

Chhetri breaks Bangladesh hearts yet again

SPORTS REPORTER



Sunil Chhetri proved to be Bangladesh's nemesis yet again as the India skipper's late brace earned the Blue Tigers a 2-0 win against the men in red and green in their World Cup/Asian Cup qualifying fixture at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha last night.

The 36-year-old turned the fate of the game decisively in favour of India -- a clinical header on 78 minutes and a clever chip in stoppage time -- to deny Janie Day's charges a third point in this qualifying fixture, which had looked like there for the taking as the game had progressed.

With the clock ticking down and Bangladesh growing in confidence, and even throwing bodies forward in search of a goal, the Bengaluru FC striker ran into space at the far post, losing the Bangladesh defenders on a perfectly weighted cross from Ashique Kurunian and beat goalkeeper Anisur Rahman

Zico with a header to the far corner of the net.

That goal was enough to break the morale of Day's charges, who had displayed excellent defensive organisation and discipline to keep Igor Stimac's men at bay despite enjoying a quarter of possession.

Bangladesh, who had earned plaudits from all and sundry for their 1-1 draw against the same opposition in the reverse fixture in Kolkata two years ago, continued to search for an equaliser. India, now playing with the luxury of the lead, with Chhetri chipping the ball over the Riyadul Hasan Rafi into the top corner of the net after collecting a cross from Suresh Singh.

The India skipper was all but neutralised in that famous match, but yesterday he showed his class again, scoring his fourth and fifth goals against Bangladesh in four most recent meetings, taking his overall international tally to 75 goals.

The defeat all but ends Bangladesh's chances of direct qualification for the

third round of Asian Cup Qualifiers as the men in red and green -- bottom of Group E with only two points -- would look to have another shot at qualification through playoffs, to take place in September and October this year. For now they will have seven days to build up for the last match of the second round, against Oman on June 15.

Bangladesh were coming from a fighting 1-1 draw against Afghanistan while India in their previous match went down 1-0 against Qatar despite playing majority of the time with 10 men.

Bangladesh coach Day went in with just one change, Manik Molla replacing the injured Sohel Rana in midfield.

With Rafi clearing Jinglesana Singh's header from the goalline in the first half and then India forwards missing a couple of free headers on set-pieces later, it looked like Bangladesh were on their way to extending their sequence of draws against their neighbours, but then Chhetri conjured two clinical finishes to make the difference.



India captain Sunil Chhetri celebrates one of his two goals against Bangladesh during the World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers match in Qatar yesterday.

PHOTO: TWITTER



Nurul Hasan led from the front with a sparkling 66-run unbeaten knock as Sheikh Jamal beat Mohammedan while [Inset] Khelaghar SKS players take a selfie after their eight-run victory against Mushfiqur Rahim's Abahani.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

DPL encounters revive excitement

SPORTS REPORTER



There was a dramatic turnaround, last over finishes and an underdog gunned down the tournament favourites, as the fourth round of the Dhaka Premier League T20 competition finally oozed with life yesterday.

Competitive displays aside, there will be a major question mark over the bizarre manner in which Old DOHS Cricket Club, once again, failed to cross the finishing line against Brothers Union at BKSP-4 ground. While needed 13 runs off the last two overs with nine wickets in hand, chasing a modest target of 140, DOHS eventually fell three runs short of victory.

Interestingly, batsman Pritom Kumar left the final delivery of the innings expecting a wide when DOHS required two runs to tie and three to win, but the umpire remained unmoved as Brothers won in the end against the odds. Previously, similar baffling display from DOHS against Abahani Limited raised many eyebrows as well, where they ended up on 113 for 3 in 20 overs, in reply to a target of 136 runs.

But there was no shortage of desire from Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity who stunned Mushfiqur Rahim's Abahani Limited and won by eight runs at BKSP-3 ground to register their second win in four games.

Khelaghar posted 164 for 6 riding on the young and inexperienced opener Imtiaz Hossain's 46-ball 66 run knock where Abahani in reply ended up on 156 for 5, and faced their first defeat in four games.

Needing 47 runs off the last five overs with two national players Mosaddek Hossain and Aff Hossain at the crease who are known for their finishing abilities, the duo failed to see off the game despite having had batted till the end. Off spinner Rony Chowdhury, who made his T20 debut for Khelaghar yesterday, picked up two early wickets, one of opener Munim Shahriar (0) and the other

was the prized wicket of skipper Mushfiqur who departed after scoring eight.

Naim Sheikh and Najmul Hossain Shanto attempted to repair but both the batsman got dismissed on 49 runs as Khelaghar spiritedly kept building pressure and eventually sealed an impressive win. Pacer Khaled Ahmed also bagged two wickets while Rafsan Al Mahmud scalped one for Khelaghar.

On the day Abahani faced their first defeat, their archrival Mohammedan Sporting Club also suffered the same as they were handed a 16 run defeat by Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

Skipper Nurul Hasan's unbeaten 66 run knock helped Sheikh Jamal to post a challenging total of 161 for 5 where Mohammedan's reply was restricted to 145 for 8 after 20 overs. On the contrary, Mohammedan's skipper Shakib Al Hasan, despite bowling brilliantly with the figures of two for twelve from his four overs, continued his poor form with the bat and was bowled by off spinner Enamul Hasan after scoring just two from nine balls.

Mohammedan kept losing wickets at regular intervals, where Nadif Chowdhury's 43-ball 57 could not help his side avoid their first defeat in four games. Enamul's three for 13 from three overs and Ziaur Rahman's two wickets contributed to Mohammedan's demise.

Elsewhere, Gazi Group led by Mahmudullah Riyad's all round performance sealed their second win in four matches beating Legends of Ruppangj by seven wickets, chasing a modest target of 133.

Mohammad Mithun's unbeaten fifty, backed by Rubel Hossain's four-wicket haul helped Prime Bank to clinch a convincing 72 run win over Partex Sporting Club.

Prime Doleshwar successfully chased down the target of 163 runs set by Shinepukur Cricket Club, courtesy of a blistering fifty from Saif Hasan, with four wickets and two balls to spare. With seven points in four games, Doleshwar sits at the top of the points table.

Euro 2020 set to capture continent's attention

AFP, Paris



The Covid-19 pandemic was responsible for its postponement but, with the health situation on the continent gradually improving, the delayed Euro 2020 finally kicks off

on Friday in Rome when Italy host Turkey while Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal prepare to defend the title they won in France five years ago.

When the action gets underway in front of a planned 16,000 fans at a quarter-full Stadio Olimpico the overwhelming feeling for European football's governing body UEFA will be of relief following the unprecedented decision to put the tournament on hold last year.

This time the month-long competition -- being staged for the first time in 11 cities across Europe rather than in just one or two host countries -- will focus the attention of the continent as it begins to open up for its summer season, with coronavirus infection

rates dropping and vaccinations picking up pace.

Yet challenges remain, especially after UEFA chose to stick with the pan-European format. Dublin and Bilbao were dropped from the list of host cities after refusing to give guarantees over spectator numbers, but Seville stepped in for the latter while Dublin's games went to London and Saint-Petersburg.

The remaining venues -- Amsterdam, Baku, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow, London, Munich, Rome, Saint-Petersburg and Seville -- have all confirmed fans will be allowed to fill between 25 and 100 percent of capacity, with the exception of Munich, which said it aims to host at least 14,500 fans at the Allianz Arena.

While the threat of more contagious variants remains, Munich's mayor Dieter Reiter said in April there had been "no promises, of any kind, to guarantee spectators".

Despite it all, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has been bullish, insisting Euro 2020 will be safe.



Upon leaving for Colombia to play the South American World Cup Qualifiers, Barcelona and Argentina superstar Lionel Messi was spotted donating a signed jersey to a local Charity. Argentina and Colombia will clash in one of the most exciting duels tomorrow at 5am (Bangladesh Time). La Albiceleste will be trying to get back to winning ways and remain unbeaten on their road to Qatar after being held by Chile at home. Meanwhile, Brazil will be looking to their star performer Neymar, who scored and assisted in his side's 2-0 win over Ecuador, when the record five-time world champions face Paraguay tomorrow at 6.30am (Bangladesh Time) to maintain their perfect winning record.

PHOTO: TWITTER



France star Kylian Mbappe vies for the ball during a training session ahead of their today's warm-up game against Bulgaria at the Stade de France in St Denis as it prepares for the European Championship. Meanwhile, Paris St Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said that Mbappe will stay at the Ligue 1 club next season.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Boult could make surprise return for second Test

REUTERS



New Zealand pace spearhead Trent Boult could make a surprise return to the team for the second Test against England, which begins on Thursday, coach Gary Stead said.

Boult missed the first drawn Test at Lord's after opting to spend time with family following the Indian Premier League's suspension.

Stead had said before the first Test that Boult would probably miss the two-Test series, but on Monday he said the bowler, who joined the squad late last week, could be available after he was out of isolation earlier than

expected. "There's a chance, there are a few things that have changed," Stead said. "The British government have relaxed their quarantine stipulations so Trent is out of isolation three or four days earlier than expected."

"The original plan we had in place...was we weren't going to play him in the second Test, but coming out of that isolation probably three days earlier than what we originally anticipated

"Special performance from Conway (Devon), a special player. He showed his class on his debut Test at the home of cricket."

KANE WILLIAMSON, NEW ZEALAND CAPTAIN



does put a slightly different spin on it.

"We'll weigh up the pros and cons and work out with Trent what we think is the best course forward to make sure he is fit and raring to go for that final."

England captain Joe Root, who showed incredible patience for

his 40 in the final session, said they adopted a cautious approach given the quality of the visiting bowling attack on a deteriorating surface in the first Test.

"It was slow and hard to time the ball and get any sort of rhythm," Root told the BBC. "You look at the target and amount of overs you have, it wasn't quite as straightforward as that."

"Of course it will disappoint a few people but from our point of view, we're very much in this series. "We leave here level and give ourselves a great chance to win the series at Edgbaston."

New Zealand may have missed an opportunity to put England on the ropes ahead of the second Test, but captain Kane Williamson can take plenty of positives from Lord's.

Djokovic survives a scare

REUTERS, PARIS

World number one Novak Djokovic survived a massive scare before fighting back from two sets down against teenager Lorenzo Musetti to reach the French Open quarter-finals on Monday after the Italian retired in the fifth set.

Musetti, appearing in his first Grand Slam main draw, was inspired as he took the opening two sets on tiebreaks but crumbled and appeared to run out of energy as he managed one game thereafter before retiring at 4-0 down in the fifth set.