

Failures breed ultimate success for Soad

SPORTS REPORTER

Having learned from numerous defeats over the years, shuttler Khandokar Abdus Soad finally reached the top as the lad from Pabna defeated highly-regarded Al Amin Jumer 21-15 and 21-13 in the men's singles final of the 37th National Badminton Championships at the Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Urmi Akhter, champion of the 2021 Bangladesh Games, also maintained her success with a hard-fought 26-24, 21-19 win over Army teammate Nasim Khatun in a keenly contested women's singles final.

Urmi would later pair with Reshma Akter to clinch women's doubles with a 2 sets to 1 win over former champions Shapla Akter and Alina Sultana.

Although Urmi's success was expected, Soad's was a surprise, especially as given the presence of well-known ranked players like Bangladesh Games champion Gaurab Singh, defending champion Salman Khan and others like Jummar,



Lokman, Sibgad.

"Since I started playing in the junior national championships from 2017, I lost a lot of matches. But I learned from those matches and started afresh and became champion in my first appearance in the national championship," Soad, of Bangladesh Police, said.

"The national championship was not held for the past three years, but I prepared myself in that time. I never crossed the third round of the Summer Ranking tournaments and that motivated me to work harder because I had a childhood dream of doing in the national championships," Soad said. "Now, I became successful in this long journey and I really feel happy with this achievement."

Soad informed that he once became champion in the Summer Championships and finished third in Bangladesh Games in 2021. Urmi was questioned about her championship during the Bangladesh Championship in the absence of Shapla and Alina but the girl from Bangladesh Army is now happier than before to clinch the title beating one of them – defending champion Shapla– on the way to be crowned national champion.

Urmi, who clinched her third champion title in a senior ranking tournament, said: "I am really very happy to become the champion because two senior players [Shapla and Alina] participated and I defeated one of them on way to the title.



The opening ceremony of the 22nd edition of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham took place yesterday, bringing together around 5,000 athletes from 72 nations, including a 50-member contingent from Bangladesh, to compete in 19 sports over 11 days.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Do their struggles reflect that of Bangladesh cricket's?

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammad Mithun was named skipper for Bangladesh A's tour of the West Indies, with the team set to depart today. While Mithun will be captain in both the four-day matches and three one-day games during the tour, former national team stars such as Soumya Sarkar and Sabbir Rahman were included in the squad for the three one-day matches.

29-year-old Soumya is the youngest of the three, all of whom made their ODI debuts for Bangladesh in 2014. While the trio have plenty of experience on the international scene and should have been part of the core of the national side by this point, they are now included in an A team which is meant for much less experienced players.

While this scenario might be another instance that could lead to fingers pointing at the national team's stagnant pipeline, their struggles coming to grips with the challenges faced in international cricket reflects the struggles of the national team as whole.

While the likes of Shadman Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Saif Hassan have much to look forward to on the tour of the West Indies in terms of experience, what will the three aforementioned stars gain from such a tour?

"Soumya did well in the two four-day games and scored runs which is a very good thing for us. When these players do well, it's good for the national side because



the gaps won't be there. There was a time when there were lots of gaps and we had to take players from the U-19 side. If players like Soumya do well, those gaps won't remain," national selector Abdur Razzak said in a press conference yesterday when asked about Soumya's inclusion for the Windies tour.

Cricketer operations chairman Jalal Yunus said that they were placing more importance on the A team.

"I spoke to the players today and told them that we have to bring the A team to a position of importance. The players here are those who have just recently been excluded [from the national side] or are on their way there. Before this, A team tours were not very important. But from now on, they will be very important. The national team's backups will have to come from the A team," Jalal said yesterday.

Soumya's call ups to the national team

have been perplexing at times given the context. Even without having much preparation for red-ball format, he was included for the tour of New Zealand in 2019. Despite hitting a career-best 149 at Hamilton, his career never took off in the format. He was also haphazardly named as Shakib Al Hasan's replacement during West Indies' tour of Bangladesh in 2021. Such call-ups never gave Soumya the chance he needed.

A loss of form saw Mithun become a national team discard. His and Soumya's return to the national team's periphery may well be due to their form in last season's BCL, when both were among the top run-getters. But given that Soumya's abilities are more in line with the shorter formats, the question that will be regurgitated is whether players get chances in formats where they should be tried.

Sabbir's case is more curious. He came up with a few big knocks in the recent Dhaka Premier League and, during his early years, he showed all the promise of becoming a regular in the national side. Although he fell away due to disciplinary issues, his ability to play pacers with ease is still something that the national team is looking for.

Whether their own shortcomings or the BCB's, the national team's struggles in finding players for the various formats is sharply reflected by Soumya, Mithun and Sabbir's struggles with their own careers in terms of finding their feet in international cricket.

U-20s eye early final berth

SPORTS REPORTER

Boosted by consecutive victories in SAFF U-20 Championship, Bangladesh are eager to all but ensuring the final berth when the boys in red and green take on Maldives in their third group match at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, India today.

Nepal and Bangladesh, with six points apiece after two matches, sit at the top of the five-team table while Sri Lanka, India and Maldives are yet to get off the mark. However, India and Maldives played a game less than the others.

Before the Bangladesh-Maldives match, Nepal take on India. Any result other than a win in favour of India would confirm the final berth of Bangladesh with a match left to play against Nepal, provided Paul Smalley's charges win against Maldives.

"We are happy to get a good start, something we wanted before coming here," said captain Tanvir Hossain through a video footage sent by the Bangladesh Football Federation.

"Our plan remains to progress match by match and having recorded two wins in two matches, our main target is to reach the final. The third match against Maldives is very important for us. If we can win against Maldives, then we can hope to play the final."

Tough road paved way for SL's new spin king

AFP, Galle

Sri Lanka's new spin king Prabath Jayasuriya reflected on his "tough" and lonely road to success after propelling the hosts to a thumping victory over Pakistan on Thursday in the second Test.

Jayasuriya claimed his fourth five-wicket haul in just his third Test to star in Sri Lanka's 246-run win to end the two-Test series level at 1-1 in Galle.

He only made his debut, aged 30, earlier this month and the left-hander made an instant impact with a match haul of 12 wickets in a Sri Lanka victory over Australia.

Jayasuriya's 29 red-ball wickets from his first three Tests is joint second in the all-time list, behind Indian leg spinner Narendra Hirwani, who took a leading 31 in his first three Tests.

"Captain [Dimuth Karunaratne] has faith in me and hopes I have delivered," the unassuming Jayasuriya told reporters.

Jayasuriya, who hails from Matale district in Central Province, made his Test debut after Sri Lanka's team was struck by a Covid outbreak ahead of the second Australia Test.

He grabbed the opportunity with both hands to run through the tourists, picking six wickets in each innings.

Jayasuriya is now the toast of Sri Lanka but he said he had initially struggled to find his footing after rising to first-class cricket from his rural hometown.

"It's been a tough journey," he said.

"I had to do everything on my own. You are all alone and finally you feel the pinch.

"I didn't tell too many things to (people back) home. Just kept it to myself and put my head down and played."



Lionel Messi may near another milestone in his storied career when Paris Saint Germain meet Nantes in the upcoming 2022 Trophée des Champions Final on Sunday. A win would see Messi lift the 41st trophy of his career, one less than the record-holder Dani Alves. Meanwhile, Robert Lewandowski was living it up in Messi's former colors in training for Barcelona.



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