



A GLORIOUS DAY FOR

Dhaka's football

WIDE ANGLE DESK

Sunday, November 21, 1937.

Something spectacular, unthinkable happened on the then Dhaka Sporting Association (DSA) field,

way from England and Dhaka Sporting Association (DSA), a local team.

In a fiercely competitive game, the DSA won one goal to nil. The solitary goal came towards the end

feet. He was from Mymensingh.

This was the first and only defeat of the visitors during their India tour.

The match was part of Corinthians' world tour that began on October 4, 1937. In 1937-38 season, the team toured the Netherlands, Switzerland, Egypt, India, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines, China, Japan, the US and Canada. One of the largest in football history, the tour made headlines in top newspapers of the day.

In all, the Corinthians played 95 matches, losing only eight. In India, they played 31 matches during their 51-day tour -- winning in 25, drawing in 5. The only match the lost was with the Dhaka team. It was also the first defeat of any foreign football club in India.

The English team arrived in Dhaka by train from Narayanganj at 1:50pm. Their lodging was arranged in Dhaka Club. The match began at 3:35pm in front of about 19,000 viewers.

On its November 22 issue, The Statesman newspaper wrote under the headline "CORINTHIANS SUFFER THEIR FIRST DEFEAT":

"...The visitors were undoubtedly feeling heat and strain of the

journey and unable to give their best... The game started at 3:35pm and for the first five minutes Dacca dominated. The Corinthians gradually settled down and worried the Dacca defence....

"In the 20th minute Dacca got the better of the Corinthians' defence and Kar [N Kar of Dhaka team] was about to score when Mannings made a spectacular save. Dacca then adopted long passing and in the 25th minute Mukharjee provided S Ghose with a fine pass. Ghose ran down the line and passed back to B Sen [Pakhi Sen] who scored from close range."

After the match, Corinthians captain P Clark said that the Dhaka team had given them a "good game". It was a day of glory for Dhaka's football.

[Credit: Dhakar Football-er Gaurabmoj Sei Din by Dulal Mahmud, Editor, Krirajagat.]

In the top photo, referee, organisers and players of DSA and Corinthians are seen posing for a photo on the DSA field on Nov 22, 1937.

KEY FACTS

BFF founded
1972

FIFA Membership
1974

Highest FIFA ranking
110 in 1996

Lowest FIFA ranking
197 in 2018

First international match
Bangladesh 2-2 Thailand, 1973

Last International match
Bangladesh 2-2 Laos, 2018

Biggest win
Bangladesh 8-0 Maldives, 1985

Biggest defeats
Bangladesh 0-9 South Korea, 1979
Bangladesh 0-9 Iran, 1982

Most wins
12 against Nepal

Most defeats
12 against India

Achievements (champions)
4-nation tournament
in Myanmar, 1995

SAFF Champions in 2003
SA Games champions
in 1999, 2010



Though men's football is going downhill, women's football shows new hope.

DHAKA SPORTING ASSOCIATION XI



Subodh Mitra

Pakhi Sen

Ronu Bose

R Majumder

J Sarkar

Rama Sen

J Dutta

Montu Ghos

P Mukharjee

Nirad Kar

B Roy

Ohi Guha

now Bangabandhu National Stadium area. Two teams faced off for a battle of pride -- Islington Corinthians FA that came all the

of the first half. Dhaka team forward Bhupendramohon Sengupta, adoringly called Pakhi Sen, entered into history -- the goal from his

ALL PHOTOS RELATED TO THE DSA-CORINTHIANS MATCH: DHAKAR FOOTBALL-ER GAURABMOJ SEI DIN BY DULAL MAHMUD. OTHER PHOTOS: KHANDAKAR TAREK

Every four years, people of Bangladesh engage themselves heavily in the FIFA World Cup though Bangladesh is light years away from it. This enthusiasm for the World Cup is evidence how much they love football. This is not a new-found passion though; rather a glorious past of football in Bangladesh drives the football-loving people to be engaged in the greatest show on earth.



Pakhi Sen and Corinthians captain P Clark shake hand just before the match as referee Khaza Azmal looks on.

Bangladesh football: then and now

ANISUR RAHMAN

The passion is so high that they hoist the national flags of their teams on rooftops and engage in bitter arguments about their teams, like they once did during matches of country's two archrivals -- Abahani and Mohammedan.

But those who once saw the best of Bangladesh football are now sorely watching the worst of it. Why so? Current and former players, officials and fans all agree that country's football has been in this dire state because of its flawed structure, which is based on the clubs who operate on donations, unlike any developed football nations. The Bangladesh clubs still maintain an amateur (nonprofessional) approach with no future programmes, including youth development, ground facility, long-term agreements with players, gym and others facilities.

And with Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), the game's governing body, seemingly happy not to take any initiative, to reverse this there is little hope for the country's football in near future.

Back in the glory days, how popular football in Bangladesh was for nearly 30 years from mid-1970s to early 2000s might sound like a fairy tale to the young generation, who now watch different European League games. But truth be told, the Dhaka league was once a pure entertainment for those who are now in their early forties and fifties.

Along with the club teams, the national football team was also at the centre of attention of the football fans, who watched their beloved side to fight neck-to-neck before going down to the current Asian giants -- Japan, South Korea, Iran, China, and the then strong teams like Syria, Thailand, Burma [Myanmar], Bahrain, Oman in competitions like Asian Cup qualifiers, World Cup pre-qualifiers

and the country's President's Cup.

The boys in red and green had a fierce competition against India to establish the regional supremacy. Now though Bangladesh is even beaten by other South Asian minnows like Bhutan and Nepal. Bangladesh, who once played the SAFF

Mia, Rummon Bin Wali Sabbir, Kaiser Hamid, Joshimuddin Ahmed Joshy, Jewel Rana, Imtiaz Ahmed Nakib, Golam Mohammad Gaus, Masud Rana, Hasan Al Mamun, Mahbub Hossain Roxy and many others were once the household names.

They are the products of district foot-

focused on the so-called professional football league and the senior national football team and spent a lot of money on them. And yet, the professional football league does not have a permanent shape while the national football team swallows defeat one after another at the interna-



A football match in Mirpur Stadium in 1999. In those glory days, football matches drew huge crowd, many of whom from outside Dhaka.

Championship final three successive times from 1999 to 2005, conceded five goals against Maldives, whom they once beat 8-0 in national and club levels.

Today, Mohammedan and Abahani still play matches but cannot draw crowd. In the past, hundreds or even thousands of football fans would travel to Dhaka from other districts to watch their team play. Not anymore.

Kazi Salahuddin, Nowsheruzzaman, Monwar Hossain Nannu, Shamsul Alam Manju, Amalsh Sen, Badal Roy, Ashish Vadra, Abdus Salam Murshedy, Hafiz Uddin, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunnu, Wasim Iqbal, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Monem Munna, Rizvi Karim Rumi, Arman

ball leagues and the school football tournaments. Sadly, district football and school and college football is almost dead with hardly any matches played in district and school-level in the last one decade, forcing the pipelines of quality footballers to dry up. This lack of talented footballers drove Bangladesh to sit on its worst-ever FIFA ranking.

Bangladesh's embarrassing 1-3 defeat at the hands of Bhutan during the play-off match of Asian Cup Qualifiers in 2016 was a wake-up call for Bangladesh and the game's governing body led by Kazi Salahuddin. But nothing happened in the last two years.

In the last 10 years, the BFF basically



In the 80s, 90s and early 2000s, there would be football tournaments outside Dhaka. Many top players of the time were picked through such tournaments.

tional level.

It has been a long cry from football pundits that the Federation must invest in district-level football to find local talents, train them and bring them into the squad like they do in other South Asian countries including India, Bhutan and Nepal.

Panama can be a great example. Panama's qualification to FIFA World Cup has been discussed in football fraternity all around. In 1995, it was behind Bangladesh in FIFA ranking, at 150th whereas Bangladesh's position was 138th. Just 23 years down the line, the nation of only 40 lakh people not only played in Russia. Today, its FIFA ranking is 55th. Bangladesh stands at the bottom, at 194th