

SPORT



BANGLADESH 0 - 2 NEPAL
BIMAL 33',
NAWAYUG 90'

Bangladesh goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel is distraught after his butterfingers came back to haunt him against Nepal yesterday in a group stage match and cost Bangladesh a place in the semifinals of the SAFF Suzuki Cup. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A slip that cost a country

SPORTS REPORTER



Ever since goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel's fumble in Nilphamari condemned Bangladesh to a 1-0 defeat against Sri Lanka in a FIFA friendly match, the custodian's selection in the starting eleven has been in question. However despite the concerns, Ashraf Islam Rana, who performed well in the Asian Games, was overlooked for the SAFF Suzuki Cup from the first game against Bhutan. English coach Jamie Day opted to stick with Sohel due to his larger physique and the keeper repaid that faith with two consecutive clean sheets against Bhutan and Pakistan. However, the lad from Chittagong made a big mistake in a crucial match to sink Bangladesh when they most needed him to stand tall. It was not the first time that Sohel has made a mistake in an international match. He was caught out of position in the aforementioned friendly as Sri Lanka striker Muhammad Fazle struck the decisive goal from 35 yards out just 10 days ago. Sohel was also the man who sunk Bangladesh in the 2011 SAFF Championship in Delhi when he misjudged a free-kick and he

was also culpable for Abahani's defeat to Bengaluru FC in the AFC Cup, where he made another fumble. However, Day was rather forgiving of his goalkeeper and said that he was proud of his boys despite being eliminated from the group stages by virtue of goal difference. "It was a simple catch for Sohel but he could not do it and that can happen in a match. It might have had an impact on the match. You are all telling me about today's mistake but he did play fantastically against Pakistan and kept a clean sheet in two matches," Day said at the post-match press conference. Asked why Ashraf Islam Rana was not considered instead of Sohel, Day said: "Rana also made a mistake against Thailand in the Asian Games and that was also part of the game. "However, I'm really disappointed that we couldn't confirm the semifinals after two wins. We controlled the game but conceded a silly goal and it can happen," Day continued. "Still I am proud of the boys for what they did over the past 16 weeks. We have had massive improvement in this period as we made history by reaching the knockout stage of the Asian Games and posted back-to-back wins after 10 years [Actually 5 years]. Let's speak of positives instead of the negatives," concluded Day.

Buttler puts England in command

AFP, London
Jos Buttler celebrated his 28th birthday with an innings of 89 that left England on top in the fifth Test against India at the Oval on Saturday. England, who had already won this five-match series at 3-1 up, started the second day in danger of being dismissed for under 200 at 198 for seven. Yet when Buttler was last man out they had made a total of 332. At stumps, India were struggling at 174 for six - a deficit of 158 runs - with captain and star batsman Virat Kohli falling to Ben Stokes for 49. Test debutant Hanuma Vihari was 25 not out and Ravindra Jadeja unbeaten on eight. England spearhead James Anderson's figures of two for 20 in 11 overs left him just two shy of Australia great Glenn McGrath's record of 563 Test wickets. Buttler and Stuart Broad (38) frustrated India with a ninth-wicket stand of 98 as, yet again this series, England bounced back with the bat after a top-order collapse. This was the fourth time in five innings that Buttler, recalled to Test duty earlier this season by new national selector Ed Smith, had been England's top scorer. Alastair Cook, in his final Test appearance

before international retirement, made 71 on Friday. But his dismissal sparked a slump that saw England lose six wickets for 48 runs. Buttler, who had been given out lbw to Mohammed Shami on eight on Friday only for a review to reveal an inside edge, was 11 not out overnight, with Adil Rashid unbeaten on four. Rashid was soon lbw for 15 to fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah on an overcast morning. Broad was then peppered with several short-pitched deliveries but hung in to play some good shots before Buttler went to fifty in 84 balls, with England scoring 106 runs in the morning session. Broad eventually fell when a skied drive off left-arm spinner Jadeja was well caught over his shoulder by a diving KL Rahul, running back from mid-on. Buttler, now with only last man Anderson for company, hit two sixes in three balls off Bumrah. But looking for a single to keep the strike, he fell short of what would have been his second Test hundred when he guided Jadeja to Ajinkya Rahane at slip. **SCORES IN BRIEF**
England: First Innings 332 (Cook 71, Ali 50, Buttler 89, Broad 38; Bumrah 3-83, Ishant 3-62, Jadeja 4-79)
India: First Innings 53 for 1 (Rahul 37, Pujara 37, Kohli 49, Vihari 25 not out; Anderson 2-20, Stokes 2-44)

Pakistan pip hosts to last four

SPORTS REPORTER



Pakistan reached the semifinals of the SAFF Suzuki Cup with an emphatic 3-0 win over Bhutan in their last Group A match at Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. With six points from three games, Pakistan, who were out of international football for more than two years due to a FIFA ban,.... Ahead of the final group fixture between Bangladesh and Nepal, Pakistan knew they might need a victory to go through and Jose Antonio Nogueira's charges accomplished that feat with a clinical performance, thanks to goals from Muhammad Riaz, Hassan Bashir and Ahmed Faheem. From the outset, Pakistan put huge pressure on Bhutan, who had come into the match on the back of two defeats. The men in green shirts came close to taking the lead three times within the first 12 minutes before Riaz broke the deadlock in the 20th minute, slamming home from close range after being set up by a header from skipper Saddam Hussain. Bhutan's premier striker Chencho Gyeltshen squandered

a gilt-edged opportunity two minutes later by driving one way off target before Bashir doubled the margin with a drive from inside the box just before the half-hour mark.

After resumption, both teams looked a bit tired and play was confined mostly to the midfield, with Pakistan enjoying better ball possession while Bhutan created two opportunities in the last stages but

failed to cash in. And then Pakistan substitute Faheem wrapped up the victory one minute into stoppage time with a placing shot after being set up by Muhammad Ali.



Pakistan's substitute forward Ahmed Faheem is ecstatic after scoring the third goal against Bhutan during their SAFF Suzuki Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

PAKISTAN 3 - 0 BHUTAN
RIAZ 20', HASSAN 28',
FAHEEM 90+1'

'Youngsters need more opportunities'

SPORTS REPORTER



It has been two years since West Indies legend Courtney Walsh was appointed as the Tigers' bowling coach. Although expectations were sky high since his arrival, the reality is something quite different. Bangladesh are yet to get a settled fast bowling line-up as not many new faces made their mark in the big leagues in the fast bowling department, where an experienced Mashrafe Bin Mortaza still dictates. Questions were raised about whether there is a lack of hunger among the youngsters but according to Walsh, the youths need to be provided with more opportunities to showcase their talent, which has not been the case so far. "That is still a work in progress where a lot of youngsters are coming through but if they don't get a chance to play you don't know how they perform. That's the one thing I think we probably need to look at more and not get too afraid to give them chances. "If you keep them waiting and keep them in the wings, they won't get a chance to play. And the more you play the better your chances to learn. Sometimes we need to give the youngsters a chance to see what they can do but if you keep protecting them, saying that they are not ready, they'll never improve," Walsh told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. However, the 55-year-old added



that the youngsters are keen to learn but it all comes down to them getting the opportunity to express themselves. While evaluating his two year tenure with the Tigers, Walsh pressed on the issue of not having enough Test matches as a key factor behind the lack of fast bowlers. When asked what separates Mashrafe from the others, Walsh informed that it is his pride in performing and improving everyday combined with his hunger that made him a high class fast bowler for Bangladesh over the years. "Mashrafe's experience and set of skills is much better than the other

guys and his experience is what he is carrying. But I think if he hadn't been injured, he would have played Test cricket. But maybe because of his knee issue he hasn't been able to play all the formats. However, he has remained a high class fast bowler for Bangladesh over the years. I think he wants to do it as well as he can and it's up to the youngsters to have that same hunger. We can only do so much as a coach from the background but it's the youngsters who also have to want to perform. Mash [Mashrafe] takes pride in his performance and I think it's the big difference he shows he wants to perform, he wants to

perform. We can only do so much as coaches from the background but it's the youngsters who have to want to perform. Mash [Mashrafe] takes pride in his performance and I think it's the big difference he shows he wants to perform, he wants to compete and that's what we need," Walsh said. The Jamaican then mentioned that Mustafizur Rahman is a special talent and informed that a fit Mustafizur always provides an extra edge to the side. There were questions whether the left arm seamer needs to manage his workload as he often gets injured but Walsh denied that fact and said that he would rather work on Mustafizur's skills. Walsh also added that he has already started working with the bowlers on their consistency and execution in different conditions, keeping next year's ICC World Cup in England in mind.

Hopeful Tigers to leave for UAE today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Tigers will leave Dhaka today to take part in the Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates with high hopes. Since the Asia Cup returned to the 50-over format, the Tigers have backed themselves to do well. The team's confidence is also considerably higher following the ODI and T20I series wins against West Indies. There has been lot of controversy over Shakib Al Hasan's fitness for last few days but the ace all-rounder is set to join the team in the UAE directly from New York. However, there are a couple of injury concerns over Tamim Iqbal and Nazmul Hossain Shanto. "Tamim [Iqbal] and Shanto [Nazmul Hossain] have been suffering from a little bit of pain in their injured fingers but there aren't any serious concerns as X-ray reports didn't show anything wrong," said BCB physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury. "Honestly speaking, I am not aware about many things as I was not with the team for a certain period of time. Shakib will join the team in the UAE. Tamim's injury is not serious. We have time in our hand and we are hopeful that everything will be okay before the start of the tournament," informed Khaled Mahmud, who will accompany the team as a manager. Mahmud did not perform the team manager role for the last three series. Bangladesh will play against Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup opener on September 15 and then take on Afghanistan in their second Group B match on September 20 in Abu Dhabi. Group-A consists of defending champions India, Pakistan and Hong Kong. The top two teams from each group will proceed to the Super-4 round. The sides will then play each other in round robin format to decide the two finalists. The final will be held on 28 September in Dubai.

Bolt takes a break from Mariners

REUTERS, Sydney

Olympic sprint champion Usain Bolt will put his efforts to carve out a football career on hold for a week to fulfil a "previously planned" overseas commitment, the A-League's Central Coast Mariners said on Saturday. The 32-year-old Jamaican has been trialling with the Mariners for the last three weeks in the hope of securing a professional contract for the 2018-19 A-League campaign. The break, from September 9-16, had been agreed before he joined Mike Mulvey's team for training, the club said in a statement. Bolt made his debut for the Mariners on August 31, coming off the bench for 18 minutes against a local amateur side. The Mariners won the game 6-1 but Bolt looked well short of match fitness and lacked the touch on the ball of many of his team mates. Bolt himself said he would need at least four months to get up to speed. Bolt's attempt to transform himself from the face of global athletics to professional football player has generated huge publicity for the Mariners, who finished bottom of the 10-team A-League last season.