

‘Deserved more from the game’

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera expressed his disappointment with the 2-1 defeat against Turkmenistan in their Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture, saying that his side deserved more from the game.

The men in red and green went a goal down early in the match from a corner kick but soon equalised through Mohammad Ibrahim's header. Having wasted a number of scoring opportunities, Cabrera's charges conceded the decisive goal in the 77th minute, leaving them without a point after two matches.

Speaking to reporters after the game, the Spaniard said he was proud of the performance but disappointed with the result.

"[I'm] Very proud of the performance of the players. But I'm very sad and disappointed that we couldn't get something we deserved out of the game today. We had chances to even win the game," Cabrera said.

This was the third defeat in five matches since Cabrera took charge at the beginning of the year. Having conceded two 2-0 defeats alongside two goalless draws, Bangladesh scored their first goal in yesterday's match under the new coach. The Spaniard opined that his side has been making improvement every match.

"It was a very good performance but I think there were very good performances from the beginning," the coach expressed when asked if this was the best performance since he took over.

"Indonesia game changed our mind. Bahrain was a great fight against a huge team and today is the next step. And we will be going like this. We will keep growing, improving and competing against everyone," the coach expressed when asked about evaluating his side's progress.

Bottom of the group with chances of qualifying for the Asian Cup all but over, Cabrera will guide the side against hosts Malaysia in the last match of the group on Tuesday.



Booters bring back memories of Kolkata

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh played arguably their best football in recent times in a 2-1 defeat against Turkmenistan in their Asian Cup Qualifiers at the Bukit Jalil Stadium in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. While defeat all but ended Bangladesh chances of qualifying for next year's Asian Cup, it was a heart-warming effort from the men in red and green, with their impressive possession-based attacking football only comparable in recent times to the 1-1 draw they played out against India in a World Cup Qualifying fixture in Kolkata three years ago.

What was most impressive about yesterday's performance was the display of key attributes of the game which are missing from Bangladesh football most of the time: build-up, passing, control of possession in midfield and penetration in the attacking third.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan once more reminded of his value to the team as he dictated the midfield with great assurance, picking key passes for Rakib Hossain, Sazzad Hossain and Mohammad Ibrahim in a three-pronged attack.

Unfortunately, the one aspect that was missing from Bangladesh's part was decisiveness and that clinical touch in front of goal. Had the efforts on goal been a bit more

clinical, the result might have been very different against a side sitting 54 places above them in FIFA ranking.

Bangladesh started the game with an unchanged eleven to the one which suffered a rather respectable 2-0 defeat against the group's top-ranked side, Bahrain, three days ago. But early signs were ominous as Javier Cabrera's charges looked unsettled and came under a

against Bahrain from corner kicks – the first one a straight header and the second a long-range effort after the corner kick was cleared to the edge of the box.

That early goal jolted awake Bangladesh's attacking intent and they hit back immediately with Mohammad Ibrahim nodding home the equaliser five minutes later after a long throw-in from Bishwanath



barrage of attacks, conceding four corner kicks within the first seven minutes. The fourth one resulted in the opening goal, with Annadurdyev Altmmyrat slicing the ball into the far corner of the net on Halmammedov Rovshengeldi's curling effort.

Turkmenistan, who surprisingly lost 3-1 to hosts Malaysia in their opener, looked to have done a fair bit of homework on Bangladesh, who had conceded both goals

Ghosh. This was a first goal in five matches under Cabrera, with two of the previous matches ending in goalless draws and two others ending in 2-0 defeats.

Bangladesh almost bagged another goal from a similar situation after 36 minutes when Yeasin Arafat rose to meet Bishwanath's throw-in from the other side of the pitch. But this time a Turkmenistan defender managed to head it out for a corner

Half-chances came at both ends as Anisur Rahman Zico made a diving save to deny Rovshengeldi before Rakib's through-ball for Sazzad Hossain was brilliantly cleared inside the box as the half drew to a close.

The second half saw Turkmenistan enjoy more of the ball, but Bangladesh had more open chances, with Sazzad's glancing header from Ibrahim's cross missing the target on 54 minutes. That was the last contribution for Ibrahim, who was stretched off the field soon and replaced by young Faisal Ahmed Fahim.

With both sides making a string of substitutions in the second half, it was Turkmenistan's changes that paid off as captain Arslan Amanov put the ball into the back of the Bangladesh net in the 77th minute following a precise cross from Altmmyrat from the left side.

Bangladesh could have left the field with their first points of the campaign had Tutul Hossain Badshah not blasted the ball skywards at the far post with the goalkeeper beaten after a curling free-kick from Jamal in the last minute of regulation time, reminiscent of the one the Bangladesh captain had delivered for Saad Uddin's opening goal against India in Kolkata three years ago. But Badshah, having put in a shift at centreback, left his scoring boots in the locker room.

Bangladesh stay steady

SPORTS REPORTER

Tamim Iqbal picked up where he left off on the first day when he reached a century, with Bangladesh on 310-7dec on the second day of the three-day practice game against CWI President's XI at the Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua yesterday.

Bangladesh resumed on 274 for six with Tamim unbeaten on 140. He had reached 163 not out when Bangladesh declared their innings but his overnight partner Mosaddek Hossain (19) was unable to prolong his innings.

Batter Yasir Ali, who had retired hurt due to back pain, will not to be able bat on the second day, the team's Logistics Operation Manager Nafees Iqbal confirmed to The Daily Star yesterday.

"Yasir Ali is suffering back spasms and won't be able to bat on the second day either," said Nafees.



Fixing questions take focus off Fortis' title

SPORTS REPORTER

Fortis FC were anointed as the new champions of the Bangladesh Championship League – the second tier of professional football of the country – after they played out a goalless draw against NoFeL SC in their last match at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Already confirmed of the title and a promotion to Bangladesh Premier League next season, the third-placed finishers of last season celebrated with the trophy and expressed their desire to compete at the highest level. The ceremony followed by questions to BFF high-ups, though, was dogged with questions regarding the overall fairness of the league, which had come under spotlight following allegations of match-fixing.

Four clubs have been embroiled in the scandal and an investigation over the issue is ongoing. Second-placed side Azampur FC Uttara, who will play their last match today, are one of those under scrutiny and will not be handed over their trophies until a verdict is made on the issue.

Talking about the issue, BFF's professional football committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy said, "The Fixed Match Identification Committee will deliver a report within June. We will take a decision on the league after that."

Two teams are supposed to be promoted while two are supposed to be demoted from the second tier, according to the bylaws.

Mitchell makes England attack toil

AGENCIES

New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell scored an impressive 190 while Tom Blundell also hit a century to put the tourists in a strong position at 553 all out on day two of the second Test against England on Saturday.

A more aggressive Mitchell milked the runs off spinner Jack Leach during the second session, smashing a huge six before getting to 150 runs after Blundell had departed for 106 on a productive morning at Trent Bridge.

The duo had shared a partnership of 236 – New Zealand's highest fifth-wicket stand in Tests – as the world champions heaped the pressure on the hosts in their quest to level the three-match series at 1-1.

A journeyman with little Test pedigree until this series, Mitchell was only given his chance in the first Test after Henry Nicholls failed to recover from Covid-19 in time.

Six years ago, Mitchell had a season playing for Blackpool in the Northern Premier League and scored just two centuries.

The 31-year-old batsman arrived in

England with just one Test hundred to his name since his 2019 debut, but now he has three following his 108 at Lord's.

Mitchell's latest century, his highest in Tests, came up in 184 balls, with England dropping him for the second time in the match after his milestone moment.

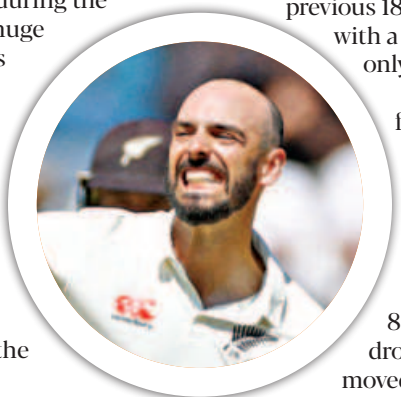
England, winners of only two of their previous 18 Tests, had to make inroads with a second new ball that was only seven overs old.

But Blundell's back-foot drive off Anderson underlined nothing had changed overnight as it rattled into the fence for the first boundary of the day.

Mitchell, who had scored 81 on Friday after being dropped by Joe Root on three, moved within touching distance of his ton after pulling a short Anderson delivery for a crunching four.

Having survived an lbw appeal from Matthew Potts, Mitchell brought up his century with a fortuitous edge off the England seamer.

If that was an ungainly way to reach the hundred, it was out of character with the rest of Mitchell's classy innings.



Bangladesh T20 captain Mahmudullah Riyad and pacer Shoriful Islam continued to practise at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday as they prepare to travel to the Caribbean after completion of the first Test of the two-match series. They are likely to join the team in the West Indies on June 25 before the white-ball action starts with the first T20I from July 2.

PHOTO: BCB