

HIGHLIGHTS

Bangladesh pulled off their highest-ever ODI total, 349 for six, in the second ODI yesterday, topping the 338 for eight tallied just two days earlier in the series opener.

Mushfiqur Rahim not only registered Bangladesh's fastest hundred in ODIs but, in the process, also reached 7,000 runs in the format, becoming the third Bangladeshi to do so after Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan. Mushfiqur also joined another set of elite company in Kumar Sangakkara, MS Dhoni, and Adam Gilchrist as only the fourth wicketkeeper-batter to enter the 7k-club in ODIs.

Tamim Iqbal is now the first Bangladeshi to score 15,000 international runs across all formats. The southpaw was 14 runs short of the milestone before the match yesterday and the Bangladesh captain managed to score 23.

On way to a 70-run knock in his 65th ODI outing yesterday, Liton Das matched Shahriar Nafees' feat to become the joint-fastest Bangladesh batter to reach 2,000 ODI runs.

Bangladesh batting stalwart Mushfiqur Rahim plays a scoop shot during his splendid 60-ball 100 against Ireland in the second ODI of the three-match series at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. [Below] Following the end of the Bangladesh innings, the rain came pouring down to wash out the match.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Alcaraz reclaims world no. 1 ranking

AFP, Paris

Carlos Alcaraz returned to the top of the ATP rankings on Monday after his Indian Wells triumph, while Rafael Nadal dropped out of the top 10 for the first time in 18 years.

The 19-year-old ended Daniil Medvedev's 19-match win streak with a 6-3, 6-2 hammering on Sunday to leapfrog Novak Djokovic, who is not competing in the U.S. hardcourt swing as he cannot enter the country due to not being vaccinated against COVID.

Carlos Alcaraz said his unwavering self-belief helped him come through an injury-plagued start to the season and drove his return to the top of the world rankings following his triumph at Indian Wells.

"I missed some tournaments I wanted to play, but I worked really hard with my team. I believe in myself and the work I'm doing right now and I'd say that's the most important thing."

"It means a lot to recover the number one ranking. I'm not going to say it was easy, but it was easier because Djokovic was not playing," said Alcaraz.

American Taylor Fritz dropped five spots to world number 10 after his title defence ended in the quarter-finals.

Nadal, who has been out injured since a second-round exit at the Australian Open, fell to 13th place.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion had previously been inside the top 10 since April 2005.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Magical Mushy turning over a new leaf

SPORTS REPORTER FROM SYLHET

Everything he hit seemed to turn into something special, but what was even more special was how Mushfiqur Rahim kept doing it over and over as he notched the fastest ODI ton by a Bangladeshi.

If the seniors' role, especially after Mahmudullah Riyad was 'rested' ahead of the World Cup, was in sharp focus, Mushfiqur's new approach was giving the Tigers a new definition.

The ODI series against Ireland had been no more than a cemetery for a number

FASTEST HUNDREDS BY A BANGLADESHI IN ODIS

Balls	Player	Score	Opponent	Venue	Year
60	Mushfiqur Rahim	100*	Ireland	Sylhet	2023
63	Shakib Al Hasan	104	Zimbabwe	Bulawayo	2009
68	Shakib Al Hasan	105*	Zimbabwe	Mirpur	2009
69	Mushfiqur Rahim	106	Pakistan	Mirpur	2015
81	Soumya Sarkar	117	Zimbabwe	Chattogram	2018



of near-tons. Both Shakib Al Hasan and Towhid Hridoy fell in the nervous nineties in the first ODI and yesterday, in the second ODI, Liton Das and Najmul Hossain Shanto also departed after scoring 70-odd runs.

Mushfiqur entered the crease in the 34th over after Shanto's dismissal with the idea to put up a partnership and help the team to a big total. He started his innings traditionally, his first boundary coming off a trademark sweep against Matthew Humphreys.

But it soon became apparent that Mushfiqur was turning it up a notch.

The innings brought to mind his knock against Sri Lanka in the 2018 Nidahas Trophy in chase of a big T20 total. It was like turning back the clock, but this time Mushy's progression towards an aggressive approach was clearer, continuing from the last game.

Mushfiqur had tried to push the tempo in the first ODI against Ireland when he made a 26 ball 44. This time, he was getting bolder with every delivery.

Coming in at number six, he showed the aggressive approach Bangladesh appear to be trying to tap into in the middle-overs. When he stepped out to pacer Curtis Campher in the 39th over and bludgeoned it over the ropes for six over cover, the confidence in his newfound approach appeared to be bearing fruit and he did not look back.

Mark Adair had been effective early on in the innings, but Mushy cracked one through point in his 43rd over, driving a full toss through cover before disdainfully dispatching a cut that went all the way for six – back-to-back deliveries that showed his domination.

Next over, Campher was smashed over cover, down on one knee, the ball almost

going for six as Mushfiqur reached 7,000 ODI runs, as if the landmark needed some special recognition.

The scoop and the glide over third man came out after a landmark half-century. The array of strokes, hitting one through cover and then another similar delivery being scooped or dispatched through point, kept Ireland from ever getting it right.

Improvisation and class were all part and parcel of the tremendous innings, but with three balls remaining, there was no way Mushfiqur was letting go of his momentum.

He moved from 93 to 97 with a scoop of sheer cheek in the 50th over. He then moved to 99 with a flick, running an easy double, before just nudging the final delivery of the innings for a single that completed his ninth ODI ton off only 60 deliveries, the fastest in Bangladesh's ODI history, moving ahead of Shakib's 63-ball effort in 2009 against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo.

If intent was the means, Mushy found it. And the dynamics Bangladesh are looking for in ODIs may just be on the way ahead of the World Cup.



"It was a happy locker room," Barcelona coach Xavi said after the 2-1 comeback win over Real Madrid on Sunday. LaLiga leaders Barca's pursuit of a 27th Spanish title gained momentum after substitute Franck Kessie scored a stunning goal in added time to secure a 12-point advantage from second-placed Madrid.

PHOTO: TWITTER

U-17s off to flying start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh made a flying start in the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship with an 8-1 thrashing of Bhutan at the Birshreshtho Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Trishna Rani and Thuinuye Marma scored two goals apiece while Sultana Akter, Munni Akter and Saurava Akanda Prity and Sagorika scored one apiece in the thoroughly one-sided affair.

Bangladesh will face Russia, the invited team of the five-team championship, tomorrow while Nepal and Bhutan will square off in the second match on the same day.

Bangladesh took the lead in the 16th minute, with Trishna Rani poking the ball home following a pass from Saurovi Akanda Prity. Trishna doubled Bangladesh's lead in the 28th minute with a brilliant placing shot before Sultana Akter made it 3-0 with a header in the 35th minute.

Prity then joined the goalfest, chipping the ball over the Bhutan keeper into the back of the net after racing through to a lobbed pass inside the box.

Substitute Thuinuye Marma scored the fifth goal in the 59th minute before another substitute, Munni, made it 6-0 a minute after the hour-mark. Preya Ghalay got Bhutan on the scoresheet in the 64th minute but Thuinuye made it 7-1 with a point-blank header and Sagorika wrapped up the victory in the 85th minute.

Earlier in the day, India thrashed defending champions Nepal 4-1 in the opening match of the competition, with Shilji Shahji scoring a hattrick and Pooja getting the other goal. Barsha Oli scored the consolation goal for Nepal.

Hosts seal final berth and WC place

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh stormed into the final of the Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi with a 45-26 points win against Thailand in the first semifinal at the Shahid Noor Hossain Volleyball Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh will play the final today against Chinese Taipei, who beat Iraq 52-44 in the second semifinal of the day.

The hosts, ranked fifth in the world, also sealed qualification for the next World Cup due to reaching the final of this international tournament for the third time in a row. Bangladesh had won both the previous finals.

The men in red and green made a cautious start against ninth-ranked Thailand. Captain Tuhin Tarafder ousted three Thai players in the 16th minute with a magnificent raid and it proved to be the turning point of the match as Thailand were well in the match till then after taking an early lead. The first half ended 17-11 in Bangladesh's favour.

After the change of ends, Bangladesh concentrated upon keeping the lead taking more points with raids rather than catching the Thai attackers. Thailand raider Chayaphon Kamunee troubled Bangladesh defence line and scored eight points but they were unable to break the superiority of the defending champions.

Tuhin scored 11 points while Mizanur Rahman, the rising star, also won same number of points. Tuhin, who was adjudged the man of the match, said he was confident of lifting the trophy for a third time.

"Chinese Taipei played well, they played powerful kabaddi in this tournament. But they lack experience, which we have in abundance. So I hope we can win the final comfortably," Tuhin said.



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