



Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammad Nabi scored a blistering 54-ball 84, featuring seven sixes and three fours, to help his side set a challenging 165-run target for Bangladesh in their T20I tri-series encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Nabi’s experience shines through

MAZHAR UDDIN

It was a perfect start from Bangladesh in the third game of the T20I tri-series when pacer Mohammad Saifuddin produced a gem of a delivery and bowled Afghanistan’s Rahmanullah Gulbaz with the first ball of the match.

The ball pitched on middle stump and swung sharply away from the right-hander, who had no clue whatsoever as the ball went on to hit timber. The Tigers held on to the momentum picked three more wickets in quick succession as Afghanistan were reeling on 40 for four at the end of the six Powerplay overs.

Saifuddin managed to continue his brilliant start and remained the only highlight for the Tigers with the ball, bowling a tight line and length that

kept the Afghan batsmen quite.

But Afghanistan proved why T20s are their favoured format and from a tough situation they managed to take complete control of the game as soon, it was raining sixes from the willows of Mohammad Nabi and Asghar Afghan.

Nabi was unbeaten on a magnificent 54-ball 84 while Afghan was dismissed for 40 as Afghanistan posted a challenging 164 for six in 20 overs.

Sixes and fours may have been the most eye-catching aspect of the latter half of Afghanistan’s innings but the calm approach of Nabi initially was crucial. He brought all his experience into play and showed that it was not just about hitting sixes and fours in the shortest format of the game.

The experienced cricketer took his time and at one point was batting

on six off 12, but he made sure to keep the scoreboard ticking with singles every now and then which released pressure from Afghan at the other end.

It did not take long for Nabi to go up a gear as he smashed the first of seven sixes against left-arm spinner Taijul Islam to start the rampage.

Although Afghan was dismissed after a crucial 79-run fifth-wicket stand, Nabi made sure to utilise his experience and time spent at the crease in brilliant fashion, helping his side to a fighting total.

He was keen to stay till the end, smashing Soumya Sarkar for 22 runs in the 18th over and went on to add 42 runs in the last three overs. It was a display of the value of experience, even in the shortest format of the game which for many is just about having a go right from the start.

# ‘We gifted the game to them’

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite a brilliant start with the ball by Bangladesh that saw Afghanistan struggling on 40 for four before the end of the Powerplay, a blistering 84-run knock from Mohammad Nabi helped them post 164 for six and set up a comfortable 25-run win over the hosts yesterday.

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan pointed to the extras -- which totalled 18 during Afghanistan’s innings -- as one of the reasons for the defeat, and admitted that the Tigers had gifted the game to their opposition after being in a position from which they could have dominated.

“We always knew that we lag behind them in terms of power but it was frustrating that we were not able to pick up wickets and they scored 106 runs in the last 10 overs. They should get credit for the way they handled the pressure and at the same time we also made mistakes as we were controlling the game pretty well.

“But I think it’s the no-ball [by Taijul Islam that negated the dismissal of Asghar Afghan] that hurt us a lot as we conceded 15-16 extra runs. We need to improve in those areas. I still don’t think we are far behind, although a 25-run loss is a big

margin. Even if they batted very well, they should not have scored more than 135 as we were unable to pick wickets at the end [after Asghar was dismissed]. We gave them that opportunity to make a comeback into the game,” Shakib told reporters after the game yesterday.

It was proven yet again that Afghanistan are a better side than Bangladesh when it comes to the shortest format, although Rashid Khan’s side also registered a thumping 224-run Test win over Bangladesh earlier this month and Shakib did not hesitate to concede that Afghanistan are a better side in T20s.

“Obviously, they are a bigger team than us as they are ranked seven and we are number 10. West Indies and Sri Lanka are above us, against whom we win and lose sometimes. As they are ranked seven, we actually find it difficult to win against them, which was the case in Dehradun [last year when they lost 3-0] and it was also proved today. At the same time, I think we also gifted them the game as I think we were in a position from where we could have grabbed the opportunity with both hands,” he said.

Shakib added that a lack of confidence and a poor mindset were the biggest reasons for Bangladesh playing below-par cricket since the World Cup.

# BCB eyeing McKenzie for full-time role

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is eyeing to rope in South African Neil McKenzie as the full-time batting coach, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury informed yesterday. McKenzie is currently working as the limited-overs batting consultant for Bangladesh.

The South African was appointed by Bangladesh in July last year and was contracted till the 2019 ICC World Cup, which ended in July.

Bangladesh finished eighth in the 10-team tournament and the BCB made drastic changes in the aftermath, deciding to part ways with head coach Steve Rhodes and bowling coach Courtney Walsh.

However, BCB were satisfied with McKenzie and decided to extend his contract. He missed the tour of Sri Lanka

immediately after the World Cup, but later joined the Tigers for the ongoing T20I tri-series.

It has been a long time since the Tigers had a batting coach in longer-version cricket and the BCB is looking forward to roping in McKenzie, but the 43-year-old is yet to decide about the new role.

“We have asked him about the role as we don’t have a lot of commitments in the Future Tours Programme with the white ball in the coming days. We are trying to rope him [McKenzie] in as our full-time batting coach but that is not finalised yet. So far, he seemed positive but we can’t say anything officially until the deal is finalised,” Nizamuddin told reporters yesterday.

McKenzie played 58 Tests, 64 ODIs and two T20Is for South Africa and worked as the batting consultant for South Africa after his retirement in 2009.

## BD-AFG SCOREBOARD

AFGHANISTAN		R/B	4s/6s	
Gurbaz b Saifuddin		0/1	0/0	
Zazai c Liton b Shakib		1/2	0/0	
Najeeb c Sabbir b Saifuddin		11/13	0/0	
Afghan c Sabbir b Saifuddin		40/37	3/2	
Zadran c Soumya b Shakib		5/7	1/0	
Nabi not out		84/54	3/7	
Gulbadin b Saifuddin		0/2	0/0	
Karim not out		5/6	0/0	
Extras: (b-8, lb-2, nb-2, w-6)		18		
Total: (For 6 wks in 20 overs)		164		
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-10, 3-19, 4-40, 5-119, 6-121.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Saifuddin	4	0	33	4
Shakib	4	1	18	2
Mustafizur	4	0	25	0
Taijul	4	0	32	0
Soumya	2	0	31	0
Mosaddek	1	0	12	0
Mahmudullah	1	0	3	0
BANGLADESH				
Bowler	O	M	R	4s/6s
Liton c Tarakai b Mujeeb			0/2	0/0
Mushfiqur b Fareed			5/3	1/0
Shakib c Rashid b Mujeeb			15/13	2/0
Mahmudullah c Tarakai b Naib			44/39	5/0
Soumya lbw b Mujeeb			0/1	0/0
Sabbir c Naib b Mujeeb			24/27	1/0
Afriz c Najibullah b Naib			16/14	2/0
Mosaddek b Rashid			12/10	1/0
Saifuddin c & b Rashid			2/3	0/0
Taijul not out			0/1	0/0
Mustafizur c sub b Fareed			15/7	2/1
Extras: (lb-3, nb-1, w-2)			6	
Total: (all out in 19.5 overs)			139	
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-11, 3-31, 4-32, 5-90, 6-95, 7-115, 8-120, 9-124, 10-139.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Mujeeb	4	0	15	4
Fareed	2.5	0	33	2
Karim	3	0	27	0
Nabi	2	0	11	0
Rashid	4	0	23	2
Naib	4	0	27	2
Result: Afghanistan won by 25 runs				
Player-of-the-match: Mohammad Nabi				

## U-18 FOOTBALL Ctg Abahani, Brothers and NoFeL thru

SPORTS REPORTER

NoFeL SC became the first team to qualify for the quarterfinals of the Walton U-18 Football Tournament after beating Sheikh Russel 2-0 in their Group D fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Piash and Abeer scored for NoFeL SC, who had held Saif SC to a goalless draw in their first match of the tournament on Friday.

Meanwhile, Brothers Union and Chittagong Abahani progressed from Group A after Brothers beat Muktiyoddha Sangsad 3-1. Chittagong Abahani had beaten Muktiyoddha 5-0 on Friday.

## Aus batting shake-up for summer Tests

AFP, Sydney

Only three Australian batsmen are certain to start the summer Test series against Pakistan, according to former skipper Ricky Ponting, with David Warner among them.

Ponting, who has been a sounding board for coach Justin Langer, unsurprisingly nominated Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne as the others. “Warner’s going to be a lock,” Ponting said, despite the opener’s miserable Ashes. “I don’t care if he gets another duck in the second innings of this Test. Marnus is an absolute lock. Smith’s a lock.”

# U-16s leave for Qatar today

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh under-16 football team will leave for Qatar today to participate in the AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers. Interestingly, the squad will be without 11 of the players who featured in last month’s SAFF U-15 Championship in India as they are reportedly over aged.

Bangladesh will compete against hosts Qatar, Yemen and Bhutan in Group E in Doha between September 18 and 22. The 11 group champions and four best runners-up teams will join the hosts in the 16-team final round, to be held in 2020.

The 11 Bangladeshi players who were found to be over aged through MRI tests were subsequently dropped from the squad, paving the way for fresh faces from the BKSP and Fortis-BFF Academy. Three players of the 2018 SAFF U-15 Championship winning squad also secured their positions again.

Only 12 players that featured in the squad for the recently concluded SAFF U-15 Championship found a place in the current 23-member team, which will face Qatar on September 18 in their campaign opener. Bangladesh finished third in the SAFF U-15 Championship after losing to Nepal and India.

Bangladesh’s British coach Robert

Ryles, who stayed back home instead of guiding the Bangladesh U-15 team in India, looks forward to using the AFC tournament as a good test for the budding footballers.

“We looked at things where they need to improve. The target we have for the players in this competition is to perform at the optimum level. We are eagerly looking forward to the challenges ahead. It will be good test for them to see where they are,” said Ryles at a press conference at the BFF house yesterday.

Bangladesh defeated Qatar 2-0 in the last edition’s qualifiers two years ago. Asked if the same could be repeated, Ryles replied, “Anything is possible. I’m optimistic but I have to be realistic as well. The competition is extremely tough.”

“This team is better than the SAFF Championship one. We have done some special training in set-pieces, counter and defence. We also have a better goalkeeper. Hopefully we will put up a positive display in Qatar,” said defender Jony Shikdar, who was a part of the SAFF U-15 Championship squad last month.

The U-16 team played three practice matches against the Mohammedan SC and Saif SC U-18 youth teams and Pioneer League outfits Uttar Club. They lost the first two matches but achieved victory in the last.



Bangladesh team’s coach Robert Ryles (C) and captain Jony Shikdar (R) field questions from reporters during a press conference at the BFF house yesterday on the eve of their departure for AFC U-16 Championship Qualifiers.

PHOTO: BFF



England pacer Stuart Broad (R) celebrates the dismissal of Australia opener Marcus Harris, who scored nine runs, during the fourth day of the fifth Ashes Test at The Oval in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# England crush Australia

AFP, LONDON



England crushed Australia by 135 runs in the fifth and final Ashes Test on Sunday to level the series at 2-2, ending their historic World Cup-winning season on a high.

Victory for the home side at the Oval means the Ashes series ends in a draw for the first time since 1972. Holders Australia retain the urn.

The tourists, chasing an unlikely 399 to win in a shade under two days, clung on late into the evening session on the fourth day before finally collapsing as the shadows lengthened in south London.

Australia were bidding to win their

first Ashes series in England since 2001 but were denied by the fired-up hosts, with paceman Jofra Archer named man of the match for his six first-innings wickets.

“A very good performance,” said England captain Joe Root. “I thought we were brilliant. To bounce back from a very difficult emotional week, to come and play like we have, the team has character in abundance.”

“This was a template of how to play moving forward. It is a step in the right direction. I am very proud of everyone’s effort throughout the summer.”

“I’ve got a couple of regrets, starting with the toss, but after that you’ve got to give credit to England, they outplayed us here,” said Australia

captain Tim Paine. “No doubt today has put a bit of a dampener on it.

“There are some mixed emotions but from where this group has come from to come to England and retain the Ashes is still a huge deal. It hadn’t been done since 2001.”

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 294 and 329

AUSTRALIA: First innings 225 and 263 (Wade 117, Marsh 24; Broad 4-62, Leach 4-49)

Result: England won by 135 runs and tied the 5-match series 2-2.

Player-of-the-match: Jofra Archer.

Player-of-the-series (England): Ben Stokes.

Player-of-the-series (Australia): Steve Smith.