

SPORTS

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & 2
US Open Semifinals
Live from 10:00 pm
STAR SPORTS 1
CPL

Barbados Royals vs Trinbago Knight Riders
Live from 8:00 pm
Jamaica Tallawahs vs Saint Lucia Kings
Live from 5:00 am (Friday)



Nasum Ahmed (2nd from L) and Mustafizur Rahman (R) took four wickets each as Bangladesh bowled New Zealand out for 93 runs before chasing down the target with six wickets to spare to clinch the five-match T20I series 3-1 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Foregoing fine-tuning for a series win?

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh are playing their last series ahead of the T20 World Cup in UAE but while there was a need to calibrate their tactical setup in terms of the batting order and team combination there is also the need for understanding the capabilities of as many players as possible ahead of the announcement of the World Cup squad. Despite that scenario, the team management and selectors prioritised winning the series as they named an unchanged playing eleven for the fourth time in a row yesterday against the Kiwis.

New Zealand had kept the series alive with a thumping 52-run win in the third T20I to make it 2-1 and Bangladesh yet again went with the same line-up for the fourth T20I. It could be argued that

the final T20I against Australia -- his only game in that series -- grabbed his chance by picking up three and has so far played all four T20Is against New Zealand. Meanwhile, the other pacers in the squad continued to be overlooked and perhaps the desire to win series with a proven line-up on such surfaces.

Rubel Hossain and Taskin Ahmed are yet to get a game either and ahead of the World Cup in UAE where pitches will offer more to pacers and Bangladesh may need an extra speedster in the line-up, the selectors did not feel the need to give them matches ahead of naming the World Cup squad, which will likely be announced very soon. What the selectors are looking for with a same eleven game after game, remains unclear. An extra pacer in the line-up is a very real possibility during World Cup matches but judging from



Mosaddek Hossain, Aminul Islam, Shamim Hossain Patwary, Shoriful Islam and Taskin Ahmed -- five of the members of the squad who have not got a game in the first four matches of the series against New Zealand as Bangladesh stuck with the same eleven in every match.

PHOTO: STAR

having lost the third T20 against an ever-improving Kiwi side in these conditions, Bangladesh would make changes just to see how the other players perform and return to winning ways. However, management perhaps felt they had the right recipe to begin with for the Kiwi series.

Shoriful Islam featured pretty regularly in the Australia series and performed well enough to be considered for the T20 World Cup due to being able to take pressure on in tough situation. He took seven wickets in four T20Is against Australia -- second highest wicket taker for the Tigers in that series -- at an economy rate of 6.37. However, after four matches in this New Zealand series, he is yet to get a game. Mohammad Saifuddin, who appeared in

team selection, this was not the series to judge them.

Nasum Ahmed has once again remained effective in this series. Yesterday, he produced a few brilliant deliveries in a career-best 4 wickets for 10 runs. However, not so long ago, he was also plundered for runs in New Zealand and Zimbabwe pitches. The World Cup pitches will offer much less than the pitches at home and since Nasum is playing as a specialist bowler, there is belief selectors will think differently in the World Cup. Giving Nasum chances is not bad, but when you don't test others such as Aminul Islam Biplab -- knowing a leggie's importance in the T20 format -- questions should be asked regarding what the selectors are really looking for in the last series ahead of naming the World Cup squad.

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Despite a middling T20I debut in New Zealand earlier this year, left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed has emerged as one of the go-to men in Bangladesh's spin bowling department.

The 26-year-old gained confidence from the home series against Australia, during which he was the highest wicket-taker for Bangladesh with eight wickets from five games at an economy of 5.11.

Nasum has displayed an aptitude for bowling during the Powerplay overs, when batsmen tend to go after bowlers and also shown maturity when it comes to keeping batsman quiet and also picking those crucial wickets at the top of the order.

Courtesy of Nasum and Mustafizur Rahman's four-wicket

SCORES IN BRIEF

New Zealand:

93 all out in 19.3 overs (Young 46, Latham 21; Nasum 4-10, Mustafizur 4-12)

Bangladesh:

96 for four in 19.1 overs (Mahmudullah 43 not out, Naim 39; Patel 2-9, McConchie 1-34)

Result: Bangladesh won by six wickets to lead the series 3-1

Player-of-the-match: Nasum Ahmed

hauls, New Zealand were bundled out for just 93 runs in the fourth match as Bangladesh sealed their first bilateral T20I series triumph against New Zealand yesterday. "In terms of adjustments, I tried

to hit the seam consistently and at times tried a few cross-seam deliveries. Since the wicket was turning, I tried to bowl a particular line and length consistently. When it comes to my role in the Powerplay, I was actually never told to pick wickets. Instead, the captain has given me freedom to bowl and look for dot balls," the man of the match told media yesterday.

Nasum broke the Kiwi batting line-up by removing openers Rachin Ravindra and Finn Allen and followed it by removing Henry Nicholls and Colin de Grandhomme with beautiful turning deliveries in the 12th over and finding himself on a hatrick.

"I enjoyed Finn Allen's dismissal when he was undone while going for a reverse sweep. Mahmudullah Riyad bhai told me to bowl a bit slower as he tried to reverse me couple of times. I saw him moving

so I bowled a bit quicker and he was unable to time the ball," Nasum added.

Nasum, who registered his career-best bowling figures of four for 19 against Australia in the previous series, seemed to grow in confidence and surpassed his previous best bowling figures as he ended with bagging four wickets at the cost of just 10 runs from his four overs, two of which were maidens.

Although the pitch in the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup in the Middle East is expected to favour batsmen, according to Nasum it will be important to perform consistently regardless of the surface.

"I think there is no better preparation than winning matches as it gives you a lot of confidence as a unit. I believe that we will be able to perform well in the World Cup," he added.

'The girls can't wait to take the field'

SPORTS REPORTER



The wait is over for Bangladesh women's football team following a two-and-a-half-year break as the women in red and green return to the international stage to square off against Nepal in the first of two FIFA friendly matches at the Dasharath Stadium in Kathmandu today.

The match will kick off at 5:15pm (Bangladesh time). Interestingly, it was in Nepal where the team played their last international match during 2019 SAFF Women's Championship semifinals against India and this time, the hosts, who never lost to Bangladesh at senior level, are the opponents.

As part of preparation for AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Uzbekistan, the charges of Golam Rabbani Choton would be looking to address and rectify loopholes through today's match and the second match on September 12 while having had set an objective to remain undefeated against Nepal.

"The girls are thrilled to get back to playing international matches and can't wait to take the field," Choton told The Daily Star over phone from Kathmandu yesterday.

"Obviously, we want to play a competitive match against Nepal and

improve our FIFA ranking by not losing. I can assure you the girls will try to give their best on the pitch," said the successful women's coach.

The players had a light practice session at the gym yesterday morning but rain prevented them from training with the ball at the match venue. However, later in the afternoon, they toured the venue to learn about its historical side.

Choton was a bit worried about the footballers' prolonged absence from international engagements even though all squad players had participated in two women's leagues during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The only problem is that the girls were out of international commitments for such a long period, so I'm concerned about their temperament. If they can calmly adjust with the tempo of the match, they will perform well. Otherwise, it can be a problem," concluded Choton.

Nepal have relatively experienced players, who had beaten their Bangladeshi counterparts 3-0 during 2019 SAFF Women's Championship. Sabitra Bhandari, who scored one in that match, might miss today's encounter due to injury. Bangladesh however, could extract inspiration from holding Nepal to a 1-1 draw during Olympic Qualifiers in 2018.



Erling Braut Haaland (top) continued his phenomenal goalscoring form with a hatrick as Norway thrashed Gibraltar 5-1 in a World Cup qualifying fixture in Oslo on Tuesday night. The treble took the 21-year-old striker's international tally to 12 in just 15 games. Despite the win, Norway were in second position in Group G, thanks to Netherlands' 6-1 thrashing of Israel in Amsterdam. The hero of the night for Louis van Gaal's side was Memphis Depay (bottom left), who scored a hatrick to take his international tally to 33 goals. Meanwhile, Antoine Griezmann (bottom right) scored twice as world champions France beat Finland 2-0 to snap a five-game winless streak in Group D.

PHOTO: AFP

Booters take on Kyrgyzstan U-23s today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team will look to wrap up their Kyrgyzstan tour on a positive note when they play their third and final match against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side at Dolen Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek today.

Following disappointing results against Palestine and Kyrgyzstan senior teams, head coach Jamie Day is expecting a victory against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side, who recently played out a 2-2 draw against their Bahrain counterparts.

"It would be nice to get a win if possible but they [Kyrgyzstan U-23] are playing for the places in the future," Day told the Daily Star yesterday.

The three matches in Kyrgyzstan are part of preparation for October's SAFF Championship and the coach tried a new formation, that of 3-4-3, in the first two matches.

The coach checked most of the players and is likely to give chance to players such as Tahmid Islam, Mitul Marma, Mehed Hasan and Suman Reza who didn't get to feature in the first two matches.

"We have to look after the players' health," said Day, who is worried about the risks for the players playing three matches in five days.