

U-19 women upbeat ahead of Sri Lanka clash

SPORTS REPORTER

A historic win against Australia had the Bangladesh camp in a confident frame of mind ahead of their second match of the ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup against Sri Lanka at Willowmoore Park in Benoni today.

Following their memorable seven-wicket win in the opener, Bangladesh skipper Disha Biswas assured that they would be measured in their celebrations and look to improve.

"We are in good shape. We will try to do better. We are following our plans and aren't getting too carried away with the win. We are cherishing the victory, but only as much as we need to. We will improve and do something better in the tournament," she said after the game against Australia on Saturday.

After coming on the back of consecutive victories in the two warm-up matches against hosts South Africa and India, Bangladesh produced an all-round display against tournament favourite Australia.

Having restricted the Aussies



to 130 for five, the young Tigresses showed maturity in their chase. Top-order batter Dilara Akter scored a 40-run knock before Shorna Akter and Sumaiya Akter wrapped it up with impactful unbeaten cameos.

Shorna, who hit the winning runs, revealed that they had initially struggled to adapt to foreign conditions on their first overseas tour.

"We played really well, especially in the practice matches leading up to the World Cup. At the beginning of the tour, we struggled to adjust to the weather because we were not used to foreign conditions but now it's fine.

"Since we've beaten Australia today [Saturday], we will hope to do something better against Sri Lanka.

"We came here to represent the country and we are here to play for the country. I will try to give my best and hopefully, the trophy will be ours," she said.

A win against Sri Lanka would be enough for the young Tigresses to confirm a spot in the Super Six. Bangladesh will face the USA in their last Group A game on January 18 in Benoni.



Sylhet Strikers' young guns, Zakir Hasan and Akbar Ali, have a chat as they walk back to the dressing room following a practice session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led side are on top of the table of BPL and will take on Dhaka Dominators in today's first match.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Finding the right technique is key'

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

Aamer Sohail, former Pakistan captain, and opener, is currently in Bangladesh as part of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) commentary panel. Sohail, who formed one of the most destructive opening pairs with Saeed Anwar, talked about formulas to shine as an opener and also many other topics during an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star's* Mazhar Uddin in Chattogram. The excerpts of the interview are given below:

The Daily Star (DS): Any fond memories of Bangladesh from your playing days?

Aamer Sohail (AS): I think it was in 1993 when I came here for the first time. We played a few games here before traveling to New Zealand. I remember Bangladesh toured Pakistan in 1985 when I made a few friends, including Faruk Ahmed, who was [Bangladesh Cricket Board] chief selector. We played here during the Champions Trophy [in 1997], so there are a few great memories.

DS: People from Bangladesh compare BPL with the Pakistan Super League (PSL) which earned a lot of popularity despite being launched after BPL. Your take on that?

AS: You cannot compare the two as a number of leagues take place during BPL. At times, the viewership of BPL suffers due to this reason. But when I talk to my friends, they actually follow BPL. PSL has earned more popularity because of its timing as not many events happen at that time.

DS: Bangladesh have not been able

to transform into a strong Test unit yet. What do you think is the reason?

AS: Previously, Bangladesh did not have quality fast bowlers. But now there are a number of good fast bowlers and Bangladesh always had good spinners. The only thing Bangladesh have not mastered yet is the art of winning Tests which require picking up 20 wickets and scoring runs.

DS: As a former opening batter, what would you suggest to Bangladeshi batters to help them adapt across three formats?



AS: It's very simple, you have to have very good technique and if you want to be successful in all formats, you must learn to maneuver the length. You have to find a technical way to convert good deliveries into scoring options. If a player learns that without taking too many risks, he will succeed.

DS: World cricket still cherishes the great chemistry you had with Saeed Anwar. What is the secret behind forming such a good opening pair?

AS: Understanding your partner is very

important. At times, Saeed came to me and said that I have to face this bowler. I did the same as well. You have to discuss strategies and talk about opponent bowlers as to how to deal with them. It's all about being open and honest.

DS: Aside from the seniors like Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal, and Mahmudullah Riyad, which other cricketers have impressed you?

AS: Taskin Ahmed has improved a lot. Another one is Afif Hossain, and the way he plays, I think he can be the one for the future if nurtured properly. I think it's up to the player to be hungry enough to become one of the best players in world cricket. The other thing is the management and their way of handling their assets. They need to keep on reminding players of their potential and also keep on guiding them. Management has to become friends with the players rather than asserting their authority all the time.

DS: You were instrumental in Pakistan's 1992 World Cup triumph. Bangladesh are yet to win a major title. What mindset is required to win a trophy?

AS: It's like a journey. When you are at the highest level, the initial challenge is not to lose. You will lose a few and then draw one -- in case of Tests. Then there will be an opportunity to push for a win. And then you need to make winning a habit. I think Bangladesh were a very good side in 2012. But they got desperate. Another thing is that Bangladesh cricket heavily relies on a few players. To win major tournaments, it is very important to know how to play as a team.

Not just an ADRS controversy

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The absence of DRS and the presence of Alternate Decision Review System (ADRS) has already come under the spotlight in this BPL season. Reactions from Soumya Sarkar and Anamul Haque regarding ADRS had already come under scrutiny.

Then Comilla Victorians' Jaker Ali, in the game against Fortune Barishal on Saturday, was left perplexed when he was given out by on-field umpire Morshed Ali Khan and, upon review, TV umpire Tanvir Ahmed upheld the decision even as the majority of the ball had pitched outside the 'Pitching Zone'.

On the surface, the umpire looked at fault but a deeper look reveals how the match officials were the ones least at fault and perhaps it was another case of lack of collective professionalism -- both from BPL governing council and the franchises.

The umpires came under fire until the BCB stated that the umpire was acting in accordance with the playing conditions. The pitching zone was made available to the TV umpire with stump-to-stump pitch map.

"In Appendix D1 of the tournament's Match Playing Conditions, it is stated that a ball will be considered to have pitched 'In-Line' in the ADRS if 'Any part of the ball was inside the Pitching Zone'."

The BCB defended the umpire and provided an image of where the ball had pitched in its media release. The subsequent criticism surrounding the decision was mostly on how BPL governing council changed the laws of the game. But the law never dictated how much of the ball would have to be pitching in line to enable a leg before decision in favour of the bowler. As stated by MCC, pertaining to law 36, a batter can be given out if the ball 'pitches in line between wicket and wicket or on the off side of the striker's wicket.'

While 'any part of the ball' sounds like something new, it was learnt that the same playing condition rule was also present in last year's BPL. While the ball was in fact pitching just in line



with leg-stump, the TV umpire had to stick to the ADRS playing conditions.

Last year, the ADRS was pushed from the franchises' side and there was controversy too. This time, the playing conditions had been handed and queries were welcome before the start of the tournament, but it was not subject to scrutiny until seen in action. It begs the question as to how professional the franchises had been in their attempt to understand the whole thing.

In the modern game, DRS puts more accountability to decision making, but without that available data of how much of the ball is outside the line of stumps in DRS's absence, any system brought in fails to provide same data. It invariably puts more stress on TV umpires who do not have snickometer or a ball-tracking system with enough statistical data.

While it is a logistical failure to have DRS setup available but not the required manpower to run it, from the franchise and their technical setup, more needs to be done to address such issues for the coming years when a proper review system -- which in itself is subject to change -- is absent.

Swiatek inspired by Barty

AFP, Melbourne

World number one Iga Swiatek said Saturday she was ready for an "intense" opening Australian Open match while paying tribute to retired champion Ashleigh Barty for inspiring her to greater heights.

Poland's Swiatek begins her Grand Slam campaign on Monday against Jule Neimeier, the German world number 68 who reached the quarter-finals at Wimbledon last year.

More recently, the pair clashed in the last 16 at the US Open, where Swiatek had to dig deep after dropping the first set before coming through 2-6, 6-4, 6-0 and going on to win the tournament.

"We played in the US Open, and you saw how intense that match was, how tough," Swiatek told reporters.

"It's not going to be easy. But any match in a Grand Slam is always more intense and more stressful than other tournaments. I'll be ready for it."

Swiatek, the top seed, is a strong favourite for the first Grand Slam of the year in the absence of last year's retired champion Barty.

The Australian, who is pregnant, dropped into Melbourne Park on Saturday for "kids' day" and enjoyed a light-hearted practice hit with Swiatek, who took over from her as

world number one.

"When she retired I felt like she still had the best tennis out there," said Swiatek. "So, yeah, I was pretty sad that I'm not going to be able to compete against her and maybe win."

But the 21-year-old credited Barty for making her a better player.

"She gave me a lot in terms of my motivation and my kind of willingness to practice even more and to have more variety on court."

"When I played against her, I felt she just had all these different game styles and slices. Even in her book she says she has five types of slice. I don't know how that's possible. I still haven't figured out only one type.

"I have like huge respect for Ash. She really gave me huge motivation at the beginning of last season to get even better. I'm kind of grateful for that."

Swiatek seized on Barty's retirement to dominate 2022, securing eight WTA titles and becoming the first woman in six years to win two Grand Slams in the same season -- at Roland Garros and New York.

Now she has her sights on a maiden title at Melbourne Park, which would leave her needing only a Wimbledon championship to complete a career slam of all four majors.



Four-time Australian Open champion Ken Rosewall is the face of the commemorative coin for this year's first Grand Slam which gets underway today, 70 years after he won his first title Down Under. The Aussie legend, now 88 years old, won a record 23 Majors in singles, including eight Grand Slam singles titles and, before the Open Era, a record 15 Pro Slam titles.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM