



Bangladesh 0 – 2 Qatar
Yousuf Abdurisag 28'
Karim Boudiaf 90+2'

The spirited Bangladesh created some good scoring chances, such as when Mohammad Ibrahim exposed a strong Qatar defence during yesterday's 2022 World Cup Qualifier match, to leave the field holding their heads high in front of jam-packed (Inset) Bangabandhu National Stadium despite the 2-0 defeat.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Defeated, but not conquered

ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh rose above their usual standards and displayed uncharacteristic valour their 2022 World Cup Qualifier match against Qatar before going down 2-0 to the Asian champions at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The scoreline may suggest a meek surrender but the actual story on a wet pitch was a different one as the men in red and green gave their much superior opponents a run for their money and a draw would not have been an outlandish result, given the competitiveness showed by the hosts.

The five changes to the starting eleven that was held to a disappointing draw by India in their last match was evidence enough of how eager Qatar were to correct course but they faced stiff resistance from Bangladesh, who formed two defensive lines to thwart Qatar's attack on the rain-soaked pitch.

The game was expected to be played in Bangladesh's half and that is how it panned out, but unexpectedly Bangladesh showed courage and wherewithal to attack on the break from the very beginning, causing hairy moments for a team ranked 125 places above them.

Nabib Newaj Jibon was presented a nice ball on the left flank in the fourth minute and the lone striker entered Qatar's danger area before cutting it back for Mohammad Ibrahim, but the left winger could not hold the ball. Four minutes later, Jibon once again darted into the deep to put a low cross for Ibrahim but defender Boualem Khokukhi cleared it for a corner.

Qatar coach Felix Suarez had earlier expressed concerns over Bangladesh's Raihan Hasan unleashing the long throw-in, and he wreaked havoc in the Qatar defence in the first half with seven such throw-ins, but the hosts could not capitalise.

Qatar striker Almoes Ali Abdullah, who struck a treble against Afghanistan, was given hardly any space. The prolific striker twice drove off target in the first half while defender Abdelkarim Hasan saw his shot sail over the far post in the 22nd minute.

In the 25th minute, Qatar almost struck their own post when Salam Al Hajri's diagonal back pass to goalkeeper Saad Al Sheed was desperately parried away for a corner.

The scare survived, Qatar launched an attack through the right flank with Abdel Aziz whipping a cross inside the Bangladesh box and Yousuf Abdurisag making space and finding the back of

the net with a curving shot in the 28th minute.

Not disheartened, Bangladesh then created two good chances, but to no avail. Yeasin's flick off Raihan's long throw-in was saved at the cost of a corner, before Jibon and Sohel Rana saw their successive attempts following a Jamal Bhuiyan corner thwarted by two goalline saves.

After resumption, the boys in red and green were more impressive than their Qatar counterparts, who were struggling on the slippery surface and Bangladesh created a couple more chances. Yeasin saw his header go straight to the goalkeeper in the 71st minute while Jamal's powerful left-footer, with the goalkeeper not in the right position, was headed clear by defender Bassam Husham.

Substitute Mahbubur Rahman Sufil saw his placing shot tipped over the crosspiece in the 75th minute, two minutes before Biplu Ahmed narrowly missed the target from inside the box off an Ibrahim cutback.

With only a minute of the three-minute added time left, Bangladesh conceded the second goal as the unmarked Karim Boudiaf sealed the win from a goal-mouth melee.

That did not prevent the hosts walking off with heads held high as the home crowd applauded a worthy and memorable effort.

Four overs of leg spin, and 140kph quickies

The seventh version of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the premium T20 competition in the country, has already been dubbed as a special BPL. Deviating from the core nature of the franchise-based tournament, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to arrange the tourney on its own steam after failing to resolve conflicts with the former franchises. The BCB are also set to run the tournament in the name of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to commemorate the his 100th birth anniversary. Those were not the end of the changes; plenty of new innovations are in the offing. The BPL governing council (GC) was exuberant about the enrolment of around 400 foreign cricketers. BCB director Mahbub Anam, flanked by GC chairman Sheikh Sohel and BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus, disclosed some unique initiatives for the upcoming tournament while talking to reporters at Mirpur yesterday, after a meeting with the representatives of four interested sponsors. They however informed that they were yet to fix a date for the draft, which they said would be determined in the next GC meeting. The GC also said that the tournament may be deferred by seven to 10 days from the earlier announced kick-off date of December 6. Sohel assured that there will be no shortage of colour in the opening ceremony of the special BPL. The unique initiatives are as below:

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**It will imitate the model of the Big Bash League.
**Every team will get a foreign coach as well as foreign physio and trainer.

Local coaches can only play the role of assistant coach. The intention is to bring balance in the team's strength. And the GC has already gotten a huge response from foreign coaches.
**There will be a team director for every team and they will be selected from the BCB directors.

**As per the desire of the national team management, the GC will make it mandatory for the team to include a leg-spinner in the playing eleven and a team must ensure that the leg-spinner gets a chance to bowl four overs.
**The GC also set a target to bring fast bowlers from abroad who can bowl above 140mph.
** A sponsor will be able to hire any additional foreign player outside the draft.
** The company that will finally get the rights of sponsoring the team will enjoy benefits similar to those received by the national team's sponsor.

Bangladesh A win a thriller

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Bangladesh A prevailed in a last-ball thriller to draw level in the three-match one-day series against Sri Lanka A, winning the second match by one wicket at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

After electing to field, Bangladesh restricted Sri Lanka to a modest 226 for nine and seemed on course for a comfortable win, with 37 runs required off 41 balls with five wickets in hand. A flurry of late wickets, however, left Bangladesh needing nine runs from the last over with bowlers Sunzamul Islam and Ebadot Hossain at the crease.

Sunzamul hit a boundary off the third ball, a single and a wide then helped Bangladesh's cause but Ebadot was dismissed off the fifth ball. Sunzamul had however crossed over during the catch and knocked away the last ball for a single to deliver the nail-biting win.

Before the late drama, Bangladesh were quite calm in the early stages of the chase with skipper Mohammad Mithun hitting 52 and Mohammad Naim providing the impetus with a 59-ball 68.

Earlier, Kamindu Mendis's 67-ball 61 and a 62-ball 52 from Priyamal Perera powered Sri Lanka. Ebadot, Sunzamul and Abu Hider took two wickets each.



Pakistan tour is a message for the whole world, and especially a message for future Sri Lankans. This has gone very smoothly. Us playing here will encourage so many other countries to also to be here.

RUMESH RATNAYAKE
SRI LANKA COACH

Agarwal, Kohli give India early edge

AFP, Pune



Mayank Agarwal hit his second century in successive matches on the opening day of the second Test against South Africa Thursday and said his side should aim for a 500-run first innings.

The opener, who made a double century in India's opening Test win, scored 108 after the hosts elected to bat.

India were 273-3 when bad light forced an early end to play, with skipper Virat Kohli unbeaten on 63 and vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on 18.

Kohli and Rahane put on 75 runs for the fourth wicket to thwart South Africa's determined bowlers who kept them under pressure as the gloom crept in.

Agarwal, 28, said he was thrilled with his

performance.

"The team is in a good position, winning the toss, batting first and with one batsman short, it's a good thing to make runs... 450-500 would be nice," Agarwal said.

"Try and get big runs in the first innings... (that) could help us in case we don't want to bat again. It could really put pressure on the South Africans."

Kohli, leading the Test side for the 50th time, reached his half-century with a boundary off fast bowler Vernon Philander.

But Agarwal took the lead role despite being hit on the helmet from a bouncer by debutant paceman Anrich Nortje. He went on to hit Nortje for three glorious off drives in one over before lunch.

The right-handed batsman put on 138 runs for the second wicket with Cheteshwar Pujara, who made 58, to steady the innings after the fall of Rohit Sharma early in the day.

He was eventually caught in the slips by South African captain Faf du Plessis -- one of fast bowler Kagiso Rabada's three wickets for the day.

"There were periods where I was getting boundaries very easily, there were periods where they bowled very good line and lengths and were testing the bouncer as well," said Agarwal, who is playing his sixth Test since making his debut last year.

Rabada also claimed Sharma, who edged the ball into the gloves of wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock for 14 in the 10th over.

That was a disappointment for Sharma, who hit twin centuries in his first run as Test opener in Visakhapatnam where India took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

SCORES IN BRIEF
INDIA: First innings 273 for 3 (Agarwal 108, Pujara 58, Kohli 63 not out, Rahane 18 not out; Rabada 3-48)
SOUTH AFRICA: Du Plessis (capt), Markram, Elgar, De Bruyn, Bavuma, De Kock, Philander, Muthusamy, Maharaj, Nortje, Rabada.



MAYANK AGARWAL... 108

Riyad shines in gloomy opening day

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The opening-day fixtures of the 21st edition of the National Cricket League (NCL) were all marred due to rain yesterday. The first day's play between Barishal Division and Sylhet Division in Rajshahi and Khulna Division's encounter against Rangpur Division in Khulna were completely washed out due to rain and a wet outfield.

The two other matches that took place in Dhaka were also interrupted by rain. All-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad shone for Dhaka Metro as they held Chattogram Division to 147 for three in the 51 overs played



On his return to competitive cricket after more than two months, Bangladesh and Chattogram Division opener Tamim Iqbal (L) scored 30 before losing a battle with his national teammate and Dhaka Metro all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad on the first day of their NCL match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

51.5 overs by defending champions Rajshahi Division before rain had the final say.

It was the duel between two national stars -- opener Tamim Iqbal and all-rounder Mahmudullah -- that was the highlight of the day. Tamim, playing competitive cricket after a

break of more than two months, featured for Chattogram. The star left-handed opener, who had a torrid time during Bangladesh's Sri Lanka tour last July, was nowhere near his best. While his partner Sadiqur Rahman played comfortably to score a 69-ball 51 before being dismissed in the 22nd over off a Mahmudullah delivery, a shaky Tamim at the other end bided his time and could not get into the groove.

Tamim could only manage 30 off 105 balls at a strike rate of 28.57 before national teammate Mahmudullah ended his misery. Tamim, attempting to break the shackles with a pull miscued the shot and Mahmudullah completed

an easy catch as the ball got the elevation and not the distance. Mahmudullah also took the other wicket that fell on the day, returning impressive figures of three for 40 in 18 overs.

In Fatullah, two other national players shone with the ball. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam and pacer Shafiu Islam accounted for all seven Dhaka wickets as Rajshahi ended the day in control. While Taijul scalped four wickets for 55 in 20.5 overs, Shafiu ended the day with figures of three for 40 in 17 overs. For Dhaka, opener Rony Talukdar -- who featured in one T20I for Bangladesh in 2015 -- scored a team high of 63 from 114 balls.

SCORES IN BRIEF

CHATTOGRAM V DHAKA METRO
CHATTOGRAM: First innings 147 for 3 (Tamim 30, Sadiqur 51, Pinak 30 not out; Mahmudullah 3-40)
DHAKA V RAJSHAH
DHAKA: First innings 143 for 7 (Rony 63, Joyraz 35; Shafiu 3-40, Taijul 4-55)

at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. In the other game in Fatullah, Dhaka Division were reduced to 143 for seven in