

'Seeing a yellow card for team's sake is a positive'

ANISUR RAHMAN From Male

On the back of only a week-long preparation under interim coach Oscar Bruzon, Bangladesh national team surprised all in their first two matches against Sri Lanka and India in the ongoing SAFF Championship before suffering a defeat against hosts Maldives in their third match, in which Bangladesh also drew the attention for being booked five times.

Bangladesh, so far, in three matches of the SAFF Championship, have conceded 64 fouls - 20 against Sri Lanka, 14 against India and 30 against Maldives - that projected a slightly negative impression for the men in red and green, even though committing fouls from aggressive intent remains a part and parcel of the game.

The apparent recklessness from the players on the pitch also left Bangladesh in a spot of bother, where they had to miss the services of defender Bishwanath Ghosh and winger Rakib Hossain in the match against Maldives, due to their one-match suspension from having been cautioned previously.

Does the lack of players' techniques lead to the mistimed tackles on the pitch or is it the consequence of the players just following coach's instructions?

AFC A license coach Saiful Bari Titu told The Daily Star, where he shed some light on this matter.

"Fouls occur on the pitch for many reasons and I don't know what the Bangladesh coach briefed to the players before the match. But I think, fouls happen when



TEAMS' DISCIPLINARY RECORD SO FAR IN SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

TEAM	MATCHES	FOULS CONCEDED	YELLOW CARDS	RED CARDS
Bangladesh	3	64	9	1
Sri Lanka	3	40	7	1
India	2	30	2	0
Nepal	2	20	3	0
Maldives	2	19	3	0

there is emotional instability," Titu opined.

"I mean, if a player can't control his emotion after being beaten, he may commit a foul. And if a player isn't technically sound, he may commit a foul to make up for

his weakness. Then again, a foul can be professional, in which the player must know when, why and how to commit such an act.

"If you play counter-attacking football, you've got to be patient to deal with the transition but it's true

that you can't stop a quality player with tackles. And sometimes the fatigue of the players also leads to mistimed challenges," Titu said, adding that instructions from the coach also have an impact on the game.

Bangladesh team manager Satyajit Das Rupu defended the aggressive playing style, especially against Maldives.

"There were moments of aggression in the game to stop the opponents. It [foul] happens only because of timing mistakes," Rupu said.

"Foul is a part of the game and it seemed to us that they [Maldives] also committed some but the referee didn't blow the whistle in our favour. I think the players' mindset changed after conceding the goals, that's why they were booked more," opined the former national player.

According to Defender Tapu Barman, his team is more focused on earning points from the matches rather than thinking much about fouls or bookings.

"While playing pressing football, if your opponents react fast but you're a bit late, then fouls will occur. From our game-plan, we try to steal the ball as soon as possible. So from that perspective, fouls may happen often," Tapu told The Daily Star yesterday.

"According to the coach, the best players of Bangladesh are in the national team and each player also has a couple of replacements. So a player seeing a yellow card for team's sake is a positive. "A player playing with that mindset, doesn't care of being booked and our main target will be to collect points from the game [against Nepal]," concluded Tapu.

Tigers head for the UAE



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team will travel to Abu Dhabi, UAE from Oman today after the International

Cricket Council (ICC) had postponed the travel plan by a day, in order to maintain the bio-secure bubble for the teams.

According to Bangladesh team officials, the ICC rescheduled the chartered flight to Sunday evening, from Covid-19 health and safety related considerations, and Bangladesh will now travel to UAE from Muscat along with Oman and Sri Lanka in the same flight.

Bangladesh will take part in two official practice games on October 12 and 14 against Sri Lanka and Ireland, respectively, in the UAE.

Following three days of training sessions and a practice game against Oman A team on Friday, Mahmudullah Riyad and his troops rested at the team hotel in Muscat yesterday.

Liton captained the Tigers in absence of regular skipper Mahmudullah, who was rested for Friday's warm up game against Oman A.

Bangladesh registered a comprehensive 60-run victory over Oman A after posting a huge total of 207 for four, riding on half centuries from opener Liton Das and Mohammad Naim and a blistering 15-ball 49-run knock from Nurul Hasan, that included seven sixes. Oman A team in reply were restricted to 147 for nine, courtesy of some tight bowling.

"We had an excellent outing with

the bat. Naim and Liton bhai got us going and Sohan [Nurul Hasan] bhai gave the finishing. I'm hopeful that our batters will do well on the wickets here [in Oman]," said the young batsman Shamim Hossain to the media on Friday.

The left-hander also impressed with his 19-run cameo off ten balls and complemented Nurul as the Tigers hammered 81 runs in the last five overs of the innings.

"I've no option but to go for boundaries because I get to bat mostly after 15 overs. So I aim to finish the innings for the team," said Shamim while giving credit to the bowlers as well.

"The bowlers played their part well too. The team combination looked good in this game and there was good communication between the players," Shamim added.

Meanwhile Shakib al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman will be joining the team in UAE following their stint in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL). Mustafizur has already joined the team hotel in Dubai while Shakib, who will not be available for his IPL team for the Play-offs, is set to join today.

Bangladesh team is scheduled to return to Oman on October 15, after which they will face Scotland in their first qualifier match on October 17 at the Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in Muscat.

The Tigers will then encounter co-hosts Oman on October 19, followed by Papua New Guinea on 21, with both games to be played at the aforementioned stadium.



Abahani striker Pushkor Khisha Mimo is ecstatic as he celebrates his late winner against Mohammedan during their 1-0 win in the eagerly anticipated fixture of the SIBL Club Hockey Tournament at the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The arch-rivals found it hard to break the opposition in a feisty affair before Mimo broke the deadlock in the last minute with a field goal, earning a second win in two matches for the Sky Blues.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Athletics dream with Imranur

ASHFAQ UL MUSHFIQ

After the inception of the South Asian Games in 1984, Bangladeshi athletes had produced stellar performances in the first three editions, with Shah Alam becoming the fastest man in 1985 and 1987.

Bimal Chandra Tarafder won the 200m sprint in 1993 while Mahbub Alam became the champion in the 100m sprint in the 1995 SA Games, taking Bangladesh's tally to five golds, nine silvers and 20 bronze medals in the first 11 years of the tournament.

However, such successes in athletics were not witnessed in the last couple of decades as Bangladesh has not been able to add to their gold tally for the past 32 years, even after participating in ten more Games during this period.

Accepting the liability of their decay and in hopes of bringing back the golden days, Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) introduced Imranur Rahman, a London-born Bangladeshi athlete, to trial in the 100m sprint and to participate for the country at home and abroad.

He was presented before the press at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

As per BAF, even though Imran's favourite event is 60m, the 28-year-old holds a track record of 10.27 seconds in the 100m sprint, 0.01 seconds faster than the

South Asian Games record set by Sri Lanka's Himasha Eashan in 2016 and 0.23 seconds faster than the latest timing of Mohammad Ismail, the current fastest sprinter in the country.

However, on his trial in the BKSP yesterday, Imran finished the 100 metres trial in 10.40 seconds (hand-timing). Both Imranur and the federation believe that the athlete can perform even better and bring glory to the country subject to regular training and grooming.

"My fitness is not at peak currently," Imranur said. "I came here to prove that I'm eligible to perform as a sprinter. With more training and conditioning, I will be ready for competitive races."

It was his love for the motherland that made the London-born Imran choose Bangladesh over England.

"Money is not the issue. I could also perform for the UK. But both my parents are from Bangladesh and I felt more connected. Hence, I decided to participate for Bangladesh," he added.

From footballers Jamal Bhuiyan and Tariq Kazi to England-born Bangladeshi swimmer Junayna Ahmed -- athletes of foreign descent have made a name for themselves representing the country over the years. Hence it would not be an audacious hope that Imran could also follow the same trajectory in future.



Young Spain up against France's forward threat

REUTERS, Turin



Spain and France meet at the San Siro stadium on Sunday in the Nations League final after a week in which the competition, in just its second edition, truly delivered on its promise.

UEFA launched the Nations League in 2018 amid much puzzlement about the format and scepticism about whether such a competition was needed or desired given the prominence of the European Championship and World Cup for national teams.

The argument from European soccer's governing body was that replacing friendly matches with competitive games in a mini-group format, with a Final Four tournament at the end, would deliver better entertainment value for fans and more meaningful action for the players.

This week's games, delivered in a rapid playoff format, certainly provided the quality and excitement fans crave and no-one who witnessed them, either in the venues or watching on television, would have considered they were in anyway 'meaningless' for the players.

In fact, in this concentrated format, the competition delivers the business end of a tournament without all the labouring through a group stage, the travel between multiple venues and the slow burn

build-up throughout a month of games.

Spain's 2-1 win over European champions Italy in Milan on Wednesday, followed by France's thrilling comeback to beat Belgium 3-2 in Turin a day later, were games which could have graced the latter stages of either of the established international tournaments.

Sunday's final promises more of



the same.

France are world champions and possess a front three that is arguably unmatched in the game — the brilliance and speed of Kylian Mbappe, the deadly finishing of Karim Benzema and the craft and guile of Antoine Griezmann.

Spain have been going through a transition period under coach Luis Enrique, not only in terms of personnel but also style, and against Italy they offered clear evidence of their direction of travel.

Luis Enrique has been willing to turn to the most inexperienced of young players, with Barcelona's 17-year-old midfielder Gavi enjoying an impressive debut against Italy, having made only three starts for his club Barcelona.

Injuries mean that Spain are without their recognised forwards in Alvaro Morata and Gerard Moreno this week, but in their absence Manchester City's Ferran Torres, nominally a winger, played in the middle and scored both goals against Italy.

While Spain still treasure possession, they transition through midfield much more quickly than in the past and have a refreshing directness in the wide areas where Mikel Oyarzabal and Pablo Sarabia shone against the Azzurri and another teenager, Yeremi Pino, impressed off the bench.

France coach Didier Deschamps has switched his team to a 3-4-3 formation with attacking wing backs in Benjamin Pavard and Theo Hernandez dangerous throughout against Belgium and it will be fascinating to see who takes control of the wide areas in the final.

At the end of Sunday night, one team will raise the Nations League trophy and while that silverware does not carry the prestige of the European Championship won by Italy in July, it will be hard for anyone to claim it is meaningless.



Argentina, Brazil in action again

AGENCIES

Group leaders Brazil, eight points adrift of second-placed Argentina in the 10-team South American World Cup qualifying table, have won all nine qualifiers so far. And they could make it 10 out of 10 when they take on hosts Colombia at the Estadio Metropolitan in the wee hours of Monday.

Their arch-rivals Argentina, who have been struggling to get close to a qualifying spot along with Brazil, would hope for faring better when they face Uruguay at home hours later.

In the 33 matches played between the two sides, Brazil hold a clear advantage over Colombia. The Selecao have won 20 games, lost three and drawn 10. The two countries last faced each other earlier this year, with Brazil beating Colombia 2-1.

Neymar is expected to return for Brazil after a suspension and he's the only good news for the team after a below-par performance at Venezuela, who led the match till the 71st minute.

Lautaro Martinez is set to start for Argentina against Uruguay after he had missed their 0-0 draw against Paraguay due to a muscle injury. Lionel Messi is reportedly carrying a slight knock in his left foot but is expected to start as well. Beyond the fact that Marcos Acuna recovered from the muscular discomfort sustained in the last game, there is a chance that Nicolas Tagliafico can appear in his place.

The previous meeting between the two teams took place in the Copa America this year and ended in a 1-0 victory for Argentina, with Guido Rodriguez scoring the winner.