



Bangladesh players celebrate winning the title of the Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi Tournament following a thrilling 34-28 points victory over Kenya in the final at the Volleyball Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh lift Bangabandhu Cup kabaddi title

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh came from behind to clinch the title of Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi Tournament with a 34-28 win over Kenya in the final at the National Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh got off to a fine start to earn two quick points from Kenya, but the African champions soon grew in confidence and turned the tables.

In face of resolute pressure, the men in red and green made some

mistakes to give the edge to Kenya, who came here with a couple of players playing in the Indian Pro-Kabaddi League. The visitors took a comfortable 18-10 lead in the first half, thanks to their excellent athletic display and superior build.

Kenya, at that point, were looking to dash the hopes of the hosts in the five-nation tournament, where world powers such as India, Iran, Pakistan, South Korea and Argentina were not playing.

However, buoyed by a pep talk

from their Indian coach Saju Ram Gayet, Bangladesh players used their experience and came back strongly in the second half.

With the spectators cheering on the home side, Kenya failed to carry their momentum as Bangladesh grew stronger and stronger, with Arduzzaman, Tuhin Tarifer and Monirul Islam producing some valuable points.

"Despite trailing in the first half, I was confident of overcoming Kenya and I succeeded in every raid. It was a tournament of teams

from three continents and we are the champions after beating all of the opponents," said captain Tuhin, who was adjudged the player of the tournament.

Arduzzaman was named player of the final while Monirul was adjudged as the best catcher.

Coach Gayet said, "We became champions as the best team of the tournament. I have belief in the boys who paid it back by performing well in the second half. I believe Bangladesh will get back its past glory in kabaddi."

An 'inevitable collapse'

EKUSH TAPADER



Abysmal failure in all three departments -- batting, bowling and especially fielding -- has come to the fore more vividly than ever during Bangladesh's recently-concluded New Zealand tour. Bangladesh were whitewashed in both T20Is and ODIs. And the thumping losses were only a reflection of Bangladesh's failure as a unit.

The recent tour to New Zealand only saw the Kiwis extend their home winning streak to 32-0 across formats against the Tigers. And according to former national skipper Aminul Islam, such dire plight of Bangladesh cricket was inevitable.

"This was inevitable. The main reason is lack of honesty. The way domestic cricket has been criminalised in the last few years, was just waiting for when the collapse was going to take place," wrote a seemingly aggrieved Aminul on his personal Facebook page yesterday.

"A team within a team. The Big five versus the rest. From what can be ascertained from people's words, the rest of the players seem like second-class citizens. Everyone is running after individual stars, leaving the team aside. Can't find the Bangladesh team," the status added.

When Aminul, who now lives in Melbourne, Australia, was contacted over phone by The Daily Star for an elaboration on such a reaction, all that came up was nothing new but still horrifying and nerve-racking for the future of Bangladesh cricket.

"There needs to be a certain type of trust surrounding a player that he can advance his career if he plays well [in domestic cricket]. But that does not happen. Rather we hear that there are certain clubs who win a game even before the match gets underway," Aminul said.

"We see many things through newspaper and media that matches at this level are not being conducted clearly. I think these are reasons behind such a harsh plight of our domestic cricket. And that's why I said that a collapse was inevitable," the former Bangladesh captain explained.

Allegations of widespread corruption in lower-tier cricket tournaments have

been a recurring occurrence in the past few years which only came to the fore after a grave scandal but only to be soon forgotten and being repeated relentlessly like a vicious cycle.

"Sometimes the clubs have a different agenda. All they are concerned about is becoming champions and they only look to increase the number of councillors. And when such things are injected in cricket, we do not get the actual performances from players," added Aminul.

According to the Aminul, who currently works as a development manager at ICC Asia, media is also to be blamed for such a dire state of the country's cricket.

"After such losses [Test series defeat against West Indies at home and T20I and ODI series loss against New Zealand], we [media] are taking interviews of some star players about what is going on in their



lives or what they are saying.

"We are not talking about the cricketing issues like our temperament, technique, fitness, experience and application. All these cricketing issues are getting covered under the rug while we are focusing more on the lifestyle and thoughts of other big cricketing stars," said Aminul.

What Aminul said is nothing new. But will these issues be finally heard by the concerned officials who can take a step to change the course of things or will the rot at the root of Bangladesh cricket still continue to spread like it has been for years?

Focus shifts to club football

AFP, Paris

RB Leipzig hope to capitalise on the absence of Robert Lewandowski in a top-of-the-table clash against Bayern Munich, while title rivals Paris Saint-Germain and Lille face off in France and there's an all-Basque Copa del Rey final... almost a year later than planned. Here are some of the standout action in Europe this weekend:

BAYERN FACE LEIPZIG TEST

Bundesliga leaders Bayern, without the injured Lewandowski, visit second-placed Leipzig at the start of a spell which could define the European champions' season.

The Bavarian giants sit four points clear of their opponents with eight league matches remaining as they bid for a ninth straight Bundesliga title.

Bayern are unbeaten in six matches against Leipzig, although four of those games were drawn.

But Hansi Flick's men may also have one eye on Wednesday's Champions League quarter-final first leg against Paris Saint-Germain at the Allianz Arena.

Leipzig are still in the running for a domestic double, having also reached the German Cup semi-finals.

TOP TWO COLLIDE IN FRANCE: Lille's shock loss at Nimes before the international break allowed PSG to retake top spot on goal difference, but Christophe Galtier's side will look to wrest the advantage back in the capital as they target a first Ligue 1 crown since 2011.

Mauricio Pochettino could hand Neymar a first start in almost two months following his recovery from a thigh injury. The PSG boss has the added bonus of a fresh South American contingent after CONMEBOL postponed March's World Cup qualifiers.

That is in stark contrast to Kylian Mbappe who featured in all three France matches, including Wednesday's 1-0 victory in Sarajevo on the way back from the long trip to Kazakhstan.

Burak Yilmaz was in fine form for Turkey, scoring four times in three games, and is Lille's joint-top scorer on nine goals this season alongside Canadian international Jonathan David.

ATLETICO ENTER HOME STRAIGHT: Luis Suarez hit his 500th career goal in last month's narrow win over Alaves to keep Atletico four points clear of his former club Barcelona heading into the final 10 games of the campaign.

The Uruguayan's 19 goals in La Liga are second only to Lionel Messi (23) this season and more than double that of his team-mate Marcos Llorente, Atletico's second leading scorer with nine.

With their Champions League dreams extinguished by Chelsea, Diego Simeone's side have just one remaining goal -- to hold

off Barca and Real Madrid and repeat their 2013/14 title triumph.

Sevilla's 55 points at this stage is the club's second most ever, two shy of their tally from the 2016/17 season. They too were knocked out of Europe's top club competition in the last 16 but look a solid bet to return with a 10-point cushion over Real Sociedad.

LONG-AWAITED CUP FINAL BASQUE DERBY: The 2020 Copa del Rey final, which was originally scheduled for last April and saw its semi-finals played before the first coronavirus lockdown in Spain, sees the Basque rivals face off in Seville.

The winners will only hold the trophy for two weeks before the 2021 final, though, also at La Cartuja.

But Bilbao will be hoping for a golden fortnight, with Marcelino's side also in this season's showpiece against Barcelona.

Saturday's match will be the first ever



Cup final Basque derby.

Bilbao have won the tournament 23 times, second only to Barca, while Sociedad have lifted the trophy twice.

DESPERATION ON BOTH SIDES OF TURIN DIVIDE: As Juventus attempt to stay in touch with Serie A leaders Inter Milan, city rivals Torino are in a fight of their own against relegation having won just four times all season.

Juve's pursuit of a 10th successive Italian title sustained another heavy blow with defeat by Benevento last time out leaving Andrea Pirlo's team 10 points off the pace.

However, they have prevailed on 10 of their past 11 visits to Torino, currently in 17th place, and lost just one of the last 29 top-flight meetings between the two sides.



Gold winners on the second day of the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games yesterday (L-R) included Farid Mia of Bangladesh Army in marathon, Chattogram DSA's Rakibul Islam in cycling's 30km individual time trial and Mahfuz Hasan of Bangladesh Army in hammer throw. (Bottom) Ansar's Thuiyenu Marma scored a staggering 10 goals in a 17-0 win against Khulna.

PHOTO: BOA



Unheralded Yousuf shoots to glory

SPORTS REPORTER

Shooter Yousuf Ali proved the biggest surprise on the second day of the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games as the unheralded shooter from Bangladesh Army struck gold in the 10m air rifle event at Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation Complex in Gulshan yesterday.

Yousuf, who entered to the final round as the fifth qualifier in his first-ever 10m air rifle competition, beat the experienced Risalatul Islam by scoring 254.4 while Risalatul made 254.1, leaving Commonwealth Games double-silver medallist Abdullah Hel Baki (222.8) satisfied with a bronze medal.

"I switched to the 10m air rifle event just three months ago because my coach Jalal Uddin brought me into this event from the 50m three position and prone events," said 28-year-old Yousuf, who started his journey in shooting in December 2014, seven years after his enrolment in the Bangladesh Army.

"I never thought that I would win the gold but I had confidence of fighting against Baki and Shovon Chowdhury after competing against them in the 50m three position event," Yousuf said. "I always thought of putting up good performances although I faced some problems with my oldest model air gun during the competition."

In the 10m men's junior event, Arnab Sharar Ladif of Bangladesh

Navy grabbed gold while Tamjid Bin Alam and Sakibul Alam of Bangladesh Army won silver and bronze respectively.

Amira Hamid of Gulshan Shooting Club grabbed gold medal in women's 50m prone event while Mayeda Mumtahina and Toufika Sultana Rojoni of Bangladesh Army won silver and bronze medals respectively.



UNSTOPPABLE THUIYENU SCORES 10 IN 17-0 WIN: Thuiyenu Marma slotted 10 goals to power Bangladesh Ansar & VDP to an overwhelming 17-0 win over Khulna District in the women's football event at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

The triumph ensured a semifinal berth for Ansar & VDP as group A runners-up, while Rajshahi became that group's champions.

"Thuiyenu had been in the BFF Women's U-14 camp for two months in Jashore before the coronavirus forced the camp to be suspended. She is a genuine striker who was picked from JFA Cup in

2018," said national women's team coach Golam Rabbani Choton.

WRESTLER BILLAL CONCLUDES 15-YEARS OF SUCCESS WITH GOLD: Unparalleled wrestler Billal Hossain of BGB ended a long 15-year career yesterday, adding another feather to his crown when he won gold in 120kg category at Sheikh Russel Roller Skating Complex.

Billal, who announced his retirement ahead of the Games, won gold in the last 11 national wrestling championships since 2004.

FARID NARROWLY WINS MARATHON GOLD: With the Bangabandhu National Stadium being cleaned up following the opening ceremony on Thursday, the athletics events got underway at the Army Stadium in Banani with Armyman Farid Mia grabbing the first gold medal in athletics in a never-wracking marathon. Farid took 2:46:38 hours, just two seconds less than his teammate Firoz Khan, who won silver.

Later at the BNS, national record holder Ritu Akter and former national holder Umme Hafsa Rumki tied in the high jump after both cleared 1.71 meters before holder Ritu was declared the gold winner.

RAKIBUL'S SURPRISE IN CYCLING: Cyclist Rakibul Islam of Chattogram DSA surprised all and sundry to win a gold medal in Individual Road Time Trial while the silver and bronze went to Adnan Rahman of Dinajpur and Ripon Biswas of BGB respectively.

Ronaldo's armband fetches 64k euros

AFP, Belgrade

The captain's armband that Cristiano Ronaldo flung to the ground in disgust after Portugal were denied an injury-time winner against Serbia was sold at a charity auction for 64,000 euros to an anonymous bidder.

With seconds to go while the score in the 2022 World Cup qualifier was 2-2 in Belgrade, Ronaldo thought he had netted the crucial goal, when the ball appeared to cross the goaline before Stefan



Mitrovic cleared.

But without video technology in use, the goal was not awarded.

A fuming Ronaldo received a yellow card for his protests and at the final whistle, as he stormed from the pitch, he threw his captain's armband to the ground.

Djordje Vukicevic, a local fireman who was deployed at the stadium, picked it up and immediately contacted a regional sports channel with the idea of auctioning it for charity.

Vukicevic told AFP on Tuesday that he suggested raising funds required to treat a six-month-old baby, Gavrilko Djurdjevic, who suffers from a rare disease.

The infant is battling spinal muscular atrophy, a disease which affects about one in 10,000 births, and results in death or the need for permanent ventilation by the age of two in 90 percent of cases.