



Striker Sirat Jahan Swapna (L) has a powerful shot blocked by a Kyrgyzstan defender during their Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. (Inset) A large crowd turned up at the BNS to watch Bangladesh take on Kyrgyzstan.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Choton happy with effort

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh coach Golam Rabbani Choton expressed his satisfaction with the way his charges launched attacks from the first minute to the last

following their narrow 2-1 win over Kyrgyzstan in the last Group B match of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup yesterday.

"Our plan was to secure full points as well as fight full 90 minutes. The girls did it accordingly as they scored two goals, but the goal we conceded was due a mistake of our goalkeeper. I want to give all the credit to the girls," Choton said, adding that his charges improved much compared to the first match against United Arab Emirates.

"There were some mistakes in the match against UAE but today the girls were very aggressive upfront and tried their best as Krishna [Rani Sarker] finished clinically on a Sanjida [Akhter] cross. Our team

had launched attacks through the flanks against UAE but today we also launched attacks down the midfield," said Choton.

The successful coach believes an international win over Kyrgyzstan is a big achievement for the girls, who would be encouraged in the semifinal match as he felt the players were much more spirited against Kyrgyzstan compared to the match against UAE.

Winger Sanjida Akhter scored the opening goal within 30 seconds and then set up the other goal for Krishna Rani Sarker to be adjudged the most valuable player of the match.

"I feel really happy for being adjudged the best player. Our target was to win the match and we did it," said Sanjida.

Kyrgyzstan coach Nataliia Gaivoronskaia termed the match 'a good one', but felt her team conceded both goals due to mistakes by the goalkeeper, who she felt was nervous playing against one of favourites of the tournament.



Bangladesh emerge group champions

SPORTS REPORTER



Hosts Bangladesh emerged Group B champions in the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup following a 2-1 win over Kyrgyzstan at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sanjida Akhter and Krishna Rani Sarker scored one goal apiece before substitute Akhmatkulova Zairina pulled one back for Kyrgyzstan, who finished group runners-up to set up the first semifinal against Group A champions on April 29. Bangladesh will play the second semifinal on April 30 against the runners-up of Group A.

Having confirmed the semifinal berths, both teams came into the final match of the group to decide the group winners and hosts Bangladesh got off to a brisk start in front of some 10,000 cheering holiday spectators by taking the lead in the first minute before Kyrgyzstan settled down.

Following the kick-off, defender Akhi Khatun delivered a through-ball on the left flank where a Kyrgyzstan defender cleared it for a throw-

in. Forward Krishna, receiving the throw-in, darted into the box to drive a low shot which was only half-stopped by Kyrgyzstan goalkeeper Tolonova Aichurek before unmarked Akhter tapped in from close range.

The 30-second strike gave the girls in red and green a morale boost and they kept pressing to double the lead with right-winger Sanjida and right-back Shamsunnahar penetrating down the flanks.

With Sanjida relentlessly releasing the ball from the right flank, Krishna twice came close

Kyrgyzstan 1 - 2 Bangladesh
Zairina 69' Sanjida 1', Krishna 59'

to doubling the lead but her efforts narrowly missed the target.

Bangladesh intensified the attack down the left flank as Marzia came in place of injured striker Sirat Jahan Swapna, but Krishna was again denied by the Kyrgyzstan goalkeeper on the half-hour mark before Marzia rattled the crossbar in the 36th minute.

During the stoppage time of the first half, Monika released a defence-splitting through-pass for Marzia, who nutmegged two defenders but could not keep her shot on target.

Bangladesh kept the opposition defenders on their toes with Krishna hitting the side-netting four minutes into the second half before she finally got the second goal in the 59th minute with a header after Aichurek failed to gather a cross from Sanjida.

The Kyrgyz goalkeeper, however, denied Krishna in the 64th minute from a one-on-one situation before Kyrgyzstan pulled one goal back from a counter-attack in the 69th minute. Zairina drove an angular shot from inside the box to beat Bangladesh goalkeeper Rupna Chakma, who might have done better to tip it over instead of trying to grip the ball.

Bangladesh sent two pairs of fresh legs with Sajeda Khatun and Tahura Khatun replacing Krishna and Sanjida. Sajeda came close to widening the margin but her flick on a chip from Shamsunnahar narrowly missed the target while Tahura dribbled nicely to dance past three players before floated the balls miles over the bar.

Malinga, Sharma lead CSK's rout

STAR SPORT DESK

Lasith Malinga slung into action with a four-for after skipper Rohit Sharma's 67 set up Mumbai Indians thumping 46-run win over leaders Chennai Super Kings in their Indian Premier League match at Chennai yesterday.

Malinga was expensive but got the job done as he took the first wicket of Shane Watson and then wrapped up the tail with the wickets of Harbhajan Singh and Mitchell Santner in the 18th over to get Chennai all out for 109.

The Sri Lankan slinger ended with figures of four for 37 from 3.4 overs. Hardik Pandya was also instrumental in the win over the hosts -- who rested skipper and talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni for the match -- as the all-rounder hit an 18-ball 23 to finish Mumbai's innings with a flourish and then took two wickets for just seven runs in 3 overs.

Earlier, Sharma's 48-ball 67 with six fours and three sixes formed the lion's share of Mumbai's 155 for four after Chennai asked them to bat first at the toss.

SCORES IN BRIEF
Mumbai: 155 for 4 (Sharma 67, Lewis 32, Pandya 23 not out; Santner 2-13)

Chennai: 109 all out in 17.4 overs (Vijay 38, Malinga 4-37, Pandya 2-7, Bumrah 2-10)
Result: Mumbai won by 46 runs

Third among equals

MAZHAR UDDIN

There has been a lot of planning and assessment surrounding the Tigers' strengths and weaknesses in batting and bowling before and since the selectors announced the 15-member Bangladesh squad for the ICC World Cup scheduled to start from May 30 next in the United Kingdom.

Many believe that the fast bowlers will play a key role in the seam-friendly English conditions, while many think that as it is an ICC event, the pitches will also help the batters post big totals.

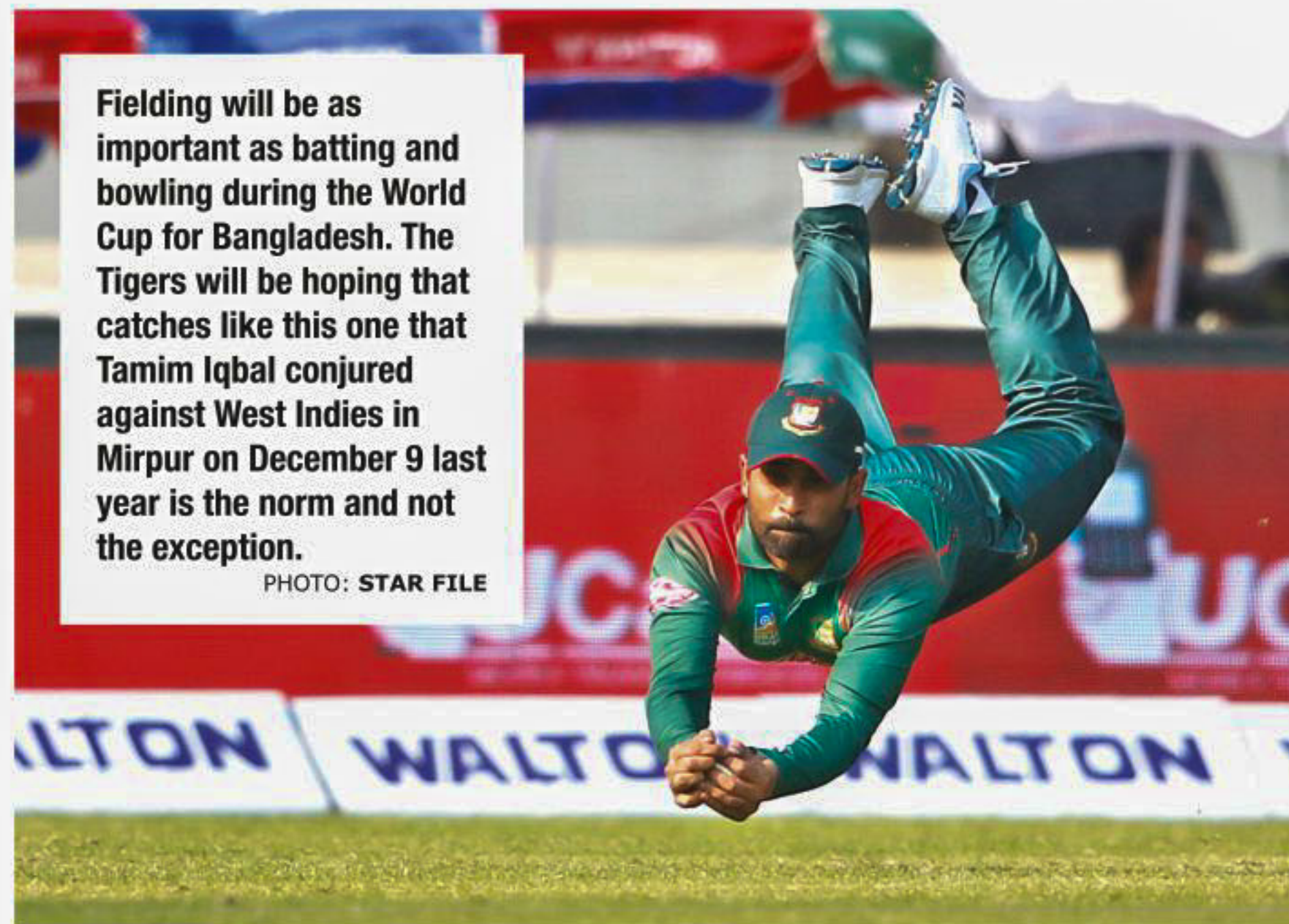
Experts have already started to chalk out the team combination, speculating over whether the think tank should include an extra spinner or go with a seam-bowling all-rounder who could also score some quick runs lower down the order.

But apart from batting and bowling, the fielding department will also play a vital role in Bangladesh's World Cup campaign. It is often overlooked, but the fielding has at times been an almost silent cause for worry, especially in big events.

Considering the fitness aspect, almost all the Bangladesh cricketers can be termed as fit and agile to varying degrees but there have been many instances where dropped catches exacted a heavy price in the past, changing the course of games that could have been won.

Despite having some brilliant fielders and safe pairs of hands in the likes of Sabbir Rahman, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and seniors like Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad, there are a few specific areas in fielding -- especially in slip the cordon -- where Bangladesh team are yet to find specialist fielders. The likes of Soumya Sarkar and Mohammad Mithun are the ones who could take up the challenge in the World Cup this time around.

Although it's not Test cricket and in the 50-over format the captain can hardly afford slip fielders except in the early stages of the innings, but it is still important to grab those chances in the slips to gain early



Fielding will be as important as batting and bowling during the World Cup for Bangladesh. The Tigers will be hoping that catches like this one that Tamim Iqbal conjured against West Indies in Mirpur on December 9 last year is the norm and not the exception.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

momentum.

A dropped catch can often be a double blow as it demoralises the bowler and if the reprieved batsman goes on to play a big knock it puts a lot of mental pressure on the team. Fielding is an especially important chink to iron out for a team like Bangladesh, because the Tigers are not often able to score or chase 300-plus, which may be par for the course in the UK this summer.

It will be important for the team management, along with fielding coach Ryan Cook, to work on this aspect.

During the recent tour of New Zealand, it was the dropped chances in both the ODI and Test series that cost the visitors heavily on a tour where an inexperienced fast bowling department were made to look more helpless.

Apart from the lack of specialist slip fielders, the poor approach and attitude from the fast bowlers towards fielding --

both catching and ground fielding -- has also remained a big concern.

The likes of Rubel Hossain and Mustafizur Rahman have remained two of the weak links in the Bangladesh fielding department.

As it was previously witnessed during the Tigers' ICC Champions Trophy campaign in England back in 2017, the bowlers had to fight really hard for each wicket courtesy of the batting-friendly pitches.

Therefore, it is fielding and catching that will once again play a big role to contain some runs on a pitches expected to offer more than 300 runs and a smart fielding unit can make the difference.

There is a saying in cricket that you can't change your skills overnight in bowling and batting, but it in fielding you can improve in a short period by working hard. That will be a big, if oft-unexpressed, hope heading into the World Cup.

ICC WORLD CUP 2019 BITES



ICC

Glenn Maxwell was relieved to see his name in Australia's 15-man squad for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019, and said he felt confident about putting on a good show at the event.

Maxwell has enjoyed a purple patch in recent times, and that solidified his claim to a spot in Australia's World Cup squad. For people on the outside, Maxwell's inclusion seemed a formality. Maxwell himself wasn't as sure, though, and his first reaction was one of relief after the news was out.

Maxwell has been central to Australia's resurgence in the fifty-over format. So far in 2019, he has scored 458 runs at 41.63, striking at 126.51. He made noteworthy contributions in the ODIs against India and Pakistan, as Australia won both series away from home.

"I've definitely gone through stages over the last 12 months where I've doubted if I might even have been there," Maxwell told SEN Radio when asked of his World Cup selection. "To be actually finally named you look

Doubted I might even be there: Maxwell



back and feel proud of all the work you've put in."

Maxwell said his recent form gives him confidence ahead of the World Cup. "To perform the way I did in India and Dubai gave me a lot of confidence going forward, that I was still good enough to dominate and do really well at this level.

"That's what gives me confidence for this World Cup: I'm coming in in good international form, and there's a bit of trust within the team to play my role. I feel like I've got a certain role now which is a nice feeling as well.

"I'm going to need a slightly different technique to what I needed in Dubai but that's something I'm working on."

T20 champs snubbed for WT20 challenge

STAR SPORT DESK



While the likes of Bangladesh pacer Jahanara Alam have been picked by one of the three teams that will contest the Women's T20 Challenge on the sidelines of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) playoffs, the Board of Control for Cricket

in India (BCCI) as snubbed any and all players from Women's World Twenty20 champions Australia.

A one-off IPL exhibition match was staged last year and Australia fielded the largest overseas contingent, with Meg Lanning, Megan Schutt, Ellyse Perry, Alyssa Healy and Beth Mooney all making the trip.

Australia romped to the T20 World Cup title in the West Indies last year, and in Healy has the world's best T20 player, according to the ICC.

Of the 39 players named in the three IPL Women's Challenge teams, 12 are foreign players, with each team having four foreign players.

Of the foreign players, four are from New Zealand, three each from the West Indies and England, and one each from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. South Africa and Pakistan will be playing a series that clashes with the triangular tournament.

Australian players are required to be in Brisbane for an Ashes training camp that starts on May 13.

Healy and Lanning indicated last month they would jump at the chance to return to India this year and play more T20 fixtures alongside the world's best.

"One hundred per cent," Healy said. "It would be fantastic. I thoroughly enjoyed that experience."



ALYSSA HEALY