



The traditional Jabbarer Boli Khela (Jabbar’s Wrestling Competition), which stands as one of Chattogram’s major festivals in the Laldighi area, saw its 114th edition completed on Tuesday. Shahjalal Boli of Cumilla was crowned champion after beating last year’s champion Tarekul Islam Jibon of Chakaria. Shahjalal, who ended as runner up the year prior, said he was delighted to have claimed the title. A total of 114 wrestler’s took part in this year’s event, showing that the event has lost little of its lustre since its inaugural edition in 1909.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

‘Bowling quick is my strength’

Ebadot Hossain has transformed into one of the finest bowlers in Bangladesh’s pace-bowling unit, which has started to show great promise in recent times. The 29-year-old has emerged as a cross-format pacer for the Tigers and spoke with **The Daily Star’s Mazhar Uddin** during an exclusive interview, sharing insight into his work ethic, ambition and a few other topics. The excerpts of the interview are given below:

The Daily Star(DS): *The national camp for the Ireland series is beginning from today in Sylhet. How’s the preparation?*

Ebadot Hossain (EH): I already started my personal preparations during Ramadan. I have been working on my fitness in the gym in the evening. We won’t get weather exactly like England, but what I can do is to maintain my fitness. I can’t be relaxed during a break. I am in touch with a trainer, who suggested spot-training three-four times a day and I did.

DS: *Although you got your international debut in the Test format, you have gradually transformed into a cross-format bowler. How did you manage to adjust to white-ball cricket?*

EH: When I was only playing Test cricket, I used to tell our then pace-bowling coach Ottis Gibson of my desire to play white-ball cricket as well and he encouraged me. At the same time, he also prescribed a few areas of improvement, which helped me cope with the white-ball formats. I am still following the process shown by Gibson and getting results till now. Whenever I struggle, I go back to basics. Also improving fitness is very important since I am now playing three formats. It is also important to be able to play with the batters’ mind so you need to be smart.

DS: *Can you elaborate on the specific areas of improvement that Gibson pointed out?*

EH: In Tests, I normally used to bowl at the same speed throughout the day, which is okay for the longer version. But in limited-over formats, you need variation. You have to bowl a certain way with the new ball but that changes when it’s a semi-new ball. It’s different again when you bowl in death overs. He handed me the white ball and asked me to bowl at the centre wickets under different scenarios. I learned how to bowl in three different ways with the same ball.

DS: *You have shown consistency in bowling yorkers, especially in the death overs. Obviously variations are key, but do you believe speed is your strength?*

EH: Even [ODI captain] Tamim [Iqbal] bhai wants me to bowl fast and aggressive. Since the captain wants that from me and since those are my two main weapons, it gives me freedom to give my best. He said even if I conceded 60 or 80 runs, he wouldn’t mind as long as I was able to bowl quick and at a consistent line where the batters struggle to play. And I am able to get breakthroughs. If you noticed, previously the spinners would come after 10 overs. But this trend has changed as dominant pacers like Mark Wood, Lockie Ferguson and other threatening bowlers try to dominate, which I am trying to implement.

DS: *You were instrumental in Bangladesh’s historic Test win against New Zealand at Mount Maunganui. Since then, the Bangladesh pace-bowling department has stepped up to*



play match-winning roles. Where does this belief come from?

EH: To be honest, Ottis Gibson laid this foundation for us and another person I would like to mention is our former Test captain Mominul Haque. This man has helped us immensely and I can’t describe the amount of belief he showed us. Mominul bhai used to sit with us and encourage our pace-bowling department a lot. I think both Gibson and Mominul bhai helped us to change the mindset and improve as a pace-bowling unit.

DS: *What are the areas current*

pace-bowling coach Allan Donald is emphasising?

EH: Donald is focusing on instilling an aggressive mindset. If Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Mustafizur Rahman and I are all receptive to aggressive bowling. Donald himself was a dominant bowler and was nicknamed ‘White Lightning’ for that reason. At times we make mistakes but you may have noticed that he will rush towards us and try to remind us.

DS: *Do you wish to bowl even quicker in the future?*

EH: Not really. I clicked 149.6 kmph during the Ireland series but there is no desire to set any target to click the fastest delivery. Bowling quick is my strength and I will continue to work. When I was in the pacer hunt, my pace was around 139 kmph and now it’s 149.6. That’s a massive jump. It’s not a matter of joke to increase 10 kmph during this period.

DS: *We all know about your trademark salute after picking up a wicket. But are you aware that Virat Kohli was unable to score a century for nearly three years after you gave him a send-off with that salute?*

EH: (Smiles) Look, everyone makes fun of it but I don’t believe this. I think Kohli went through a tough phase and that’s it. But yes, since then my teammates started to request me not to salute them and make fun. Even after dismissing Mohammad Rizwan, I gave him a salute and many were saying his career was done. But he went on to score hundreds after that.

U-17s set for Turkmenistan challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are set to face an unfamiliar opponent in the form of Turkmenistan when they begin their AFC U-17 Women’s Asia Cup Qualifiers Round-1 campaign at the Jalan Besar Stadium in Singapore today.

The match will get underway at 8:00pm (BST). Bangladesh, who qualified for the finals of the AFC U-16 Women’s Championship Qualifiers in 2017 and 2019, will be eager to progress to the finals of the AFC U-17 Women’s Asia Cup.

But they first need to progress past Round-1 of the Qualifiers, where they have been pitted against Turkmenistan and the hosts.

Bangladesh have never faced Turkmenistan in an U-17 competitions, with the Turkmen set to make their debut. However, a Bangladesh U-20 side beat Turkmenistan 4-0 in the AFC U-20 Women’s Asia Cup Qualifiers in March last year in Dhaka.

“It is a very important match for the girls. We are hoping that they will display their natural performance and leave with a victory,” head coach Golam Rabbani Choton said yesterday.

“Turkmenistan came to play this tournament for the first time, so they will be trying their best. What we always do is that we respect our opponents and consider them a strong side. We also believe we can leave the ground with a victory if the girls show their normal performance,” he added.



Former national tennis champ no more

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh tennis player Shovon Jamaly breathed his last on Tuesday in Canberra, Australia. He was 55 at the time of his demise.

Jamaly, who was suffering from colon cancer, will today be buried in the capital of Australia where he had been residing for a long time.

A three-time National Tennis Champion and two-time National Doubles Champion, Jamaly represented the country in the Davies Cup, the Junior US Open, and the Junior Wimbledon.

Jamaly represented Bangladesh in the Davies Cup on 10 occasions between 1986 and 1999. One of the reliable faces in the Bangladesh side during his time, Jamaly played a total of 53 matches in the competition and boasted 25 wins.

He was the son of the former general secretary of the Bangladesh Tennis Federation Masud Hasan Jamaly.

In a press release issued on Tuesday, the Bangladesh Tennis Federation expressed its deepest condolences to the bereaved family.



Gunners must gun down City to keep fate in own hands

AGENCIES

Like a sky blue juggernaut, Manchester City have begun to fill Arsenal’s rearview mirror and on Wednesday the reigning champions have the chance to begin their over-taking manoeuvre on the road to a fifth Premier League title in six years.

A match that has loomed on the fixture list for months as a likely title-decider now feels like a must-win game for an Arsenal side whose hold on the summit is coming loose.

While treble-chasing City have been churning out the wins, just as they usually do at the business end of a season, Arsenal’s young pretenders have been struck by vertigo.

They could have been going to City with a double-digit points lead but after surrendering 2-0 advantages to draw consecutive away games 2-2 at Liverpool and West Ham United, they were then held to a frenzied 3-3 draw by bottom club Southampton on Friday.

After that rip-roaring contest, in which Arsenal needed late



goals from Martin Odegaard and Bukayo Saka just to salvage a point, the players slumped to the turf and their fans filed away wondering if the dream of a first title since 2004 was fading.

Arsenal still have a five-point lead with six games to play but City have two matches in hand and look irresistible having collected 25 points from the last 27 on offer.

According to statistician Simon Gleave of data company Gracenote, Arsenal’s draw with



Southampton left them with a 21% chance of dethroning City, while Pep Guardiola’s side now have a 79% probability of finishing top.

Anything other than a first away win against City since 2015 would leave the destiny of the title in Pep Guardiola’s side’s hands.

Coach Mikel Arteta, having seen Arsenal record several notable away wins this season, told a pre-match news conference on Tuesday: “It is going to be a tough

night and challenge, yes, but the opportunity is incredible for us.

“We knew from the beginning – we have to go to City and we have to beat them – you want to be champion, you have to win these matches, it is as simple as that.”

City have chipped away at Arsenal’s lead while also progressing to the semifinals of the Champions League and on Saturday reached the FA Cup final after easing past Sheffield United in third gear.

The games are coming thick and fast for Guardiola’s side but such is the quality and depth of his expensively-assembled squad that few doubt their ability to chase only the second treble – Premier League, FA Cup, Champions League – by an English side after Manchester United.

And Arteta was aware of the quality, especially the prowess of City’s goal-machine Erling Haaland. “When you look at the numbers, there is no comparison with anybody else. He (Haaland) is able to produce that as well because the setup is done in the right way for him,” Arteta said.



The Bangladesh team will travel to Sylhet today for a three-day camp and veteran Mushfiqur Rahim, not one to miss a beat when it comes to self-improvement in practice sessions, was seen driving at a delivery at Mirpur’s SBNCs yesterday a day ahead of the team’s departure. The Tigers will take the available players to Sylhet but BCB sources could not confirm whether ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will attend the camp in Sylhet.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED