

MABIA gets lighter and stronger

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's most renowned weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta bettered her national records in the in the 64kg weightlifting category of the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games despite sustaining an injury on her left elbow at the Mymensingh Gymnasium yesterday.

The two-time SA Games gold medallist lifted 80 kilos in snatch and 101 kilos in clean & jerk to win the gold with a total weight of 181 kilos. That feat meant she set three new records by eclipsing her previous records of 79 kilos in snatch and 100 kilos in clean & jerk as well as the total weight. Her previous record was during the Inter-Services Weightlifting Championships in 2018.

Mabia had won gold medal in the 2019 SA Games in Nepal in 74kg category lifting a total of 185 kilos - 80 kilos in snatch and 105 kilos in clean & jerk but she shed 12 kilos of weight since then to get back to her favourite category where she had won her first gold medal in SA Games.

Interestingly, all three of her achievements took place on the seventh day of the month - the first one on February 7 in 2016, the second one on December 7 in 2019 and the latest one on April 7, 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS



- SA Games gold medallists Karateka Humaira Akter Antara and Marzan Akter Priya grabbed gold medals in Karate in their respective categories in Bandarban.
- Weightlifting produced six more records on the third day of the competition to take the total records tally to 14.
- Bangladesh Army clinched gold in men's football event after beating Sylhet 2-0 in the final at the Shaheed Dharendra Nath Stadium in Cumilla while BKSP won bronze following a massive 8-0 win over Sathkira DSA.
- Bristi Khatun and Fatema Begum of Bangladesh Army bagged gold medals in women's doubles event of badminton beating their respective rivals of Bangladesh Ansar.
- Bangladesh Ansar became champions in both men's and women's roll ball events.
- Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Army moved into Friday's final of the hockey event after beating Bangladesh Air Force 2-1 and Bangladesh Police 1-0 in their semifinals respectively.
- Army and Navy also advanced to the basketball final after beating Bangladesh Air Force 70-66 and Rajshahi district 116-56 respectively.

"Seven is a lucky day for me and I did not want to waste the opportunity. I set my target to set new record in clean and Jerk but it happened in all three sections," Mabia told The Daily Star over phone while taking treatment on the injured elbow at the Mymensingh Medical College.

"I had a previous pain on the right wrist. May be I gave too much stress on the injured hand to lessen the impact on the other hand. The doctor advised me to have a plaster on the elbow but I didn't do it because I don't want to miss this month's qualification competition for the Tokyo Olympics. If everything goes well amid the lockdown, I will fly for Uzbekistan on April 19," said Mabia.

"After winning the SA Games gold in 2016, I was forced to switch to 74kg category to cure the wrist pain, which I could not heal despite spending Tk 3 lakh. Then I sustained another injury in 2019 SA Games and spent more money. It is not possible for me to spend all the money I was given for winning gold medals as I also have to think of my future," said the 21-year-old.

Like Mabia, Shakayet Hossain Pranto of Bangladesh Ansar produced records in both snatch and clean & jerk to win gold in men's 89kg category after lifting overall 273 kilos - 124 kilos in snatch and 149 kilos in clean & jerk.



BCB sticks to winning formula for U-19s

MAZHAR UDDIN



Proper execution of a long-term plan from the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) game development committee, led by former captain and BCB director Khaled Mahmud, played a vital role as the Bangladesh Under-19 team tasted World Cup glory in early 2020.

The Under-19 World Cup victory raised the benchmark for the next generation and gave Bangladesh recognition as a competitive unit from the cricketing world.

One of the factors in the long-term plan was an emphasis on age-group selectors to nurture and hone specific skills among cricketers during training camps.

Another aspect that worked immensely in Akbar Ali and his troops' favour was the number of matches that the young Tigers played as a unit against tough opponents in different conditions ahead of the start of the World Cup in South Africa. The team won 22 of the 31 matches played in England, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh between September 2018 and November 2019.

The game development committee had chalked out similar plans for the upcoming ICC Under-19 World Cup, which will be held in the West Indies next year. However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country March last year halted proceedings.

Since last year, the new batch of cricketers that make up the Bangladesh Under-19 team have undergone 110 days of intensive training under head coach Naveed Nawaz. Nawaz has been working alongside strength and conditioning coach Richard Stonier, who was part of the U-19 World Cup-winning staff, and local coaches Talha Jubair, Mehrab Hossain Opee and Mohammad Selim.

The U-19 team will begin preparations for the upcoming Under-19 World Cup by facing off against their Pakistani counterparts, who are scheduled to arrive on April 17 and take part in a four-day and game and five youth ODIs.

"We are world champions so we need to have better preparation. I don't want to say that we won the World Cup by fluke and I

HIGHLIGHTS

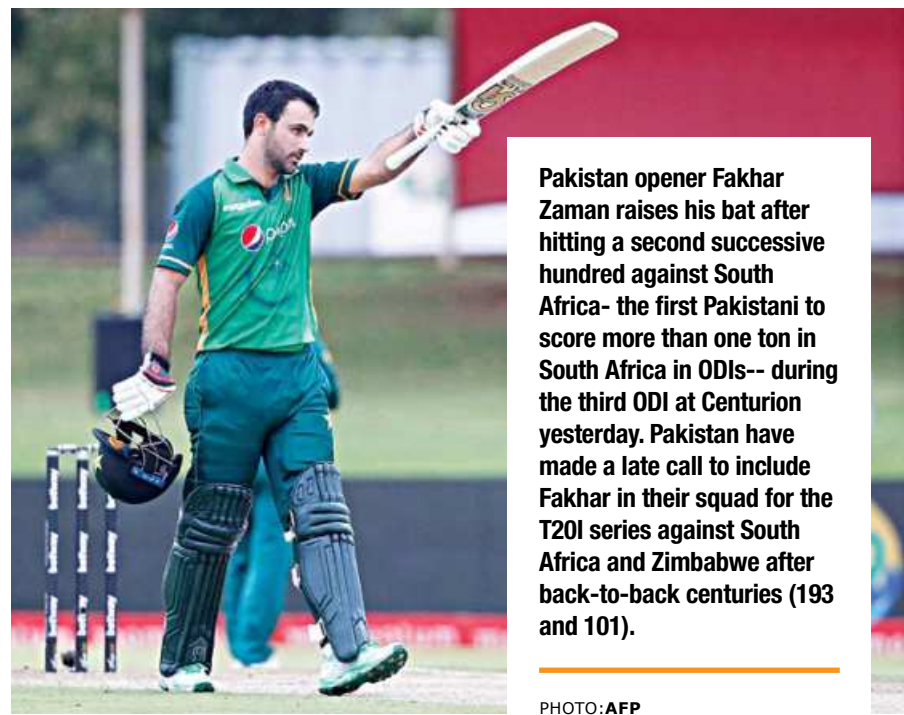
- April-May, 2021- Five-match Youth ODI home series against Pakistan.
 - May-June, 2021: Away series against Afghanistan
 - August, 2021: Bangladesh Under-19s team will travel to England to play a tri-nation series involving England and Australia
 - September-October, 2021: Bangladesh Under-19s to tour Pakistan.
 - November, 2021: Bangladesh Under-19s to play tri-nation home series involving India and Afghanistan.
- The ICC Under-19 World Cup takes place in the West Indies next year. Bangladesh will conduct a short training camp in West Indies ahead of event and will also play few warm up matches.

want to prove that. So the upcoming series against Pakistan is very important and our boys will be able to prepare themselves well. The upcoming Pakistan series will be the first series for this new batch so I am looking forward to it," Khaled Mahmud said.

The BCB's game development committee is also committed to arranging at least 25 matches in different conditions ahead of the Under-19 team before the World Cup.

The Under-19 Asia Cup, which was scheduled for November last year in UAE and postponed due to the pandemic, is also expected to take place this year. That will add more matches to the Tigers' preparation ahead of the World Cup.

"Despite the pandemic, we can say that Bangladesh are among the first few teams who have already started preparing for the upcoming Under-19 World Cup. We are planning to play a lot of matches as we did before ahead of the World Cup in the West Indies. We are emphasising on playing in different conditions and would like Bangladesh to conduct a short training camp in the West Indies ahead of the World Cup campaign. We will also try to arrange a few warm-up matches and official warm-up matches before the tournament begins," said BCB game development manager Emam Kayser.



Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman raises his bat after hitting a second successive hundred against South Africa- the first Pakistani to score more than one ton in South Africa in ODIs-- during the third ODI at Centurion yesterday. Pakistan have made a late call to include Fakhar in their squad for the T20I series against South Africa and Zimbabwe after back-to-back centuries (193 and 101).

PHOTO: AFP

AFC CUP

Abahani to face Eagles

SPORTS REPORTER

Six-time Bangladesh Premier League champions Abahani will face Eagles Club of Maldives in the Preliminary Round 2 of the AFC Cup after the Maldivian outfit handed a 2-0 defeat to Thimphu City of Bhutan in a Preliminary Round 1 match in Male yesterday.

Abahani are supposed to host Eagles Club in Dhaka on April 14 even though the fate of that match hangs in the balance due to the nationwide lockdown imposed from Monday. If that match takes place and Abahani win, they will play in the playoff round against the winners of the match between Bengaluru FC Nepal Army, the latter beating Sri Lankan Police yesterday.

"We have already informed the AFC about the government's decision of lockdown which necessitates foreigners to follow a 14-day quarantine period. Abahani also sent a letter to the AFC informing of their inability to host their opponents during the lockdown. We are still waiting for a reply from the AFC," said BFF competition manager Zaber Bin Taher Ansari.

IPL set to roll even as pandemic worsens

REUTERS, MUMBAI



The Indian Premier League is not only one of the world's most lucrative annual sporting properties but also among the most durable, with not even the lengthening shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic apparently able to stop the Twenty20 juggernaut.

Royal Challengers Bangalore all-rounder Daniel Sams has tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of the cash-rich tournament, which begins on Friday. The 28-year-old Australian is the third player to test positive inside the IPL's bio-secure bubbles after Delhi Capitals spinner Axar Patel and Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Nitish Rana.

Sams' Bangalore team mate Devdutt Padikkal tested positive before he joined up with the squad, while Mumbai Indians scout and wicketkeeping consultant Kiran More is isolating after

contracting the virus.

Last year's delayed tournament was shifted to the United Arab Emirates but the 14th edition returns to India, where the coronavirus situation has worsened significantly in recent weeks.

The surge in new cases could yet scupper plans to host the tournament in bio-secure bubbles at six venues across the country, starting on Friday in Chennai and climaxing at the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad on May 30.

The Indian cricket board (BCCI), however, is bullish about the chances of pulling it off.

"We did it successfully in Dubai last year. We are confident we are going to do it again this time," BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly told Reuters.

Champions Mumbai Indians, captained by Rohit Sharma, and Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore get the eight-team tournament going at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Friday.



India and Punjab Kings pacer Mohammed Shami feeds a cat during practice yesterday.

PHOTO: TWITTER

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTERFINALS

City get away with one

STAR SPORT DESK



Phil Foden's stoppage time winner ensured that Manchester City would leave the Etihad Stadium with a lucky 2-1 win against Borussia Dortmund, with poor officiating squarely in the limelight.

Pep Guardiola's side struggled to get into their usual rhythm and Foden was wasteful before finding the winner just a couple of minutes after Dortmund have equalised through Marco Reus. The winner came following a sublime ball from Kevin de Bruyne -- the scorer of City's opener who coincidentally signed a four-year extension after the match -- that was tapped into Foden's unchallenged path by Ilkay Gundogan.

The drama that would define

the game, however, had occurred far earlier.

As Dortmund pressed for an equaliser, livewire Jude Bellingham closed down Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson and cleanly won the ball that he would then poke into an empty net. However, the 17-year-old was denied that chance by the Romanian official's whistle for a foul.

As replays would show, there was no claim that Ederson had been fouled, but VAR were powerless to intervene as the whistle had gone before the goal was scored. There are even arguments that Ederson could have been penalised for a foul as the follow-through on his attempted clearance caught Bellingham on the bottom of his foot.

England international Jadon Sancho, one of the visitors' notable



absences, could not temper his frustration, tweeting mid-game: "This ref needs checking."

However, even though they will be without the Yellow Wall, Dortmund can capitalise on their away goal and the winning side's Catalan coach's praise of the losing side showed that he was aware of the threats they possess.

"The rest of them play that system

and the quality of [Mahmoud] Dahoud, [Jude] Bellingham and, of course, the pace of the people up front -- the quality is there. We know it was," Pep said. But when you want to press they play long balls. They play long balls to Haaland -- Haaland is a bastard. Link-up [play] is always perfect and they have the pace so we knew it was not easy to control them."

'Vinicius deserved a night like that'

REUTERS, MADRID

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane praised forward Vinicius Jr. for rising to the big occasion after the Brazilian's brace powered a 3-1 win over Liverpool in Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal first leg.

Vinicius was signed by Real from Brazilian giants Flamengo when he was just 16 and despite showing flashes of brilliance and exceptional dribbling ability, his time in Spain has often been overshadowed by lacklustre finishing.

Before Tuesday he had scored



only 12 goals in 105 Real games while his erratic play led to strike partner Karim Benzema telling teammate Ferland Mendy to avoid passing to the forward during halftime at a Champions League game earlier this season.

But the 20-year-old thrived in the spotlight against the Premier League holders and 2019 Champions League winners, breaking the deadlock with a cold-blooded finish after expertly bringing down a Toni Kroos ball with his shoulder.

"I'm delighted for him, we are seeing some fantastic stuff

from him right now," Zidane told reporters. "We know how good he can be when he gets into space, as he showed with the first goal, which was fantastic."

Marco Asensio doubled Real's lead before halftime but Mohamed Salah's strike offered Liverpool a way back into the tie, only for Vinicius to pop up again and deliver a potentially fatal blow to Jurgen Klopp's side.

"He was lacking a goal here or there and getting two tonight will really lift his confidence, he deserved what happened tonight," added Zidane.