



BANGLADESH 0 - 1 SRI LANKA
MOHAMAD FAZAL 10'

Bangladesh midfielder Sohel Rana (3rd from L) and Sri Lanka captain Subash Madushan fight to control the ball during the FIFA friendly at the Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Defeat makes Day's work easier

SPORTS REPORTER



English coach Jamie Day did not hide his frustration after Bangladesh's shock 1-0 defeat to Sri Lanka in a FIFA friendly after his charges underwent hard training over the past two months. The coach also categorically put the young lads that played the Asian Games ahead of the ones who played against lightweights Sri Lanka in Nilphamari yesterday.

Bangladesh had more possession but could not make any clear-cut scoring chances as they miserably failed to hold the ball in the attacking third against the Islanders, who looked better on counter-attack with better running.

"Obviously, it was disappointing. We had a lot possession but didn't do enough with the ball; not enough shots, not enough crosses of quality. With the possession we had we didn't deserve to lose but we did," said a frustrated Day at the post-match press conference.

"The team that played last week is completely different to the team that played this week. Last week we had younger ones and today [Wednesday] we had the rest to show us whether they deserve a place in the SAFF Championship. My question is: have they done enough? Probably some have and some haven't. So, it makes my job easier picking the team next week," added the English coach, who will declare his final squad on September 2.

After watching the poor performance from the senior players, Day subtly contrasted their performance with the showings of the youngsters at the Asian Games.

"If you look at last week, we had a group of 10 young players that were aggressive, that were on the front foot, they had the desire. It probably made my job easier for next week. For me now we get back to pick a squad of 20 and we move on to SAFF Championship next week," said Day, adding that "if we go younger [for the SAFF Championship], then we go younger".

Same old seniors

Bangladesh lose friendly 1-0 against Sri Lanka

AL-AMIN

A full-house turned up at the renovated Sheikh Kamal Stadium in Nilphamari yesterday to see a refreshingly different Bangladesh against Sri Lanka in what was the first big match experience for an otherwise tranquil city in the northern part of the country.

Others glued to television sets across the country anticipated the fresh wave of energy that a youthful Bangladesh side injected in the Asian Games being instilled into the experienced one.

Unfortunately, they discovered the same old Bangladesh against a team they have only lost to thrice in their previous 16 meetings. Bangladesh lost the FIFA friendly against the Emerald Island nation 1-0.

It was not that Sri Lanka have made a marked improvement, nor was it the case that Bangladesh have turned from bad to worse. A few might argue that Bangladesh dominated possession and created more openings in a game that was played over 105 minutes (including a staggering 10 minutes of added time in the second half) under

physically demanding hot and humid conditions. But how many clear-cut chances did Bangladesh create in the game? Just one in the first half and hardly a couple after the break.

It was only a build-up match for next week's SAFF Championship. However, more importantly it was a game for the senior members to prove their worth against the growing popular notion that if Bangladesh are to move ahead from their lowest ebb, the future is the next generation. And after yesterday's game, Mamunul Islam and Co. only took a step towards that inevitable conclusion.

They did train with the young guns hard and stayed together during Bangladesh's Asian Games campaign, where a team mostly comprised of a generation of Under-19s made it to the quarterfinals for the first time. But they looked like the same old players in Nilphamari when it was their turn.

Bangladesh conceded the only goal of the match quite against the run of play in the 10th minute. It was an intelligent chip shot from Sri Lankan forward Mohamad Fazal from about 35 yards out that caught an out-of-position Bangladesh custodian Shahidul Alam Sohel napping. Shahidul was only to be blamed for

standing too high off his line.

If that was a basic flaw from a goalkeeper, there were plenty of loopholes in other areas.

The Lankans never attempted to take control of the midfield. They defended deep and tried to attack on the break. Bangladesh used the flanks to create something but all their efforts stumbled in the third quarter. They failed to penetrate down the middle and were not allowed to win a single free-kick just outside the box. The first three corners they won were wasted by midfielder Mamunul. His first two flag-kicks could only reach the near post while the other harmlessly sailed way over. There were a few crosses down both flanks but they were either off target or the forwards were not in the right position. Bangladesh tried to use their two wingbacks to create space. Unfortunately, those who were assigned to comply with that demanding job primarily did not possess the physical ability and more importantly lacked the necessary understanding of that art.

Bangladesh's English coach Jamie Day has a few days before he announces his SAFF squad. And after yesterday's failed experiment, he might turn to his young guns leaving behind a wasted experience.

Imperfect but joyful

EAM ASADUZZAMAN from Nilphamari



Before the start of the FIFA friendly match between hosts Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the new-look Sheikh Kamal Stadium bore a festive look as spectators young and old turned out in joyful droves to make the event a memorable one for Nilphamari.

The capacity crowd of 20,000 however had to leave the venue with broken hearts after the home side suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to the visiting Sri Lanka.

The enthusiastic fans -- who apart from Nilphamari natives consisted of visitors from Rangpur, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Panchagarh -- came a long way to queue at the entrance of the stadium from the morning and the organisers were forced to open the gates at 12:00pm, four hours before the start of the match. A remarkable number of female spectators also came to watch the match.

With 13,000 of the 20,000 tickets sold on the first day of sales on Sunday, it was expected that the Sheikh Kamal Stadium

would be a full house, and that is what transpired. There was no space left inside the gallery -- spectators watched the match standing in front of the fence, obstructing the view of some of the seated spectators. However, there was no unpleasant incident because of this inconvenience.

Many enthusiastic spectators bought tickets from the illegal scalpers, spending four to five times the original ticket price, while a couple of thousand spectators failed to enter the packed gallery and were seen standing outside the stadium.

"Three other traders and myself came to enjoy the match because it is the biggest event in Rangpur division, but only two of us could manage tickets at Tk 500 per ticket," said Amzad Hossain, a trader of Paker Hatbazaar in Khansama upazila of Dinajpur, before entering the stadium.

"It was an exciting match where Bangladesh dominated throughout 90 minutes but could not score because they lacked the cutting edge and lost to Sri Lanka. But I am happy to watch this match in such an environment," said schoolteacher Ramash Barman of Sadar Upazila.

Puzzle remains at the top

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With a happy recent history in limited-overs cricket, the most recent instances being the ODI and T20I series won in the West Indies in July, there are not many selection dilemmas for the national selectors ahead of the Asia Cup starting in the UAE on September 15. Perhaps the only big missing piece of the puzzle is a stable opening partner for Tamim Iqbal.

The 29-year-old Tamim has had to burden the responsibility of providing a solid start for the Tigers all on his own, which sometimes has the effect of the left-hander needing to play more cautiously than he naturally would.

Interestingly there was no shortage of talented batsmen and neither was there a deficit of opportunities given to the young hopefuls, but none were able to cement their spot in the opening slot in any of the formats so far.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Anamul, who started his international career with a bang in 2012 and has struck three hundreds in the fifty-over format, lost his place after a series of disappointments culminating in three poor performances in the West Indies ODIs.

There were also questions over Anamul's negative batting approach, for which he was also not considered for some time since his honeymoon period ended in 2014. The cricketer managed to score heavily in the domestic circuit and returned to the side after three years during the tri-nation series at home earlier this year.

But despite getting the license from captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza to play this natural game, Anamul failed to

prove his worth and managed to score just 88 runs in the seven consecutive matches he played since making a comeback to the side.

Another highly rated and talented batsman, Soumya Sarkar, did not fare much better. Boasting the ability to time the cricket ball sweetly, regardless of conditions, the left-hander who stormed onto the scene with blazing innings in 2015 has been unable to rekindle even a flicker of that flame despite numerous opportunities.

With one hundred and six fifties, Soumya has scored 967 runs in 32 ODIs at an average of 34.53. He lost his place from the Test and ODI squads after a poor tour of South Africa last year.

However, Soumya still managed to keep his place in the T20I squad, but was unable to score significantly. The 25-year-old did show glimpses of returning to form in the recent tour of Ireland with the Bangladesh A team.

Another wicket-keeper batsman, Liton Das, is perhaps the first choice among the three probable opening partners of Tamim as the right-hander managed to get starts during the Test series against West Indies and his tour culminated in a brilliant 32-ball 61 run in the third and final T20I against West Indies to guide Bangladesh to a series win.

It will be important for Liton to carry the momentum and cement a place in the one-day format, in which the right-hander has just scored 165 runs in 12 games without a half-century -- which does not justify his talent.

Liton, who played his last ODI against South Africa almost a year ago, could well be the latest puzzle piece in ODIs -- it remains to be seen whether he will make himself fit for the purpose.



Bangladesh batsman Soumya Sarkar dives to take a catch during training at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'We're at 8, seniors at 20'

SPORTS REPORTER



The fact of the young players lagging far behind the five senior stalwarts in terms of contribution to the team's success has become a talking point in Bangladesh cricket.

It seems that players like Soumya Sarkar and Sabbir Rahman lack the will to improve that has become the hallmark of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad, which is why the team's success is still overly dependent on the strength of these five pillars. Soumya believed that there was a logic behind the criticism against the young players.

"We cannot say the young players are not contributing anything, but it's definitely less than them [seniors]. The question would not be raised if the difference had been

19/20 between the junior and senior players but it's actually 8/20. It will be helpful for them [seniors] if we can reach near their level," said Soumya while talking to reporters yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"It's always a challenge [the performance of the seniors] for the young players. I believe our result will be better if we can support the seniors more," he added. The left-hander said that he had been working on his batting to overcome a long bad patch but reminded that different batsmen have different approaches.

"I always hit the bad ball. I play power cricket," he said. He also informed that he has no problem with his batting position as his main motto was to contribute to the team.

From the beginning of the camp for next month's Asia Cup, the players have been singing a positive song

regarding Bangladesh's chances in the tournament in UAE and Soumya was no exception yesterday as he put the Tigers ahead in the group matches against Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. "The most important thing is that we know how to play one-day cricket," said a confident Soumya.

"I definitely put Bangladesh ahead in the group. If you consider our last performance we are well ahead of Sri Lanka and Afghanistan," he added. Although Afghanistan's spin attack was a cause for concern in their last meeting in the T20I series in Dehradun, Soumya ruled out the fear factor in the Asia Cup because batsmen get the opportunity to build innings in the 50-over format. "So, I am hopeful their spin will not be successful in the Asia Cup."

Some disciplinary issues has rocked the cricket arena recently but Soumya said that they were only focusing on the Asia Cup.

Kohli's no to 100-ball cricket

REUTERS, Undated

India captain Virat Kohli has ruled out participating in the initial stages of the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) new 100-ball format and says he is worried that commercial concerns are eroding the quality of the game.

The ECB's new eight-team tournament is set to begin in 2020 and sees each side facing 15 six-ball overs, culminating in a final 10 deliveries.

Kohli, already represents India in Tests, ODIs and T20Is and plays in the Indian Premier League, said he did not want to be "a testing sort of cricketer for any new format..."

"Obviously for the people involved in the whole process and the set-up it will be really exciting but



I cannot think of one more format, to be honest," Kohli said in an interview with Wisden Cricket Monthly.

"I am very... I wouldn't say frustrated but it can get very demanding of you when you have to play so much cricket. I feel the commercial aspect is taking over the real quality of the cricket and that hurts me."