

Messi, Lewy set new records

Lionel Messi won his 8th Pichichi, 5th in a row to surpass Di Stefano & Hugo Sanchez's record of 4 in a row. With 30 goals in 35 games in this La Liga season, Messi has ended up as the league's top goalscorer, thus winning him the Pichichi Trophy. Meanwhile, Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski broke Gerd Mueller's 49-year-old Bundesliga goal-scoring record for a single season on Saturday when he netted for the 41st time in the last minute of their last match, a 5-2 win over Augsburg.

AGENCIES



Mushy 'not a big guy', but flexes his skills

SPORTS REPORTER

It is often Mushfiqur Rahim who comes up with a big and crucial score to save the day for Bangladesh. And that is what transpired once again yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur as the Tigers took a 1-0 lead in the three-match ODI series by defeating Sri Lanka by 33 runs.

The diminutive wicketkeeper-batsman smashed an 87-ball 84 to help Bangladesh post a competitive 257 for six before the visitors were bundled out for 224 in 48.1 overs.

Mushfiqur came in to bat after 12.1 overs. Bangladesh were on 99 for four and reeling from the loss of Tamim Iqbal and Mohammad Mithun in back-to-back deliveries.

From there, a calm and collected Mushfiqur strung together a crucial 109-run fifth-wicket stand with Mahmudullah Riyad to revive the innings.

Asked what the mantra was behind such a knock, Mushfiqur said he stuck to his strengths and did not try to force the issue.

"I am not a big guy, not a Pollard or Russell," chuckled a delighted Mushfiqur during the post-match presentation ceremony. "I stuck to my strengths, took my time. I had to keep one end safe and that's what I did. The finishing touch from Riyad and Afif [Hossain] was superb. These conditions aren't ideal for play. It's not just hot, the humidity takes a lot out of you but credit to our players," continued Mushfiqur.

Mushfiqur, who batted for two hours and then went on to keep wickets on a scorching Dhaka day, was humble in crediting his compatriots for the victory.

"It wasn't an easy wicket to bat on. When Shakib and Liton got out early, there was pressure. Tamim batted well, allowed me to take my time. And then Riyad bhai was superb," added the 34-year-old.

Despite Tamim's fifty at the top, Bangladesh lost their way in the middle before fifties from Mushfiqur, Mahmudullah and cameos from Mohammad Saifuddin and Afif Hossain helped the Tigers get a competitive score on the board.

"Happy with the way we fought. Mushfiqur, Mahmudullah were superb. Young Afif batted superbly. We did a decent job scoring 250 because it was two-paced. Definitely good to get back to winning ways. Losing is no fun, we lost 10 games across formats in a row. Winning is happiness. Still got two games, hope to continue this," Tamim said after the match.

Spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz was the most impressive with the ball, scalping four crucial wickets in the middle to break the back of Sri Lanka's chase. Miraz finished with figures of four for 30 in 10 overs that included two maidens, Mustafizur Rahman continued his good form from IPL as the left-arm paceman picked up three for 34 in his 9 overs.



Bangladesh batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who stitched a 109-run partnership with Mahmudullah Riyad after Bangladesh were in a spot of bother at 99 for four, raises his bat after reaching half century during the first ODI against Sri Lanka in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Experience shows the way for batting unit

SPORTS REPORTER

Once again it was that big guns -- skipper Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad -- that struck fifties to post a fighting 257 for 6 against Sri Lanka in the first ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh returning to the 50-over format after the 3-0 defeat to New Zealand in March this year desperate to return to winning ways on home soil and the experienced campaigners, aside from Shakib Al Hasan, did the job with the bat.

Aside from the result, there were still a few areas in batting that remain a concern for the Tigers think-tank.

Topics of discussion in the team meeting may have ranged from a lack of consistency from the likes of Liton Das and Mohammad Mithun to Tamim being unable to convert fifties into hundreds to Mushfiqur's love for the reverse sweep once again costing his wicket.

Liton was under some pressure before the first ODI and went for a rather loose shot in the third delivery he faced, giving an outside edge to the slip fielder off the bowling of Dushmantha Chameera to register his third duck in the last five innings.

The right-hander, who has scored

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 257 for six in 50 overs (Tamim 52, Shakib 15, Mushfiqur 84, Mahmudullah 54, Afif 27 not out, Saifuddin 13 not out, extras 12; Dhananjaya 3-45)

Sri Lanka: 224 all out in 48.1 overs (Gunathilaka 21, Perera 30, Mendis 24, Hasaranga 74, Udana 21, extras 7; Miraz 4-30, Mustafizur 3-34, Saifuddin 2-49, Shakib 1-44)
Result: Bangladesh won by 33 runs.
Player-of-the-match: Mushfiqur Rahim.

just 76 runs in his last seven innings, will surely need to rectify the mistakes that have stopped him from becoming consistent as a batsman.

Shakib, despite spending some time at the crease after coming in at number three, was dismissed on 15 when he was caught at long-off trying to play over the top off Danushka Gunathilaka.

However, Tamim remained solid at the other end and continued his sublime form by reaching his 51st ODI fifty. But the left-hander was once again guilty of not being able to convert his 50 into a century despite getting a 50 in four of his last seven innings.

He was trapped leg before on 51 by Dhananjaya De Silva, which brought in

Mohammad Mithun, who will surely curse himself for playing an irresponsible shot.

The right-hander tried to play a paddle sweep without adjusting to the pace of the pitch at the turn from Dhananjaya and was dismissed for a golden duck to leave Bangladesh in a spot of bother on 99 for 4.

Since then, experienced batters Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah steadied the ship for Bangladesh as the pair went on to add the first-ever 100-run stand for any wicket at home against Sri Lanka in ODIs.

Both Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah worked hard in hot and humid conditions, pacing their innings really well and realising the importance of mixing caution and aggression.

At one stage, the hosts was eyeing somewhere near the 270-run mark with the two experienced players at the crease until Mushfiqur fell victim to his favorite reverse sweep to Lakshan Sandakan on and departed for 84 off 87 balls.

The phrase 'live by the sword and die by the sword' probably suits Mushfiqur, who lost his wicket numerous times playing the shot that has gained him many runs in international cricket.

Mahmudullah played his part and was eventually dismissed for 54 while Afif Hossain also chipped in with 27 off 22 balls and helped Bangladesh score 24 off the last two overs of the innings.

Missed out on gold but still a golden success

SPORTS REPORTER

Even though the Ruman Sana and Diya Siddique pair did not end up with the gold medal in the Recurve Mixed Doubles event of Archery World Cup (Stage-2), they brought the highest success in the history of Bangladesh archery despite suffering a 1-5 defeat to the pair from the Netherlands in the final at Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday.

The triumph of silver medal in Archery World Cup is a huge achievement for Bangladesh archery, which had earlier seen Ruman Sana secure bronze medal from the bigger stage of World Archery Championships two years ago in the Netherlands through which he made a direct entry to 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

With the absence of Asian top teams such as South Korea, China, India, Chinese Taipei and Japan in the ongoing World Cup in Lausanne, Bangladesh stunned all to move into the recurve mixed doubles final after they underperformed in individual and other teams' events, after following a return to the international level by a more than 16 months gap due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Though almost everyone was dreaming of another upset



in the final of the event, Ruman and Diya were in fact the underdogs to begin with compared to Netherlands' Seif Van De Berth and Gabriela Schloesser, who are World ranked seventh in men section and 18th-ranked in women's section while Ruman is world's 13th-ranked archer and Diya is 325th-ranked archer respectively.

In the grand finale though, Ruman and Diya could not uplift their performance, only to make 30 points [7, 7, 8 and 8] out of 40 while the Dutch duo won the first set with a score of 36. Afterwards, Ruman and Diya did show enough resilience to draw the second set with an equal 35 points, but when Ruman and Diya needed to raise their game to even beyond their maximum potential to level the set points, they could only make 34 against Netherlands' 37 and thus had to surrender tenderly in the end.

"I'm so happy with the achievement because being a newcomer at such a stage was hard for me. However, I think I tried my best and delivered," said Diya Siddique, thanking all coaches, teammates and team officials after the final in a video message.

Ruman Sana said: "We have made history to reach the final in an event of the Archery World Cup and we are very thankful to our sponsor City Group."

Before leaving for Lausanne, German coach Martin Fredrick was ecstatic to get a good recurve women's team for the first time and promising Diya was tremendously assisted by Ruman to reach the finals of such a big stage though Bangladesh previously bagged gold medals from comparatively small tournaments like Asian Grand Prix, ISSF Solidarity Archery Championships, South Asian Games and South Asian Archery Championships.



Sri Lankan batsman Wanindu Hasaranga walks back to the pavilion after a magnificent 60-ball 74. It was a big wicket from Mohammad Saifuddin, who was excellent at the death.

PHOTO: STAR

Day satisfied with Saudi arrangements

SPORTS REPORTER

Following the cancellation of the proposed Qatar training camp for the Bangladesh national football team due to the strict Covid related measures, the booters are all set to fly out this morning for Saudi Arabia for a better preparation of next month's World Cup Qualifiers in Qatar.

Saudi Arabia responded positively to the request of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to facilitate the training sessions and organize practice matches against local clubs for the boys in red and green.

Head coach Jamie Day conducted six days on-and-off the field training so far and will have another five to six days training in Dammam including one or two practice matches in between May 26 to May 29 before heading to Qatar on May 30 with the group-stage matches

scheduled to begin on June 3.

"Of course it [overseas training] will help. We will get better training facilities in Saudi and games to play which we did not have here in Bangladesh. Besides, it will take less travelling time to reach Qatar on May 30," Day told The Daily Star yesterday.

Day also announced his final 25-member squad, keeping winger Mohammad Ibrahim, subject to his Covid-19 report before May 28. Winger Saad Uddin, who left the camp on Saturday night with his old knee injury and Rezaul Islam, who has passport related issue and goalkeeper Pappu Hossain have been dropped from the 28-member preliminary squad in which Bishwanath Ghosh could not join.

"It [Saad] is a big loss and we also lost [Bishwanath] Ghosh and [Nabib Newaj] Jibon but that gives someone else a chance in the squad," said Day.

'Suarez, a born goalscorer'

Barca, Real pay the price for transfer gaffes

REUTERS



LaLiga

Atletico Madrid's La Liga title triumph had many protagonists but their two standout players were undoubtedly Luis Suarez and Marcos Llorente, who fell into their laps after being spurned by rivals Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Atletico Madrid have remained a top side since last winning the league in 2014 but had been lacking a proven goalscorer for some time. Step forward Luis Suarez, who had been forced out of Barcelona and was able to join Atletico for only six million euros.

Suarez helped Atletico get off to a blinding start by scoring his first 12 goals with 18 shots and then hit winners over Osasuna and Real Valladolid to clinch the title.

Llorente, meanwhile, joined Atletico the previous year after being cast off by boyhood club Real. He got off to a slow start at his new side before transforming himself from a holding midfielder into an explosive winger.

The Spaniard made a name for himself in his new role last year by scoring twice to knock Liverpool out of the Champions League and has gone from strength to strength, scoring 12 goals and providing 11 assists in the title-winning campaign.

Between them, Llorente and Suarez scored almost half of the 67 league goals which saw Atletico become champions for the first time since 2014.

Llorente's great uncle Paco Gento

was one of Real Madrid's greatest ever players, while his father and grandfather also played for the club.

Real, who finished two points behind Atletico, may now be kicking themselves at letting such a talented player join their neighbours and help lead them to glory at their own expense.

But at least they managed to pocket around 40 million euros for his transfer, and they were well covered in the holding midfield role

198 goals and won four league titles ever, recalled his pain at being pushed out by his former club.

"It was a difficult situation after being mistreated like that, but Atletico opened a door to me so I could keep showing I'm good enough, they put their faith in me," he said in an emotional post-match interview.

"This is very special because of how much I suffered. My statistics show I've won five league titles in



thanks to the ever-reliable Casemiro.

Barca, however, may be feeling particularly sore about parting ways with Suarez, who was forced out of the Camp Nou last summer as part of a clearout of big earners over the age of 30 which also led to Arturo Vidal and Ivan Rakitic leaving.

The Uruguayan's departure came despite the protests of Lionel Messi, who is close friends with Suarez and fiercely criticised the move.

Suarez, who became Barca's third-highest scorer with an astounding

seven years."

"A lot of people have suffered with me - my wife, my children. Day by day, they are the ones who have suffered the most from my many years in football."

Atletico coach Diego Simeone added: "Suarez is a competitive animal, a born goalscorer."

"He's a defiant guy who had just left an extraordinary club in Barcelona but he said 'I want to continue at the top' and joined a club which lives football just like he does."

Covid scares spark further caution

SPORTS REPORTER

There was huge uncertainty over the three-match ODI series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka just hours before the first ODI after news broke that cricketers Shiran Fernando and Isuru Udana and bowling coach Chaminda Vaas had tested positive for Covid-19.

But the clouds parted as only Fernando returned a positive in the second test.

Fernando had tested positive a couple of weeks ago in Sri Lanka and, according to health specialists, the virus' dead cells had remained and caused the result.

"These things happen. There is a thing called false-positive. But I think the facilities offered are more than enough and I'm looking forward to a good series. The BCB is giving the best possible facilities in the new normal and it's something that we understand when we tour another country," visiting team manager Manuja Kariyapperuma said through a video statement yesterday.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan said yesterday that they would be more careful regarding the bio-secure bubble.