

SPORT



We're not afraid of Laos: Sanjida

SPORTS REPORTER



After having played a key role in seeing Bangladesh top Group B of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup, winger Sanjida Akter is already looking past the semifinals and focusing on Laos as possible final opponents.

The skilful winger, who scored the opening goal within 30 seconds before setting up Krishna Rani Sarker in the second half against Kyrgyzstan on Friday, said they were not afraid of facing Laos should the Southeast Asian nation make it to the final.

Bangladesh will play the second semifinal against the Group A runners-up team on April 30 while Kyrgyzstan will take on the Group A champions on the previous day.

"Laos have beaten Mongolia by a big margin. So they are undoubtedly a strong team. We may face them in the final, and we are prepared for it," Sanjida said after the team's training session yesterday afternoon.

"We have played against teams like Japan and Korea in the past, so there is nothing to be afraid of in Laos. The final will be a very good match," Sanjida added.

Coach Golam Rabbani Choton admitted that finishing was a worry for his team, and that they need to sort it out soon.

"Our finishing against Kyrgyzstan was better than in the first match. But we will have to work more on finishing before the semifinal match. We have a problem in finishing," the coach said.

The team's captain Misrat Jahan Moushumi, meanwhile, was satisfied with the team creating many goalscoring opportunities, even though she was a bit disappointed with not making most of those chances.

"We have played well and there has been improvement in our football. We could not create many scoring chances previously, but now we do which is a good thing. We tried our best to score as many as possible," Moushumi said.



Laos forward Pe dribbles past a Tajikistan defender during their Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

Match statistics say Bangladesh had 33 shots on target against Kyrgyzstan, yet they only won the game 2-1 and those two goals were the result of fumbles by Kyrgyzstan's goalkeeper.

There were more than 10,000 spectators who turned up for the match on Friday, and even though they left with the taste of victory, they perhaps wanted to see more goals from the home team.

Moushumi, when asked, said they were sorry for not being more lethal in front of goal.

"If people came to see us score more goals, we are sorry. I would say we played very well and played very attacking football. You can't score from every opportunity in football, however, if our finishing was a bit better, we would have scored more."

Laos hit Tajikistan for 6

SPORTS REPORTER

Laos announced their credentials as one of the contenders for the title of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup with a 6-0 thrashing of Tajikistan in the last match of Group A at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The win helped the Southeast Asian nation emerge group champions and set up a semifinal clash against Group B runners-up Kyrgyzstan tomorrow, while Bangladesh, the champions of Group B, will take on group A runners-up Mongolia on Tuesday.

On the back of a 5-0 victory against Mongolia, the Laotians got off to a brisk

start when their most inspirational forward Pe opened the scoring with a fine side-footed finish in the fourth minute.

Anouta Chanthithong got the second goal in the 25th minute, thanks to a dreadful mistake from the Tajikistan goalkeeper before Pe made it 3-0 in the 37th minute with her second goal of the game and fourth in two matches by beating the Tajikistan goalkeeper from the spot.

Pe then turned provider in the 75th minute as her cross was volleyed home expertly by centre-back Saysamone Inthaphone, who wrapped up a consummate performance for Laos with two more goals in the 89th and 92nd minute of the match.

BCB 'satisfied' with security arrangements

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Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) media committee head Jalal Younus informed yesterday that the board was satisfied by the security plan provided by Cricket Ireland after the BCB had enquired about the matter earlier.

"We wanted to know about the security plan and they have sent it to us. There will be security personnel with the team. There will be armed policemen in motorbikes when the team will travel to the field from hotel. If there is any sort of threat, then they will contact the local police immediately," Younus said.

"We are quite satisfied with the plan."

Fans to get replicas for first time

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Sports & Sportz, the sole commercial selling rights holder of the Bangladesh national cricket team jersey for the upcoming ICC World Cup, announced a retail partner for the replica jerseys yesterday.

This will be the first time that Bangladesh fans will be able to get the official replica jersey, which will be available at Anjans and Gentleman outlets across the country. Supporters can also buy the jersey online from Cricshopbd and Jerseyfrickbd. The jerseys are priced at Tk 1150 each while children's sizes are priced at Tk 850 each.

Representatives of the selling partners, along with Bangladesh Cricket Board director Akram Khan and chairman of the media committee Jalal Younus, were present at a press conference detailing the decision in Dhaka yesterday. It has also been learnt that the jersey will be officially unveiled within a few days.

Salma dazzles Gulshan

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh women's cricket team captain Salma Khatun came up with an all-round performance for Mohammedan SC, helping her team register a massive 260-run victory over Gulshan Youth Club during their Premier Division Women's Cricket League encounter at BKSP-4 yesterday.

Although the Mohammedan top order were amongst the runs, the mammoth total of 326 for six would not have been possible without Salma's quickfire unbeaten 80 off 46 balls that saw 12 boundaries and a solitary six.

Salma also scripted an 83-run sixth-wicket stand with Nupur Kohale. Although Nupur was dismissed after scoring 35 off 49 balls, Salma and Ritu Moni strung together another unbeaten 69-run partnership for the seventh wicket.

After the exchange, Salma went wicketless but her economical figures of 14 runs in nine overs alongside Ritu's excellent figures of four wickets for six runs in 10 overs helped Mohammedan bundle out Gulshan Youth Club for a meagre 66 runs in 41.4 overs.

In the other game, Abahani Limited bounced back from a after a disappointing start to the league with a 10-wicket victory over Keraniganj Cricket Academy courtesy of Jhumur Akter Mira's four for 16 in nine overs.

After electing to bat, Mira dismantled Keraniganj's batting line-up, scalping wickets of four of their five top-order batters. Keraniganj could not recover from the early slump and were bundled out for only 60 runs in just 28.4 overs.

Coming in to chase, openers Shamima Sultana and Sharmin Sultana strung an unbeaten 61-run opening stand and helped Abahani to their first win of the league.

'Bowling is going to win it for us'

ICC

When West Indies last won the ICC World Cup in 1979, they did it with a 92-run victory over hosts England in the tournament final at Lord's. While Viv Richards was adjudged player of the match for his masterful 138*, there were a few unsung heroes for the champions as well.

The game saw 14 single-digit scores – including nine ducks – with seven of them (five ducks) on the England scoresheet. The revered Windies bowling attack ripped through the hosts' middle order, propelling their side to a second straight World Cup triumph. Joel Garner, the right-arm pacer, claimed five wickets.

While the seam-friendly pitches in England have changed over the years and turned conducive to batting, Floyd Reifer, the West Indies head coach, believes that it will still be the bowlers who take his side to victory at the 2019 World Cup. "Looking at the pitches in England in the county circuit, they are very high-scoring," he said on Friday.

"But I still think that the team that bowls and fields the best will



FLOYD REIFER

win the World Cup. The batters are expected to score runs, but I think bowling is going to win it for us."

Reifer also added that in the training camp ahead of the Ireland tri-series, West Indies have tried to add to their bowling arsenal. "We did a lot of specifics. We worked on bowling plans, we did a lot of stuff on death bowling. All in all, the energy levels are very high," he said.

"It is a really good team. There is a blend of experience and youth. At the World Cup, we have the X factor. The camaraderie is there."

"Gayle and Russell, they're hardened professionals. They are going to blend right into the team and are getting ready to win the World Cup," said Reifer.

ICC WORLD CUP 2019 BITES



AGENCIES, Kent

Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur called his team's preparations for the World Cup "outstanding", on the eve of their practice match against Kent.

Pakistan play Kent on Saturday, ahead of the limited-overs series against England before the World Cup begins on May 30. They open their campaign against the West Indies on May 31 and Arthur said that the team was acclimatizing well to the English conditions.

"Although the weather is chilly at the moment but the team is used to playing in such conditions," he said in a video shared by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). "The facilities provided here have been outstanding. We've done a lot of preparations in Lahore but now we've been practicing for the last three days in these conditions which has been invaluable for us."

"We've played a lot of cricket in England and we're used to the weather and the

'Our preps outstanding'

players have acclimatized quickly. Players have been brilliant and our preparations have been outstanding," he added.

Arthur also said he had high hopes from veteran all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez as Pakistan seek World Cup glory for the second time in their history following their previous triumph in 1992.

Hafeez is recovering from



MICKEY ARTHUR

an injury sustained during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and has been included in the 15-member squad for the World Cup.

"He [Hafeez] has bowled and he has fielded. Hafeez is ahead of where we want him and that's great news," Arthur said.

Thiem ends Nadal's historic bid

AFP, Barcelona



Dominic Thiem saved three break points in the final game to deliver a 6-4, 6-4 upset of 11-time champion Rafael Nadal and reach the final of the Barcelona Open on Saturday.

The Austrian, who lost the Roland Garros final to the Spanish great last year, denied Nadal the opportunity to become the first man to capture the same ATP title 12 times.

"I'm happy with how I played. I was competitive for the first time (in a few matches)," Nadal insisted. Thiem will on Sunday face Daniil Medvedev, a 6-4, 3-6, 7-5 winner over two-time tournament winner Kei Nishikori.

"Things were positive even if I lost. Congrats to him, he's a great guy and a great player," added top



A dejected Rafael Nadal acknowledges the fans after losing the Barcelona Open semifinal against Dominic Thiem yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

seed Nadal who was a semifinal loser last week to Fabio Fognini in Monte Carlo where he was also an 11-time champion.

"Today I played at a good level,

it was a great improvement on last week, when I was not competitive at all."

"I enjoyed the match, I'm feeling the way I want to feel about my game."

I'm happy and I'm confident."

Third-seeded Thiem took revenge for not only his 2018 French Open final loss to Nadal but also avenged losing the 2017 Barcelona title match to the 32-year-old Spaniard.

Nadal had never before lost a Barcelona semi-final.

Thiem joins Novak Djokovic as the only player to have defeated Nadal four times on clay after Buenos Aires in 2016, Rome in 2017 and last year in the Madrid quarterfinals.

Fourth seed Nishikori had reached the final of the Catalan clay-court event three times, winning in 2014 and 2015 but losing the 2016 final to Nadal.

"He played very aggressive and was better today on the clay," Nishikori said after his loss to Medvedev. "It was a close match, he played well at the right moments."