

Nahid breaks Ahmed's 17-year-old record

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahmudunnabi Nahid broke a record that stood for the past 17 years, clocking in at 25.69 seconds in the 50m butterfly event of the Bangabandhu 31st National Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Championships at the Syed Nazrul Islam National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

The previous mark of 25.74 seconds was set by Jewel Ahmed in 2005.

Nahid -- also a part of Bangladesh Navy's 4x100 freestyle relay team that broke a record on the opening day of ongoing championships -- finished well ahead of the others. Anik Islam of Bangladesh Navy won silver with a time of 26.10 seconds (hand-time) while Titu Miah of Bangladesh Army bagged bronze with a time of 26.70 seconds.

Nahid believes he was reaping the rewards of the hard work in the national camp since November.

"I was confident I could make a national record. I think this record should have been broken much earlier," Nahid told reporters.

"I know my time is not good enough for a gold in the South Asian Games. But if the national camp continues going as it is, I believe I can improve," Nahid, who won bronze in the last SA Games in Kathmandu, added.

Former record-holder Jewel Ahmed shared the opinion that the record should have been broken earlier. "As new records were being set year after year, I wondered who would break mine," Jewel said.

Four other national records were broken on the second day of the championships by Kajal Mia (200m individual medley), Jewel Ahmed (200m backstroke), Juthi Akhter (200m backstroke) and Sadi Mohammad Mohsin (one-meter springboard).



Bangladesh suffered heavy defeats in all six Tests they played in South Africa. The Tigers suffered innings defeats in five of those Tests.

South Africa have four uncapped players in their current Test squad. In 2017, they fielded two debutants in the Potchefstroom Test, the most against Bangladesh.

In the four Tests against Bangladesh, South Africa Test skipper Dean Elgar has scored 405 runs -- the highest among the players from the current squads of the two sides.

Elgar, who scored his career-best 199 against Bangladesh in Potchefstroom back in 2017, also boasts a staggering 101.25 average against the Tigers which is also the most among players of the two sides.

Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim is just behind Elgar in the top-scorers' list. The right-handed batter scored 331 runs in the eight Tests he played against the Proteas.

With eight wickets in two Tests, Keshav Maharaj is the active South African player with the most number of wickets against Bangladesh in the format.



'We need to start from scratch'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be looking to continue their upward trend in Tests away from home after the Mount Maunganui triumph earlier this year against New Zealand, with a confident Mominul Haque and Co. unsurprisingly eyeing a maiden Test win against South Africa in their den.

The first of the two-match Test series, starting in Durban from today, is expected to test Bangladesh's ability to continue to follow the right process, especially given the backdrop of an ODI series win against the Proteas.

More importantly, valuable points in the ICC World Test Championship will also be up for grabs.

"We will play to win this series but to do that it's important to follow the process. If we can dominate and play well over five days, the result will definitely come our way. When you come to play a full series and win the first series as we did in the ODI series, confidence levels increase," Mominul told the media during the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"However, there are differences in the red and white-ball formats and we have to start



"There's no point in thinking too much about the wicket. It could aid the pacers but still be good for batting. Spinners may come into play as the match progresses."

MOMINUL HAQUE
Bangladesh Test captain

fresh. We need to put forward what process we followed in New Zealand and we need to work on the mistakes from that series. Overall we are confident, but we need to start from scratch."

Once again, Bangladesh's rising pace-bowling department is expected to play a major role in the upcoming Test series, especially on a seam-friendly Durban track. The forecast also suggests rain for the first four days, which will surely provide extra assistance.

Taskin Ahmed has been in terrific touch, getting player of the series in the ODI series, while the hero of the Mount Maunganui

Test victory, Ebadot Hossain, and left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam are expected to play vital roles.

"It is important for fast bowlers to perform if a team wants to win Test matches abroad. If they can give early breakthroughs and bowl in the right areas, it becomes easy. A few of our pacers have played in the ODI series and had a good rest. I think our pacers are in a relaxed mood," Mominul added.

However, a lot will depend on how the Bangladeshi batters deal with a rather inexperienced South African bowling line-up that will be without premier fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje and Marco Jansen.

"We have worked on the short-ball strategy. When nothing happens, opponents tend to come out hard with the short-ball strategy. But that doesn't last for more than ten overs so it's important how we handle that pressure," he said.

The Tigers will miss star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan after he opted to skip the Test series for personal reasons but the return of experienced opener Tamim Iqbal will surely provide stability at the top alongside youngster Mahmudul Hasan Joy.

'Thank you for all you did for us'

AGENCIES

Shane Warne was remembered as "mesmerising" and a "genius" at a state memorial service in Melbourne Wednesday attended by tens of thousands of spectators and legendary players, with music superstars Elton John and Chris Martin performing by video link.

The well-loved Australian cricketer died at a luxury resort in Thailand this month from a suspected heart attack, aged 52, eliciting shock and grief from his millions of fans as well as prime ministers, rock stars and fellow players.

The larger-than-life "king of spin" was honoured at a two-hour service at the Melbourne Cricket Ground with more than 50,000 free tickets handed out. It was beamed live to cricket grounds across Australia and watched around the world.

"Shane said of himself, 'I smoked, I drank and I played a little cricket,'" Keith Warne said in a eulogy at his son's home ground, where he took a hat-trick and his 700th test wicket.

"Mate, your mother and I can't imagine a life without you. You have been taken too soon and our hearts are broken. Thank you for all you did for us."

Warne's son Jackson said there was "no other better place in the whole world" to hold the memorial than the famous MCG where Warne made so many memories, including a hat-trick in an Ashes Test against England and taking his 700th Test wicket.

"It's very special for a lot of us, especially our family," he said.

A stand at the ground was officially re-named after Warne, who in the eyes of many is second only to Bradman in Australia's long list of sporting greats.

Some fans attending wore their cricket kit, while others donned Warne t-shirts with emotions running high as they snapped pictures in front of his statue outside the venue.

One woman showed off her new thigh tattoo of Warne, which she had done last week.

Mark Taylor, who captained him for Australia, said the huge interest showed "how admired Shane Warne was".

"The fact

he had that rough diamond character about him made him what people like to see. People like to see something a bit different, and they got that with Warnie," Taylor told reporters.

Fellow Australian captain Allan Border called him "a genius".

"I don't know how the Oxford dictionary defined genius, but he's as

close as I've been to genius, the way he developed his game and just transcended everything," he said. "He's left us with a flood of memories and such great times."

Current Australian Test captain Pat Cummins released a moving tribute online, reading a poignant poem written about Warne while one-day skipper Aaron Finch pointed to his fellow Victorian's charity work.

"His cricketing ability was one thing, but his generous heart for second to none," Finch said from Pakistan.

Music stars Elton John, Martin, Robbie Williams and Ed Sheeran all played songs via video link.



Drama and upsets in final night

REUTERS, CAPE TOWN

The final night of African qualifying for the World Cup produced high drama and upsets on Tuesday, though the continent's line-up in Qatar will have a familiar look about it.

Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia participated at the last finals in Russia in 2018, while Cameroon and Ghana were at the finals four years before that.

Both Cameroon and Ghana produced unexpected away success to qualify, eliminating the more fancied Algeria and Nigeria.

Cameroon secured their place with the last kick of the match, deep in extra time in Blida, as Karl Toko Ekambi swept home a speculative cross.

It left Algeria, who were African champions in 2019 and had breezed through the earlier stages of the World Cup preliminaries, crestfallen.

Ghana profited from a goalkeeping error to also advance on the away

goals rule, their 1-1 draw in Nigeria setting off rioting by home fans in Abuja.

Senegal repeated their penalty shootout success over Egypt as Sadio Mane again got the better of his Liverpool team mate Mohamed Salah. Dakar's new stadium was filled to capacity hours before the clash which saw Senegal beat Egypt 1-0 for a 1-1 draw on aggregate after extra time.

That set up another shootout between the teams, some six weeks after Mane had netted the decisive kick to win the Africa Cup of Nations finals in Cameroon.

He was again the talisman as he fired home to give Senegal a 3-1 shootout victory. Salah had put Egypt's first effort well wide of goal.

Tunisia denied Mali a first World Cup finals appearance with a 1-0 aggregate triumph while Morocco enjoyed an emphatic 4-1 win over the Democratic Republic of Congo in Casablanca after a 1-1 draw in the first leg.



Portugal, Poland grab finals spots



Portugal's Bruno Fernandes celebrates with teammates after scoring his first goal during their 2-0 victory over stubborn visitors North Macedonia. [Inset] Robert Lewandowski stroked home a second-half penalty, which he termed as one of the most difficult of his career, as Poland booked their place in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar in front of a fervent home crowd in Chorzow.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

PARIS, France

Portugal beat North Macedonia 2-0 and Poland saw off Sweden by the same score in play-off finals on Tuesday to book their places in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Bruno Fernandes scored both goals for Portugal to overcome the Balkan nation that had knocked out European champions Italy in a stunning result last week.

Fernandes set Portugal on their way at the Estadio do Dragao by finishing off Cristiano Ronaldo's pass in the first half and then put the victory beyond doubt in the second, connecting with a sublime cross from Diogo Jota.

The victory means Portugal extend their run of qualifying for all six of the World Cups since the turn of the century while Manchester United forward Ronaldo is on course for his fifth, aged 37. Ronaldo's best previous result was reaching the semi-finals in 2006, when Portugal were beaten by Germany.