



There was a lot of hype surrounding the final between Bangladesh and Laos, the two best teams of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup, but Cyclone Fani poured cold water on all that, forcing the organisers to officially cancel the final and declare the two finalists as joint champions, some 20 minutes past the scheduled kick-off.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Fani spoils the final party

Bangladesh, Laos declared joint champions

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh and Laos were yesterday declared joint champions of the Bangamata U-19 Women's International Gold Cup after the final was cancelled considering the severity of cyclonic storm Fani and the impact it has had over the country.

The Bangabandhu National Stadium was all set to host that which promised to be a mouth-watering clash between the two best sides of the tournament, and there was no shortage of enthusiasm from fans as nearly 4000 spectators braved the drizzles to turn up at the big bowl, only to learn 20 minutes after the scheduled kick-off that the final was cancelled.

"Despite having all the preparations to hold the final in presence of enthusiastic spectators, the organising committee has decided to cancel the final match due to the horrifying natural disaster - Fani - as well as the country's overall situation," Abdus Salam Murshedy, chairman of the organising committee of the tournament, briefed journalists at the press box some 20 minutes after the scheduled kick-off time.

"For the cancellation of the final, the BFF apologises to all its stakeholders, declaring the two finalists as joint champions," added Murshedy.

Even though Laos manager Galdansukh Tuvshinbayar expressed her frustration at not being able to play the final, she respected the decision of the game's local governing body.

"From our team's perspective, we are not happy with the decision because we were eager to play the final. However, we must respect this decision of the Bangladesh Football Federation," said Tuvshinbayar during the briefing.

"I don't think anyone wanted such an end to this tournament but the reality is some southern districts of the country have already been flooded and people are praying for reprieve from the cyclone. It is not desirable for anyone to be involved with a football festival in the capital. Considering all aspects, the BFF took the decision and we also accepted it after consulting with our sponsors," said Fahad Karim, CEO of K-Sports, the commercial rights holder of the tournament.

Asked whether it was possible to cancel the match before it was

announced or shift the match to a new day as the cyclone was forecasted a few days ago, Murshedy said, "For any international tournament, there is a schedule for the participating teams and you can't postpone the match like a domestic engagement and hold it later. We also followed all the rules and regulations of FIFA and AFC and discussed it with the match commissioner as well as Laos team before taking the decision."

Both Bangladesh and Laos stormed into the final with unbeaten records. Bangladesh beat UAE 2-0 and Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in group stages before beating Mongolia 3-0 in semifinals. Laos, on the other hand, beat Tajikistan 5-0 and Mongolia 6-0 in group stages before inflicting a 7-1 defeat on Kyrgyzstan in semifinals.

ICC WORLD CUP 2019
BITES



26 DAYS TO GO

Learn from the humbling: Langer

ICC

Justin Langer, the Australia coach, said that the returning pair of Steve Smith and David Warner needs to be humble as the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019 will offer them a chance at redemption.

Smith and Warner were handed a 12-month ban for their role in the ball-tampering incident last year in South Africa. The duo are now back with the national side for a training camp in Brisbane ahead of the premier tournament.

Langer, who spoke to the reporters at Allan Border Field on Friday, 3 May, believes that the incident was a very "humbling experience" for the team but they now need to concentrate on the upcoming World Cup.

"We saw some sad vision 12 months ago to some really positive vision to where we are now," he said. "We have had great success in the past. While we celebrate that, it means nothing on how we play this [World Cup]. But I do know that we had a very humbling experience. And we bought it upon ourselves. We must make the most of every opportunity that comes up, including this World Cup."

He also added that Smith and Warner's return to the side bodes well for the reigning champions and that the team will benefit from their leadership experience. Both batsmen have been in terrific form of late, having come back from a successful

Indian Premier League campaign. While Warner has been the leading run-getter in the tournament with 692 runs in 12 games for Sunrisers Hyderabad, Smith, who briefly handled the captaincy for Rajasthan Royals, rose back to form with gritty performances.

"There is no tension," said a smiling Langer. "They're back in the team now. There's been a big build up to it. It's been a bit like facing fast bowling, you worry about it until you get out there and it's not as bad you thought it was. It was probably worse the night before [in your head]. It's the same with the boys coming back in."

"They've been selected, which is brilliant. We'll draw on their experience on and off the field and we would be absolutely crazy not to."

Smith and Warner held leadership roles - captain and vice-captain respectively - the last time they played for Australia, and part of their challenge in reintegration revolves around how well they're able to adjust in the team environment without the positions.

"There are certainly going to be challenges for both of them, though. When you've come from a titled position of captain, there's going to be a certain degree of humility that comes with that. But one of our really strong values is humility so it will be a great opportunity for them to develop that."



Newly eligible England pacer Jofra Archer celebrates his first wicket in the one-off ODI against Ireland in Dublin yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Foakes shines on debut

AFP, Dublin



Ben Foakes' unbeaten 61 on his debut helped England recover from a top-order collapse to beat Ireland by four wickets in a lone one-day international in Dublin on Friday.

England, the world's top-ranked side in ODI cricket and the hosts of the 50-over World Cup starting later this month, collapsed to 66 for five chasing a modest 199 for victory.

But wicket-keeper Foakes and Surrey team-mate Tom Curran (47 not out) saw England to victory with an unbroken stand of 98.

'Didn't celebrate Eid in 2003'

In the lead-up to the 2019 World Cup, we take a look back on World Cups past through the eyes of Bangladesh's former World Cup stars. Tushar Imran, who featured for Bangladesh in five Tests and 41 ODIs, last featured for the country back in 2007. The right-hander, who is the only Bangladeshi player to have reached 11,000 first-class runs, has not however been able to emulate his domestic performances in the international stage. The domestic colossus talked with The Daily Star's Nabid Yeasin about his experience of playing in the 2003 World Cup -- his only World Cup -- for Bangladesh.



TIGERS' WORLD CUP STRIPES

The Daily Star (TDS): How was your experience of being in the 2003 World Cup squad -- your first World Cup?

Tushar Imran (TI): Out of all the World Cups Bangladesh played, I think the 2003 World Cup was the most horrible one for Bangladesh. We did not play that bad in any World Cup but we could not win a single match in 2003. We actually got chances that time and we also made them count somewhat but somehow it did not happen. However, there

is a huge difference between that Bangladesh team and this one. We used to go to the World Cup with hopes of winning maybe one or two matches. There were many big teams and better teams than us. At that time we used to take the field with hopes of defeating teams like Kenya or Zimbabwe. But now Bangladesh take the field to win, no matter who the opposition are.

TDS: Although Bangladesh had a torrid World Cup campaign in 2003, you made a memorable contribution in that World Cup. You scored 48 runs against Kenya but unfortunately Bangladesh went on to lose the game. How did you feel about that?

TI: I was disappointed as I think I could have won the game

for Bangladesh. The chance was there but I could not make it count. I still regret that as winning matches was not a regular occurrence for Bangladesh at the time -- Bangladesh used to win matches with several days in between. I would feel very good if I had won that game for Bangladesh and maybe my career



would have taken a different turn after that. So I always regret not doing it.

TDS: Any other memorable World Cup experiences?

TI: I was very young at that time. I was around 20-22 years old and the people I toured with were almost all senior players. Except me, Mashrafe [Bin Mortaza] and [Mohammad] Ashraful all the other players were seniors. So there is may be one specific memory that I can recall. The day after we lost a game against Canada, it was Eid. We were supposed to go for Eid prayer but as we had lost a game against Canada we did not go for prayers. We had a team meeting around 10 in the morning. We expected that we would at least win one

or two matches but we could not win a single match and losing to team like Canada really hurt us. So that is an experience I can recall, that even on Eid we did not celebrate. We just spent the whole day in our hotel rooms.

What are your expectations regarding this Bangladesh team and how far do you think they can go?

The format now is very difficult as every team will play against each another. So I hope that Bangladesh reach the second round [semifinal] as it will be very difficult this time. Maybe there were a lot more expectations in the previous World Cups but this time it would make me very happy if Bangladesh can reach the second round.



After enjoying a brief break and then travelling to Ireland, the Bangladesh team trained on the field for the first time since their arrival at the Pembroke Cricket Club ground in Dublin. The Tigers are set to take part in a practice match against Ireland Wolves on May 5 ahead of their tri-series campaign opener against West Indies on May 7 at the Clontarf Cricket Club. From here on, each match will be a part of Bangladesh's build-up to the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup in the United Kingdom.

PHOTO: AFP