

SPORT



Bangladesh forward Anuching Mogini unleashes a powerful volley at the Kyrgyzstan goal during their AFC Under-16 Women's Championship Qualifiers fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A goal-fest indeed

Hosts thrash Kyrgyzstan 10-0

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh forwards finally found their scoring boots to notch up a 10-0 win against Kyrgyzstan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday, the biggest victory in the

Group C Qualifiers of AFC U-16 Women's Championship.

The girls, sporting blue shirts for the first time in the meet, treated the home fans -- who turned up with red and green flags -- with a glut of goals in yet another display of attacking football. Although rain stayed away for a change, it was a different kind of rain that the strike force of Krishna Rani, Anuching Mogini, Marzia, Maria, Shamsunnahar and Nargis Khatun showered on a hapless Kyrgyzstan in a bid to reduce the goal difference with Chinese Taipei, who are still on top with a two-goal advantage after their 9-0 win against Singapore in the day's opening fixture.

Krishna struck a hat-trick while her young striking partner Anuching and defender Shamsunnahar scored a brace each. Marzia, Maria and Nargis put their names on the score-sheet as well in the one-sided affair against a team who came into their third match after conceding 16 goals. The impressive victory also marked an improvement for the Bangladesh girls, who were more clinical in front of goal against the Central Asian nation.

The girls not only showed their ability to score but also there were also a few eye-catching goals from the feet of Krishna, Marzia and Nargis which can be compared to goals of senior level competitions.

Anuching was given the room in the starting eleven for the first time in place of Sirat Jahan Swapna and the girl who was promoted from the U-14 team justified her coach's decision after breaking the deadlock in the 21st minute against an opposition who had opted to park the bus.

Afterwards, it was only a matter of time before the margin was increased as Bangladesh grew into the game more and managed to muster accurate shots on target, leaving their misfiring ways in the first two matches behind.

Like the previous matches, the home team clearly dominated their opponents from the first minute till the last and, with their scoring boots firmly on, they tore apart Kyrgyzstan in both halves.

It was also a delight for coach Golam Rabanni Choton that his strikers returned to scoring ways ahead of their crucial match against Chinese Taipei on September 3, the day when the group winner will be decided with a match in hand.

"I am happy because the girls rectified their mistakes to post a big win which we knew they were capable of. In the past two matches, the girls dominated throughout the match but squandered a lot of scoring opportunities. However, today [Wednesday] they were more accurate with their finishing.

"The margin could have been bigger had two goals not been cancelled, but we should not expect any more from this group of girls, who hardly got any time to breathe on the pitch," said Choton, adding that the girls were given a clear message to score as many as they could in a bid to catch Chinese Taipei.

Meanwhile, Iran recorded their second win after beating United Arab Emirates 5-0.

Walsh all but official

SPORTS REPORTER

It is understood that the necessary paperwork has long been done and dusted. Now the wait is for the joint statement from both parties -- former West Indies captain Courtney Walsh and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

The flight is yet to be booked for Walsh's arrival to the city, but a statement may come very soon and make the news that the West Indian great will become Bangladesh's next coach public. And if everything goes according to plan, the 53-year old will

Fitness levels at 'an all-time high'

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh national cricket team might have had a very dull 2016 so far with no ODIs or Tests, but the good news is that the team has reached a new landmark as far as their fitness numbers are concerned.

According to the Bangladesh Cricket Board's sports physician Debashish Chowdhury, the numbers from the recently organised fitness camp have reached an all-time high, with the current average 'beep test' score of the team hovering around 11.

"I don't think we have ever had such a high average score. This is great," Debashish told The Daily Star yesterday.

Speaking to reporters Nasir Hossain echoed Debashish's sentiments.

"At the start, my test results were 10 by 6. After the camp I reached 11 by 3. We have all improved a lot," said Nasir.

One of the main tests used to measure the players' fitness levels is the 'beep test.' The setting for this test is quite minimal. Two cones are kept 20 meters apart and the test starts when the players hear three consecutive beeps from the speaker. The player starts at one cone and

must reach another cone before the next beep, doing so until he can no longer keep up with the beeps. If a player misses three beeps in a row, he has to quit the test. The frequency of the beeps increases as time progresses.

For example in level one, the beeps may come after a long gap. However, as each minute passes, players enter new levels and are required to increase their speed in order to keep up with the beeps.

The scoring is based on the number of levels a player passes and the number of times a player completes a full round. So in Nasir's case, he reached level 11 and managed to run 20 miles,

while keeping up with the beeps thrice before falling behind.

The increase in the average beep test score and the way the players have emphasised the importance of fitness during the camp in the last one month, in a way, goes on to show a change in the mentality of the cricketers. The rule at the moment seems to be simple: if a player is not fit enough, there is no room for him.

Therefore, it is not a surprise that cricketers who are outside the national team and those who are yet to cement their position, like Shahriar Nafees and Nasir for instance, are putting in extra hours in the gym lately.



Maldives friendly today

Saintfiet looking for team combination

SPORTS REPORTER



Tom Saintfiet will be looking to fine tune his strategy and team combination for the Asian Cup Play-off Qualifiers as the Bangladesh national team take on Maldives in an international friendly in Male today.

The friendly, which will kick off at 10:00pm Bangladesh time, has been arranged as part of both teams' preparation for the qualifiers. While the men in red and green will host Bhutan in Dhaka on September 6 before play away at Thimphu in October, the Maldivians will vie against Laos in their attempt to get into the Asian Cup qualifiers final round.

Saintfiet, who has put together a

squad comprising a number of new faces alongside proven campaigners, is not focusing on result, rather is looking to find an ideal combination and adaptability of his players to his system.

"I am trying to change Bangladesh football and the recent results were not good for sure. We must change that to get sponsors and fans to take it to the next stage," Saintfiet was quoted as saying by Maldivissoccer.com yesterday.

Even though the Belgian is seeing Maldives as the favourites in this match, statistics is tilted slightly towards Bangladesh. The men in red and green have won five times while losing three times and drawing on the other three occasions against their South Asian counterparts. The last meeting, though, ended in a 1-3 defeat for Bangladesh in

the SAFF Championship last December.

The 43-year-old Belgian praised the attacking line-up of Maldives while admitting the weakness of his own forwards.

"Maldives players are much better technically, but I am sure there are some areas that we can take advantage of. Our main problem is scoring, but I know Maldives' strike force is very good and there is no doubt about the quality of Ashfaq," Saintfiet said.

Saintfiet's counterpart, Darren Stewart of Australia, wants to make a positive start too.

"I want to start with a positive result. I can see the hard work and commitment from my players during training," said Stewart, who will also make his debut for the Islanders.

NAT'L SHOOTING C'SHIPS

Perfect Baki's fifth gold on the trot

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier shooter Abdullah Hel Baki fired a near-perfect shot on his final attempt to retain gold in the 10m Air Rifle event in the Beximco 28th National Shooting Championships, barely holding off Mahmudul Hasan at the National Shooting Complex in Gulshan yesterday.

Both Baki and Mahmudul were tied on 192 points after 19 shots, leaving the 20th and final shot as the decider. And while Mahmudul hit 9.2 out of 10.9 with the final shot, the experienced Baki kept his composure to hit 10.5 and clinch his fifth successive gold with a 1.3 point margin of victory.

Shovon Chowdhury, a silver medallist in the 2016 South Asian Games, finished third with a score of 181.3.

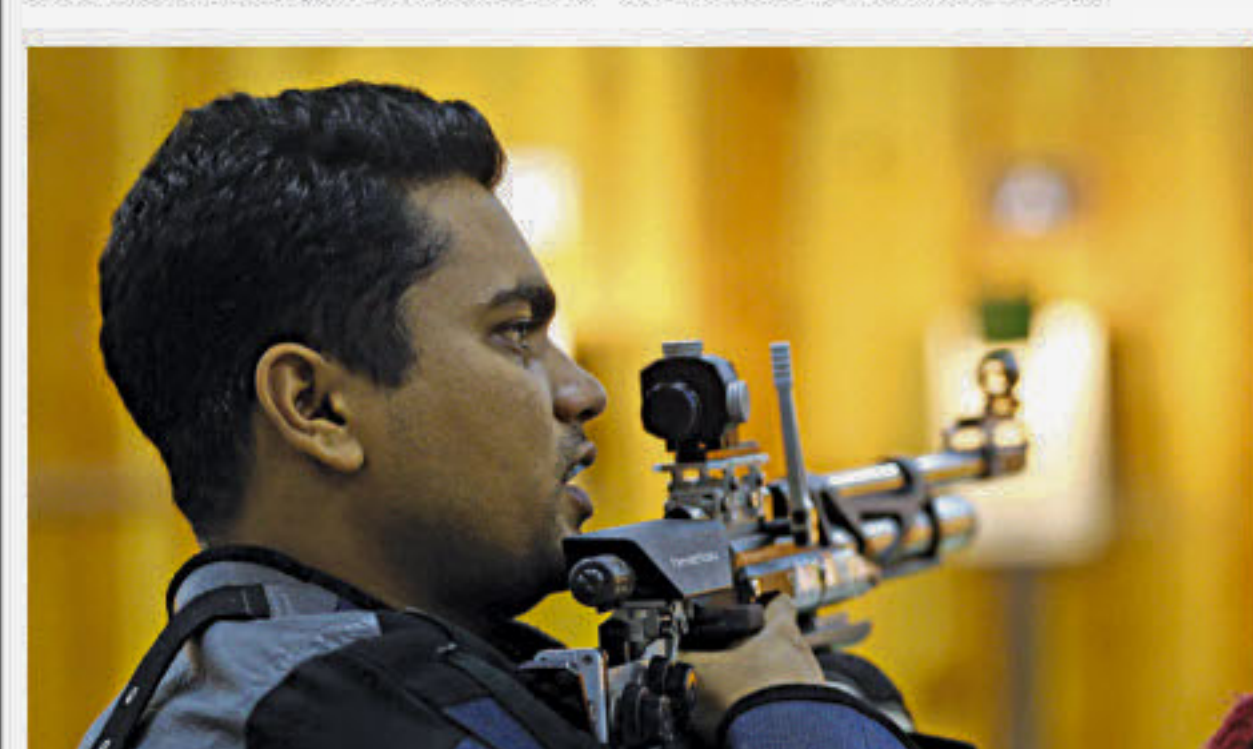
Before coming into the eight-shooter final round, Commonwealth Games silver medallist Baki also created a national record in qualification after hitting 596 out of 600, surpassing the mark of 595 set by Asif Hossain Khan in 2009.

"I was under immense pressure because I just returned home after participating in Olympics. I did not get any time to prepare for the national championship. It was a bit difficult for me to take part in the renovated range on which I practiced only one day before today's [Wednesday] final event.

"I always believe I will get an opportunity to fight back and always try to do my best with my next shot and I am happy to have completed the job," said Baki after the win.

However, although it was a fifth gold in a row for Baki, the shooter from Gazipur was not ecstatic with his fifth successive conquest.

"It is not important how many times I become champion in the national championship. However, there is a place of satisfaction this year as I also set a national record. In the last edition I touched the national record of 595 created by Asif bhai and this year I broke it," said Baki triumphantly.



Aus clinch ODI series

AFF, Dambulla

John Hastings claimed six wickets before Aaron Finch and George Bailey's attacking half-centuries powered Australia to a series clinching six-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the fourth one-day international in Dambulla on Wednesday.

Australia rode on Finch's 19-ball 55 and an unbeaten 90 from Bailey to chase down 213 in 31 overs and take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.

Finch, who equalled the record for the fastest fifty -- in 18 balls -- by an Australian, struck eight fours and three sixes as he carted the Sri Lankan spinners to all parts of the ground.

Earlier Hastings' career-best bowling figures of 6-45 helped bowl out Sri Lanka for 212 after electing to bat first despite Dhananjaya de Silva's fighting 76.

The victory comes as a welcome relief for the visiting side after they suffered their first series whitewash against Sri Lanka in the three Test matches.

The fifth and final match of the series is scheduled on September 4 in Pallekele.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SRI LANKA: 212 all out in 50 overs (De Silva 76, Mathews 40, Pathirana 24; Hastings 6-45)

AUSTRALIA: 217 for 4 in 31 overs (Finch 55, Bailey 90 not out, Head 40; Pathirana 3-37)

Result: Australia won by 6 wickets and led 5-match series 3-1.

Player-of-the-match: John Hastings.

Fans play with Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER

Forty eight lucky winners of Huawei's "Play with Shakib" offer played cricket with all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan at the Mirpur Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Huawei, an android smartphone brand, had initiated the "Play with Shakib" offer for its customers ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. The offer ran from July 10 to the Eid day. Every day, two lucky customers won the opportunity to play cricket with Shakib during the offer period.

Shakib played with six teams which were formed comprising of the 48 winners of the offer.

Pak, Azhar under fire

AGENCIES, London



The Pakistan cricket team have been facing criticism from all corners after their 169-run defeat to England at Trent Bridge on Tuesday.

The hosts piled on a world record 444 for 3, with Pakistan falling massively short in response and succumbing to a third consecutive loss in the 5-match series, which still has two games left.

Pakistan captain Azhar Ali, who has come under fire from the media and former players, accepted his own side's fielding had been well below the required standard.

"It was an exceptional innings from Alex Hales and Jos Buttler," he said. "I think 444 is a bit too much."

"I think we missed some key chances -- especially that [Wahab

Riaz] no-ball when we would have got rid of Alex Hales on about 70.

"We didn't start well, and there's no excuse for that. Those fielding lapses didn't send a good message."

Meanwhile, former Pakistan captain Rashid Latif layered severe criticism on Pakistan for their below par performance against England, saying that the hosts were 'still 20 to 30 runs short'.

"In my opinion, England were 20 to 30 runs short as their batsmen had gotten tired by spanking boundaries. They may go on to score more than 444 in the remaining two matches."

However, Rashid saw a silver lining in the defeat.

"Had England put up 300 and Pakistan lost the match by 50, it would not have had such an impact. With such a heavy drubbing, there are chances of changes in Pakistan cricket."

WALTON-DRU FOOTBALL Guest delight for The Daily Star

SPORTS REPORTER

The Daily Star needed a totally committed guest under the bar to cross the quarterfinal hurdle and set up a semifinal showdown with Bangladesh Protidin in the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) football tournament.

The guest player in question was Mojibur Rahman, whose three brilliant saves in the shootout, including a scorching that swelled his palm and required ice treatment after the game, gave The Daily Star a 2-1 tie-breaker win against Kaler Kantha after regulation time had failed to end the morning's duck at the Handball Stadium yesterday. Fazlur Rahman fired in the first goal for the popular English language daily in the shootout before Mohammed Al-Amin struck to confirm a victory in a tight contest. The Daily Star will play the second semifinal today, and a victory will put them in pole position to retain the title.

The final is also billed today after the two semifinals.