

Hider, Naeem star on opening day

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Left-arm seamer Abu Hider bagged his third five-wicket haul in first-class cricket, helping Walton central Zone bundle out Islami Bank East Zone for 245 in their first innings on the first day of the second-round match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In reply, Central Zone ended the day on four without loss with Mizanur Rahman and Mohammad Mithun set to resume the second day.

A lack of patience from the East Zone batters after being asked to bat on a Mirpur sporting pitch was a defining feature of their innings. Despite getting set at the crease, a majority were guilty of throwing away their wickets. Apart from Hider, left-arm spinner Hasan Murad took three wickets and pacer Robiul Hoque scalped up two wickets for Central Zone. Pacer Robiul removed both the openers, with Mohammad Ashrafal departing on a duck after he was caught at slip while going for a drive away from his body.

Young Shahadat Hossain Dipu then paired with skipper Imrul Kayes and added 51 runs for the second wicket before the latter became Robiul's second victim, handing a straightforward catch to fine leg off a loose delivery.

Hider then picked up his first wicket, removing Irfan Shukkur (14),

before Murad took a return catch to dismiss Afif Hossain for a duck.

Shahadat looked solid and reached his fifty off 99 balls with a gorgeous cover drive to Hider but he too perished as he was trapped leg before by Murad after scoring 72 off 132 balls.

After that, Hider ensured his first game of the season would count as he rattled through the East Zone lower-middle order and ended with figures of five for 93. Nayeem Hasan fought a lone battle with the bat in the end for East Zone and was unbeaten on 40.

At the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, veteran Naeem Islam struck his 28th first-class ton as BCB North Zone ended the first day on 246 for four against BCB South Zone.

North Zone were initially in a spot of bother after being asked to bat as off-spinner Nahidul Islam removed openers Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Parvez Hossain Emon for ducks. Left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed then trapped Junaid Siddique leg before to leave North Zone struggling on 24 for three before Naeem and skipper Marshall Ayub steadied the ship, adding ninety for the fourth wicket.

However, Marshall was dismissed for 47 and Naeem then paired with Mahidul Islam Ankon and added an unbeaten 132-run stand for the fifth wicket. Naeem remained not out on 126 runs off 297 balls, smashing 14 fours and a six, while Ankon was unbeaten on 53.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Girls fly into final

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Hattricks from Afeida Khandaker and Shaheda Akter Ripa powered hosts Bangladesh to a massive 12-0 win over Sri Lanka in the final group match of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

A third win from four matches steered Bangladesh to top of the five-team tournament with 10 points and set up a final against second-placed India, who beat Nepal 1-0 in the day's first match to confirm a final berth and leave Bangladesh needing at least a point

against Sri Lanka to topple Nepal.

However, the hosts not only secured three points, they recorded the biggest win of the ongoing tournament, the final for which is scheduled on Tuesday.

An outright triumph over Sri Lanka, who conceded 16 goals in their three previous matches, was anticipated to favour Bangladesh and Golam Rabbani Choton's charges toyed with the Islanders, giving them a lesson in football in front of a few hundred.

Bangladesh also had perfect practice in scoring goals ahead of the final as six players -- Afeida, Ripa, Rituparna Chakma, Anuching Mogini, Akhi Khatun and Unnoti Khatun -- got their names on the scoresheet.

Bangladesh took just two minutes to break the deadlock, with Anuching Mogini tapping in a rebound from close range as a powerful shot from Shahida Akter Ripu ricocheted her way after hitting the crossbar.

With Bangladesh pressing to widen the margin, Rituparna availed a defense-splitting pass from captain Maria Manda and stayed calm before placing to the far post in the seventh minute while fledgling Shahida Akter Ripa showed dribbling skills from the right flank to make it 3-0 in the 16th minute.

Ritu's brilliance shone again when she coolly lobbed a long ball over the Sri Lankan goalkeeper two minutes from the break before

Akhi wrote her name on the scoresheet with a four-yarder that kissed the top right corner of the post on its way in two minutes into the second half.

Ripa, who also rattled the crosspiece once in the first half, struck her second and team's sixth goal with a volley from a perfect Akhi cross in the 49th minute.

Defender Afeida Akter joined the goal feast as well, hitting all three of her goals from long range in the 54th, 70th and 84th minute before Anuching struck her second in the 77th minute.

Ripa also completed her treble in the 87th minute before substitute Unnoti Khatun struck Bangladesh's 11th goal in the 86th minute to complete the rout.



Hosts finish empty-handed

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Hosts Bangladesh completed their first-ever Asian Champions Trophy campaign in fifth position among five teams following a 6-2 defeat to former world champions Pakistan in the last pool match at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday.

Pakistan, who needed a point to qualify for the last four, finished third and the margin of victory helped them avoid defending champions India in the semifinals. Pakistan grabbed third position by virtue of superior goal difference over Japan, who in the day's first match suffered a 6-0 defeat to table-toppers India.

Pakistan will take on second-placed South Korea while India will square off against Japan in the semifinals, billed for Tuesday at the same venue.

Bangladesh, who conceded 23 goals and scored four goals in four matches, finished without a single point.

Despite knowing that a win would take them to the semifinals, the men in red and green took to the field with a defensive



strategy and kept their opponents at bay initially.

The charges of Iman Gobinathan Krishnamurthy raised their hopes of even an upset victory after taking the lead against the run of play when Arshad Hossain scooped home in the 13th minute after Rashed Mahmud Jimmy stopped a fierce hit from Shohanur Rahman.

But the lead lasted only for a minute as Pakistan hit back strongly with a close-range strike from Nadeem Ahmed. Since that point

nothing went in favour of Bangladesh, who could not match Pakistan's pace and pressing hockey. Instead, Bangladesh's defence was exposed badly in face of crisp passing from Pakistan in the attacking third.

With Bangladesh struggling to negotiate with the opposition players, Pakistan took the lead three minutes into the second quarter when Ahmed Ajaz darted into the circle from the right almost without any challenge before beating goalkeeper Biplob Khujur with a diagonal hit while Arfaz and captain Umar Bhutta netted one goal apiece in the 24th and 26th minutes to shatter Bangladesh's confidence before going to the break with a comfortable 4-1 lead.

After resumption, Bangladesh came out of the sit-back strategy to launch attacks down the two flanks but were well resisted by Pakistan, who widened the margin through a penalty-corner strike from Muhammad Razzak in the 34th minute. One minute later, Bangladesh pulled one goal back with Arshad Hossain tapping in a diagonal hit from Ashrafal Islam but Ajaz restored the margin again with a tap-in in the 38th minute. The home team then collectively defended the area to keep the defeat to a reasonable margin.



Pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who had suffered a strain during Bangladesh's second T20I against Pakistan last month and was subsequently ruled out of the tour of New Zealand, returned to training yesterday for the first time. The left-arm pacer is yet to gain full fitness and curbed his intensity in yesterday's training when he bowled to T20I captain Mahmudullah Riyad at the net.

PHOTO: BCB

Tigers' Covid-19 results due today

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The results of the Covid-19 tests that the Bangladesh cricketers underwent in New Zealand yesterday are expected to arrive today and a clean chit would enable to Tigers to get preparations underway for the two-match Test series scheduled to begin from January 1.

Bangladesh will be allowed group training for the first time since landing on December 10 if they return negative tests.

However, one positive case can complicate matters further and would concern both boards, especially given the tight timeframe.

"We are feeling fine after our last Covid-19 test today [Sunday]. If the results come out negative, we will be allowed to practice from the day after tomorrow [Tuesday]. We all are excited about this and looking forward to it," left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam said yesterday.

The turbulence began after Bangladesh's spin-bowling coach Rangana Herath tested positive for Covid-19 in Christchurch after joining the team from Sri Lanka. It then came to light that New Zealand's first case of the Omicron variant was found on the same flight from Dubai to New Zealand that the Bangladesh team was traveling on, forcing the New Zealand Health Ministry to take strict measures.

In line with guidelines from the New Zealand Health Ministry, the visitors were asked to stay at the Managed Isolation Center for three further days of strict room quarantine despite originally being scheduled to move to a team hotel and start outdoor practice from December 17.

"We all are doing well. We have been divided into two groups and were given yellow bands. We are able to see each other twice a day while maintaining social distance and it feels good to see each other and talk for a while," Shoriful added.



PHOTO: STAR