

SPORT



Shahawat Hossain Rony celebrates one of his two goals as Bangladesh notched a 4-2 win against Sri Lanka in the opening match of the Bangladesh Gold Cup at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

Maruful wary of complacency

SPORTS REPORTER *from Jessore*

Having achieved the first target to win the opening match against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh coach Maruful Haque set his second goal to confirm the semifinal berth in the Bangladesh Gold Cup.

"We could not perform well as expected in the SAFF Suzuki Cup, and the players had the eagerness to do well in the opening match. Our target was to win the first match which we have achieved and our next goal is to confirm the semifinal berth," said Maruful at the post-match briefing yesterday.

Bangladesh will take on Malaysia XI in their second match on January 12 at the Bangladesh National Stadium.

Maruful, however, urged his charges to improve the performance in the next matches if they are to move into the semifinals.

"The players should not feel complacent after winning the first match. They must concentrate more on the next game and make less mistakes if they want to move forward," said the 46-year-old coach, who believed his charges could execute only 60 percent of his plan in the first half but it was only 30 percent in the second half.

A good combination between the midfielders and the forwards saw Bangladesh take a comfortable 3-1 lead in the first half before they were under tremendous pressure and almost threw away the lead with...

"They might have felt complacent with a 3-1 lead which is a nationwide problem for us. That's why they did not perform in the second half," explained Maruful.

Two-goal scorer Shakhawat Hossain Rony dedicated the victory to the spectators for their effortless support for the national team and believed the win would boost their confidence.

"I think a win changes the mentality of the players. This win will boost our confidence to put up better performance in the next match. We have to cash in on the performance and rectify the mistakes we made today [Friday]," said Rony.

Having agreed to the notion of Maruful's complacency theory, Rony said, "Foreign coaches and Maruful bhai had a lot of work on not losing concentration when the team are in an advantageous position. But we lost concentration time and again which might occur due to our effort in the first half which made the players tired."

Booters off to winning start

ANSUR RAHMAN *From Jessore*

Hosts Bangladesh got off to a winning start in the Bangladesh Gold Cup with a nery 4-2 win over Sri Lanka in the opening match at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore yesterday.

Striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony struck a brace while Nabib Newaj Jibon and Zahid Hossain netted one goal apiece to give Bangladesh the victory against Sri Lanka youth side who, however, gave a run for the money to the hosts by making it 3-2 at one stage.

The charges of Maruful Haque dominated the game from the outset before going for the break with a comfortable 3-1 lead in front of some 8,000 spectators, however they surprisingly started showing some nerves in the second half before Rony took the match away from the opposition with his second and the team's fourth goal, thanks to a misunderstanding between Sri Lanka goalkeeper Ruwan Annasiri and defender Hettiarachchi in the dying moments.

Having shrugged off their poor performance in the SAFF Suzuki Cup last month, last edition's runners-up Bangladesh showed signs of returning to their natural performance as midfielders Mamunul Islam and Jamal Bhuiyan controlled the game in the first half, with Mamunul initiating the first three goals with his traditional long-ball passing.

A daring move from winger Zahid Hossain in the third minute indicated that the day would belong to the home side as the winger, availing a long ball from Mamunul, darted into the box and put a nice cross for Rony before the Sri Lankan defenders came to the rescue.

With nice exchanges between the midfielders and defenders, chances came one after another before Zahid again, receiving a long ball from Mamunul, advanced into the box to feed in-form Rony, who did not mistake to poke the ball home to give Bangladesh a deserved lead in the 17th minute.

But the lead lasted only three minutes as Danushka Wijesiri converted a spot-kick in the 20th minute after Nasiruddin Chowdhury had unnecessarily backed Madushan De Silva from behind inside the box.

Bangladesh, however, regained the lead made in the 22nd minute when Mamunul curled in a flag-kick to the far post where Zahid dived in after Yeasin Khan's header fell onto his feet.

Jibon made it 3-1 with a nice low volley after a Zahid free-kick fell onto his foot with a deflection two minutes before the break.

But Bangladesh went surprisingly on the back foot and conceded the second goal six minutes into the second half, thanks to a fumble by Jamal, with Sanjeeewa Kumara placing the ball inside the far post.

Maruful soon set on midfielder Monaca Khan Raju in place of Jibon to make the midfield compact and the decision saw Bangladesh starting to regain possession before Rony, who also struck a brace in the last international match against Bhutan, fired from close after the Sri Lanka goalkeeper and defender fumbled to meet a long ball from Bangladesh goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel in the 86th minute.



Bangladesh national cricketers Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Soumya Sarkar, Jahana Alam and Salma Khatun yesterday visited a region of Sakhira which suffers from water-logging to meet and encourage the people residing there.

Five Tigers in awards shortlist

SPORTS REPORTER

Five Bangladesh players were shortlisted for the ESPNcricinfo awards for 2015, with Mustafizur Rahman appearing twice.

Mustafizur's 6-43 against India has been shortlisted for the 'ODI Bowling Performance of the Year' award. He has also been shortlisted for the 'Debutant of the Year' award after picking up 26 wickets in 9 ODIs.

Rubel Hossain has also been nominated for the 'ODI Bowling Performance of the Year' for his 4 for 53 against England in the World Cup.

Skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has been shortlisted for the 'Captain of the Year' award, after the Tigers defeated Pakistan, India and South Africa under his leadership.

Tinazu is rounded off by the batting performances of Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad. Tamim struck 24 boundaries, including seven sixes, and scored 206 runs of 278 balls to bring Bangladesh back from the brink of defeat against Pakistan, after they had conceded a 296-run deficit; a feat that sees him nominated for 'Test Batting Performance of the Year'. Meanwhile, Mahmudullah has been shortlisted for 'ODI Batting Performance of the Year' for his unbeaten knock of 128 against New Zealand in the World Cup.

Malaysia XI take on Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER *From Jessore*

Malaysia under-22 team were good enough to lift the Bangladesh Gold Cup in the last edition, and this time Malaysia will be represented by a club team, FELDA United FC, who, too, vowed to return home with the same title.

FELDA United FC, who will be playing as Malaysia XI, will start their campaign against Nepal side, comprising under-23 players, at the Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore today.

"Our club has been chosen to represent Malaysia and we are not here for holiday. We want to win the trophy," said Malaysia XI coach Irfan Bakki, who also guided a club to triumph in the 1997 edition of this tournament.

Bakki's bold announcement came on the basis of his squad, which consists of two current national players and many former national players. The team played in the semifinals of Malaysian Cup and finished fifth in the Malaysian Super League this season.

Bakki, however, believes the main challenge would come from hosts Bangladesh.

Bakki's counterpart Bal Gopal Maharjan also vowed to move into the next stage by defying the challenge from Malaysia and hosts Bangladesh.

"We have come here as part of preparation for the South Asian Games. We are in a strong group which comprises the defending champions and the runners-up, but we want to move to the next stage," said Maharjan, who once played for Brothers

JFA blames BFF over 'fake tickets'

SPORTS REPORTER *From Jessore*

There was a huge demand for tickets for the match between Bangladesh and Nepal at the 12,000-capacity Shamsul Huda Stadium in Jessore reached approximately 8000.

There have been allegations that the spectators could not buy the tickets from the designated outlets, most of which remained closed, and some spectators had to return home due to not having holograms on the tickets. Even police arrested a ticket-selling truck operated by Jessore Football Association (JFA) alleging that they were selling fake tickets with no hologram.

"We could not distribute tickets properly because the Bangladesh Football Federation delayed in sending tickets to us. I gave 7000 tickets for distribute but we still have 2000 unsold," said JFA president Asaduzzaman Mithu blaming that the game's governing body sent many tickets without holograms which were treated as 'fake tickets' by the police.

Mithu also showed tickets of the Malaysia-Nepal match without holograms and questioned how they would distribute today's match tickets because they received those only after the match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka yesterday.



Left-arm pace sensation Mustafizur Rahman gets off the bus in Khulna en route to the team hotel yesterday. The Bangladesh national cricket team reached the city yesterday in order to begin their camp for the Zimbabwe series.

IN A NUTSHELL

Steyn in for third Test

South African fast bowler Dale Steyn is expected to be fit for the remaining two Tests of the series against England. But Steyn will have to prove his fitness ahead of the third Test starting at the Wanderers Stadium next Thursday after failing to see out his two most recent Test appearances.

He has been out since suffering a shoulder strain in the first Test against England in Durban last month.

Chappell calls for global Gayle ban

Australian cricket legend Ian Chappell has called for a worldwide ban on Chris Gayle over his controversial TV interview during a recent Big Bash League match.

"I wouldn't have a problem if Cricket Australia said to the clubs, 'he's never to be contracted again in this country'," Chappell said. "And I also wouldn't have a problem if Cricket Australia said, 'this is the ICC, what we're doing should be worldwide'."

"You'd have to talk to the individual countries then... but I wouldn't have a problem if it was tabled at an ICC meeting that Cricket Australia said, 'this is what we're doing, and we would recommend that everybody else do the same'," he said.

Warrant issued against Dhoni

A non-bailable warrant was issued by a court in Anantpur, Andhra Pradesh, on Friday against Indian cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni for a controversial magazine cover in 2013 showing him as Hindu god, Vishnu, holding a shoe among other products he was endorsing. According to reports, India's limited-overs skipper has been asked to be present in court on 25th February.

Jayakumar Hiremath, a social activist, claimed Dhoni had hurt Hindu sentiments.

Cricketers bring relief

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national cricketers Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Soumya Sarkar, Jahana Alam and Salma Khatun yesterday visited a village named Narayanpur at the Talu Upazila of the Sakhira District, which has been heavily affected due to climate change.

The village remains under water for almost six months a year, as a result of which the suffering of the dwellers are immense. Often villagers find it difficult to adapt to the flood-ridden region and are compelled to migrate to the city.

The cricketers yesterday interacted with the villagers as part of a programme entitled 'Anirai Pari' organised by the BBC Media Action with support from the Bangladesh Cricket Board.

Ireland at full-strength

IRELAND U-19 WCCSQUAD

Tector (Cap), Anders, Austin, Chopra, Dennison, Doherty, Gillespie, Little, McClointock, McClointock, Stanton, Tector, Tucker, Tucker. *Compiled by Star Sport Desk*

Ireland yesterday announced a full-strength squad for the Under-19 World Cup in Bangladesh, after being confirmed as replacements for Australia.