

## SPORT

## Girls show grit in narrow defeat

ANISUR RAHMAN from Thailand

It started disappointingly for Bangladesh when they suffered a 9-0 defeat against North Korea in their opening fixture of the AFC U-16 Women's Championship in Chonburi, Thailand last week. But on Sunday they signed off with their heads held high despite the fact that they lost to Australia 3-2 in what was their last group league game.

The game at the Institute of Physical Education Stadium itself epitomized the struggle of some nondescript girls from remote villages, from where they started kicking a football barely six years ago. Playing against a team like Australia, who are ranked 100 places above, is itself an achievement. When our men's team hosted the Soccerros for the first time in their home-leg World Cup qualifier last year, they lost the game 5-0 without a fight.

But these girls did not lose without a fight. They conceded a goal as early as the ninth minute with Australia's Laura Emily finding the net for the first time for her country in this championship. The Bangladesh girls suffered another blow when they were reduced to 10-women after captain Krishna Rani got the marching order in the 32nd minute.

It could have killed the game as a contest had that been any other Bangladesh football lineup against any decent team in the world. But these girls have grown up facing adversities in every conceivable way possible. They made a spectacular turnaround against let us say the future Matildas – the senior Australian women's team that beat their Brazilian counterparts 2-1 only a couple of days ago.

A ten-women Bangladesh restored parity in the 45th minute when Shopna was brought down by Cecilija Matic in the forbidden zone. Shamsunnahar converted from the spot as the Bangladesh girls headed for a satisfying lemon break. They returned to stun their fancied opponent with Monika Chakma presenting Bangladesh a 2-1 lead in the 51st minute, slotting home a rebounder from the top of the box. That goal marked an amazing turnaround, which is something beyond anybody's imagination.

They not only held their fort gallantly but showed the amazing ability of how to do battle in a game with the disadvantage of being one player short.

Australia eventually needed two late goals including a magnificent curling corner from Kyra Cooney-Cross, which sailed into the far corner of the net in the 78th minute, to save their blushes against a spirited Bangladesh team. Substitute Sofia Sakalish scored the winner in the 83rd minute, slotting home from a goal-mouth scramble.

The match turned into a dead rubber after both sides' defeat against North Korea and Japan. Interestingly, both Bangladesh and Australia ended their scoring duck in the match after conceding 12 each in their previous games.

Australia might have won the game by the skin of their teeth, but it was certainly the Bangladesh girls who won hearts.

When Bangladesh qualified for the finals, they had been placed in a group that can be best



**Bangladesh's AFC U-16 Women's Championship encounter against Australia may have been a dead rubber but the contest between the two proved quite lively. Australia won the match 3-2.**

PHOTO: AFC

described as good as world beaters in age-group level competitions. They suffered a stage-fright in their opening game against North Korea, but showed remarkable tenacity against Japan, who

won 3-0. And after yesterday's 3-2 defeat against Australia they proved a point beyond debate that they have achieved more than what was expected in their first-ever top-flight venture.

It was not a fairly-tale ending by any means for coach Golam Rabbani Choton's girls, but it gave hope, a hope of something extraordinary if these girls play together for another four to five years.

## 'Our best ever performance'

SPORTS REPORTER from Thailand

Bangladesh coach Golam Rabbani Choton said that the match against Australia in the AFC U-16 Women's Championship was the best performance the Bangladesh U-16 women's team had ever put up.

Bangladesh conceded two late goals in a span of six minutes to surrender the lead and thus suffered a 3-2 defeat to mighty Australia in an enthralling encounter following defeats against Japan and North Korea.

"Despite being reduced to 10 players, what the girls put up on the field was their best ever performance I have seen because they showed good display from the beginning and never thought of against whom they were playing though it was Australia who are the sixth in FIFA women's ranking," said Choton, who has been involved with women's football in the country for at least 10 years.

It was all but beyond everyone's expectations that Bangladesh would be able to come from behind and take the lead, with 10 payers no less. Bangladesh,

who are 100 places behind Australia in FIFA women's rankings, were just 15 minutes away from pulling off a huge win had they held the margin against the side they were facing for the first time.

"Actually we all were dreaming of a win, especially the way the girls were performing after taking the lead. We could have pulled off the victory had Krishna not been sent off," said Choton. "Actually we fought against them neck-to-neck but made a few silly mistakes in the latter part of the game because the girls could not take the pressure to play with 10 players. They were probably tired playing 65 minutes against 11-player Australia."

During the match, it appeared that Krishna pushed an Australian player twice after she had been fouled her in the middle of the pitch. Seeing this, the referee then gave Krishna her marching orders despite awarding the free-kick in favour of Bangladesh.

Choton also believes victory might have not slipped from Bangladesh's grasp had the best player from the match against Japan, goalkeeper Mahmuda stopped the equalizer by Kyra Cooney-

Cross as Sanjida easily cleared the ball before Australia's Sofia Sakalis tapped in to snatch the win.

However, Choton said this performance against Australia is something that can be a positive sign for Bangladesh women's football. If they take these lessons forward and also if this group of girls are provided regular training along with better facilities, they can produce more good performance in the future.

Australia coach Rae Dower also praised Bangladesh's performance, especially goalkeeper Mahmuda Akter.

"We were aware of Bangladesh's performance after their first two-match performance. We started the match positively but Bangladesh showed up with a really fighting attitude throughout the game and never gave up. The goalkeeper [Mahmuda] made some world-class saves," said Dower. "However, I brought two positive changes in the start of the second half and the players continued to press for the equalizer by holding the ball. Substitute Sofia did her job nicely."

## Thrilling finish awaits at Rajshahi

SPORTS REPORTER

The ongoing 19th National Cricket League has been highlighted by fierce competitiveness and intensity from the get go and the third day of the first class competition's opening round yesterday, being held across the country, was no exception.

So far, the teams have displayed an attacking approach and this push for results may certainly raise the standard of the crucial first-class tournament, which, not long ago, was termed 'Picnic cricket'.

Moving into the third day at the



ANAMUL...172 not out

Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Rajshahi made a brilliant comeback and needed to score another 125 runs with eight wickets in hand to secure a win against Sylhet on the final day.

Sylhet were all-out on 162 after resuming on 90 for 5. Rajin Saleh top scored with 39 runs while medium pacer Forhad Reza and left-arm spinner Saqlain Sajib once again picked up three wickets each after bagging the same scalps in the first innings.

Rajshahi made a confident start coming into chase the target of 211 runs and scored 86 for 2 after bad light closed the day's play with Zunaid Siddique (not out) and Farhad Hossain (10 not out) set to resume the final day.

Elsewhere, Rangpur's wicket-keeper batsman Anamul Haque, who reached his hundred in the second day, went on to score an unbeaten 172 as his side ended the day on 342 for 4 and still trail Khulna by 129 runs. Khulna

posted 471 all-out in the first innings.

Anamul will look to smash his maiden first class double century in hopes of catching the selectors' attention to make a comeback in the national side.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, Chittagong is struggling against Dhaka Metro as they trail by 372 runs in the second innings when they resume the fourth day on 11-0.

Dhaka Metro declared their second innings on 169-6, where skipper Marshal Ayub scored an unbeaten 74 runs and posted a huge target of 383.

Meanwhile, rain once again interrupted the game between Dhaka Division and Barisal at the Sheikh Kamal International cricket stadium in Cox's Bazar where the third day was cancelled without a single ball being bowled after the first day was also abandoned due to a wet out-field following overnight showers.

## NSC, BCB served legal notice

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh Cricket Board director Mobasher Hossain has sent a legal notice to the National Sports Council (NSC) asking the country's local sport's governing body to stop any and all functions of the present BCB board of directors, including president Nazmul Hasan.

Barrister Mahbub Shafique, on behalf of Mobasher, served the legal notice on Saturday asking the BCB president not only to stop all his activities but also to refrain from holding the upcoming AGM of the board which is scheduled to take place on September 30.

The notice, which was simultaneously served to the BCB and NSC, stated that the present committee of the BCB has lost its legality following the judgement of the Supreme Court on July 26 this year.

The apex court declared the amendment in the BCB constitution made in 2012 illegal, it also ruled that the BCB is the sole authority to amend its constitution, not the NSC, which can only consent or reject.

The present board had been elected under the 2012 constitution and Nazmul Hasan became the first elected BCB president in that campaign. The notice also said that the matter will be taken to court if action has not been taken within 72 hours upon receiving the notice.

## Pandya puts India ahead

AFP, Chennai

All-rounder Hardik Pandya starred with the bat and ball to help India defeat Australia by 26 runs in the rain-hit opening one-day international in Chennai yesterday.

Chasing a revised target of 164 in 21 overs, the visitors were frustrated by wrist spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav who shared five wickets between them. They ended on 137-9.

But it was Pandya's 66-ball 83 and two wickets that proved decisive in India taking a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

Pandya put on a 118-run sixth-wicket stand with Mahendra Singh Dhoni (79), to lift India from a precarious 87-5 after electing to bat first.

Pacemen Jasprit Bumrah and Pandya combined to hurt Australia's hopes of chasing with three early strikes including skipper Steve Smith for one. Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav got star opener David Warner caught behind for 25 as Australia's innings fell apart.

Leg-spinner Chahal ended with three

wickets in his five overs. Pandya and Yadav took two each.

Earlier Australian fast bowler Nathan Coulter-Nile made an impact with three wickets including that of Virat Kohli for nought, putting Indian in trouble at 11-3.

After Marcus Stoinis sent Rohit Sharma, who made 28, and Kedar Jadhav, who scored 40 packing, Dhoni made his innings with Pandya count.

Pandya then smashed Adam Zampa for a four and three successive sixes in an over to bring up his third ODI fifty.

Dhoni, taking over after the loss of Pandya, blasted some vital runs in the last five overs, adding 72 with number-eight Bhuvneshwar Kumar (32 not out).

The two teams now head to Kolkata's Eden Gardens for the second ODI on Thursday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 281 for 7 (Pandya 83, Dhoni 79,

Jadhav 40; Coulter-Nile 3-44)

AUSTRALIA: 137 for 9 (Maxwell 39, Faulkner

32 not out, Warner 25; Chahal 3-30)

Result: India won by 26 runs

Player-of-the-match: Hardik Pandya



Mahendra Singh Dhoni (L) and Hardik Pandya run between the wickets during India's first ODI against Australia at M A Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

## BD sans Rubel arrive in SA

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh cricket team reached Johannesburg, South Africa yesterday and will start training from today for their upcoming two-Test series against the Proteas.

However, fast bowler Rubel Hossain, who returned home from the Hazrat Shahjalal International airport on Friday due to visa complications, only cleared the issue yesterday. Hence, the cricketer is expected to leave Dhaka today.

Mushfiqur Rahim and his troops will take part in a three day practice match against Cricket South Africa Invitation XI from September 21 at the Willowmoore Park in Benoni.

The Tigers will face South Africa in the first of the two matches from September 28 at the Senses Park in Potchefstroom.

Bangladesh will play the second Test from October 6 at the Mangaung Oval, in Bloemfontein and will later take part in three ODI's and two T20's on their month long tour to Africa.

## Silva banned for two years

AFP, Colombo

Former Sri Lanka player Chamara Silva has been banned for two years for misconduct during a domestic first-class match, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) announced Sunday.

SLC said the match between Panadura Cricket Club and Kalutara Physical Culture Club in January this year had not been played in keeping with the spirit of the game and that players and officials on both sides had been penalised.

The two captains, Chamara Silva, who played in all formats of international cricket for Sri Lanka up to 2011, and Manoj Deshapriya were banned for two years from all cricket-related activities while the other players and managers were barred for one year, SLC said in a statement.