

# SPORT

TIME FOR THE  
**FUTURE STARS**



The Bangladesh U-19s are characterised by the fun they have when playing their cricket, an attitude that has had good results in the Under-19 World Cup so far. Here batsman Nazmul Hossain Shanto (L) is having a laugh with team technical adviser Stuart Law during training at the Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

## 'Jolly' U-19s focused on their own game

SPORTS REPORTER



Having convincingly beaten the West Indies in the three-match series prior to the ICC Under-19 World Cup, one would have ideally expected the Bangladesh contingent to be relaxed ahead of the semifinal against the boys from the Caribbean tomorrow.

However, judging by the intense training sessions that the junior Tigers went through yesterday, the dressing room does not seem to have any room for relaxation.

Sure enough, the youngsters were in jolly mood during training at the Academy Ground in Mirpur, breaking into spurts of laughter every now and then, but they were equally focused on their training.

A reason behind that could be that the West Indians have improved quite a bit ever since their arrival. It is something about which Bangladesh batsman Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who had scores of 41 and 79 in the two matches he played against them prior to the tournament, is well aware.

"They have been in the country for many days and have adjusted to the conditions. They are playing good cricket. We don't think that we will be able to comfortably beat them; at the same time I am not saying that we can't beat them.

"We are going through our usual routines. Our process will be the same no matter who our opponents are. We are all in a very jolly mood and we are all confident," said Nazmul, adding that it would be easier to plan for the West Indies match considering that they had faced them quite recently.

Nazmul reckons that subduing West Indies' fast bowlers would be the key to

winning the semifinal. And the team's technical advisor Stuart Law echoed Nazmul's sentiment.

"We know that they have some good pace bowlers and they have some hard-hitting batsmen. We are not worried about how they play; we are worried about how we play.

"And we know that they are going to be very tough. Every time they have gone out there on the cricket field they have improved. We will have to play very well to nullify them," said Law.

"We are just preparing. Cricket is a game where if you worry too much about what others are doing, you lose the game. So we need to forget about everyone else, focus on what we need to do," he added.

Law believes that his players have achieved several crunch moments in the competition and will be raring to go in tomorrow's game.

"I think we have seen the crunch days. We played South Africa, the defending champions and we also played against Nepal in the quarterfinal which was in the balance for a long time. So we have come through those two games.

"On the day it comes down to how each team handles the pressure and how we can put the pressure back on the opposition. You know we did that in the last game against Nepal. Hopefully we can continue," said Law.

Regardless of what happens tomorrow, Law believes that this group of youngsters deserve a pat on the back.

"I am extremely proud of how the boys have played. It is not about winning the trophy but about doing everything right everyday to make sure we are in the best possible position to win games," he concluded.

## India show mettle to reach final

### Beat Sri Lanka by 97 runs

SPORTS REPORTER



India's youngsters once again proved why they have been tagged as the favourites of the ICC Under-19 World Cup. In the semifinal against Sri Lanka, they held their nerves and despite making a bad start ended up winning the game by a comfortable 97 runs at Mirpur yesterday. On February 14, the three-time champions will be making their fifth appearance in the final.

Having lost their star batsman Rishabh Pant and their skipper Ishan Kishan within the first 10 overs, many had begun sniffing the possibility of an upset. However, a brilliant stand from Sarfaraz Khan and player-of-the-match Anmolpreet Singh and a few lofted hits from Washington Sundar displayed just how resilient this Indian batting order is.

Having booked a place in the final, India will either face hosts Bangladesh or the West Indies. They will get to know their opponents tomorrow after the two teams clash in the second semifinal in Mirpur.

Batting first, India recovered from a precarious 27 for two to post 267. Anmolpreet scored a responsible 72 while Sarfaraz smacked 59 off 71. The duo put on 96 runs for the second wicket and stabilised their side.

Sri Lanka grabbed six wickets in the final 10 overs, but India still managed to add 89 runs as Armaan Jaffer pushed the score along with a 16-ball 29.

During the chase a nervous Sri Lanka were reduced to 13 for two in 3.2 overs. They further slipped to 42 for three following the loss of skipper and star batsman Charith Asalanka in the 10th over before Kamindu Mendis (39) and Shammu Ashan (38) engineered a

brief recovery.

But, once left-arm spinner Mayank Dagar had Mendis caught off a top-edged sweep and Ashan ran himself out, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 170 in 42.4 overs.

"It was a little difficult for me and Pant initially. The wicket wasn't so easy to bat on. However, I thought our batsmen did well later on. To enter the final unbeaten in the tournament shows that we have so far executed our plans well," said Kishan.

Kishan further said that his side were not worried about who they would face in the final and that they were more eager to focus on their

own skills.

Anmolpreet, who led the comeback for the Indians, said that while he did not enjoy missing out on his century, he was happy with his knock.

"When I went to the crease, my only objective was to be there for as long as possible. That was it and the rest worked out well," he said.

Sri Lanka skipper Charith Asalanka said that he was disappointed to let the game get out of reach after the first few overs.

"The target was not difficult, but we kept losing wickets. No one stayed long enough to take us through," said Asalanka, who expects either Bangladesh or India to win the trophy.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan qualified for the ninth place play-off final with an eight-wicket win over New Zealand in Cox's Bazar.

And Pakistan beat Nepal by 122 runs in the fifth place play-off semifinal in Fatullah.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**INDIA:** 267 for 9 (Sarfaraz 59, Anmolpreet 72; Fernando 4-43, Kumara 2-50, Nimesh 2-50)

**SRI LANKA:** 170 all out in 42.2 overs (Mendis 39, Ashan 38; Dagar 3-21, Avesh 2-41)

**Result:** India won by 97 runs.



DAGAR'S DAGGERS: India left-arm spinner Mayank Dagar is overjoyed after claiming one of his three wickets to speed Sri Lanka to defeat in their ICC Under-19 World Cup semifinal at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

## WORLD TWENTY20

### PCB proposes neutral venue

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's cricket chief Monday said a proposal was given to play their World Twenty20 matches on neutral venues next month in the event that Islamabad does not allow the team to tour India.

India host the ICC World Twenty20 from March 8 to April 3 but Pakistan's participation is subject to government clearance as there are specific threats, Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan said.

"We have told the ICC (International Cricket Council) now and before as well, the decision (to tour India) is with the government and it will consider if there is a specific Pakistan oriented security threat," Khan told media.

Khan said a proposal was given during the ICC Board meeting in Dubai last week.

"Someone in the ICC meeting said that if there are doubts over extremists (at Pakistan matches) we are ready to play at neutral venues in case our government does not give the permission to tour India," said Khan.

Khan said there have been incidents recently which suggested that there are indeed Pakistan-specific threats.

"They are not general threats, like Australia had in Bangladesh and they did not send their team for the Under-19 World Cup," Khan said.

## ASIA CUP 2016

### Tamim headed for paternity leave

SPORTS REPORTER



Tamim Iqbal is unlikely to be available for the entire Asia Cup as the left-hander was granted paternity leave by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to be with his wife Ayesha Siddiqa. According to sources, the opener requested the board to grant him leave from February 24, the day the Asia Cup will kick off with a match between India and Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, as the couple is expecting their first child later this month.

Tamim's probable absence will result in one change to the team for the regional tournament, which will be held in T20 format for the first time. BCB has yet to declare the team for the Asia Cup but another left-handed opener, Imrul Kayes, is most likely to make the cut for the final squad.

When Faruque Ahmed announced the 15-member squad for the ICC World Twenty20 a few days back excluding Imrul, the decision left many surprised. Faruque explained that team management's interest in wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Mithun saw the Imrul end up among the four standby cricketers.

Imrul has made valuable contributions whenever he got chances as a back-up opener since the last 50-over World Cup in early 2015. In Test cricket he has averaged 54 in 2015 with a high score of 150 and the two ODIs he played since the World Cup saw him score 76 and 73 against Zimbabwe. He was by far the most exciting Bangladeshi batsman in the Bangladesh Premier League, where with 300 runs he was the second highest run-scorer.

Besides the four major nations -- India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka -- Afghanistan, Oman, Hong Kong and UAE will be playing a qualifying tournament that starts on February 19. Each team will play three matches and the one finishing on top will advance to the main event.



## Smith to lead Aus in World Twenty20

AFP, Sydney

Australian selectors Tuesday dumped Aaron Finch as captain in favour of Steve Smith for the World Twenty20 which begins next month in India, while Peter Nevill replaces Matthew Wade as wicketkeeper.

Finch has been skipper since October 2014 but with Smith already captain of both the Test and one-day teams, national selector Rod Marsh said it was the right time for him to now take over in the shorter format.

"Aaron Finch has done a very good job captaining Australia in T20 cricket. He will have benefited enormously from the leadership opportunity and will remain a highly-respected leader within the Australian squad," said Marsh.

"However since he became T20 captain, there has been a broader leadership transition in Test and one-day international cricket with Michael Clarke retiring and Steve Smith assuming the captaincy in Test and one-day cricket.

**SQUAD:** Usman Khawaja, David Warner, Shane Watson, Steve Smith (capt), Glenn Maxwell, Mitch Marsh, James Faulkner, John Hastings, Peter Nevill, Adam Zampa, Josh Hazlewood, Aaron Finch, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Ashton Agar, Andrew Tye.

## Lankans stun India

AGENCIES, Pune



After registering a comfortable 3-0 win against Australia few days back, world No.1 India were outplayed as Sri Lanka registered a comfortable five-wicket win in the first Twenty20 international in Pune on Tuesday.

Debutant Kasun Rajitha and 24-year-old Dasun Shanaka picked up three wickets each and captain Dinesh Chandimal made a crucial run-a-ball 35 as the visitors reached the target of 102 in 18 overs to take 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Chasing a low total for 102 runs to win, Sri Lanka didn't have a good start as Ashish Nehra dismissed Niroshan Dickwella (4) in the first over and then Danushka Gunathilaka (9) in the fifth over to give India a slight hope. However, Chamara Kapugedera (25) and Chandimal had a 39-run stand for the third wicket to steady the visitors' innings.

Ravichandran Ashwin made a breakthrough at a crucial stage by trapping Kapugedera in front but it was still a very tough ask for India to defend 101. Chandimal was one of the rare batsmen who showed the skill to tackle the testing conditions as he was the highest scorer of the match.

However, he could not see Lanka through as he suffered some cramp and was adjudged LBW off Sures Raina. Milinda Siriwardana struck 21 off 14 balls as he finished the match with a flourish hitting Jasprit Bumrah for a six and a boundary.

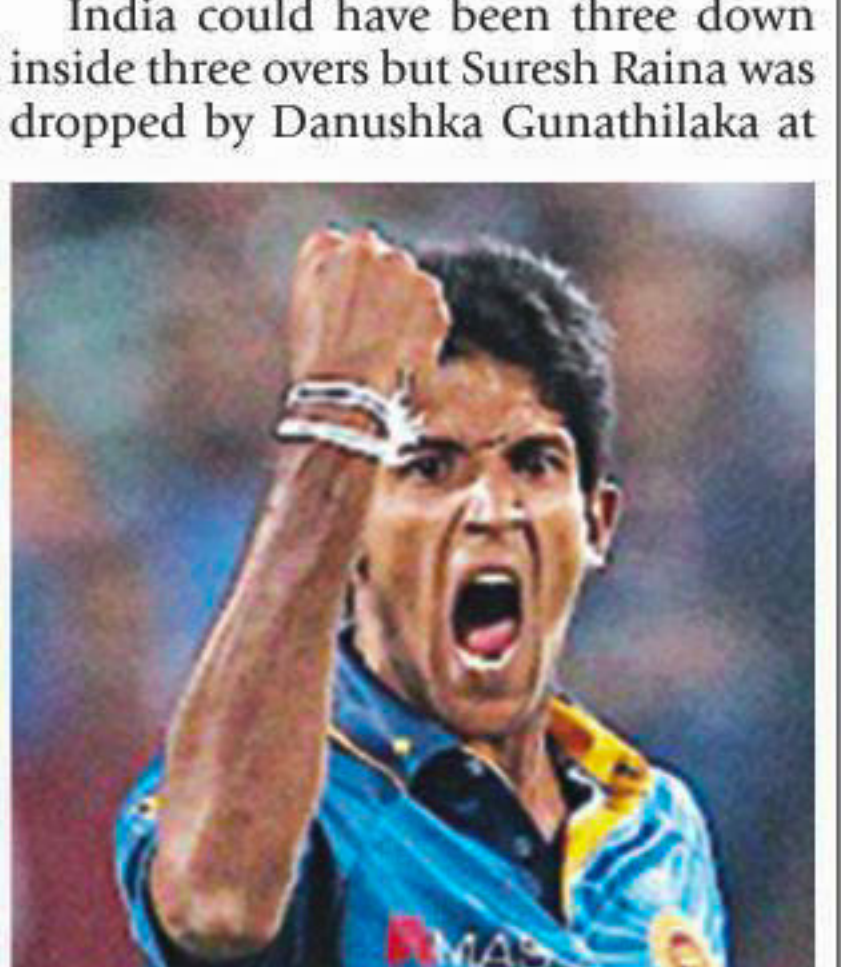
For India, Ashish Nehra (2/21 in 3 overs) and Ashwin (2/13 in 3 overs) got a couple of wickets each but it was the failure of the batsmen that hurt India the most.

Earlier, put into bat first on a green pitch, Indian batsmen fell like pack of cards from the word go. It all started

when pacer Rajitha picked up in-form Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane in the first over.

Rohit Sharma (0) miscued his shot and Dushmantha Chameera took a superb catch at mid-off. Rahane (4) fell on the last ball of the same over when he attempted to clip a ball to leg but only managed a leading edge to get caught at short extra-cover.

India could have been three down inside three overs but Suresh Raina was dropped by Danushka Gunathilaka at



RAJITHA... 3 for 29

third man. Opener Shikhar Dhawan then tried to take the attack to the opposition and hit one out of the park but his stay did not last long as Rajitha got his third wicket when he forced a thick edge off the left-hander which flew to third man and Gunathilaka did not make any mistake this time.

**SCORES IN BRIEF**

**INDIA:** 101 all out in 18.5 overs (Raina 20, Yuvraj 10, Ashwin 31 not out; Rajitha 3-29, Chameera 2-14, Shanaka 3-16)

**SRI LANKA:** 105 for 5 in 18 overs (Chandimal 35, Kapugedera 25, Siriwardana 21 not out; Nehra 2-21, Ashwin 2-13)

**Result:** Sri Lanka won by 5 wickets.

## Manik completes Sk Jamal move

SPORTS REPORTER

Veteran coach Shafiqul Islam Manik yesterday penned a two-year deal with defending Bangladesh Premier League champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club. The former national footballer penned the deal at the office of the club president, Manzur Kader, in presence of the club officials.

"The deal is a two-year one for now. My immediate duty will be to prepare the side for the AFC Cup. The club officials are trying to take some national players on loan while there are a few local and foreign players already with the side. I hope we can form a balanced side with these players," said Manik in his reaction.

After enjoying domestic success with clubs like Muktijoddha and Mohammedan, the veteran coach was out of job for the entirety of the last season before being poached by big-spending Chittagong Abahani at the end of the season. And in his first assignment, Manik delivered the title of Sheikh Kamal International Club Cup for the Chittagong outfit. However, Manik reportedly was piqued by the constant interference of the club manager which spurred him to look for a new destination. Sheikh Jamal, on the other hand, had failed to retain last season's coach Joseph Afusi.

Even though the domestic season is still a month away, Sheikh Jamal will start their season on February 23 when they play away to Singapore outfit Tampines Rovers.