

Wrong turn to Commonwealth gold

REUTERS, BIRMINGHAM

Uganda's Victor Kiplangat took a wrong turn but still found his way to marathon gold at the Commonwealth Games on Saturday, providing some late drama to what had been an uneventful race.

After more than 40 kilometres of running through the twisting Birmingham streets, Kiplangat veered off course in the late stages but had built up such a commanding lead that the miscue did not cause any damage.

The 22-year-old was a comfortable winner in a time of two hours, 10 minutes and 55 seconds.

'I thought we could chase it down'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Nurul Hasan Sohan said that his side would reply strongly in the second T20I of the three-match series after losing the first game against Zimbabwe today.

"We have to improve for a few overs in the next matches. 10-15 runs less would be a positive game for us. I thought we could chase it down. It was a very good pitch. Hope we come back strongly in the second match," Sohan said after his side's 17-run defeat yesterday.

Despite signs of intent from skipper Sohan, Liton Das, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Anamul Haque, Bangladesh were unable to chase down Zimbabwe's daunting total of 205 for three -- the highest T20I total for Zimbabwe in Harare and their second-highest total in T20Is overall.

In chase of the imposing target, Bangladesh were restricted to 188 for six.

Man-of-the-match Sikandar Raza, who put the Bangladesh bowling to the sword during an unbeaten 26-ball 65, expressed satisfaction.

"We thought 170-180 would be okay. We had a good start. I wanted to carry on and take it from there. Didn't think it was a 206 wicket. There were couple of instances where the ball stayed low. A bit two-paced. After those scary moments with a couple of surgeries, nothing bothers me now," said Raza.

Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine lauded his side's batting effort. "The guys in the middle batted exceptionally. We always want to hit the ground running and it's a quick turnaround. One of the areas [that we need to work on] today were the extras."



Zimbabwe batter Sikandar Raza swivels on his heels to pull for a maximum during the first T20I against Bangladesh at the Harare Sports Club yesterday. Raza's unbeaten 26-ball 65 helped the hosts to a 17-run victory. PHOTO: AFP

Bowlers lose the plot

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite the fact that there were few fresh faces in Bangladesh's batting department to provide freedom to the relatively younger players in the first T20I against Zimbabwe, it was a full-strength bowling attack, barring the absent Shakib Al Hasan, that was made to look ordinary in Harare yesterday.

Zimbabwe elected to bat and piled up a team record total of 205 for 3 in Harare, courtesy of some wayward bowling and sloppy fielding from Bangladesh.

Nurul Hasan went with four specialist bowlers in the line-up, but disappointingly all of them remained expensive and provided frequent scoring opportunities to the Zimbabwean batters, allowing Sikanadar Raza and Wessly Madhevere to



respectively from their four overs while the only specialist spinner, left-arter Nasum Ahmed, gave away 38 runs from his four overs. All three went wicketless.

However, Mustafizur did manage to pick up the early wicket of Regis Chakabva and off-spinner Mosaddek Hossain bowled Craig Ervine for 21 as Zimbabwe were reduced to 43 for 2 inside seven overs.

But the Tigers completely lost the plot after that. Their bowlers were in disarray for the rest of the innings and that enabled the Zimbabwean batters to assert their authority on a sporting wicket in Harare.

It was probably when Nasum bowled the 12th over of the innings that the momentum shifted towards the hosts as the left-arm spinner bowled full tosses, balls down the leg side and short-pitched deliveries. He was hammered for 18 runs in that over.

The situation did not improve in the death overs either as the Tigers conceded 77 runs from the last five overs. Raza was the tormentor in chief, smashing Mustafizur for two boundaries and a maximum off the

final over as Zimbabwe took their score past 200 -- only the third time that they achieved it in T20Is.

Keeping the upcoming Asia Cup and ICC T20 World Cup in mind, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo and the Tigers think-tank will surely expect better performances from the bowling unit.

The Bangladesh team management had previously informed that they wanted to bank on spinners, but after Nasum's performance, the question remains whether the spinners can have an impact on sporting tracks.

Nasum has picked up 28 wickets in 22 T20Is, but interestingly the left-arm spinner bagged 20 of them in Mirpur, where the pitch has historically offered great purchase to spinners.

But Bangladesh will be playing the T20 World Cup in Australia, where pitches are expected to be sporting. With less than three months to go until the mega-event, can the Tigers bowling unit gain that confidence?

Record 100 Davis Cup ties for Vicini

AFP, PARIS

San Marino's Domenico Vicini is pushing 51, but that hasn't stopped him becoming the first man to compete in 100 Davis Cup ties and he has vowed to keep playing.

Competing in the ongoing Europe Group Four event in Baku, Vicini, who is 50 years and 11 months old, became the oldest player to win a Davis Cup match in a doubles rubber against Albania earlier in the week.

On Friday, playing in his landmark 100th tie, Vicini lost his doubles against Iceland alongside 17-year-old Simone De Luigi, but San Marino still won 2-1 overall to progress to Saturday's promotion play-off against Azerbaijan.

"It's a great achievement for me. It's been a long journey, but from the beginning I have been able to travel to so many places and see so many things," said Vicini, who made his debut in 1993.

"I don't know when I will stop. I will continue to play as long as I can."

'Sunday the king plays'

AGENCIES

Manchester United forward spend much of Saturday on social media, commenting under different posts to dispel speculation about his future before finally saying that he would return to the team to make his first appearance under new manager Erik Ten Hag's regime in their final pre-season friendly against Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Ronaldo posted four laughing emojis in reply to a series of pictures of Atletico Madrid fans holding a banner that read 'CR7 not welcome'. On another post speculating about his future, Ronaldo replied: "Impossible not to talk about me for one day. Otherwise the press makes no money. You know that if you don't lie you can't get people's attention. Keep going. One day you will get the news right."

To an Instagram post commenting on his exclusion from the squad for the Atletico match, Ronaldo commented: "Domingo o rei joga", which translates to "Sunday the king plays."



Regarding the weekend double-header, which sees them take on Rayo just a day after meeting Atletico, a United statement on its website read: "Some of those absent from the squad will take part in Sunday's game against Rayo Vallecano, while others are ill or injured."

England's Lionesses take on German might

AFP, LONDON

England manager Sarina Wiegman has fulfilled her goal of using Euro 2022 to fuel the nation's passion for women's football and victory in Sunday's final against Germany would consummate the burgeoning love affair.

A tournament that has smashed attendance records will get a fitting finale with a crowd of 87,000 expected at Wembley to set a new high for a final at a European Championship in either the men's or women's game.

Anticipation is reaching fever pitch in England as the Lionesses look to end their wait to win a first major tournament.

Wiegman's team are unbeaten in 19 games since the Dutch coach, who led the Netherlands to Euro glory on home soil five years ago, took charge in September.

On top of a sold-out Wembley, a crowd of 7,000 is set to congregate to watch the final on big screens in London's Trafalgar Square.

There have even been calls from leading politicians for a national holiday "day of celebration" should a 56-year wait for either England's men or women to win a major football tournament come to an end at the weekend.

Outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson encouraged England to "bring it home", while Prince William expressed the pride of the nation.

"We believe in you and will be with you all the way!" the Duke of Cambridge said on Twitter.

Such support for the sport shows how far women's football in England has come since it was banned by the Football Association for nearly 50 years until 1970.

England's presence as a force in the women's game has long been on the cards.

Fittingly it is Germany, the European nation that for so long led the drive in professionalism and standards for women's football that stand in the way of England's history bid.

Germany has never lost in any of their previous eight finals at the Euro, including a 6-2 thrashing of England in the 2009 final.

"It's a classic game," said Germany boss Martina Voss-Tecklenburg. "It will be an incredible final."

The hope for many is that the impact lasts long after the final whistle under the Wembley Arch.

Of the 488,000 to have attended matches at Euro 2022 so far, 47 percent have been female with nearly 100,000 children, according to figures released by UEFA.

"You can see the audience is children and happy people," said Sweden manager Peter Gerhardsson in the aftermath of his side's semi-final defeat.

Wiegman got her wish for a nation to be hooked. Now they are waiting for one more win.



Bashundhara Kings players and officials celebrate with the Bangladesh Premier League trophy following their last match of the league against Sheikh Jamal DC, which they won 2-1 at the Kings arena yesterday. The champions finished with 57 points from 22 matches while former champions Sheikh Jamal ended in fourth position with 35 points. PHOTO: AFP