

SPORT



Bangladesh battled with last edition's winners North Korea in their round of 16 match of the Asian Games football event, but they could not contend with the pedigree of their superior opponents despite an admirable performance in a 3-1 loss yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Booters leave with heads held high

ATIQUE ANAM from Jakarta



The Bangladesh under-23 football team's historic run in the 2018 Asian Games came to an end with a 3-1 defeat against North Korea at the Wibawa Mukti Stadium in Bekasi yesterday.

The men in red and green, who created a piece of history by reaching the competition's knockout round for the very first time, might have been outplayed but they certainly were not humiliated by the side who finished second in the last Asian Games and ranks 86 places higher at the international stage. They were on the receiving end of a couple of harsh decisions, but those decisions failed to stifle their resolve to fight till the end.

The defeat caps off a campaign, which started with a 3-0 defeat and ended with a 3-1 defeat but had a lot to take heart from, especially with the way they held Thailand to a draw before snatching a historic victory against Qatar.

North Korea started the game briskly and almost got the opening goal in the 10th minute when Kim Kuk Bom's curling freekick found Kim Yu Song free inside the box but the prolific centre-forward's touch on the bouncing ball took it above the bar.

However, it took only two more minutes for Song to make amends as he made no mistake from the spot after Bangladesh right-back Shushanto Tripura was adjudged to have handled the ball inside the box while trying to clear the ball. The decision, made after insistence from the linesman, was questionable and it set the tone for the

match, with the North Koreans trying to consolidate the lead for the remaining time.

Bangladesh threatened the North Korean goal in the 32nd minute when Fahad's floating freekick was headed inches over the crossbar by defender Kim Nam Il. However, Jamie Day's charges conceded the second goal six minutes later, with Han Young Thae slotting one into the top of the net after a long exchange of passes lead up to a nice one-two between Young Thae and Kim Nam Il.

The third goal, coming at the 69th minute, was a result of Bangladesh's poor defence, which had stood valiantly throughout the whole competition. The move started when Tripura's poor clearance fell to So Jong Hyok, who dribbled past a week effort from Topu Barman before squaring it back to Kang Kuk Chol, who needed only to stab it into the back of the net.

The men in red and green showed tremendous resolve to launch a few attacks in the last 10 minutes of the match and they were rewarded for their efforts in the 91st minute. Substitute Rabiul Hasan's cross floated to the middle of the box and the opposition goalkeeper failed to reach it before Saad Uddin took the chance with a wonderful volley past a host of defenders. Bangladesh, in fact, could have ended with more from the game had Rabiul been able to keep his header on target a few minutes later when another substitute, Jafar Iqbal, delivered a brilliant cross from the left. But it was, nonetheless, a morale-boosting effort.

BANGLADESH: Rana; Topu, Badsha, Bishwanath, Shushanto; Jamal, Fahad, Johnny (Abdullah), Saad, Biplo (Jafar); Sufil (Rabiul).

'Desire making up for technical lackings'

SPORTS REPORTER from Jakarta



Bangladesh coach Jamie Day said that although his charges may not be at a very high level technically, the desire and discipline they put into the game during yesterday's defeat to North Korea compensates for their lack of technical ability.

The 38-year-old English coach also said that the team's campaign in the Asian Games, which ended with the 3-1 defeat against last edition's champions North Korea, will give them confidence ahead of the SAFF Championship, which begins on September 4 in Dhaka.

"I am extremely proud of the boys," Day said during his post-match press conference. "I am

extremely proud of what they achieved in the last two weeks. I can't decline that they lack technical ability, but they make up for it with desire."

The coach came to the press conference with a broad smile on his face, having guided Bangladesh into the knockout round for the first time. However, he was barely smiling on the pitch as he felt Bangladesh had a number of rough decisions going against them. "I can't tell you what it [the reason for the penalty] was. The officials were not very good tonight."

The coach felt the biggest positives to be taken from these Games are the team's ability to fight and their current high level of fitness.

"The positive points are we played four very good nations and we played as well as we can. You can't complain about fitness anymore. We got a good group of young players. They listen and learn and

they want to do well for Bangladesh," the coach, who has been in charge for about eight weeks, said.

Day, however, believes that the SAFF championship will be a different challenge altogether as there will be senior players with tons of experience in each side.

"This effort will give us confidence for the SAFF Championship but there will be experienced players playing there. It will be a different competition and it might be a bit more physical. These younger boys will have to adapt with the experienced ones," said Day.

The adaptation will have to begin as soon as possible though as there are only ten days left till the biggest football competition in South Asia. The team will return home today and will play a friendly match against Sri Lanka on August 29.

'Better not to send us sans preparation'

ATIQUE ANAM from Jakarta



Mabia Akter Simanta, Bangladesh's South Asian Games gold medallist weightlifter, made her frustration public after failing to match her personal best score by two kilos in the Asian Games yesterday.

The 19-year-old, competing in 63kg category, lifted 77 kilos in snatch and 101 kilos in clean & jerk for a total of 178, which is two kilograms less than what she had lifted in the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games earlier this year.

She tried to match her best by attempting to lift 103 kilograms in clean & jerk, one kilo more than her personal best in an attempt to match her overall best score, but failed in that attempt.

She finished sixth out of seven participants with the seventh competitor, Rakhi Halder of India, pulling out of the competition. Kim Hyo Sim of North Korea grabbed the gold medal in this event, lifting a total of 250 kilos (113kg, 137kg).

Mabia was visibly frustrated with her performance as she felt that her month-and-a-half's preparation was barely enough to compete in tournaments such

as these.

"I have nothing to say. I am disappointed and frustrated," she said, after being initially unwilling to say anything.

The weightlifter from Dhaka did not hide her frustration, laying the blame squarely on the authorities.

"I got the opportunity to carry the national flag at the opening ceremony, which is a big honour for me" she said. "But if you talk about competition, I'm here on my own and only with the help of my coach. No one else helped me."

The weightlifter has been improving continuously ever since she won a gold medal in the 2016 South Asian Games, where she lifted 149 kilos, but the Asian Games is a much bigger and tougher platform. The fifth-place finisher in yesterday's event lifted 200 kilograms, 22 kilos more than what Mabia did.

The 19-year-old said she was demoralised and embarrassed by this loss and that it is better not to send athletes to compete in this manner.

"It's better to not send athletes like these without enough preparation. I wanted to better my score, but here I am lifting two kilos less than my best. This kind of performance demoralises the athletes," Mabia said.

Kohli central to potential fairytale

REUTERS, London



Only one team in the history of Test cricket has won a five-match series from 2-0 down but India have an opportunity to emulate Don Bradman's Australians of 1936-37 after fighting back against England.

"1936-37? I wasn't even born, man! Why are you reminding me of 36-37?" boomed India coach Ravi Shastri in Nottingham on Wednesday after his side's emphatic victory had reduced their series deficit to 2-1.

"One match at a time, we live in the present, okay? We move to Southampton and start afresh," added the coach.

His players were on a roll as England's batsmen just rolled over at Trent Bridge. He purred at watching what he felt was "by far" the best Indian pace attack he'd seen. And, above all, he trusted in his captain marvel Virat Kohli.

When the matchless Bradman, in his first series as Australia's captain, went two down in those 1936-37 Ashes, he responded with a monumental 270 at Melbourne that set up their third Test win.

Kohli's 200 runs at Trent Bridge -- the second time in the series he had



Virat Kohli, seen here at the end of his 103 against England in the third Test in Trent Bridge, has cemented himself in the upper echelons of Test batsmanship and is central to India's hopes of staging a turnaround that has not been seen since Sir Donald Bradman's Australia in 1936-37.

compiled a double century of runs in the match, following his defiant effort in a losing cause at Edgbaston -- provided the same impetus for his side, continuing a series in which he has underlined his own greatness as a batsman.

So what happens next? In Bradman's case, further epic captain's

innings -- 212 at Adelaide and 169 back in Melbourne -- laid the foundations of the 3-2 comeback win.

Yet while "The Don" was always in a world of his own, Kohli has his own Bradmanesque air at the moment.

"His work ethic is second to none. I haven't seen any cricketer -- I'll put [Sachin] Tendulkar in that

bracket -- when it comes to preparation, in the way he visualises situations," Shastri said. "I promise you, Virat will forget these two innings now and take guard again as if he hadn't scored a run in the series."

The Trent Bridge 200 took his tally for the series to 440, including two centuries, and returned him to the top of the ICC Test rankings for batsmen.

With two Tests left -- the next starts at Southampton on August 30 -- Kohli, who has scored more Test runs (726) than anyone in 2018, needs six more to top 6,000 in Tests and if he does so in the first innings, he will have reached the landmark in his 119th knock. Tendulkar took 120.

He could also go on to overhaul Rahul Dravid's tally of 602 runs, the most by an Indian in a series in England.

Yet it is a measure of the way the 29-year-old has matured from tyrant batsman into inspirational leader that the collective feat of India completing a cricket comeback for the ages would mean far more to him than more individual laurels.

"We definitely believe we can if we play cricket like this," said the man who looks as if he could achieve anything if he keeps batting like this.



Female Bangladeshi weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta put up a dismal showing, failing to give her best performance at the Asian Games yesterday. The 19-year-old later blamed a lack of preparation for her performance. PHOTO: AFP

Hockey team pummelled

SPORTS REPORTER from Jakarta



Bangladesh hockey team suffered a 7-0 defeat against Malaysia -- their first defeat of the 2018 Asian Games -- at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium hockey field yesterday.

Having started their campaign with a 2-1 win against Oman which was followed by a 6-1 thrashing of Kazakhstan, the men in red and green faced a side who were technically far superior and far more agile.

Gobinathan Krishnamurthy's charges managed to keep his compatriots at bay in the first quarter. However, once the first goal went in -- a penalty corner converted on 18 minutes -- the floodgates opened.

The fourth-placed finishers from the last Asian Games scored two more goals in the first half before adding four more after the break, with four of the seven goals coming from open play. Two goals came from penalty corners while the other came from a penalty stroke.

The Bangladesh coach admitted it was an uneven match-up, and



informed that their target is to secure either a fifth or sixth position finish.

"Malaysia came with two years of preparation while we came with two months'," Krishnamurthy said after the match. "It's like Bangladesh playing against Brazil [in football]."

The Malaysian added that their concentration will now be on beating Thailand. "Our focus will now be on the match against Thailand [Aug 26], and if we win that match, we will be able to play in the fifth-sixth place decider match, which will be the first time for us."

Wins over Thailand and Pakistan will

take Bangladesh to the semis.

ARCHERS SHOW FIGHT

Bangladesh's recurve mixed team in archery gave it their all to reach the quarterfinals. The pair of Ruman Sana and Nasrin Akter beat their Kazakhstan counterparts by 5-4 set points, setting up a quarterfinal clash against Japan.

However, they failed to lift their game against the Japanese, losing by 5-1 set points. The compound mixed team, featuring Ashim Kumar Das and Roksana Akter, failed to get past the pre-quarterfinal stage, losing against Philippines by 154-149 points.