

A late stumble

SPORTS REPORTER from Incheon



A late goal-rush saw Bangladesh hockey team stumble to yet another big defeat in the 17th Asian Games at the Seonhak Hockey Stadium yesterday.

This time it was Malaysia, who pumped in four goals in the last quarter of their Pool A encounter to inflict a 5-1 defeat on Bangladesh, who had earlier lost their opening game against Japan 8-0.

However, Bangladesh showed signs of recovery after a horrendous start as they held Malaysia 1-1 until the game had entered the last quarter of the four-quarter (each quarter consisting of 15 minutes) game.

Bangladesh played well in the first quarter and kept Malaysia at bay before conceding the opening goal as Azuan Bin Hasan put Malaysia ahead five minutes into the second quarter.

Bangladesh bounced back on the half-hour mark when Krishna Kumar restored parity through a field goal, which Bangladesh held on until the end of the third quarter. But Bangladesh's defence fell like a house of cards in the fourth quarter, conceding four goals on the trot, thanks to some silly mistakes from goalkeeper Ashim Gope, who was brilliant under the post in the first three quarters.

"We played a good game and we controlled it for almost three and a half quarters. Unfortunately, we were not up to it for the rest of the time," said Bangladesh coach Naveed Alam.

"Today, we played a good game," said Bangladesh's lone scorer Krishna Kumar, adding that they were looking forward to beating Singapore in their next match on Tuesday.

Adithiya champion

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Top seed Adithya Karunaratne of Sri Lanka beat Bangladesh's Fabiha Lamisa Suchona in straight sets (6-0, 6-0) to clinch the girls' singles title of the Bengal Group Asian Under-14 tennis Series which concluded at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna yesterday.

The match, rescheduled from Saturday due to inclement weather, lasted little as the top seed cruised to victory without dropping a single game.

Bangladesh Tennis Federation's general secretary Abdur Rahman distributed prizes among the participants after the end of the match.

National chess

SPORTS REPORTER

Four players shared joint lead with two points after the second round of the Berger Paints National Chess championship yesterday. The leaders are: GM Enamul Hossain, IM Minhazuddin, FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed and Uten.

Defending champion GM Abdullah Al Rakib drew against GM Niaz Murshed in the second round at the Bangladesh Olympic Association after 18 moves while GM Ziaur Rahman beat CM Sohail Chowdhury after 28th move.

In the other matches, Enamul Hossain beat FM Aminul Islam; Minhazuddin beat CM Mahtabuddin Ahmed; FM Sk. Nasir beat FM Debaraj Chatterjee; Uten beat Golam Mostafa Bhuiyan and Masum Hossain beat FM Rezaul Haque.

S'pore GP goes to Hamilton

AFP, Singapore

British driver Lewis Hamilton won the Singapore Grand Prix on Sunday to take the lead in the Formula One drivers championship from his Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg who failed to finish with electrical failure.

Rosberg turned up for the Marina Bay street circuit night race 22 points clear of pole sitter Hamilton.

But the German endured a wretched time, his car failing to set off for the warm-up lap from second on the grid.

He eventually started from the pitlane, but retired on lap 15, to leave Hamilton to win and take a three point advantage to the Japanese Grand Prix on October 5.

Looking for a miracle

Bangladesh take on Hong Kong today

ANISUR RAHMAN from Incheon



Bangladesh will be looking forward to creating a small piece of history when they face Hong Kong in their last Group B match of the Asian Games at the Hwaseong Sports Complex in Incheon today. The match will start at 2pm Bangladesh time.

Having never qualified for the second round in the Asian Games, the Bangladesh U-23 team may enter uncharted territory provided that they beat Hong Kong.

It may be a small matter of a win but according to Bangladesh's Dutch coach Lodewijk de Kurif, whose tactical game-plan gave Bangladesh a shock 1-0 win against Afghanistan, his boys need to perform a miracle to beat a nation that has not lost a football match at any level against Bangladesh.

Ranked 164th, Hong Kong need only a draw to advance into the next round along with Uzbekistan from this group.

"We have collected three points and that means tomorrow's (today's) game is very important for us. If we can collect another three points, we go to the second round. If we secure one point, we are out of the tournament. When you have a chance to go to the second round, you have to avail it and not let it slip," said De Kruif after a one-and-a-half-hour training session at the Goyang training ground yesterday.

De Kruif has every reason to be upbeat after his charges' inspiring performance against Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, especially in the second half despite a 3-0 defeat.

During training, the coach worked a lot on how to build attacks through both wings and how to track back against the speedy Hong Kong side.

It is understood that the Dutchman is likely to shun the ultra-defensive strategy that he adopted against Uzbekistan opting instead to start left-winger Zahid Hossain in place of defender Kesto Kumar and striker Wahed Ahmed in place of Toklish Ahmed.

De Kruif hinted that he was against

going all-out right from the start, saying he would not mind if one of his players scores another 85th-minute winner like Mamumul Islam did against Afghanistan.

"It is not that we will attack and attack without any ideas. We have seen Hong Kong's matches. I think there is a possibility of a victory even though they are a good, organised team. Even if we can score after 85 minutes, I will be a happy man. Let's see how the game plays out tomorrow and hopefully we can grab our chances," said a confident De Kruif.

He said that Hong Kong were put under heavy pressure in the last 20 minutes in their 2-1 win against Afghanistan.

"With the experience that Hong Kong have, one point is enough for them to secure a second round berth. I told my boys that they (Hong Kong) are a very strong side but at the same time there are a lot of possibilities. And if we collect three points against them, it will be a miracle," concluded the Bangladesh coach.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh players stretch at the Goyang ground in Incheon yesterday, ahead of their do-or-die battle against Hong Kong today.

'For your country it has to come from within'

NAIMUL KARIM



Bangladesh's debacle in the West Indies can be attributed to a number of reasons. The lack of longer version games, dead wickets in the first-class circuit and the low morale created due to the series of defeats this year are just a few.

However, according to Bangladesh bowling coach Heath Streak, it's the lack of 'physical preparation' that tends to hurt players the most. While a poor first-class system does contribute to that aspect, the former Zimbabwe all-rounder reckons that it also comes down to individual training.

"It all comes down to being a real professional. Your training; your diet; your rehab; improving your physical conditions when you're off cricket; the guys who perform are the ones who have ticked all these boxes," Streak told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon yesterday.

"For example, Mushfiqur [Rahim] is a real professional. He trains hard, he is in the gym and goes the extra yards. It's not a surprise that he has been Bangladesh's best performer. But we need more people feeding off that work ethic. That's how we are going to improve.

"As coach we need to go and try to encourage them. But when you are playing for your country it has got to come from within. I can always coach someone to be better, but if he does not want to be better, if he does

not have the right attitude...the first thing is that it needs to come from him. That's a key ingredient," the Zimbabwean explained.

Streak believes that the advent of T20 leagues around the world and commercialisation of cricket should be incentives for Bangladesh's cricketers to perform and challenge their limits.

"If I were playing now I think there

has put in. If you are just comfortable making the national team but don't have aspirations to improve and get even better then that's where you are going to remain.

"If you are happy to average 30 or have an economy rate of 6 then you will never improve. But if you are not, you will push yourselves. And again that comes back to how you train your lifestyle," observed Streak.

While the pacers fared well in the ODIs—Al-Amin Hossain with 10 wickets was the top wicket-taker and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza recorded his best bowling figures (3-39) since 2010—they disappointed in the Tests. Streak believes that the roots of Test failures lie in the country's domestic structure.

"In a Test, most seamers are expected to bowl between 40 to 50 overs. But our players are not accustomed to that since they don't bowl that often in domestic cricket.

"We need to have good wickets if not seam-friendly ones in domestic cricket. These are some of the challenges that I think everyone knows but we need to address them for the longer version," said Streak.

He also lamented not being able to use Mashrafe and Taskin Ahmed in the longer version.

"If you had taken Mashrafe it gives you an experienced and consistent performer. Taskin has got raw pace. He would be a really good starting bowler. I suppose it's going with a knife to a gun fight," he concluded.



HEATH STREAK

would be a bigger incentive to bowl well because the world is full of opportunities and what better arena can these guys have to showcase themselves to try and get an IPL contract.

"Shakib [Al Hasan], everyone wants him because he has performed well internationally. So he is getting the rewards for the effort he

Watson to miss Pakistan Tests

AFP, Sydney



Australia all-rounder Shane Watson was Sunday ruled out of next month's Test series against Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates with a calf injury.

The injury-prone Watson was recovering from an ankle he sprained in training which forced him out of last month's tri one-day series in Zimbabwe when he suffered complications.

"While Shane has made steady progress with his rehabilitation he has suffered a setback, experiencing some right calf soreness," national team physiotherapist Alex Kountouris said.

"As Shane has previously had similar calf injuries, we plan to hold back his return to running and bowling for approximately 7-10 days.

"The injury will mean that his preparation for the UAE tour will be considerably affected and he would have been unavailable for the T20 and ODI part of the tour and significantly limit his bowling preparation for the Test matches."

Watson's injury gives Mitchell Marsh a chance to make his Test debut against Pakistan on October 22.

Kane Richardson has taken Watson's place in Australia's Twenty20 and one-day squads, while swing bowler Ben Hilfenhaus has been drafted into the Test line-up.

"The selectors have opted for another pace option in Ben as we feel we have enough cover in the all-rounder position," chief selector Rod Marsh said in a statement.

"Shane has done everything he can to get up for this tour and left no doubt in our minds that he wanted to push through," Marsh said.

"Had the decision been left to Shane, he would be on the plane to Dubai. However as selectors we have taken a conservative approach to ensure he has the best chance of being fit for the big (domestic) summer ahead."

Watson's objective will be to return for the home limited-overs series against South Africa in November.

"I've been here before and know what I need to do to get back to full fitness. That means remaining positive and working hard," Watson said.

Watson has overcome a series of injuries in his career, but played all 10 matches in last year's back-to-back Ashes series against England.



Caesar's redemption

Gymnast reaches final round of two events

ANISUR RAHMAN from Incheon



Gymnast Quazi Syque Caesar has put years of frustrating performances behind him as he reached the final round of two events in the Incheon Asian Games yesterday.

The USA-based gymnast, who failed miserably in the 2012 Olympic Games and the 2014 Commonwealth Games, put up a scintillating show at the Namdong Gymnasium yesterday to reach the eight-man finals of parallel bars and nine-man finals of horizontal bar, which will be held on October 24 and 25 respectively.

Caesar said he could sense that something good was going to happen when he landed perfectly on the floor from the parallel bars. "I felt really good when I landed perfectly. I could only remember one word, 'redemption.' It was redemption for my performance in the Commonwealth Games," said a relieved Caesar.

Caesar not only redeemed himself, but paid back the faith entrusted to him by sports minister Brien Sikder. Caesar was not supposed to take part in the Asian Games at all as gymnastics, along with eight other disciplines, was excluded from the Bangladesh continent.

Caesar's poor performance in the Commonwealth Games, where he had scored a miserable 9.931 points, had convinced the Bangladesh Olympic Association that he should be left out of Asian Games contingent. But thanks to the sports minister's insistence and Caesar's father's encouragement, the 24-year-old gymnast went to Incheon. And now he is here in the final round, dreaming of medals from the Asian Games.

The 24-year-old gymnast yesterday scored 15.150 points in qualifying round of the parallel bars, eclipsing his previous best mark of 14.766 points set in the 2012 Olympics, to finish seventh among 62 gymnasts. He also put up his best effort of 14.200 points in the qualification round of horizontal bar, eclipsing his previous best of 13.700 set in the 2012 Olympics, to finish seventh among 56 gymnasts.

Caesar is the lone competitor in the gymnastics event from Bangladesh and he didn't garner too much attention either from the Bangladesh officials or the spectators. But he is least bothered about it as he knows all that could change now that he stands so close to a precious medal.

Ivanovic wins Pan Pacific title

AFP, Tokyo

Ana Ivanovic charged the net repeatedly to overcome US Open finalist Caroline Wozniacki 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) in the final of the WTA Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo Sunday.

The 26-year-old Serb needed 99 minutes to win the battle of the former world number ones, stretching her head-to-head tally of wins over the second-seeded Dane to five-two.

"It was so hard physically. We had a lot of long rallies but to win the title is amazing," said the third-seeded Ivanovic, who had ousted Germany's top-seed Angelique Kerber in the semifinals.

"I really tried to come into the net and finished a lot of points at the net," said the Serb, who is ranked 10th in the world and has won 15 WTA titles, four of them this year.

"I am happy because

Wozniacki is a great defensive player and she gets a lot of balls back."

It was the first Pan Pacific Open title for Ivanovic, who has competed in the Tokyo event for eight straight years. Ivanovic broke the 24-year-old Dane's serve in the first, fifth and seventh games of the first set on a sun-drenched hard-centre court at the Ariake Coliseum.