

SPORT



BANGLADESH 1-0 LAOS
BIPLU AHMED 60'

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh winger Biplu Ahmed celebrates his all-important goal against Laos in their opening match of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

Local boy wins it for hosts

ANISUR RAHMAN from Sylhet

A fortunate strike from Biplu Ahmed helped Bangladesh get off to a winning start in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup as the hosts handed a single-goal defeat to Laos in the tournament opener at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

A 60th-minute strike from the local boy not only took the hosts close to the semifinals, giving the crowd enough reason to cheer, but also gave Bangladesh their first victory over Laos in their meeting. It was Bangladesh's third win in four matches, coming as a relief to the team following their group-stage exit from the SAFF Championship last month.

Coach Jamie Day made only two changes to the side that lost against Nepal in the crucial SAFF Championship match, with midfielder Rabiul Islam and striker

Nabib Newaj Jibon coming in place of Mamunul Islam and injured Saad Uddin to form in a 4-4-2 formation instead of a 4-2-3-1.

The men in red and green started the game brilliantly as the striking pair of Jibon and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil exposed the opposition defence with darting runs.

Both strikers came close to breaking the deadlock a couple of times inside the first 20 minutes, with Laos also getting a good opportunity in the early stage. However, neither Sufil nor Jibon could cash on on those chances despite staying in threatening positions.

Availing a through-pass in the 11th minute, Jibon ran down the left flank before mustering a powerful shot on the edge of the box which went narrowly wide of target while Sufil found the ball inside the box in the 25th minute with only the goalkeeper to beat, but the promising striker drove miles off target.

I tried to play my best on a ground where I grew up as a footballer. I'm really happy that I helped the team win in front of my family members.

BIPLU AHMED
GOALSCORER

Jibon found Laos goalkeeper Saymanolinh Pasemuth on a one-on-one situation again, but deposited the ball straight to the goalkeeper to frustrate the almost full-house crowd before Laos threatened to break with some good

I'm delighted with this win. The boys looked a bit tired and the first half was slow but they showed character. All credit for working hard to keep a clean sheet.

JAMIE DAY
BANGLADESH COACH

attacks. Phithack Kongmathilath nutmegged defender Wali Faisal with goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana to beat but Bangladesh were lucky as centre-back Tapu Barman thwarted the goal-bound shot for a corner in

the 33rd minute. Bounphachan Bounkong beat defenders Bishwanath Ghosh and Tutul Hossain Badsha from the left flank to hammer a shot only to be denied by goalkeeper Rana three minutes later.

Bangladesh started the second half as brilliantly as they did in the first half, but Sufil's curling effort in the 47th minute missed the far post, with the goalkeeper already beaten.

Bangladesh finally got their deserved lead on the hour-mark when Biplu's low shot from a difficult angle crawled into the net after brushing the leg of the opposition goalkeeper who had blocked consecutive efforts from Jibon and Sufil in the build-up to the goal. The goal was a bit scrappy, but it was no more than the hosts deserved for their attacking football.

The coach then sent three pairs of fresh legs to stem the flow of Laos attacks and succeeded in coming out with a victory which came as a relief for the hosts.



TIDBITS

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

DIGITAL ADVERTISEMENT BOARD

The use of a digital advertisement board at stadiums during international tournaments or bilateral series has become the norm for cricket, however, the use of such devices during an international football event is an alien concept.

This year's Bangabandhu Gold Cup features such arrangements at the Sylhet District Stadium as K-Sports had determined that a digital advertisement board would be used in their bid to bring a new look to the football ground. The owner of K-Sports, Fahad Karim, claimed that the board cost seven crore taka.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY

People who will watch the matches live on television will also get a different perspective of the tournament as a total of 14 cameras will be used to provide better angles for the first time ever. One small camera was set up behind each of the two goalposts in order to get closer to the action when goals are scored, just like in the European leagues. In addition, viewers will have the chance to scrutinise every detail of play due to the introduction of an ultra-slow motion replay feature.

PARTLY EMPTY GALLERY

Spectators in Sylhet generally turn up in droves with huge enthusiasm whenever the city hosts international sporting events. They once even famously broke down the gate and fence to enter the Sylhet District Stadium, where a FIFA friendly between Bangladesh and Nepal was being held in 2014. Yesterday though, the South-East gallery of the ground remained empty. Sylhet District Football Association president Mohi Uddin Selim informed that they were told to handle publicity shortly before the tournament began and hence, they sold approximately three thousand tickets less than the stadium's capacity.



NOT THE SAME TROPHY

The Bangladesh Football Federation previously remained consistent with one aspect of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup; they awarded the winning teams of the 2015 and 2016 editions a trophy which was identical to the one used in the inaugural edition, built with 20 tolas of 24 carat gold and standing at 22 inches tall.

However, three years later in the fifth rendition of the tournament, that trophy has been replaced by a 27-inch version which varies greatly in form.

"Every detail related to this tournament was approved by the BFF. They approved this trophy and kept one replica in a bid to maintain it in the future," said Fahad Karim, chief executive officer of K-Sports, the tournament's rights holder.

First-class opens with a bang

HIGHLIGHTS

There has been a lot of talk about whether leg-spinner Jubair Hossain is provided with enough matches to showcase his talent in the domestic circuit. But yesterday, Jubair utilised one such opportunity as he bagged his second five-wicket haul in first-class cricket while playing for Chattogram against Dhaka Division.

The only Bangladesh batsman to score ten thousand first-class runs, Tushar Imran once again kicked off his favourite four-day format with yet another hundred. The right-hander took his tally of first-class centuries to 29.

Although pacer Shafiqul Islam has been in and out of the national team, the 28-year-old has performed consistently in the domestic circuit. Shafiqul picked up his third first-class five-wicket haul for Rajshahi against Khulna.

The only member of the Bangladesh's Asia Cup squad who did not feature in any matches at the recently concluded regional competition, Ariful Haque, smashed his eight first-class hundred and remained unbeaten for Rangpur in their encounter with Barishal.

Young Shadman Islam continued his fine form in the domestic circuit as the left-hander struck his sixth first-class hundred for Dhaka Metro against Sylhet.



SHADMAN... 157



ARIFUL... 117 not out



TUSHAR... 104

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA v RAJSHAHI

KHULNA: First innings 210 all-out in 52.3 overs (Tushar 104; Shafiqul 5-43)
RAJSHAHI: First innings 122 for 1 in 29 overs (Mizanur 74, Nazmul 46; Afif 1-5) trails by 88 runs.
RANGPUR v BARISHAL

RANGPUR: First innings 300 for 5 in 90 overs (Ariful 117 not out, Naeem 92, Jahid 62; Sohag 2-88)

DHAKA DIV v CHATTOGRAM
DHAKA: First innings 238 all-out in 81 overs (Taibur 63, Rony 59; Jubair 5-61, Nayeem 3-74)

CHATTOGRAM: First innings 25 for 2 in 7 overs (Sadiqur 23; Shahadat 2-18) trails by 213 runs.

DHAKA METRO v SYLHET
DHAKA METRO: First innings 332 for 4 in 88 overs (Shadman 157, Marshal 50; Shahanur 2-61)

SPORTS REPORTER



The opening day of the 20th National Cricket League was a mixed bag as both batsmen and bowlers were greatly rewarded for their efforts with three centuries being scored and two five-wicket hauls taken yesterday.

Leg-spinner Jubair Hossain, who marked his return to first-class cricket with his second five-wicket haul, perhaps shone the brightest. Although Jubair was playing a first-class game after a year's gap, the Chattogram bowler was the wrecker-in-chief, surprisingly on a green top, against Dhaka Division in a Tier-2 encounter.

His exploits saw Dhaka all out on 238 after being sent in to bat at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah.

day on 25 for 2.

In the other Tier-2 fixture, Shadman Islam struck his sixth first-class ton as Dhaka Metro posted 332 for four against Sylhet at the end of the first day's play at the Sylhet International Cricket stadium.

Apart from Shadman's hundred, Marshal Ayud scored fifty while Shahnur Rahman picked up two wickets for Sylhet.

In a Tier-1 encounter at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, Tushar Imran scored his 29th first-class ton but to no avail as his side Khulna were all out on 210 against Rajshahi.

Tushar was dismissed on 104 off 144 balls, which featured 14 fours and two sixes, while Nahidul Islam's 26 was the second highest score for Khulna. Rajshahi replied well and ended the day on 122 for one as Mizanur Rahman remained unbeaten on 74.

Meanwhile, Ariful Haque scored an unbeaten century to help Rangpur post 300 for five against Barishal in a Tier-1 encounter at the Shaheed Chandu stadium in Bogura.

Khulna clinch women's hockey title

SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna Division clinched the title of the Walton 4th National Women's Hockey Competition, beating Dhaka Division 1-0 in the final at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Jessi scored the only goal of the game in the 24th minute.

This is the first title for Khulna Division. The first two editions were won by Narail district in 2012 and 2013 while the third edition was won by Jhenaidah district in 2015.

In the third-place deciding match earlier in the day, Rangpur Division beat Rajshahi division 3-1.

Khulna's Nomita Karmakar became the best player of the tournament while three players got rewards for emerging as top-scorers with five goals each.

High-flying girls take on Nepal today

SPORTS REPORTER



Following their record 17-0 victory over Pakistan which sealed them a place in the semifinals, Bangladesh are looking forward to another victory to emerge champions of Group B when they take on Nepal in the SAFF U-18 Women's Championship in Thimphu today.

The match will get underway at the Changlimithang Stadium at 7:00pm Bangladesh time.

A draw would be enough for the girls in red and green to emerge group champions, but coach Golam Rabbani Choton is confident his charges can pull off a victory today.

"The girls did everything according to plan against Pakistan. We knew we would be through to semifinals with a win and we also had the goal-margin issue in mind," the coach said after the win against Pakistan. "Now we face Nepal who are a good team, but we will be fully prepared and will play for a victory."

The team had gym and conditioning session in the morning before having light



7-goal scorer Sirat Jahan Shopna speaks as coach Golam Rabbani Choton looks on after the win against Pakistan. PHOTO: BFF

practice session in the evening yesterday. The players were all in good spirits ahead of this match.

Striker Sirat Jahan Shopna, who scored seven of the 17 goals against Pakistan, said they would try to capitalise on every chance they get against Nepal.

"We scored a lot of goals against Pakistan, but we missed a few too. However, we have achieved what we wanted to from this match. Nepal are a good team, but we will give our best to win the match," the striker said.



Players of Khulna Division celebrate after beating Dhaka Division 1-0 in the final of the Walton 4th National Women's Hockey Competition at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: STAFF