumptuous lunches and dinners. And from there I broke into the Pakistan team."

Saqlain will arrive in Lahore next week to start remedial work on Ajmal's action, reported during the Galle Test against Sri Lanka last month.

The ban was imposed by the International Cricket Council. Ajmal's action was then assessed in a bio-mechanics lab in Brisbane, Australia which revealed he flexes his elbow up to 43 degrees for his off-spinner and 42 for his doosra.

## Contador's third

AFP, Santiago de Compostela

Alberto Contador won his third Vuelta a Espana as Italian Adriano Malori took victory on the final stage 9.7km timetrial in Santiago de Compostela on Sunday.

Spaniard Contador finished 1min 40sec down on Malori on the rain-affected course as he took no chances.

But although he lost 27sec to Chris Froome, he did enough to add to his 2008 and 2012 Vuelta victories, taking his Grand Tour successes to six.

New Zealander Jesse Sergent and Australia's Rohan Dennis were second and third on the stage at 8sec and 9sec respectively.

## Bencic upsets Kuznetsova

AFP, Tokyo

Rising Swiss star Belinda Bencic upset two-time Grand Slam champion Svetlana Kuznetsova 6-3, 6-0 in the first round of the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo Monday, maintaining recent impressive form.

The wildcard broke the Russian veteran's serve twice in the first set and three times in the second to win the match at Ariake Tennis Park in only 68 minutes.

The 17-year-old is on the back of a run to the quarter-finals at the US Open in New York.

## Slow going by A team

SPORTS REPORTER



A half-century from Bangladesh A opener Liton Kumar was the only highlight on the rain-interrupted second day of their four-day match against Zimbabwe A at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

Liton scored 54 as the home side finished the day on 162 for 3. The visitors bowled well on a slow wicket which compelled the batsmen to follow a cautious approach and as a result the hosts strolled along a run-rate of just 1.76. To slow things down further, the match was halted for two hours after lunch due to rain.

Continuing from an overnight score of 23, Liton reached his half-century in 97 balls in the morning session. He was however removed by slow left-arm Wellington Masakadza nine balls later. He hit six fours and batted for nearly two-and-a-half hours. After the 76-run opening stand was broken, Marshall Ayub joined Sadman Islam to put on 49 more runs. Sadman spent 225 minutes at the crease for his 40 and hit just two boundaries. He was eventually sent back by young leg-spinner Tinutenda Mutombodzi who had him caught after lunch.

Six overs later, Mutombodzi struck again as he removed Marshall in the 63rd over. At 125 for 3, there were fears of a collapse -- an aspect which was witnessed during Zimbabwe's innings who had earlier collapsed from 103 for 1 to 122 for 7 -- but, captain Naeem Islam and Rakibul Hasan ensured that there were no further hiccups.

Naeem faced 86 balls for his 17 while Rakibul scored 16 off 107 deliveries. While selector Minhazul Abedin was content with the way the hosts played, he thought that they were 60 runs short.

"It was a good wicket to bat on. The only problem that the batsmen would have had to deal with was the slowness of the wicket. The ball did not come to the bat that easily. The Zimbabweans bowled well but at the same time we failed to dispatch a number of below-par deliveries."

"If we could have been at around the 220 or 230 runs today, it would have been a good finish. Anyway I hope we can take a 100-run lead by tea tomorrow," said Minhazul.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**ZIMBABWE A:** First innings 206 all out in 74.1 overs (Chakabva 64, Sibanda 62; Saqlain 9 for 82)

**BANGLADESH A:** First innings 162 for 3 in 92 overs (Liton 54, Sadman 40; Mutombodzi 2-27)

## ASIAD CRICKET

## Women's team leaves tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team leaves here tonight for South Korea with a dream of winning the gold medal in the Asian Games to be held in Incheon from September 19 to October 4.

Captain Salma Khatun expressed optimism over her side's chances to bring glory as she believed that the team tuned up well for the event.

"We are looking forward to playing good cricket and our main target is to win the gold. We may face Sri Lanka in the semifinals and that would be our main hurdle on way to the final and we are hopeful that we will be able to overcome this hurdle because we won against them previously," said the all-rounder yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The Bangladeshi women will start their campaign from the quarterfinals stage where they will face off with the runners-up of Group D. The group comprises Nepal, Malaysia and China.

The final of the women's event will take place at the Yeonhul Cricket Ground on September 26.

In the last edition in Guangzhou in 2010, Bangladesh women's team had to return with the silver medal after losing a hard-fought final against Pakistan.

## INTERNET



Whenever a foreign player moves to the Premier League, there's always talk of how they will need time to get acclimated to the unmatched

power and speed of it.

Well, Diego Costa responds to this notion with a defiantly uncaring shrug. Since joining Chelsea from Atletico Madrid, he has scored seven goals in his first four Premier League matches — including a hat-trick in Saturday's 4-2 win against Swansea.

Of course, scoring goals for Chelsea hasn't been easy for every pricy striker

of the Roman Abramovich era. Andriy Shevchenko and the recently shipped out Fernando Torres are the two examples that immediately come to mind.

Seven goals in just four matches puts the 25-year-old Spanish international 39 games

ahead of Torres' pace and 37 games ahead of Shevchenko's. He's even 14 games ahead of club legend Didier Drogba's pace. Given this, Costa's £32 million price tag seems like a bargain so far when compared to the total of £80.1 million that the club spent to acquire Torres and Shevchenko.

The other worldly passing of fellow new addition Cesc Fabregas, who has a league-leading six assists, has certainly helped Costa's rapid acclimation. But even taking his exceptional supporting cast into account, Costa's start to his first season in a challenging new league has been nothing short of incredible. He's the first Chelsea player to score in each of his first four matches since

John Meredith in 1928. And just to make everything that much crueller on Fernando Torres, a sprained ankle kept him from making his Milan debut against Parma, which turned out to be an absurd goalfest that Milan won 5-4.

