

Ram Krishna, Diya strike gold

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Ram Krishna Saha retained the title of the men's individual recurve bow event at the Teer 13th National Archery Championships, handing a 6-4 defeat to Rakib Miha in the final at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi yesterday.

Meanwhile, Diya Siddique regained the women's individual recurve bow title after beating teammate Fahmid Sultana Disha 6-0.

Diya and Disha, along with Umay Ching, later struck gold in the women's recurve bow team event



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with a straightforward 6-0 win over the Bangladesh Army Archery Club.

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In the mixed recurve event, Bangladesh Police Archery Club beat Bangladesh Ansar 5-4 to bag the gold medal.

In compound events, Bangladesh Police Archery Club grabbed gold in the men's compound team event with a 231-228 win over BKSP.

Bangladesh Police Archery club also secured the gold medal in the women's compound team event by beating Bangladesh Ansar 214-13. But the gold medal in the mixed compound event went to Bangladesh Army Archery Club, who beat Bangladesh Police Archery Club 154-153.

‘We want all our bowlers to become world class’

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South Africa has historically remained the toughest of places for away teams due to the pace and seam-friendly conditions that the hosts exploit to great effect and Bangladesh's track record reflects that, with the Tigers having lost all six of their Tests in South Africa in the past.

However, the scenario appears to be quite different ahead of the first of the two-match Test series starting in Durban from tomorrow. A historic Test win at Mount Maunganui against New Zealand earlier this year and a maiden ODI series victory against South Africa has provided the Tigers with extra confidence.

“We definitely have the confidence that we can win matches and we will play to win. We don't have control over the result but our intensity will reflect our desire to win,” a confident Taskin Ahmed said yesterday.

The Bangladesh pace attack will once again have to take responsibility in the upcoming Test series, where apart from Taskin, Mount Maunganui hero Ebadot Hossain and Shoriful Islam are expected to play crucial roles in the pace-bowling unit.

“To be honest, all the fast bowlers have been working hard over the past two years or so and it's going well for us. But we still need to improve a lot. We want all our bowlers to become world class and we have that ability as



Domingo banking on new-found confidence

Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo expected the upcoming Test series in South Africa to be difficult but said the Tigers are improving which gives them hope.

“We take the positive from the ODI series but it's a different format. We have a lot of improving to do in this format so we expect a very tough series against South Africa,” Domingo said.

“We drew the Test series at New Zealand. South Africa are a tough side to beat at home. We do come in with a bit of confidence. I do feel that our Test match cricket is improving along with the results. We have a more balanced team and we know our best players are in the Test match format.”

well. We are bonding and our coaching staff is also helping us,” Taskin added.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo was wary of the threat from the hosts but added that the Test squad's 10-day conditioning camp in Cape Town prior to the series had helped them a lot in adapting to the surface.

“We had great preparation in Cape Town, where we trained on similar wickets [to what we expect in the Test] and the team benefited from that. Although the wicket here will be bouncy, there won't be too much pace,” Domingo said.

Dean Elgar's hosts will be without four of their top pacers as the likes of Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje and Marco Jansen will miss the Test series in order to take part in the Indian Premier League.

It will be crucial for both teams to secure valuable points in the World Test Championship and the hosts will be under pressure to secure the maximum points from the home series before travelling to England later this year.

“They still have depth in the side because they have got some young players, especially in the pace battery. They [South Africa]

will be under some pressure as those players will be looking to secure a place in the team. That is an added advantage for us but they will still represent South Africa which means they will pick the best players to face us,” Domingo added.

After the maiden series win in ODIs against South Africa, the question was asked whether the Tigers were also hoping to seal another historic win in the Test series. Domingo replied: “I didn't create history, the boys did it. South Africa are very good at home and it will be a tough series for us, but we are here to compete.”

Cabrera finds positives despite missed chances

ATIQUE ANAM FROM SYLHET

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera declined to blame his players, instead claimed that the team has made good progress and are adopting to his ideas, following a goalless draw against Mongolia in a FIFA friendly at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday.

The 37-year-old Spaniard, who saw his side suffer a 2-0 defeat against Maldives away from home last week in his first assignment, said a win would have been a fairer result but he was satisfied nevertheless with the effort of his charges.

“I think we should be happy and proud of our players today,” Cabrera said. “We achieved what we wanted, which was to have initiative with the ball.”

For a change, Bangladesh dominated an international match in terms of possession and creating chances, but none of those efforts managed to find the target, either through profligacy of the strikers or the lack of precision in the attacking third. Simon Reza, the top local scorer in the league last season, was to blame for spurning at least two gilt-edged chances.

The coach, however, was happy with the effort and wasn't too concerned with the outcome.

“I'm really happy with the team that we have, with the forwards that we have. We had many chances today and that's a really strong thing,” the



Spaniard said. “The crucial part was converting the chances but I'm happy with the work the strikers put in today.”

There were moments in the match when Bangladesh players seemed to have too much of the ball, but little idea of what to do with it as the team seemed to try high-pressing football against an opponent happy to defend. Generally used to defending and playing on the counter-attack, the players failed to make a smooth transition to keeping possession of the ball with incisive passing.

It seemed like an odd mixture of old school long-ball football with an attempt to build the game from the back and passing the ball around. The outcome was neither very effective nor pleasing for the eyes. The coach, though, believes the players are making good progress in adapting to his style.

“I think we have made a lot of progress. These players are already playing at a good level and many of them have already adapted the style of football I want them to play,” the coach said.

Even the substitutions that the coach made – Nabib Newaz Jibon, who is more used to playing at a support striker's position for centre-forward Sumon, attacking midfielder Biplu Ahmed for the distributor Jamal Bhuyan – raised some eyebrows.

Eventually those substitutions failed to make any impact, but the coach said he felt the situation demanded those substitutions and he was happy with the performance of those who came in.

‘Need to improve our mentality first’

Nigar Sultana Joty captained Bangladesh in their ODI World Cup debut and showed maturity as captain as the Tigers got their first win at the World Cup against Pakistan. Although Bangladesh did not get any further wins, Nigar divulged her sweetest memory from the tournament as well as what was required to take things to the next level in an interview with The Daily Star's Ashfaq Al Mushfiq. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): You wanted to make memories during Bangladesh's maiden Women's ODI World Cup. What were your most memorable moments?

Nigar Sultana Joty (NS): I think we made many memories and there are more good memories than bad. Salma [Khatun] apu's and Rumana Ahmed's 50-wicket milestone in ODIs and Fargana Hoque Pinky's 1000 runs in the format and scoring our highest ODI total are very sweet memories. A first World Cup is always very special. Even though we couldn't perform overall, the bowlers performed tremendously and it drew praise from the world cricketing fraternity.

DS: What is the biggest lesson from the World Cup?

NS: We have gained a lot of experience from the World Cup. I believe the batters have to run more on a stage of such gravity. If we can post a good score on the board, I believe the bowling unit we have can always put in the effort to defend it. So, we need to score more runs and the batters need to be more skilled. We also need to work on how to bat in pressure situations against big teams.

DS: What are the issues you want to focus on to improve the batting unit?

NS: I think we need to improve our mentality first. We already have skills, but we need to work on taking more singles because we gave away too many dot balls.

We should also put extra focus on power-hitting because having a few power-hitter would be very beneficial for the team.

DS: Do you have any fond memories with players from other teams?

NS: The bio-secure bubble forced teams to stay separate so most of the conversations we had were during matches. My favourite memory was meeting my all-time favourite wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy during our match against Australia. I follow her style a lot. We had a conversation and I told her I followed her style and was her fan. She replied that she was also my fan. I was surprised and asked why. She replied: “Why not? I've been following you for a long time and you've been leading your team very well and you've been keeping and batting very well. So I think I am becoming your fan!” To me, it was a sweet memory.

DS: What do you see in the future of women's cricket in Bangladesh?

NS: We have played a lot of T20Is in the past but the amount of ODIs is very less. Obviously, practice and camping is very important but we need to play more competitive matches so that we can experience tougher situations and sharpen our skills. The more matches we play, the more composed we will be in these situations. I am confident that if we strengthen our batting unit, we can play in the semifinals of the next ODI World Cup.

