

SPORT



After Bangladesh went a goal down, the captain of the Tigresses, Krishna Rani, caused havoc among the Chinese Taipei defence, earning two penalties -- which she deferred to Shamsunnahar -- and scoring a goal to ensure a win in the sides' AFC Women's Championship qualifiers at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A victory for the ages

SPORTS REPORTER



As the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) tried to warm up to the footsteps of USA and Europe by laboriously introducing football among women in 2004, a major roadblock came in the form of fundamentalists. There were violent protests to stop women from playing football or sport for that matter. That tournament, however, eventually took place, amid heavy police security, after women's organisations came out on the streets and some brave football officials remained steadfast.

It is quite remarkable to think that only twelve years later the game has brought about one of the most glorious moments of Bangladesh's sporting history as the Bangladesh under-16 women's were placed among the eight best Asian teams. The game had stuttered quite a few times in those 12 intervening years, but there were sure signs of progress. Those little steps -- the nationwide staging of Bangamata Gold Cup, the women's national team players going for overseas stints, and back-to-back AFC U-14 Zonal Women's Championship titles -- culminated at the Big Bowl last night. Bangladesh surely has turned a corner.

Coach Golam Rabbani Choton, who has overseen three SAFF Women's Championship campaigns and two South Asian (SA) Games campaigns apart from successfully guiding the under-14 side to back-to-back successes over the last five years, saw the success coming.

"It is a result of dedication of some of the officials associated with women's football," the revered coach said after his team's win over Taipei. "It is also a result of continuation of strategy and purpose and grooming a specific bunch year after year."

Choton believes that he had made this bunch of footballers -- most of whom were part of the victorious under-14 teams -- battle-hardened by thrusting them amongst the big girls. "When I took nine of these young girls to the SA Games earlier this year, I faced a lot of criticism. I felt that we would finish third in any case, so why not give these talented girls the exposure they needed. We are reaping the rewards of that experience."

The irony is that the incredible success of women's football is coming at a time when the privileged men's football is hitting a new nadir in every game the men's national team plays. Just the other day, the men's team slumped to a 5-0 drubbing against Maldives -- their biggest defeat to a South Asian opponent. So when Bangladesh under-16 women's team's skipper Krishna Rani Sarker was asked to comment about the contrasting fortunes, she came up with a candid reply and an incredulous look: "Men are ahead in everything -- everything including facilities. Still they are losing by 5-6 goals!"

Krishna or Choton for that matter were certainly not happy to see the men's team lose like that. But they were only pleading inside that they got some of the privileges so they could further ride the wave of success because they have earned the right to do so. And they know they would need all the support from the game's governing body and other stakeholders to make their presence felt in China come September 2017.

Girls qualify into Asia's top 8

Beat Chinese Taipei 4-2 to seal qualification

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have sealed a place in the final round of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship after beating main rivals Chinese Taipei 4-2 in the penultimate match of Qualifying Group C at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The girls in red and green came back from a goal down to notch the terrific victory, which ensured their passage to the final eight where they are set to meet Asian powerhouses such as Australia, Korea and Japan next year.

Despite having a game left to play, Bangladesh's qualification was ensured on

head-to-head count as they have beaten both Taipei and Iran, the two teams who have a mathematical chance to equal Bangladesh on points in case the hosts lose their last match against the UAE on Monday.

But given the brilliant form, confidence and resilience of this bunch of girls, a defeat against lightweights UAE -- which will at best take some gloss off their qualification -- is unlikely. The brilliance of the hosts was on full display at the Big Bowl last night as the girls came storming back after conceding an early goal.

With both teams having won their previous three matches by big margins, this game had turned into a virtual final. And it did look like it was going to be a competitive affair when Taipei skipper Yu-Hsuan Su beat

Bangladesh goalkeeper Mahmuda with a piledriver of a shot on ten minutes, stunning the 5,000-something crowd into silence.

Taipei had made the better start, with Mahmuda having to make a valiant block to deny Hsin-Hui Lin from point-blank range minutes before the opening goal. But the goal seemed only to have woken up the Tiger in the hosts.

Skipper Krishna Rani proved a handful for the Taipei defence, and her darting runs made way for Bangladesh's first two goals in the space of 12 minutes. The former under-14 skipper was brought down in the box on 25 minutes by Chen Chiao-Yi, who earned a second yellow card in the process. Shamsunnahar stepped up, and despite her feeble attempt, managed to beat the Taipei

keeper to her right. Twelve minutes later, Krishna was brought down inside the box yet again, and this time Shamsunnahar beat the Taipei goalie with a powerful strike.

With the numerical advantage, there was hardly any stopping Bangladesh. They kept battering the opposition, with Anuching Mogini hitting the woodwork on 40 minutes before Krishna made it 3-1 with an exquisite chip ten minutes after restart.

The margin was further widened by Marzia from a goal-mouth scramble in the 78th minute before Taipei pulled one back two minutes before time after a scrappy clearance from the hosts, but the goal mattered little and in the end as the hosts celebrated a richly deserved victory and a place among Asia's best.

Fizz's rehab continues

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman returned from his hometown last Wednesday and is currently working on the first phase of his rehabilitation under the guidance of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) medical team.

The left-arter, who is currently staying at the BCB's cricket academy, spends his time doing a range of motion (ROM) exercises and hanging out with his colleagues, who are currently busy with the ongoing national camp.

According to BCB sports physician Debashish Chowdhury, the exercises which the left-arter has currently been asked to do are not that difficult.

"He just needs to move his arm a little bit. It does not cause much strain. He will be here till the eighth and then go back for the Eid holidays," said Debashish.

Range of motion exercises indicate how far an athlete can move his joints in different directions. These exercises help move each joint through its full range of motion. Movement can help keep the joints flexible, reduce pain, and improve balance and strength.

Mustafizur, who still walks around with an arm sling, will begin the second phase of rehab on September 19.

The pacer had undergone a surgery on August 11 in London to fix a recurring shoulder problem. The surgery has ruled him out of the Afghanistan and England series. He may take up to four to five months to recover but if the left-arter is lucky, he might return in time for the New Zealand series which begins on December 26.

Ali, Bairstow sure of touring BD

AGENCIES, London



England players Jonny Bairstow and Moeen Ali have both stated that they are happy to go to Bangladesh, putting their faith in the safety assurances they have been given.

Other England players have so far refused to commit to visiting the country at the end of the month for three one-dayers and two Tests. However, Bairstow and Ali's positive pronouncements come as good news for England supremo Andrew Strauss, who remains confident most players will board the plane.

Bairstow said: "I've not made a 100 per cent decision but I have a lot of faith in Reggie [Reggie Dickson]. I've been on a lot of tours with him, he's known me since I was a young boy."

"I've been asking questions regularly, that's only natural. There's a decision to be made but, at the same time, I'm pretty confident in the

decision I'll make and it will be a positive one.

"The world is not necessarily the safest place, that's in England, Australia, South Africa and Bangladesh. We had a meeting in Leeds on Wednesday but it lasted about three minutes and went smoothly. Reg is an expert in his field. If he wasn't an expert, he wouldn't be employed to do what he does. The detail I know he has gone into -- because I've asked questions about it -- is fantastic."

Ali echoed those sentiments as he said he would 'definitely go' if he was called upon.

"If selected, I'll definitely go," said Moeen. "I'm pretty happy with everything and really looking forward to it. "Everyone's different and has their own views on things -- and as a team, you back other's decisions. It's up to the individual. There's no pressure on anyone."

"My view is you're not safe anywhere these days. I think you can be anywhere and still not safe. I totally understand, and I back every decision people make."

42ND CHESS OLYMPIAD Winning start for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh men's and women's chess teams made winning starts in the 42nd World Chess Olympiad which got underway in Baku, Azerbaijan on Friday.

The men's team beat lowly San Marino 4-0 while the women's team followed in the men's footsteps, beating minnows Sudan by the same margin.

Grandmaster Enamul Hossain Razib, Grandmaster Abdullah Al Rakib, Grandmaster Niaz Morshed and International Master Minhaz Uddin Ahmed Sagor won their respective boards while Ziaur Rahman, the country's highest-ranked Grandmaster, sat out the opening round.

In the women's first round, WIM

Shamima Akter Liza, WFM Sharmin Sultana Shirin, WFM Nazrana Khan Eva and WIM Rani Hamid beat their respective Sudanese counterparts to collect maximum points.

But after the easy opening round, both the teams were set to face a much stiffer challenge in the second round, which was scheduled for Saturday. The men's team were set to face Norway -- which features the world's leading chess player Magnus Carlsen -- while the women's team were to face a strong Vietnam side which features three Grandmasters.

A total of 180 teams from 175 countries and three organisations are taking part in the open (men's) section while 140 teams from 136 countries and two organisations are participating in women's section.

BSPA holds hockey workshop

SPORTS REPORTER

A workshop for sports journalists on rules and regulations of hockey was organised by the Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA) at the Dutch-Bangla Bank Auditorium of the Bangladesh Olympic Association yesterday.

The discussants at the workshop were Bangladesh Hockey Federation vice president Khaa Rahmatullah, coach Mahbub Harun, coach Mamunur Rashid and umpire Selim Lucky.

These four veterans of hockey explained the ever-changing rules of the game and current standing as well as Bangladesh's future prospect of in terms of Asian hockey and world hockey.

The workshop was conducted by BSPA general secretary Rezwanuzzaman Rajib. Later Mostafa Mamun, president of BSPA, handed over crests to the discussants.



Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan scored a fine half-century during the Tigers' practice match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Shakib one of 32 to get nat'l sports award today

BSS

Thirty two sports personalities, including sports stars and organisers will be bestowed with National Sports Awards for 2010, 2011 and 2012 at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the capital today.

The names of the awardees were declared in 2013. Prime minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to hand over the awards to the awardees.

19 cricketers have received the award so far since its inception.

The recipients of national sports award for 2010 are: Harun-Ur-Rashid (swimming), Atiqur Rahman (shooting), Mahmuda Begum (athletics), Dewan Md. Nazrul Islam (gymnastics), Mizanur Rahman Manu (organiser), ASM Ali Kabir (organiser), Md. Tokbir Hossain (swimming, posthumously), Farid Khan Chowdhury (athletics), Neli Jesmine (athletics) and Nipa Bosh (athletics, Autistic).

The recipients of national sports award for 2011 are: Rowshan Ara Chobi (gymnastics), Md. Kanchon Ali (boxing), Md. Ashraf Ali (wrestling), Helena Khan Eva (volleyball), Khaled Masud Pilot (cricket), Robiul Islam (bodybuilding), Jumman Lusa (hockey, posthumously), Kutubuddin Mohammad Aksir (organiser), Ashikur Rahman Miku (organiser) and Saheed Sheikh Kamal (athletics and organiser, posthumously).

The recipients of national sports award for 2012 are: Shakib Al Hasan (cricket), Md. Mohsin (football), Khurshid Babul (football), Ashish Bhadra (football), Abdul Gaffar (football), Sattyajit Das Rupu (football), Firoza Khatun (athletics), Nazia Akter Juthi (badminton), Kazi Rajibuddin Ahmed Chapal (organiser), Mamunur Rashid (hockey), Salma Rafique (organiser, posthumously) and Nurul Alam Chowdhury (organiser).