

SPORT



The Bangladesh team, which retained the title of the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship by beating India 4-0 in the final in Tajikistan on Sunday, were received with flowers and sweetmeat on their return last night.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

The sweet taste of success

SPORTS REPORTER

From Marzia to Tohura Khatun, or Anuching Mogini to Maria Manda -- these are average girls that you will find in every nook and corner of Bangladesh. And they represent perhaps the most neglected section in a country where you will find many of them working in garments factories, as house-help of the affluent families or in villages struggling to study while helping their parents in every way possible before becoming a victim of early marriage.

However, given the opportunity to express themselves in a playful manner, the Marzias and Tohuras showed that that world is a possibility for them no matter where they are from or which section of the

society they belong to. Over the years we have been accustomed to seeing heavy defeats in whichever tournament Bangladesh feature in international sports in general, and football in particular.

But what these under-14 girls have scripted in the Tajikistan capital of Dushanbe in an AFC-sponsored football tournament is something this fledgling nation will not only savour, but will also take note of, of the fact that possibility is unlimited if we really do care. It was not a kind of football tournament that the world took note of, but it's an event where you can have the first sight of what you are capable of, given the opportunity and proper care. In four games the Bangladesh girls have played in this tournament, called the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship (South and Central), they have scored a staggering 25 goals on way to retaining the title they had clinched a year ago in a most

adverse and dramatic circumstance in Kathmandu. They scored nine goals against Nepal, a team that they had beaten 1-0 in last year's final. They beat India twice, including a 4-0 win in the final. And for the record, it was Bangladesh's first-ever successes against India in any women's competition. A 9-1 win against hosts Tajikistan in the semifinal was quite a statement for the committed and well-drilled Bangladesh girls, who first made the headlines while training in a remote village under a selfless coach in a schoolyard.

Last night they returned home with their much-deserved trophy, and smiles etched on their faces. Skipper Marzia, who had scored the winning goal in last edition's final, said the team was better and more prepared this time. "We had better training this time. We were told we have to become champions. So we were amidst strict discipline," said Marzia. While Marzia was an integral part of the

back-to-back triumphs, Tohura stole the limelight by becoming the top-scorer with 10 goals, which featured hattricks in both the semifinal and the final. The Class-VII student of Kalshindur High School said she was concentrating only on scoring goals.

"The opposition teams were strong, but we played well. My job was to receive the ball from the defence, and I scored a few solo goals from that position."

Tohura hoped that the football federation keeps them in training for the rest of the year so that they can build on this achievement for a bigger one in future.

Nilufar Yasmin, a defender who was playing for the team for the first time, said the success owed to the hard work they had done. "We did not think about our families in the last two months. We only trained hard and attended video sessions. And now we have got the result."

Hard work paying off for Anamul

SPORTS REPORTER

If you are an opener knocking on the door of the national team, life is bound to be a bit difficult. There was a time, around four or five years ago, when selectors preferred and at times were forced to chop and change openers for Bangladesh across the three formats.

Today however, the policy seems to be the complete opposite and that is because the likes of Imrul Kayes and Soumya Sarkar have proved themselves time and again.

Add to that the series of top-order batsmen who are already in the pipeline -- the likes of Mohammad Mithun, Liton Das, Rony Talukdar, etc. -- and the degree of competition just gets higher.

That is something that Anamul Haque seems to have realised over the last year, ever since a shoulder injury forced him out of Bangladesh's World Cup squad.

And that is why the ongoing Dhaka Premier League is so important for him. Anamul scored a match-winning century for Gazi Group Cricketers against Cricket Coaching School yesterday; prior to that he had posted scores of 42 and 67, albeit with a poor strike-rate.

A player who claims to be putting in a lot more effort in training this year as compared to the past, Anamul attributed his century to his hard work in the nets.

"This century feels good because it's the first time I have reached three figures since 2014. In fact, I am playing one-dayers after a long time," said Anamul at Mirpur yesterday.

It was true. Prior to the league, the last time he played a 50-over contest was back in September 2015 when Bangladesh A toured India.

The 85-ball innings saw him hit smack seven sixes and four fours. It was a knock that seemed to impress skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who was watching the match from the Grandstand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

While the innings, like his previous knocks did include a number of dots, Anamul however, ensured that he posted a much better strike-rate compared to the previous games and provide his side with an easy finish.

"I am really trying to work on my mistakes. I know I need to improve my strike-rate and I am talking to my coaches regarding that. I try to work on it from morning to evening. If I trained four hours a day before, I train six hours now."

"I just hope I am a lot more prepared the next time I get a chance in the national team," said Anamul.

Tushar fined for dissent

SPORTS REPORTER

Brothers Union captain Tushar Imran has been fined after pleading guilty to a Level 2 breach of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) code of conduct during the Walton Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League 2015-16 match against Abahani Limited on 30 April, 2016 at BKSP Ground 3.

According to a press release from the BCB, Imran was found to have breached Article 2.2.1 of the BCB Code of Conduct for Players, which relates to 'Showing dissent at an umpire's decision during a Match.'

The charge was brought by on-field umpires Akhteruzzaman and Nadir Shah.

The player admitted the offence and accepted the sanction, a fine of Tk 20,000, proposed by match referee Mir Belayet Hossain. As such, there was no need for a formal hearing.

Abahani rout Wari

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani recorded a massive 10-0 victory over Wari Club in their Marcel Club Cup fixture at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The Sky Blues, who are already through to the semifinals, registered the thumping victory, thanks to a hattrick from Pakistani recruit Shafkat Rasool and one goal each from Mohammad Irfan, Shakil Abbasi, Kashif Ali, Maksudul Alam Habul, Khorsheedur Rahman, Rajib Das and Shoyeb Ali.

The day's other match between Sonali Bank and Bangladesh SC had to be ended, with 25 minutes remaining, due to power outage. Bangladesh SC were leading 1-0 at the moment. The remainder of the match will be played today.

Victoria move to second spot

SPORTS REPORTER

Sunday's rain burst meant that that it was possible only to have two out of the three Dhaka Premier League matches yesterday. The match between Mohammedan Sporting Club and Legends of Rupganj at Fatullah had to be shifted to the reserve day on Tuesday due to a wet outfield.

The day's other games saw Gazi Group Cricketers secure a comfortable six-wicket win over Cricket Coaching School (CCS) at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, while Victoria Sporting Club put in a dominant performance to beat Kalabagan Cricket Academy (KCA) by five wickets at the BKSP.

A team filled with youngsters, CCS has not managed to find their groove in the tournament so far. Their bad run continued today when they were bundled out for just 176 in 47 overs. Salman Hossain and Uttam Sarker did score half-centuries for them, but the rest of the team fizzled out. The key wicket-takers for Gazi Group were Mohammad Sharif and the young Mahedi Hassan, both of whom scalped two wickets each.

After the exchange, a century from former national opener Anamul Haque helped them ease to their total. Gazi Group reached their target in 33.4 overs and six wickets in hand. Anamul, who is hoping for a national comeback, hit seven sixes and four fours during his 85-ball 100. The boundaries constituted more than half of his runs. He did score

in the last few matches, but he lacked aggression. In this game however, he seemed to have struck the right balance.

While Anamul is still quite some distance away from an international call up, his innings yesterday did seem to receive some acclaim from Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza who was watching the match from the gallery.

Both Mashrafe and national selector Habibul Bashar clapped for Anamul once the batsman reached his century.

Meanwhile, in the day's other game, an all-round performance from Mominul Haque's Victoria helped trump Kalabagan opener Irfan Sukkur's 88 as they chased down KCA's 263 with 11 balls to spare.

Opener Abdul Majed scored a cautious 69, while middle order batsman Mohammad Al-Amin smacked a 52-ball 54 with one six and six fours to lead them home. They were supported well by Mominul and Dhiman Ghosh. Mominul scored a 45-ball 36, while Dhiman smacked 32 off 41.

For Kalabagan Cricket Academy, young pacer Abu Jayed was the pick of the bowlers finishing with figures of 3 for 57 in 9.1 overs. Mehedi Hasan Miraz, the former Bangladesh under-19 captain, also had a good game. He scored a half-century with the bat and also managed to scalp a wicket for Kalabagan. Unfortunately for him though, the rest of the team just couldn't back him up.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CRICKET COACHING SCHOOL: 176 all out in 47 overs (Uttam 54, Salman 52; Sharif 2-22, Mahedi 2-27, Kapali 1-14)

GAZI GROUP CRICKETERS: 179 for 4 in 33.4 overs (Anamul 100, Farhad 45; Saifuddin 3-26, Rajin 1-19)

Result: Gazi Group Cricketers won by six wickets.

KALABAGAN CRICKET ACADEMY: 263 for 6 (Irfan 88, Mehedi 51, Nuruzzaman 30; Surawadi 2-20, Mominul 1-9)

VICTORIA SPORTING CLUB: 266 for 5 (Majid 69, Al-Amin 54, Mominul 35, Dhiman 32 not out; Abu Jayed 3-57)

Result: Victoria Sporting Club won by five wickets.



A focused Anamul Haque drives through covers during his 85-ball century against Cricket Coaching School in the third round of the Dhaka Premier League in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Salahuddin sets priorities

SPORTS REPORTER

Two days after being re-elected as the president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for a third consecutive term, Kazi Salahuddin set his priorities on three things -- developing district football, strengthening club football and building a strong national team in the next four years. The BFF boss also said he also dreams of seeing Bangladesh in the Asian Cup by the end of his tenure.

"Surely district football is special for me but it is not that special that I would throw away club football. There will be a combination between the two," Salahuddin told reporters at his office yesterday.

"I will give emphasis on three things -- district football, club football and the national team. In order to run the federation as well as run the country's football, the pledges of the manifesto will have to be materialised. Real success will come when district football and club football will develop," Salahuddin said. "When I came to office eight years ago, there was no football on the ground, but we have

started the game which is going on. However one thing you can say is that the performance of the national team in the last few months has not been remarkable. Football is going on everywhere and if it keeps continuing, football will come up itself," Salahuddin said.

The BFF boss is wants to build a solid organisational capacity so that new leaders can easily continue the development programme in future.

"Football is played in 209 countries, so it is not an easy task. We have started our work far ago and we are trying to develop it, which will take time. You will see results."

"We have come here to work for football because we love football, which is in our blood. However love is not enough to develop football. I would like to see my nation on top of football world but it is a very difficult job. I believe, if we keep working and get support from the government and country's people, one day we will be champions like our under-14 girls' team," said Salahuddin, who thanked all delegates who supported him and even those who did not support him in the elections.

