



'Proved I deserve number 10'

ANISUR RAHMAN



Both Lodewijk de Kruif and his counterpart Nikola Kavazovic heaped lavish praise on young midfielder Hemanta Vincent Biswas for his sparkling performance which earned Bangladesh a 1-0 win against Sri Lanka at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The 19-year-old midfielder, who had won the number 10 jersey in a sparkling debut against India in Goa last March, proved to be the difference in yesterday's game as he scored a screaming volley and was denied a further couple of goals by some last-ditch clearances from the Lankans. De Kruif felt Hemanta should have bagged a hat-trick.

"I told him (Hemanta) after the game he should have scored three times," the Dutch coach said in his post-match press briefing, with the youngster sitting by his side.

"We must be very happy because Bangladesh has got a player like him. He is only 18 years old but he can perform in an international level like this. This is a guy with big promise," added de Kruif.

Hemanta, who burst into the limelight after an impressive performance in the AFC U-19 Championship qualifiers last year, felt he proved his worth as the chief playmaker of the team.

"I am really happy that Bangladesh won the game through my strike. I think I proved my worth of wearing the number 10 jersey, which was not given to me due to the coach's affection, but considering the formation and the style of play," said the player of the match.

Hemanta's growth as the pre-eminent play-maker of the team was spotted early by de Kruif and the Dinajpur lad and since then, Hemanta has grown in strength in domestic competitions as well as making ten appearances till date for the senior national and under-23 team.

The Sri Lanka coach reserved the best praise for Hemanta, terming the starlet as the biggest potential of Bangladesh and his strike a 'masterpiece'.

"They scored one goal that was not by chance. It was simply a masterpiece. If they played against Japan today they would have scored the same way," said the Serbian.

"(Hemanta) Biswas is the biggest potential of Bangladesh football. The current generation is finishing in two or three years and he will be the next Mamunul Islam."

Overall the Serbian felt that the Bangladesh players were in better physical condition and pace than three months ago when the two sides had met and that they used the flanks better in yesterday's game.

Bangladesh midfielder Hemanta Biswas lets loose a first-time volley that finds the back of the Sri Lanka net amidst deafening roars from the stands at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Hemanta shoots hosts into semis

ATIQUE ANAM



The Bangladesh team is already starting for the Bangabandhu National Stadium to change their fledgling fortunes. This is the venue where they had won their last competitive match against Lebanon 2-0 during a pre-World Cup qualifier in 2011. Since then they never played a competitive match at this venue, except for a friendly against Japan U-21 team two months ago.

So if they needed inspiration - and they needed all of it after a morale-shattering 0-1 defeat against Malaysia in the opening fixture of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in Sylhet -- it was here at the BNS that they could turn to. And they were not disappointed, and

they did not disappoint the 12,000 people in attendance at the Big Bowl and the millions of fans across the country. A wonderful volley from the edge of the box by teenage midfielder Hemanta Vincent Biswas in the 40th minute of the match gave the Red and Greens a relieving victory and set up Friday's semifinal clash against the winners of Group B to be decided today.

There were a few nervous moments for the hosts, who needed only a draw to qualify, as goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel needlessly gifted a penalty kick to the opposition. But the 23-year-old keeper redeemed himself by making a one-handed save to deny Sri Lanka any opportunity of causing an upset.

Bangladesh coach Lodewijk de Kruif, much maligned for his choice of personnel in the Malaysia

Bangladesh 1 (Hemanta 40) -- Sri Lanka 0							
GROUP A							
	M	W	L	D	GD	Pts	
Malaysia	2	2	0	0	+3	6	
Bangladesh	2	1	1	0	0	3	
Sri Lanka	2	0	2	0	-3	0	

defeat, made two changes to the starting eleven. Goalkeeper Rasel Mahmud Liton, whose loopholes in the 'sweeper-keeper' role were cruelly exposed by the Malaysians, made way for the first time in eight months to the tall Sohel. Centre-back Nasiruddin Chowdhury replaced injured Atiqur Rahman Meshu, but veteran striker Zahid Hasan Emily kept his place despite failing to capitalise on a number of goal-scoring opportunities in the

opening match.

The biggest surprise though came at the other end, as Sri Lanka's set-piece specialist Nalaka Roshan was left on the bench due to a niggling injury.

However, the absence of Roshan made little difference as Bangladesh enjoyed the lion's share of possession in the first half, with Zahid Hossain and Sohel Rana wreaking havoc down the flanks while Jamal Bhuiyan, who was later dubbed as the best central midfielder of South Asia, put in a stellar performance in the middle, distributing the ball with assurance and making sure the jangling nerves around him didn't cause the team any trouble.

Still, Bangladesh had to wait for a sublime Hemanta volley to break the deadlock.

The sturdy lad from Dinajpur showed all of his technique as he

found the corner of the net after Emily chested down Zahid's looping cross just in front of the box. The powerful shot, hit with inch-perfect accuracy, screamed past Sri Lanka goalie Sujan Perera's outstretched hands and sent the big bowl into raptures.

Goalkeeper Sohel felled LK Ishan just inside the box in the second half and Roshan, who had come in at the start of the second half, stepped up and chose to shoot down the middle. Sohel parried with one hand, before easily gripping the rebound.

Bangladesh kept creating chances at the other end, and if it was not for a goalline clearance by defender Tharindu Eranga and a valiant save by Perera, Hemanta could have bagged a hat-trick by the 87th minute. But by then, Bangladesh had ensured there was no upset on the cards.

Barca clinch a thriller

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona moved back to within a point of La Liga leaders Real Madrid as they twice came from behind to beat Villarreal 3-2 in a thrilling encounter on Sunday.

Madrid loanee Denis Cheryshev put Villarreal ahead against the run of play after half an hour only for the in-form Neymar to level just before the break.

A crazy four-minute spell early in the second-half then yielded three goals as Luciano Vietto put Villarreal back in front, but Rafinha quickly equalised before Lionel Messi struck a memorable winner from the edge of the box.

Victory takes Barca back three points clear of third-placed Atletico Madrid.

Barcelona started with the confidence of a side who had won each of their last seven games, scoring 26 goals in the process, but Luis Suarez's struggles in front of goal continued.

The Uruguayan dragged a shot wide from Andres Iniesta's through ball before forcing Sergio Asenjo into a great save from the edge of the box and finally smashing his best opening into the side-netting.

Barca were then punished for the former Liverpool man's profligacy when Villarreal broke and Mario Gaspar's wayward effort was deflected beyond Claudio Bravo by Cheryshev.

Crucially Barca managed to get on level terms a minute before the break when Asenjo again parried from Rafinha's curling effort, but Neymar was on hand to continue his scoring streak with his 22nd of the season.

Roma suffer Iturbe blow

REUTERS, Milan

AS Roma suffered another blow on Sunday as they confirmed that forward Juan Manuel Iturbe had suffered damage to his right knee, with damage to the lateral collateral ligament," said the Serie A side in a statement.

"Iturbe underwent tests this morning that revealed a distorted trauma to his right knee, with damage to the lateral collateral ligament," said the Serie A side in a statement.

"Iturbe also suffered a strain to his right ankle and potential ligament damage. The player has already started treatment on the injury."

Roma did not make any mention of an operation, however, and Italian media said he would be out of action for around six weeks.

Spurs tie up Kane deal

AFP, London

Harry Kane, break-out star of the current Premier League season, has signed a new five-and-a-half-year contract with Tottenham Hotspur, the London club announced on Monday.

"The club is delighted to announce that Harry Kane has signed a new five-and-a-half-year contract which runs until 2020," Tottenham announced on their website.

Kane, 21, came through Tottenham's youth academy and has scored 20 goals in 33 appearances this season, making him the leading scorer in all competitions in the English top flight.

Blatter faces 3 rivals

AFP, Lausanne



Football's world governing body FIFA announced on Monday that four candidates are bidding to become its president, including long-time incumbent Sepp Blatter.

The three others who have thrown their hat into the ring are Asian Football Confederation vice-president Prince Ali bin Al Hussein of Jordan, former Portugal international Luis Figo and Dutch football chief Michael van Praag.

Two others who had been considering making bids - former France international forward David Ginola and ex-FIFA executive official Jerome Champagne - both failed to get the necessary backing from five national associations.

A FIFA statement said that the candidature dossiers would next go before the investigatory chamber of an independent Ethics Committee to carry out integrity checks on the four men within ten days.

"Upon receipt of the results of the integrity checks, the (FIFA) Ad-hoc Electoral Committee will reconvene in order to review all of the submissions and validate

their compliance with the applicable FIFA regulatory provisions.

"Following this process, the Ad-hoc Electoral Committee will formally admit and declare the candidates who are eligible for the office of FIFA President."

After that the FIFA executive committee will meet in Zurich on May 29 and decide if Blatter will get a fifth term as president or bring in a new man.

The 78-year-old Swiss bureaucrat is seen as an outstanding favourite to win a new term despite a storm of protest over the way he runs the organisation.

His reign has notably been tarnished by accusations of corruption stemming from the bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, which were awarded to Russia and Qatar respectively.

The controversies have seriously eroded his support and tarnished his reputation in European strongholds like England, Germany and the Netherlands, but he still enjoys wide support in Asia, Africa and Oceania.

On top of that the success of last summer's World Cup in Brazil, despite earlier fears over the state of the organisation, has further boosted his status.

Thieves foiled at di Maria's home

AFP, London

Burglars made an unsuccessful attempt to break into the home of Manchester United winger Angel di Maria at the weekend, according to British media reports on Monday.

The Sun newspaper said that Di Maria, 26, was having dinner with his family at his home in Prestbury, northwest England, when a group of thieves tried to smash through the patio doors with scaffolding poles.

They fled when an alarm sounded.

"At 7.30pm (1930 GMT) on Saturday, police received reports of a burglary at a house in the Chelford Road area of Prestbury," said a spokesperson from Cheshire Police.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (L) celebrates his winning goal against Villarreal during their Primera Liga clash at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP