

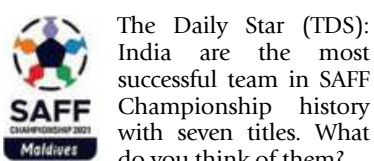
BANGLADESH VS INDIA IN SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

Bangladesh	0 (2)	-	0 (4)	India 1995 (semifinal)
Bangladesh	0	-	3	India, 1997 (group stage)
Bangladesh	0	-	0	India, 1999 (group stage)
Bangladesh	0	-	2	India, 1999 (final)
Bangladesh	2	-	1	India, 2003 (semifinal)
Bangladesh	1	-	1	India, 2005 (group stage)
Bangladesh	0	-	2	India, 2005 (final)
Bangladesh	0	-	1	India, 2009 (semifinal)
Bangladesh	1	-	1	India, 2013 (group stage)

[OVERALL: BANGLADESH PLAYED 27 MATCHES—W-3, D-10, L-14]

'Will try to grab three points from the first minute'

Bangladesh are determined to maximise on winning momentum in today's SAFF Championship clash against seven-time champions India, a side they have beaten only thrice in the past 50 years. However, Bangladesh can also be emboldened by the most recent encounters, three of which ended in draws before their latest battle last June ended in a 2-0 defeat. And coach Oscar Bruzon, at a pre-match conference in Male, sought to end an 18-year jinx by winning the 28th battle between the neighbours.



The Daily Star (TDS): India are the most successful team in SAFF Championship history with seven titles. What do you think of them?

Oscar Bruzon (OB): I have a lot of thoughts because I worked in India, Maldives and now in Bangladesh. India are favourites according to FIFA Rankings and they have one of the better leagues in the subcontinent. They have good players and I think tomorrow's [Monday's] match will be a tough game but we are ready for them and the boys are ready to progress in the tournament.

DS: Is it an advantage for you to strategise against India because you have experience working in the country?

OB: I don't think we have an advantage in this regard. My aim here is to instil confidence in our players. I don't feel there is only one team in the tournament stronger than us. I can only repeat what I said before: in terms of determination and confidence, Bangladesh are the best team in the tournament and in the world.

DS: Will you play for a win or a draw?

OB: I never play for a draw. I don't understand speculative football or defensive games. I think football is a game to be enjoyed on the pitch. You have to find all kinds of ways to win the game. The easier option is to create more chances to win



the points. So tomorrow, from the very first minute, we will try to grab three points. We are going to have a good opportunity. We will be trying to play according to our strengths because they are going to start the tournament with zero points. I am sure they are going to play a very energetic game for the first 15 or 20 minutes, pressing more. We will plan accordingly.

DS: Are you going to rely on the

same squad that played against Sri Lanka?
OB: It is a totally different game against India compared to the match against Sri Lanka. There will be a slight modification of the formation and a similar modification to the best eleven.

DS: Have you decided on a game plan?

OB: We are not thinking of different ideas. We will try to control

the ball and we would like to have a compact defence to adjust to their quick circulation. Of course, the level of tomorrow's opponent is not similar to Sri Lanka. India will fight for possession and they will move it quickly. They are also very sharp on the wings and we will have to adjust to that as well. But India struggled to get goals in their past few matches, so they will be under pressure and we will try to capitalise on that.



Bruzon has plans for Chhetri

ANISUR RAHMAN FROM MALE

With the clock ticking down during the World Cup qualifying match against India at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in Doha in June, Bangladesh were expecting to register their fourth successive draw against their neighbours but Sunil Chhetri broke the hearts of the men in red and green with a glancing header in the 79th minute before adding another in stoppage time with a deft finish with his right foot inside the box.

It was not the first time that Chhetri rescued India in the dying moments of a match against Bangladesh. The veteran striker brought India back in the game with equalisers against Bangladesh in 2013 SAFF Championship in Nepal and in a friendly match in Goa in 2014.

India have always been blessed with genuine strikers who made the difference in matches against Bangladesh. Shishir Ghosh, Bikash Panji, IM Vijayan and Baichung Bhutia made the difference with their goal-scoring ability. Chhetri, at his fag end of career, is still a big threat for Bangladesh ahead of today's crucial match between the two sides in Maldives.

Bangladesh coach Oscar Bruzon has already said he has a different plan for the 37-year-old forward, who has scored five goals in the last four matches against Bangladesh.

"Of course, Sunil is a talented player. Sunil will be a player we need to control and he is best in his left position and in the box. If he has half a second or half a metre, he tries to make his space in the box and he will do it," said Bruzon, who worked with the India captain during his time with Mumbai FC in Indian Super League in 2017.

"In endurance and physical fights, Sunil struggles, so we must have a plan for him because he is the most dangerous player. If you saw the last match, Sunil scored goals and he is the player who has more responsibility to attack. However, I am not scared. Sunil is a good player but we also have our own defenders for him tomorrow," said the Spaniard.

When asked how much the Indian team depended on Chhetri for winning matches, India coach Igor Stimac said, "I don't underestimate other players. I am very confident that if we go without Sunil, we can do well. If you saw the past, India drew against Qatar without Sunil."



Mukti Khatun of Bangladesh Ansar & VDP dominated the opening day of the Bangabandhu 34th National Age-group Swimming and Diving Competition with five gold medals at the Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday. Mukti won the medals in the juvenile (18-20 years) age group for girls. The three-day competition features 100 swimming and three diving events. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



There was uncertainty regarding Bangladesh team's departure to Oman for their upcoming World Cup preparation camp and qualifying matches after Cyclone Shaheen bore down on Oman on Sunday. The Tigers' flight was set to depart at 10:45 PM and BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury confirmed that everything was on schedule for the team to depart on Sunday night. Afif Hossain was seen at the Airport as the players assembled for their scheduled flight yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

'I can now grasp situations and read batsman'

Always at the centre of attention since making his international debut, pacer Taskin Ahmed has seen both sides of the coin in his career so far. The 26-year-old is now expected to play a crucial role in Bangladesh's fast-bowling department at the upcoming T20 World Cup and the cricketer spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin about the areas he is focusing on, mental tweak and other topics before boarding an Oman-bound flight. Excerpts of that conversation are below:



The Daily Star (DS): This is going to be your second T20 World Cup but the

previous one was quite dramatic after your bowling action came under the scanner. How are your preparations this time around?

Taskin Ahmed (TA): The World Cup is always special. I played well in the 2015 ODI World Cup but my action came into question in the 2016 T20 World Cup. I was not picked for the 2019 ODI World Cup due to fitness issues and I broke down after being dropped. I am excited about the upcoming World Cup but I can't guarantee anything because even an edge off a good delivery can go for a boundary. But I can say I am confident.

DS: What homework have you done for the event considering the pitches and conditions in Oman and the UAE?

TA: My strength is pace and hitting the seam, then getting some early swing with the new ball and then bowling according to the situation and the demands of the captain. My pace and accuracy have improved but I still couldn't bowl the cutters well. Mashrafe bhai helped me with cutters recently and I am thankful. Everything depends on the surface and you have to adapt accordingly.

DS: There is a small margin for error for a fast bowler, especially in the T20 format. What are the



mental adjustments required to sustain at this level?

TA: I prefer execution more than anything else and see whether I can bowl where I want to or not. I

can remember giving away 48 runs in four overs against New Zealand but I felt good as a bowler because I was able to execute. Then I spoke to the computer analysts and it

turned out the ground was small so a few edges had gone to the boundary. It's important that I can execute.

DS: How important it is for the team to have variety in the fast-bowling department? Everyone has different strengths so how important will the bowling partnership be in the World Cup?

TA: The strategy differs from person to person. I try to bank on pace. People often say I bowl the short ball a lot, but that is in the game plan. It's the demand of the situation and the instruction from the captain. There is nothing personal when you play for your team. Fizz (Mustafizur Rahman) is one of the best bowlers in the T20 format and he has shown very good form in the IPL. His experience will play a huge role for us. Then we have Shoriful Islam growing in confidence and Saifuddin also to add great variety. We are hopeful of making an impact in the pace-bowling department regardless of conditions.

DS: Is it important to read the batsman as a bowler in this format?

TA: Yes, it's very important and I think I have improved on that aspect. I can now grasp situations and read the batsman and I make sure I don't ruin my hard work when I bowl the last two balls of an over. T20 is all about economy. If you give 30 runs from four overs, it is very good. And if you can get a few wickets, it's super.