

Tottenham Hotspur's Dele Alli was hit on the back of the head by what appeared to be a plastic bottle during his side's 2-0 win over Arsenal in the League Cup quarter-finals on Wednesday. The midfielder helped put his team ahead with a superb pass for scorer Son Heung-min in the first half, then netted a beautiful goal of his own, running in and calmly chipping the ball over Arsenal keeper Petr Cech. Minutes later Alli was hit on the head as Arsenal were about to take a throw-in. The player, who did not appear hurt, turned to the crowd and used his hands to gesture the 2-0 scoreline to them. "It made the goal a little bit sweeter," he told Sky Sports.

—REUTERS



A LEGENDARY SUPER-SUB CALLED UPON AGAIN

SAMAMA RAHMAN

If ever there has been one person to point to as Manchester United's super-sub, especially in the Premier League era, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's name should undoubtedly be the first one to pop into one's mind.

The Norwegian joined the club in 1996 as a relative unknown but quickly made a name for himself as Sir Alex Ferguson's ace in the hole, earning the moniker of 'the baby-faced assassin' for his evergreen looks and penchant for scoring off the bench, often deep into matches.

In the span of seconds the now 45-year-old became a bona fide legend, scoring that stoppage time winner against Bayern Munich in the 1999 Champions League final. He had plenty of other notable moments, such as when he scored four goals in 19 minutes against Nottingham Forest in a Premier League clash, but that one touch which fired the Red Devils to a famed treble shot him into footballing folklore.

However, despite all the goodwill that Solskjaer the player has with fans, his appointment as an interim manager is

ages a team that nobody relishes coming up against.

But Manchester United are a different prospect. In recent times teams have shown up to Sir Matt Busby Way not with the fear that once filled them, but knowing that they could pull off a sensational win against a team in turmoil.

Yet the move to appease fans has worked.

One of the biggest gripes with former manager Jose Mourinho was the dour brand of football on display, not to mention his proclivity of falling out with key players -- namely Paul Pogba and Anthony Martial.

Solskjaer seems to promise something different. He has already managed Pogba when he was coach of the

Manchester United Reserves from 2008-

2010, and shared dressing rooms with bigger egos. In his first full

season as a manager, he brought Molde

their first-ever

Eliteserien title playing flowing, attacking

football. He repeated the feat in his

second season, again winning the top-flight

league and adding the Norwegian Cup in his

third season.

However, at Manchester United trophies only buy time. They did so for



Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico is ecstatic after lifting his side to the Independence Cup final by not only doing his part during the shootout against Abahani, but also scoring a penalty himself at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Heroic Zico propels Kings to final

SPORTS REPORTER

Another heroic performance by goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico propelled Bashundhara Kings to the Independence Cup final with a 7-6 win on penalties over Abahani at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

None of the Kings' players or officials could bear to watch when Zico decided to stop Emon Babu from taking the seventh spot-kick of the shootout and take the penalty himself after having stopped Abahani's seventh shot from Imtiaz Sultan Jitu. The lad from Cox's Bazar then beat Abahani goalkeeper Shahidul Alam Sohel from the spot with a powerful shot to send the fans and his teammates into a wild frenzy.

Earlier Zico, also the Bangladesh U-23 national team goalkeeper, had stopped three penalties from three foreign players of Rahmatganj MFS in shootouts during a quarterfinal encounter to take the Kings to the semifinals.

This triumph means that big-spending Bashundhara Kings have qualified for two successive finals in their debut season. The newcomers will now face off against Sheikh Russel

KC on December 26.

On the other hand, for Abahani this defeat means that the Independence Cup title remains elusive for the Sky Blues since the start of the professional football era in 2007.

"I saw our tensed players at the dugout as they might have disbelieved me. But I individually regularly practice shooting from the spot after practice sessions. After stopping one shoot from Abahani, I thought I would take our next shot as a couple of our players already missed," Zico said. "I was really confident about beating the

ABAHANI 1 (6) - 1(7) BASHUNDHARA
BELFORT-82' MATIN MIA-69'

opponent goalkeeper because I had struck from spot in a local football tournament in Cox's Bazar."

"After the completion of regulation time, our coach [Oscar Bruzon] told the players; don't worry, we have Zico in the shootout and that made me more confident. I had also practiced penalties yesterday [Wednesday] and stopped two shots from our coach," he continued.

Federation Cup champions Abahani were

tipped as favourites for the match over runners-up Bashundhara Kings as the latter was missing a few key players, who were either suspended or recovering from injuries.

However, the Sky Blues were not as impressive as they were in the Federation Cup final, where they handed a 3-1 defeat to the same opposition.

After surviving the initial pressure from Abahani, the Kings regrouped and returned the favour as they came close to take the lead twice before Zico denied Abahani midfielder Pranotosh Kumar brilliantly two minutes from the break.

After resumption, substitute Matin Mia gave Bashundhara the lead through a nice combination with Daniel Colindres and Mahbubur Rahman Sufil in the 69th minute before Abahani hit back in the 82nd minute to level the margin with a spectacular header from Haitian Fils Belfort.

Afterwards, Abahani created a few good scoring opportunities but either failed to convert or the woodwork denied the Dhanmondi-based outfit. Abahani paid dearly for the loss as they quit the tournament from the semifinals to stretch their Independence Cup drought to one decade.

Spurs silent on Poch's future

AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino may be the bookmakers favourite to get the number one job at Manchester United on a permanent basis but on Thursday the club press officer refused to allow questions on the matter.

The press officer said the 46-year-old Argentinian -- whose attractive style of football and ability to bring on young players has earned him praise -- had dealt with the matter on Tuesday.

Britain's Press Association reported that at Thursday's press conference the press officer eventually resorted to asking for the cameras to be turned off after the journalist posing the question refused to cede ground.

A debate lasting just under two minutes then took place over the matter. One question mark that has been posed about Pochettino's eligibility for the United job is he is yet to win a trophy.

They will try and dispose of the 'chokers' tag in a two-legged League Cup semi-final with Chelsea -- who beat Spurs in the 2015 final of that competition in Pochettino's first season in charge -- in January.

However, Pochettino -- who is contracted to Spurs till 2023 -- played down the possibility that the elusive trophy was within their grasp.

Gold rush for shuttlers

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh finished on top of the Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Junior by bagging three gold medals at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

Bangladesh grabbed the gold in three of the five events, men's singles, men's doubles and women's doubles, which were all Bangladeshi affairs. India won gold in the women's singles and mixed doubles events.

By winning three gold and one silver medals, the junior shuttlers outshone their seniors who could only manage one bronze medal in the Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Challenge held last week.

Top seed Abdul Hamid Lokman beat second seed Sibgat Ullah by 17-21, 22-20, 21-19 points to win his first international medal. Until now, the Bangladesh Youth Games champions had participated in only three international tournaments -- twice in India and once in Indonesia.

"I faced tough matches but I finally overcame the hurdle after following the instructions of my coaches. I am really proud to become champion in an international tournament," said 17-year-old Lokman.

Asked whether the tournament was

easy considering that there were no competitors from India or Nepal, Lokman said, "I worked really hard to win the title, I beat top ranked players like Gourab Singha [number one], Mangal Singha [number two] and Sibgat Ullah [number six] in quarterfinal, semifinal and final. All three matches were challenging for me but I succeeded. It could have been better though had good shuttlers from India and Nepal participated."

However, Lokman is unsure of whether to continue playing the sport.

"My family backs me to play badminton but there is no future in badminton in Bangladesh. I will give it up if my family pressures me to do something for my bread and butter," said Lokman.

In the women's singles final, Treesa Jolly beat by Ruhi Raju 21-15, 21-11 points while Gourab Singha and Mangal Singh beat Hanif Mohammad and Lokman by 21-16, 21-17 points to win the men's doubles.

Rasma Akter and Urmu Akter beat Rahima Jarin and Kamelia Islam by 21-9, 22-20 points to win the women's doubles while Indian pair -- Manvir Raj and Treesa -- beat Bangladeshi pair Gourab and Urmu by 21-4, 21-14 points to win the mixed doubles.



Abdul Hamid Lokman celebrates after defeating Sibgat Ullah 17-21, 22-20, 21-19 in the Yonex-Sunrise Bangladesh International Junior at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Paltan yesterday. PHOTO: COLLECTED

NAT'L ARCHERY C'SHIPS Army emerge champions

SPORTS REPORTER

Dhaka Army Archery Club emerged champions in Teer National Archery Championships after bagging six gold medals out of ten on the concluding day at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi, Gazipur yesterday.

Unheralded Abdur Rahman Alif of Wahed Archery Club came to the men's recurve individual final beating the illustrious archers but he finally fell to Hakim Ahmed Rubel of BKSP, who won his first gold medal in the national championships with a straight 6-0 win over Alif.

In women's recursive individual, unknown Diya Siddique of BKSP also made it to the final but gave some hard time to national archer Nasrin Akter of Army Club before suffering a 3-5 defeat in final. It was also her first gold medal in national championship for experienced Nasrin.

However, unheralded Mithu Rahman of Army Club emerged champions in men's compound individual event after beating Nazmul Huda 141-131 while Susmita Banik retained the title of compound women's individual event beating Ritu Akter of Teerandaz Sangsad 138-137.

BKSP finished second with three gold, one silver and a bronze while Teerandaz Sangsad finished third with one gold and two silver and a bronze. Apart from six gold, champions Army won one silver and two bronze.



no different to Santiago Solari taking over Real Madrid earlier this season.

After both Spain and England's most decorated clubs endured some of their roughest starts to a season, the appointment of a fan favourite with some managerial pedigree has been received by fans as nothing short of a move to appease them.

And the Old Trafford faithful have been here before, although not on such a grand scale. David Moyes's sacking in 2013 saw club legend Ryan Giggs handed a player-manager role but that only lasted four games, nowhere near enough time for relations to sour.

Solskjaer does not have that comfort. He finds himself firmly in the hot-seat till the end of the season and although there is next to no chance the fanbase will turn on him, a sacking may be a blemish on the club where he made a career.

Back in Spain, Solari has done far better than expected, winning 10 of 12 games while losing the others but he has a far superior crop of players and man-

Mourinho; who may point to his Europa League and FA Cup triumphs as indicators that he has done better than the trophyless Jurgen Klopp at Liverpool or Mauricio Pochettino at Tottenham. But the brand of football that those two play -- the kind Manchester United fans expect their team to play -- and steady improvement is the reason they are still around.

Solskjaer's last managerial stint in England, when he was recruited to Cardiff City in January 2014, lasted six months before he was relieved of his duties having won nine, lost 16 and drawn five matches. However, with players better equipped for his brand of football, perhaps he can showcase his talents on the biggest of stages.

Even if he does, it is unlikely he will be able to turn things around significantly enough to be around next season. In the meantime he will have the unenviable job of repairing a fractured dressing room, translating his attractive brand of football onto a team that have not expressed themselves in years and perhaps making a run at the top four.

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