

CHHETRI MOVES PAST PELE

Indian captain Sunil Chhetri broke legendary footballer Pele's record during their semifinal match of the SAFF Championship against Maldives on Wednesday. Pele had 77 goals for Brazil, and Chhetri surpassed the Brazilian legend in the 62nd minute of the encounter. Chhetri added another goal to his tally, bringing his total to 79 international goals as India beat the hosts 3-1. The Indian skipper is now the third highest active international goalscorer. Lionel Messi (80) and Cristiano Ronaldo (115) are the two active international goal scorers who are ahead of Chhetri. Chhetri has also become the world's joint sixth-highest goalscorer. Chhetri is currently the joint 6th highest goalscorer in the world.

--- Agencies



CONFIDENCE SHATTERED?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered their second successive loss in their last official warm-up fixture leading up to the T20 World Cup with a 33-run defeat against Ireland at the Tolerance Oval in Abu Dhabi yesterday. The defeat came hot on the heels of a defeat against Sri Lanka two days earlier despite the Tigers being in control of the match for a large period of the game.

Even as Bangladesh went into both these games without Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib Al Hasan, the team's think tank would now need to address whether the losses dented the much talked-about confidence that the Tigers gained from the recent series wins against Australia and New Zealand at home.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin had said that Bangladesh's World Cup preparations would begin in Oman during the announcement of the World Cup squad. Even taking that remark on face value, there has been a reversal in fate for some players in the practice matches which could render the confidence gained as null leading

into the World Cup Round 1.

The top-order batting was once again brought back into focus in these practice matches. While openers Liton Das and Mohammad Naim scored runs against Oman 'A' before the official warm-up matches, they failed to get up to gear on pitches more conducive to shot-making against Sri Lanka and Ireland. Chasing a target of 178 against Ireland yesterday -- usually a par

answers when under pressure with the bat.

Continuing on that theme of reversal in performances compared to Mirpur pitches, Soumya was amongst the runs again yesterday during a 30-ball 37. The left-hander had a torrid time at home against Australia but provided substance to the batting which led to Tigers eventually reaching 144 all-out. Except for Nurul Hasan, who struck a team-high 24-ball

the ball at home in recent few series. Yesterday, Mustafizur and Shoriful both went wicket-less, conceding 40 and 41 runs from their respective four overs while Nasum went for 33 in three overs, bagging the wicket of opener Paul Stirling.

Ireland's number three, Gareth Delany, took the attack to the cleaners during an unbeaten 50-ball 88, hitting eight sixes and three fours as Ireland posted 177 for three in 20 overs. Perhaps there was a lack of help from the surface but it may also be the case that the bowlers did not face enough challenge in recent series which could get them mentally ready to face onslaughts and come up with answers. The preparation time now is up and it remains to be seen whether preparation matches helped or dented their confidence.

The Tigers were scheduled to depart for Oman last night to play the Round 1 matches and with their first match against Scotland on October 17, not much time is available to recover confidence. The Tigers will now hope that Shakib and skipper Mahmudullah returning to the side can bring them that x-factor in the coveted tournament.

SCORES IN BRIEF	
IRELAND: 177 for 3 in 20 overs (Delany 88 not out, Balbirnie 25; Taskin 2-26, Mustafizur 0-40, Shoriful 0-41, Nasum 1-33)	
BANGLADESH: 144 all out in 20 overs (Soumya 37, Nurul 38, Afif 17, Mushfiqur 4; Young 2-21, Little 2-22)	
RESULT: Ireland won by 33 runs	

on such pitches -- the top-order succumbed with Liton and Naim perishing inside the first two overs. Mushfiqur Rahim's form has been subdued since returning to the side in the New Zealand series and yesterday the batsman departed for a run-a-ball four. As the most key member in the middle-order, Mushfiqur's lack of runs directly correlates to a lack of

38, not much else came from the lower middle-order with Shamim Hossain, Afif Hossain and Mahedi Hasan unable to play meaningful knocks.

The biggest setback could be the dent in the bowlers' confidence. Pacers Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam and spinner Nasum Ahmed had been key to the Tigers' potency with

The referee 'killed our dream'

SPORTS REPORTER FROM MALE



"We had been waiting for this moment for the last 16 years but you killed our dream," Tapu Barman shouted towards Uzbek referee Akhrol Riskullaev soon after Bangladesh's encounter against Nepal, as well as their SAFF Championship campaign, drew to a close on Wednesday at Maldives National Football Stadium in Male.

After the final whistle was blown, the rest of the men in red and green converged on the referee and his assistants to protest against the controversial penalty decision that forced Bangladesh to play out a 1-1 draw in their final group match, which ended up barring them from playing the much-desired final of the regional football extravaganza.

"Anjan Bista [who earned the penalty and converted it] instead, should've been cautioned for diving and was supposed to be sent off for a second booking but the referee did the complete opposite," Tapu

"If it was Saad who had indeed committed the foul, then it would have been normal for him to get the booking, so it all indicates how properly the referee had witnessed the whole incident," said Rupu.

Before the dubious penalty decision, another refereeing decision had the goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico sent off, which shifted the balance of the game against Bangladesh.

"I believe we were forced to draw the match, something I won't forget in my rest of life. I don't regret getting the marching order but I just can't accept the decision [penalty] of the referee," said the talented goalkeeper, who had put up an impressive display prior to receiving the marching order.

Forward Suman Reza informed that the players and officials were all completely devastated post-match.

"We all had sleepless nights and our spirit remained lost until morning. In the dressing room after the match, we were all speechless or in tears," said Suman, the goal scorer of the game for Bangladesh.



There was clear daylight between Bishwanath Ghosh (L) and Anjan Bista (C) during the penalty incident.

PHOTO: TV SCREENGRAB

shared his experience with The Daily Star on Wednesday night.

"I even misbehaved with Bishwanath Ghosh but later I apologised to him after watching the replay because it was not his fault rather the referee's.

"Before the match, I briefed all the players regarding how crucial this tie was for all of us. We almost achieved our target as a unit but were forced to be eliminated," said a teary-eyed Tapu.

Bangladesh's team manager Satyajit Das Rupu presented an interesting and thought-provoking observation, revolving around the penalty decision.

"After watching the replay of the decision [penalty], we saw that Saad Uddin was the closest to the Nepal player [who fell] but surprisingly, the referee showed the yellow card to Bishwanath.

Suman also cannot get over the penalty awarded to Nepal.

"A lot of scuffles occur inside the box but the referee ignores it generally. Yesterday, the referee could have avoided it because the Nepalese player failed to collect the ball which was drifting away much higher from his reach while any Bangladeshi players hardly pushed him," said the young striker of Uttar Baridhara.

Midfielder Mohammad Ibrahim expressed his frustrations as well.

"Before the start of the match, coach [Oscar Bruzon] warned us about the referee telling us that we won't be allowed to win and it happened eventually," Ibrahim said. "The final was supposed to be between Bangladesh and India and we had a good opportunity in the final, especially the way we played against them in the group stage."

Dhoni v Morgan tactical showdown in IPL final

AFP, Dubai



The Indian Premier League final on Friday will be a clash between two of cricket's finest tacticians when M.S. Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings take on Eoin Morgan's Kolkata Knight Riders.

Between them they have won every major title on offer.

Morgan led England to victory in the 2019 50-over World Cup. Dhoni masterminded India's wins. He was India's captain when they won the Twenty20 World Cup in 2007 and the 2011 50-over title.

Neither has been a big run scorer in this year's pandemic-hit tournament,

teams, but went on to win five out of seven games to reach the playoffs.

They knocked out Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore in the eliminator and then Delhi Capitals in the second qualifier on Wednesday to reach the final. Kolkata advisor David Hussey, the former Australian international, said Morgan has made a huge impact on the team's results, aided by the break during the IPL's suspension when a coronavirus surge hit India in April.

"I truly believe that Morgan is captaining really well, he's marshalling the troops, he's tactically very clever," Hussey said after the win over Delhi.

Chennai are still smarting from their failure to reach the playoffs last season.



which forced it to be moved to the United Arab Emirates.

But Dhoni's Chennai, three-time champions, have been the team to beat this year, the first to make the playoffs.

The 40-year-old, who will be a mentor for India at the T20 World Cup starting Sunday, has been his usual unflappable self as the tension mounts.

"Purely from the captaincy point of view who can handle the pressure best, probably has to be Dhoni," admitted Gautam Gambhir, the former India batsman who led Kolkata to their two previous IPL triumphs.

Morgan's Kolkata resumed the tournament seventh out of the eight

But Dhoni says key players made use of their time to improve their performances.

"That is the reason why we have come back strongly this season," said the legendary Indian.

Morgan knows he faces a classic battle in Dubai but knows the IPL can throw up surprises.

"We would like to keep going, playing against CSK, one of the best franchises in IPL history. Anything can happen," said the England leader.

WATCH ON GTV & STAR SPORTS HD 1
LIVE FROM 8:00 PM



MOHAMMEDAN AWOL AS MARINERS FACE ABAHANI IN FINAL

Mariner Youngs Club got walkover in the second semifinal of the SIBL Club Cup Hockey Tournament after their opponents, Mohammedan Sporting Club, decided not to show up for yesterday's match, protesting the non-withdrawal of one-match suspension to their key forward Russel Mahmud Jimmy. The Black and Whites had asked the hockey federation to withdraw the suspension, which the veteran forward had received for assaulting an umpire and clashing with opposition players during their group stage match against Bangladesh Police. Mariners will play the final tomorrow against defending champions Abahani, who thrashed Sonali Bank 6-2 in the first semifinal.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

A family affair for PNG

AFP, Sydney



Charles Amini's two brothers, his parents and a grandfather all played cricket for Papua New Guinea, and there's even a stadium named after the family.

But he is the only one to reach a World Cup -- and happily claims bragging rights.

The leg-spinning all-rounder is a crucial cog in the Pacific nation's team at their first global tournament, the T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates and Oman, a feat he calls "a very big deal".



Cricket runs deep in his family, with brothers Chris and Colin, father Charles senior, mother Kune and grandfather Bryan all representing PNG.

So entrenched are they in the sport that the country's main cricket stadium in the capital Port Moresby, Amini Park, is named after them.

PNG open their account against co-hosts Oman on October 17.

"The match the boys are looking forward to is Bangladesh," said Vala. "It will be really good for us to test ourselves against a top-quality team and see where we are at against the best teams in the world."