



Shakib Al Hasan congratulaes Afif Hossain after the 19-year-old gave Bangladesh the desperately needed breakthrough with two wickets in an over in the T20I tri-nation series match against Afghanistan in Chattogram yesterday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Tactical gamble pays off

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram



The Bangladesh team management made a tactical change against Afghanistan in what was a dress rehearsal for the tri-nation T20I

series final at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Many expected the Tigers to tinker with their playing eleven to test their bench strength in the dead rubber with the likes of pacer Rubel Hossain and young opener Naeem Sheikh in

Instead, Bangladesh made just one change with batsman Sabbir Rahman replacing injured leg-spinner Aminul Islam, who needed three stitches to his left hand after injuring it during an impressive T20I debut against Zimbabwe in the previous game.

Obviously, the mantra of holding onto winning momentum was the reason behind not making drastic changes, but it came as a even the halfway stage, introduced his sixth surprise as Bangladesh went for four specialist bowler, Mosaddek, in the ninth over. bowlers -- pacers Mustafizur Rahman, Shafiul Islam, Mohammad Saifuddin and skipper nine overs, it seemed the play to play four options for him in the coming days.

R/B 4s/6s

Shakib Al Hasan -- with Mahmudullah Riyad, Mosaddek Hossain and Afif Hossain other bowling options.

Bangladesh made a good start after electing to field as seamers Shafiul and Saifuddin maintained a tight line and length initially, keeping Afghanistan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Hazratullah Zazai quiet.

The hosts were almost rewarded for that in the second over when Gurbaz, on just three runs, top-edged a short delivery from Shafiul and popped a regulation catch to Mahmudullah, who incredibly dropped the dolly.

Shakib introduced Mahmudullah and his off-spin in the last over of the batting Powerplay and Zazai cut loose.

over yielded 16 runs, easing the pressure on Mustafizur also leaked nine runs in his first

over and Shakib, suddenly in a dilemma before

specialist bowlers was going to be a failure. That is, until Shakib injected Afif into the attack.

Interestingly, Afif, who burst onto the scene with a five-wicket haul for the Rajshahi Kings on his T20 debut in the Bangladesh Premier League in 2016, was handed the ball for the first time since making a comeback to the national side in the ongoing tri-nation series.

The move paid off as Afif provided the first breakthrough for the Tigers, dismissing Zazai on 47. He went on to scalp another in the same over, sending Asghar Afghan back for a duck.

That swung the pendulum Bangladesh's way and Mustafizur removed Gurbaz for 29. Shakib went for the kill, trapping the dangerous Mohammad Nabi leg before on four, and He smashed two fours and a six as the Afghanistan's middle-order collapsed. They were unable to recover and posted a modest 138 for 7 in 20 overs.

Although many may raise questions about the team having a specialist bowler short in the line-up, it was the perfect platform for head coach Russell Domingo to try something With Afghanistan at 75 without loss after different in terms of tactics and could create

## Tohura brace earns draw against Aus

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh ended their AFC U-16 Women's Championship campaign with a brilliant 2-2 draw against Australia, earning their first point in the history of the final

round of the championship. Fleet-footed striker Tohura Khatun was the star for the Bangladesh team, twice giving her side the lead only to see the Young Matildas fight back.

Even though Bangladesh finished bottom of the four-team group, the draw will restore some confidence in the camp, which was shattered following defeats against Thailand [1-0] and Japan [9-0].

From the beginning of the match, Bangladesh never looked like they were playing against an opponent who are much higher in women's ranking and have drawn against Japan while thrashing Thailand 8-1. The girls in red and green, who missed a sleuth of scoring chances against Thailand and looked out of their depth against Japan, stood-toe-to toe against the Young Matildas, making up for their physical disadvantage with skill.

There were not too many chances that Bangladesh created, unlike Australia, but the two half-chances that Bangladesh created on counter-attacks were grabbed with both hands by Tohura.

However, Australia eventually found their way back into the match in the 77th minute, with Claudia Mihocic bundling home a corner kick. Two more goals came in the next three minutes at either end, with Tohura almost replicating her first goal in the following minute with another excellent finish, this time breaking the offside trap and sliding the ball past the Australia keeper, who was hesitating to commit herself to the ball.

The Bangladesh camp burst into joy, but the joy lasted only two minutes as Paige Zois's left-footed strike from the top of the box sneaked under the crossbar, evading the outstretched hands of Rupna.

Bangladesh lived a few nervy moments towards the end, evoking memories in the camp of a 3-2 defeat against Australia at this stage of the championship two years ago, but there were no late heartbreaks this time around.

The team's coach Golam Rabbani Choton was happy that his players lifted themselves from the demoralising defeats and held a much-better side to a draw.

"We are very happy because today our girls showed that they can play big tournaments. The first match was disappointing and the second one was a disaster. Today they were up against a very strong side like Australia, but they played very well," Choton said in



Tohura Khatun was the toast of her teammates after she scored both goals in a 2-2 draw against Australia in the AFC U-16 Championship in Chonburi yesterday. PHOTO: AFC

The Bangladesh No. 10 raced onto a long his post-match reaction. ball from Rituporna Chakma and found the back of the net with a powerful and precise shot over onrushing Australia goalkeeper

Miranda Templeman in the 20th minute. Chakma, who was much maligned for improved from the past," Choton said. the performances in the first two matches, redeemed herself with some assured goalkeeping to keep the Aussies at bay in

He gave credit to all the players for their effort. "Coming back from a nine-goal defeat against Japan to give this kind of performance against Australia deserves a lot of credit. The Bangladesh goalkeeper Rupna draw against Australia shows that we have

The veteran coach also heaped praise on Tohura, calling her a special talent and hoped that they could nurture her for even

#### **BD-AFG SCOREBOARD**

AFGHANISTAN Gurbaz c & b Mustafizur

Mustafizur

Zazai c Mustafizur b Afif			47/35	6/2
Afghan c Najmul b Afif			0/2	0/0
Zadran b Saifuddin			14/16	0/1
Nabi Ibw b Shakib			4/6	0/0
Gulbadin run out				
(Mahmudullah/Mushfiqur)			1/1	0/0
Shafiqullah not out			23/17	2/1
Karim c Mustafizur b Shafiul			3/4	0/0
Rashid not out			11/13	0/0
Extras: (lb-1, nb-1, w-4)			6	
Total: (For 7 wkts in 20 overs) 138				
Fall of wickets: 1-75, 2-75, 3-80, 4-88, 5-96,				
6-109, 7-114.				
Bowler	0	M	R	W
Saifuddin	4	0	23	1
Shafiul	1	0	24	1

Mosaddek BANGLADESH: Nazmul Hossain, Liton Das, Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mosaddek Hossain, Afif Hossain, Sabbir Rahman, Mohammad Saifuddin, Shafiul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman. Toss: Bangladesh elected to field. Umpires: Gazi Sohel, Masudur Rahman

TV umpire: Sharfuddoula

Match referee: Chris Broad

### BD U-23s level one-day series

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Under-23 team bounced back from their 34-run defeat in the first game by registering a five-run win (D/L method) against their Indian counterparts in the rain-interrupted second

Lucknow yesterday. Bangladesh captain Saif Hassan and teammate Mahedi Hasan made a good start after the visitors decided to bat first, adding

one-dayer at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in

52 runs for the opening wicket before the later was dismissed for 25 runs. Fardeen Hasan joined Saif to contribute a 75-run second wicket stand. Saif returned to the dressing room on a 92-ball 64,

featuring four boundaries and a six. After 34 overs of Bangladesh's innings, rain stooped the match and when it resumed, it was reduced a 36-over affair. Bangladesh posted 149 for two in 36 overs and as per the D/L method, the target was set at 218 for the home team.

In reply, India made a solid start through a 72-run opening stand between Yashasvi Bhupendra and Madhav Kaushik. Br Sharath and Priyam Garg then hit half centuries but their efforts were not enough for the home side to achieve the target as they finished their 36-over quota for 212 runs with three wickets in hand.

Abu Hider and Sumon Khan claimed two wickets each but it was skipper Saif who was more economical, giving away just 22 runs in seven overs, to help his side level the series after contributing with the

The third match of the five-match series will take place at the same venue tomorrow. SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh U-23s: 149 for 2 in 36 overs (Saif 64, Fardeen 47 not out, Mahedi 25, Yasir 7 not out; Shokeen 2-39)

India U-23s: 212 for 7 in 36 overs (Sharath 55, Priyan 53, Yashasvi 34, Madhav 34; Sumon 2-44, Hider 2-45, Tanvir 1-49) Result: Bangladesh U-23s won by five runs



A snapshot of the action at the Sylhet District Stadium in the upazila final of the Bangamata Gold Cup between Jointapur and Gopalganj. Gopalganj finished as champions.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

### SHORT CORNER

### **Rohit eyes** Kohli's spot

After taking a 1-0 lead in the series, India will take on South Africa in the 3rd T20I at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru today.

The battle of T20I dominance between India captainVirat Kohli and vice-captain Rohit Sharma will continue as the two Indian batting greats are in a neck-and-neck battle



to be on top of the list of leading run-scorers' in T20I cricket, with Kohli edging past Rohit to be on the top of the pile with his match winning 72 not out in the 2nd T20I against the Proteas earlier this week in Mohali.

However, Kohli's reign could come to an abrupt end on Sunday if Sharma regains the top spot when he comes out to bat. The righthanded batsman is just eight runs away from Kohli's feat, and could take the top spot. Kohli has 2,441 runs in T20I cricket, while Sharma has 2,434.

Since, Sharma will open the innings for India, he will come out to bat before Kohli, and hence, could easily surpass his skipper with a couple of boundaries. --Agencies



#### **Pakistan leave** out Hafeez

Pakistan left out veteran batsman Mohammad Hafeez for next week's series start against Sri Lanka, who are touring the country for the first time since they were targeted in a terror attack.

Hafeez, 38, was part of Pakistan's fifth-placed World Cup squad but has been kept off due to his commitments in the Caribbean Premier League, said head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq.

"He is not out of our plans," Misbah added. "Whoever is effective for the team will be included in the future.'

Fellow World Cup team members Hasan Ali and fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi have also been left out due to poor fitness.

Sarfaraz Ahmed will lead the team in both the one-day and T20 matches.

Middle order batsman Iftikhar Ahmed was recalled to the one-day squad after a four-year absence.

Cricket tours were suspended in Pakistan for six years after a 2009 assault on the Sri Lankan team bus that killed half a dozen police officers and wounded six members of the visiting team.

Sri Lanka agreed to the current tour after a favourable security assessment.

Three one-day internationals will be played in Karachi, the first on September 27.

Another three Twenty20 matches will be played in Lahore in early October.

**SQUAD** Sarfaraz Ahmed, Babar Azam, Abid Ali, Asif Ali, Fakhar Zaman, Imamul-Haq, Haris Sohail, Mohammad Hasnain, Iftikhar Ali, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan, Shadab Khan, Mohammad Nawaz, Usman Shinwari, Wahab

#### Moeen on break from Tests

England all-rounder Moeen Ali has taken a break from Test cricket after losing out on a central contract for the longest format for the 2019-20 season following a dismal summer.

The 32-year-old off-spinner and left-handed batsman lost his place in England's World Cup winning team before being dropped from the Test side after the defeat in the first Ashes Test.

"It's just to get away from it a little bit. I feel like I want to enjoy my batting and this will give me a bit of a break," Moeen told ESPNcricinfo. I want to spend some time with the



"I've been playing for England for five years and it's been quite tough. The intensity is obviously higher in Test cricket so this is just to give me a break and then we will see what happens after that.

T'm not ruling out playing Test cricket in the future."