



Nahida spins Tigresses to big win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team continued their dominance in the ongoing Commonwealth Games Women's Cricket competition qualifiers, beating Kenya by 80 runs in their second game in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

After being sent in to bat, Bangladesh were in a spot of bother early and were struggling at 50 for six. But a world record seventh-wicket stand of 75 unbeaten runs between Ritu Moni (39*) and Salma Khatun (33*) helped the Tigresses to post 125 for six in 20 overs.

In reply, Kenya were all out for just 45 runs, thanks to Nahida Akter's best bowling figure by a Bangladeshi in T20 format of 12 for five as Bangladesh managed to bundle out their opponents below the 50-run mark for the second time. The Tigresses, who will play against Scotland in their third game on January 23, earlier beat Malaysia by eight wickets after dismissing the hosts for 49 runs.



(L-R) Members of Chattogram Challengers and Sylhet Sunrisers franchises – Ryad Emrit, Ravi Bopara, Kesrick Williams, Mervin Dyllon, Chadwick Walton and Kennar Lewis – indulge in a friendly chat in the middle of their practice sessions at the BCB Academy Ground in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Focus on safety as BPL launch draws near

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite the latest Covid-19 surge, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has set aside certain health protocols in order to manage the month-long Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), slated to begin from January 21. However, the BCB wanted all the players inside the bio-secure environment of their hotels yesterday but certain realities saw them push back their plans.

The Omicron variant of Covid-19 has proven to be more contagious than other variants and the BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury issued a word of caution to the franchises, reminding everyone concerned that success depends on awareness. Several franchises have had promotional events and jersey unveilings till now, with the BCB instructing them to keep things in check.

There have been a few cases in the BPL so far, although the exact number remains classified information. The BPL has a Covid-19 committee and the tournament will be played according to the guidelines set by the committee.

"We are testing each and every participant. And those who will return a negative test and also those who have double vaccine doses, will enter

the bubble," Debashish told the media yesterday after the second day of tests and informed that the bio-bubble setup is being replaced by Managed Event Environment (MEE).

He urged the franchises and their officials to maintain protocols during the events.

"All stakeholders, franchise officials and players have an important role to play and we can't succeed without them.

"Of course, we have to be more aware in places where it is crowded. Our stakeholders will have to be more careful if we want to finish the tournament successfully," Debashish added while mentioning that the number of cases so far do not put the tournament at risk.

With the beginning of the BPL edging closer, the teams are also finalising their setup. Star-studded Comilla Victorians, handed the captaincy to experienced Imrul Kayes. With Faf du Plessis starring for Comilla, Imrul dictated that the South African was sharing his experience with

the local players.

"He's a big star. He shared his experiences from IPL and also how he bats in other tournaments. I also talked to him about our wickets and what the team plan will be. Since he'll be batting with Liton [Das], I shared some info. His experience means we need his help on the field," informed Imrul.

Meanwhile, Khulna Tigers coach Lance Klusener hopes to get the best out of his local players.

"I don't believe that in Bangladesh, the BPL is won with overseas players. It's won with local players," Klusener opined.

One big local star who has found it hard is Mashrafe Bin Mortaza. The former Bangladesh ODI captain returned to practice yesterday for Dhaka, but once again found his injury aggravating enough and had to stop bowling after a few attempts. As the tournament gears towards its beginning, the franchises and the BCB will be hoping the tournament goes smoothly amidst the pandemic with the best local stars and overseas players available.



U-19s take on Canada today

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a crushing seven-wicket defeat in their opening game of the ICC Under-19 World Cup against England, defending champions Bangladesh will be looking to bounce back when they take on Canada in their second Group A fixture in Basseterre, West Indies today.

The Rakibul Hasan-led side were disappointing in their first game, bundling out for 97 runs in 35.2 overs, a target easily chased down by England.

Head coach Navid Newaz will be hoping to correct the mistakes in batting from the first game as the young Tigers looked shaky against the English pacers and surrendered meekly in the end. Canada also lost their opening game against England by 106 runs.

Osaka all smiles

AFP, MELBOURNE

Naomi Osaka said she drew on past experience in a composed beating of Madison Brengle on Wednesday to move closer to a blockbuster Australian Open clash with top seed Ashleigh Barty.

The Japanese 13th seed and defending champion raced through the first set but had to work hard in the second on Rod Laver Arena before eliminating the 54th-ranked American 6-0, 6-4 in 65 minutes to make the third round.

"I remember when I was younger, I would watch her play in the pro circuit, and she was kind of notorious for getting every ball back," she said of Brengle.

"So I just kind of took those memories from back then and tried to tell myself, you're probably going to make a lot of unforced errors this match, but it's something you have to do because you can't let her dictate you in this match in the way that she would try to, like, keep the ball in play.

"For me, I feel like it was really important that even though I made a lot of errors at the net today, I thought it was really important to keep stepping in."

Osaka will meet another unseeded American next after Amanda Anisimova upset Tokyo Olympic champion and 22nd seed Belinda Bencic 6-2, 7-5.

The four-time Grand Slam champion, who has won two of the past three Australian Opens, wasted little energy on Brengle in the first set.

She immediately broke to take control and raced through in just 20 minutes, with her opponent hitting zero winners and managing just 10 points.

Laughing and smiling on court, Osaka held serve to open the second set before Brengle won a huge round of applause by finally getting on the scoreboard for 1-1.

It lifted the American and Osaka faced a harder fight, with her unforced error count mounting.

But the Japanese star regrouped to secure the win.



Japan's Naomi Osaka hits a return against Madison Brengle of the US during their second round women's singles match of the Australian Open in Melbourne on Wednesday.

Cabrera aims for competitiveness

SPORTS REPORTER

Newly-appointed head coach Javier Cabrera wants to make Bangladesh national football team a competitive side in the coming days.

Following a meeting with the National Teams Committee headed by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice president Kazi Nabil Ahmed, the 37-year-old Spanish coach was introduced before a crowded media conference at the BFF House yesterday, four days after his arrival in Dhaka.

The Spaniard is expected to implement a possession-based brand of football. However, instead of making any promise to produce results in the FIFA friendlies or international tournaments, Cabrera told the media that his foremost target is to make Bangladesh national football team a competitive side over his 11-month tenure.

"I think it's beautiful and a big challenge for me. My intention is to create a competitive team from the beginning and to create a proper high-performance structure along with all other necessary areas involved," said Cabrera, who believes his eight-year tenure in India will give him some advantage in Bangladesh.

"I think we will try to put the technical, scouting, analysis, medical performance areas together to create that globally integrated structure, in order to get the best performance out of the national team."

Cabrera will begin his work by observing the training facilities at the club level, starting with Abahani, from Friday. Afterwards, he will proceed to watch the Bangladesh Premier League matches alongside BFF technical director Paul Smalley to scout players for the FIFA Window in March and Asian Cup Qualifiers in June.

"I need to go step by step and face each FIFA window and Asian Cup Qualifiers. When the



Qualifiers come, let's see what point we are at. We have to make sure that we are able to compete in any stage, be it Asian Qualifiers, SAFF or FIFA window," dictated Cabrera, who was quite impressed with national team's display during the SAFF Championship in Maldives and the four-nation tournament in Sri Lanka but he feels that the Bangladesh team lacked cohesion.

"We have to be competitive. The main objective is to win the match but if you can't create a competitive squad, that is not going to happen," stated the UEFA Pro-licensed coach.

"To be successful, I need to create a high-performance structure and a football identity that we want, and be able to communicate and transmit to the players what we want to achieve and what our common plan is. That is the main thing.

"The players need to be clear in what we want from them and how we can be successful together. My responsibility is to create confidence in players whenever they jump into the game. The players have to know what individual roles are functional on the ground and that is how I'm going to make the team competitive," Cabrera concluded.

What to WATCH

GTV

ICC U19 World Cup 2022
Bangladesh vs Canada
Live from 07:00 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 2
ICC U19 World Cup 2022
Pakistan vs Afghanistan
Live from 07:00 pm

T SPORTS

LA LIGA
Getafe vs Granada
Live from 12:00 am
(Friday)

TEN 2 & SONY SIX

Australian Open 2022
Round 1
Live from 06:00 am
onwards

PHOTO: AFP