



Sameh FM Maraaba (R) watches his shot sail past Bangladesh goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana during Palestine's 2-0 win in the second semifinal of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup at the Birshrehtha Shaheed Ruhul Amin Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Finishing lets down 'proud' Day

SPORTS REPORTER from Cox's Bazar



Bangladesh coach Jamie Day expressed satisfaction over his side's performance against Palestine despite a 2-0 loss in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup semifinal yesterday, adding that his players' profligacy in front of goal made the difference.

"I'm extremely proud of the performance. We started a bit slowly in the first ten minutes and then conceded from a cross. They were really dangerous in the air because they are a physically imposing side. Afterwards we played really good football -- good movement, getting into spaces, creating chances -- but it was a little bit of the same story of not taking our chances," was how Day summed up the match after the hosts exited from the semifinals of the tournament for the second straight edition.

"It is disappointing to exit the tournament but our boys have done very well.

"I think we played very good stuff. Our players passed the ball very well, we were in control of the game for a long time but we just couldn't take the chances. We need to score, that's the weakness. We have opportu-

The final pass and touches [in the box] were not good enough. That's what we have to work on. The national team players have to play week in, week out for their clubs because they need to get into a position to become better.

JAMIE DAY
BANGLADESH COACH

ment were the best under his guidance over three competitions.

"I will go back to England to see my family. Then I will come back to watch the league and get a squad ready for November's international friendly. The players deserve a break as well. I can come back fresh watch players who didn't get a chance. I'm looking forward to the next month. I'll choose younger players for that; anyone who scores goals, I'll take," Day stated emphatically.

Palestine coach Nouredine Ali also praised Bangladesh's performance, say-



Bangladesh coach Jamie Day and the players leave the field applauding the crowd's support following their defeat against Palestine.

PHOTO: STAR

Impressive booters bow out

ANISUR RAHMAN from Cox's Bazar



Bangladesh's campaign in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup came to an end with a 2-0 defeat against Palestine in the second semifinal at the Birshrehtha Shaheed Ruhul Amin Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday, but not before the hosts won hearts with their brave performance.

Mohammad MM Balah and substitute Sameh FM Maraaba scored in each half to ensure Palestine's final berth in their first-ever appearance in the tournament, but the home side gave a run for the money to their superior counterparts, who are 93 places ahead in FIFA rankings.

The pre-tournament favourites Palestine will play the final against Tajikistan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium tomorrow.

A defeat for the home side was not unexpected against a side they never beat since the latter's entrance in international football in 1998 and the margin of defeat could have been bigger, but the home side played a lot better against the top-ranked side compared to Palestine's group-stage opponents Nepal and Tajikistan.

However, it was skillful Palestine who availed the opportunities with both hands as they had

the physical edge over the Bangladeshi players on the fast-paced ground amid drizzle.

Since the kick-off, Palestine threatened the home side with their speedy run and puzzled the Bangladesh defence, who however negotiated well to counter-press and impress the 10,000 capacity crowd.

With both sides starting to display entertaining football, Palestine broke the deadlock in the eighth minute as Musab Ki Battat shrugged off two markers to release a well-judged cross from the right flank and towering Mohammad Balah headed home effortlessly.

After conceding the lead, Bangladesh put up really good performance with Biplu Ahmed penetrating from the left flank while hard-working striking pair of Mahabubur Rahman Sufil and Nabib Newaj Jibon threatened to equaliser. Left-back Biswanath Ghosh and hard-working midfielder Masuk Mia Jonny were also brilliant on the field to show never-say-die attitude throughout the match.

Jonny tried from distance with goalkeeper Rami ka Hamada gripping the ball in his second attempt in the 13th minute while Biplu came close to levelling the margin with the goalkeeper to beat but the winger was denied by a timely intervention from defender Battat in the 21st minute.

It was again Bangladesh, who came close to reimbursing the goal in the stoppage time of the first half but Jibon, availing a through-pass from Sufil, struck the side netting, much to the relief of Palestine goalkeeper Hamada.

Bangladesh kept on pressing for the equaliser after the break, forcing Palestine on the backfoot as all 11 of their players trenced inside their own half. But Bangladesh saw another chance go in vain, with Jibon failing to connect to a Biswanath long-ball despite getting the opponent goalkeeper alone.

As Bangladesh looked desperate for the equaliser, Palestine launched a few good counter-attacks but they were either denied by goalkeeper Ahsraful Islam Rana or missed the target despite beating the goalkeeper.

But they ensured the victory by scoring the second goal in the stoppage time of the second half when Oday Im Dabbagh headed down a cross from Yazan Laiwai for substitute Sameh FM Maraaba, who slotted home from inside the box.

But the men in red and green left the field with heads held high with their brave performance and the spectators gave them a standing ovation as the players waved towards the spectators for coming to the stadium and supporting them throughout the match.



With so much misinformation surrounding Shakib Al Hasan's infected finger -- the latest being BCB president Nazmul Hassan saying that he did not know who approved a steroid injection in August but the player saying that he consulted the physio -- the all-rounder briefly left hospital and relaxed at the residence of a friend in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Surprise in Tigers' ODI squad?

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors submitted a 15-member Bangladesh squad to the board for the three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe yesterday. The changes to the Asia Cup squad were obvious as two stalwarts Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal have been ruled out due to injuries and there may be one or two surprise inclusions when the team will be officially announced. The Minhajul Abedin-led selection panel has mostly depended on known faces but a fresh inclusion is not unlikely.

The selectors did not opt for a preliminary list this time for the three-match ODI and two-match Test series against Zimbabwe as they wanted to ensure that the players not in the squad continue playing in the ongoing National Cricket League.

The Zimbabwe team will arrive in Dhaka on October 15 and start their campaign against the Tigers on October 21 when they will play the first ODI in Mirpur before travelling

to Chattogram, where the remaining two matches will take place on October 24 and 26 respectively.

Although there has been talk about resting pacer Mustafizur Rahman's from the Test series, Minhajul assured that they made the best possible side for the one-day series.

"We made the best possible side because every series is important for us as there is the issue of ranking points. As Shakib and Tamim are injured, you will definitely see one or two changes in the side," said Minhajul. The former skipper also portrayed a bright picture about the back-up players in the pipeline.

Injury is now a big concern for the team management and with the busy schedule up ahead for the Tigers, the idea to rest a key player like Mustafizur from the Tests was floated. However, there was also a counter opinion -- whether resting a player from the Test series will be wise as the Tigers desperately need to improve their credentials in the longer-version.



Pakistan sniff victory

AFP, Dubai



Hard-working fast bowler Mohammad Abbas took three wickets in seven balls to bring Pakistan closer to victory in the first Test against Australia in Dubai on Wednesday.

The right-arm medium pacer dismissed Aaron Finch (49) and the Marsh brothers -- Shaun and Mitchell -- for ducks as Australia slumped from 87 without loss to finish the fourth day at 136 for 3.

At stumps opener Usman Khawaja was batting on a fighting 50 and Travis Head on 34 as the pair had added an invaluable 49 for the unbroken fourth wicket stand to prolong Australia's resistance on a weary and spinning Dubai stadium pitch.

Pakistan will need seven more wickets while Australia require another 326 runs for an improbable victory to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

It was an action replay of the first innings as Australian openers put on 87 -- they made 142 in their total of 202 on Tuesday -- as Finch

was trapped leg-before soon after tea with a sharp incoming delivery from Abbas.

Finch, who took an unsuccessful review, hit five boundaries in his knock.

Two balls later Abbas had the elder Marsh caught behind and in his next over trapped Mitchell right in front of the stumps only to get the decision on review.

But it was Finch and Khawaja in the afternoon session who batted with resolve.

Pakistan-born Khawaja, who top scored

| SCORES IN BRIEF | |
|---|--|
| PAKISTAN: First innings 482 | |
| AUSTRALIA: First innings 202 | |
| PAKISTAN: Second innings 181 for 6 decl (Imam 48, Haris 39, Shafiq 41, Azam 28 not out; Lyon 2-58, Holland 3-83) | |
| AUSTRALIA: Second innings 136 for 3 (Finch 49, Khawaja 50 not out, Head 34 not out; Abbas 3-26) | |

for Australia with 85 in the first innings, held one end intact with resolute batting, having so far hit six boundaries.

Abbas has figures of 3 for 26 to add to his four wickets in the first innings, but leg-spinner Yash Shah was still wicketless in the match.



Pakistan pacer Muhammad Abbas celebrates after dismissing Australia's Shaun Marsh on the third day of the first Test in Dubai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



SHANE WARNE

Malik offered Warne \$200k

STAR SPORT DESK

Australia spin legend Shane Warne spoke in detail about former Pakistan captain Saleem Malik offering him a bribe to bowl badly in a September 1994 Test between the countries in Karachi.

Speaking to NDTV.com in connection with his recently published autobiography 'No Spin', Warne spoke about one of the earlier incidents of attempted match-fixing in cricket.

"Saleem Malik offered me 200,000 US dollars, he said it will be in my room in half-an-hour if I bowl wide of the off-stump and the match was a draw. That's the bottom line of what he asked," Warne was quoted by the Indian news website as saying.

While the approach from then Pakistan captain Malik was known since 1995, Warne's latest utterance on the issue revealed the amount that was at stake and the way in which the approach was made. Pakistan eventually won the match by one wicket, chasing 314. Warne took his fourth five-wicket haul in the innings while Malik scored 42.