

U-17s net half-dozen to sink Turkmenistan

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach revealed on Tuesday that his troops were raring to go ahead of their first foreign mission and the girls in red and green did not disappoint as they outclassed debutants Turkmenistan in their campaign opener of the AFC U-17 Women's Asia Cup Qualifiers at the Jalan Besar Stadium in Singapore yesterday.

Bangladesh struck five goals in the first hour and eventually won 6-0, courtesy of forward Thuinuye Karma's double, while Puja Das, Ruma Akter, Sauravi Akanda Prity, and Srimoti Trishna netted one each.

Bangladesh got off the blocks quickly as they found the lead in only the third minute, courtesy of midfielder Puja.

The debutants were rattled two minutes later when Thuinuye doubled the lead with her first but just when it seemed that Turkmenistan had managed to settle into the game, Bangladesh captain Ruma netted her side's third in the 39th minute to go into half-time with a comfortable 3-0 lead.

An already uphill task became a lot steeper for Turkmenistan when Thuinuye scored her second just seven minutes after the interval. Bangladesh were soon 5-0 up in the 60th minute when forward Sauravi converted from the spot.

From then on, damage control was on the agenda for Turkmenistan but Bangladesh were not done yet until substitute Srimoti scored a penalty to cap off the goal-fest.

Up next, Bangladesh will take on hosts Singapore at the same venue on Sunday.



UEFA FB wants handball law revamped

AGENCIES

The UEFA Football Board held its inaugural meeting at the House of European Football in Nyon, Switzerland, reflecting on various topics, including the Laws of the Game and refereeing matters such as the line of intervention, VAR, the handball rule and player behaviour.

This week it issued recommendations after discussing the handball law, specifically the aspect which states that not every touch of the arm or hand with the ball is an offence.

"The Board recommends that UEFA should clarify that no handball offence should be called on a player if the ball is previously deflected from his own body and, in particular, when the ball does not go towards the goal," it said.

"On the same notice, the Board recommends that not every handball should automatically lead to a caution after every shot at goal, as anticipated by current guidelines."

The Board also suggested that a player should be sent off for denying a goal-scoring opportunity only if they "deliberately and intentionally" touch the ball with their hand or arm. "In case of other handball offences, the players should only be cautioned," it added.

Manchester United expect a 'mad' Tottenham

AFP, London

Manchester United boss Erik ten Hag expects to face a "mad" Tottenham on Thursday following Spurs' humiliating 6-1 defeat by Newcastle but has insisted no opponent can be "hungrier" than we are.

Spurs' embarrassing loss to the Magpies led to the sacking of acting head coach Christian Stellini, with the 48-year-old spending less than a month in charge after replacing Antonio Conte.

Tottenham have now appointed Ryan Mason as their caretaker boss.

Tottenham sit sixth in the Premier League, but have lost 10 of their last 22 games after a bright start to sink hopes of a return to the Champions League next season.

Stellini had only been in charge for four matches and his appointment was symptomatic of a club lacking in leadership on and off the field.

United are currently fourth in the Premier League, six points clear of Spurs and with two games in hand.

They travel to north London still eyeing a Cup double, after Sunday's FA Cup semi-final penalty shoot-out win over Brighton at Wembley, having already lifted the League Cup this season.

But United themselves have had to recover from some disappointing results this season, with Ten Hag telling a pre-match news



conference on Wednesday: "We had some, not so often, that we have to bounce back.

"Definitely (more than I would like) but it happens with all the great teams, even Real Madrid, eh?"

"It's obvious they (Tottenham) had a really bad defeat. Of course, then they are mad. That can be fuel for bouncing back.

"But it's about us. An opponent can never be more hungry than we (are), so that is how we have to prepare the game."

Regardless of Spurs' problems, England captain Harry Kane remains a threat.

The 29-year-old striker has scored 26 goals in all competitions and faces one of the clubs

reportedly interested in signing him at the end of the campaign should he decide to leave Spurs in pursuit of his first major trophy.

Kane's goal to beat Manchester City in February and pass the legendary Jimmy Greaves as Spurs' all-time leading scorer in the process has been the highlight of a disappointing campaign.

Even surrounded by mediocrity, the England captain has scored 26 goals this season.

"It's quite clear his impact on the game for Spurs," said Ten Hag.

"We have a plan of course for that. The home game we did very well, so for tomorrow we need a very good plan as well.

"You have to defend him as a team."

Spurs cannot afford to lose Kane if they are to bounce back under a new manager next season.

Meanwhile, Ten Hag played down fears Bruno Fernandes had suffered a serious injury.

The 28-year-old suffered a knock against Brighton before eventually being substituted in the 101st minute.

Fernandes' wife posted a photo on Monday of the United playmaker with his right foot elevated next to a protective boot and pair of crutches.

But the Portugal international was seen without that boot and crutches on Wednesday, with Ten Hag saying: "We have to see how Bruno Fernandes is. We don't know yet, he's a question mark."



Following the Eid break, the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur turned lively once again. On Wednesday, Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusingha held a meeting with national selectors Minhajul Abedin Nannu, Habibul Bashar and Abdur Razzak before heading to Sylhet for Bangladesh's three-day training camp ahead of their tour to the United Kingdom for a three-match ODI series against Ireland next month.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'Overall improvement' on Tigers' agenda

SPORTS REPORTER

Chandika Hathurusingha is adept at making specific plans designed for specific scenarios and with technical improvement being one of the biggest areas that still needs addressing, the Bangladesh head coach planned for a three-day training camp in Sylhet, hoping to test the adaptability of bowlers and batters to conditions there.

The team departed for Sylhet yesterday evening but Chandika had a meeting with the selectors and a few of the coaching staff in Mirpur ahead of their scheduled departure.

Chandika had arrived in the country before the other coaching staffs and with the coaching staff now available following vacations, it was an opportunity to discuss plans going forward.

The Tigers are set to undergo skill practice sessions from April 27th till April 29 before they return to Dhaka. They will be heading to England next to play the ODI series against Ireland, part of the ICC ODI Super League. However, the Tigers' view will have extended past the Ireland assignment in preparation of challenges this year.

Where Sylhet's conditions come into the equation has to do with Test cricket, which challenges mental endurance the most, even though it is the Bangladesh ODI side that are going for the sessions. The conditions in Sylhet had allowed for swing with



the new ball while the challenge for the bowlers came in the shape of consistent bounce on wickets which allowed for effective stroke-play.

Given that Dhaka has been hosting the Dhaka Premier League, Chandika wanted something which would allow the side to be tested outside of the challenges from tired pitches that have very little carry for pacers.

"When we play in Sylhet, some of the pitches over there are closest to what we might expect in England. It is also very hot here [in Dhaka]. There's a lot of matches being played here. We can't get the wicket that I want here," the head coach said while talking to the media yesterday.

The training sessions in Sylhet will be effective for overall growth and although Chandika did not say it was done particularly to replicate

conditions at England, it was in preparation for away challenges where there is swing and bounce on offer.

"It is not just about English conditions. It is about the overall development of our game. We are not worried about opposition or results. We want to improve our game overall wherever we play in the future. We have lots of Test cricket coming up next year. We play away from home as well.

"Just to improve our cricket," Chandika said about the special training camp's objective.

The majority of the players are available for the camp bar Shakib Al Hasan, who will be joining the side in England. Liton Das and Mustafizur Rahman, currently playing the Indian Premier League, are expected in England by May 5.

School cricketers get exposure

SPORTS REPORTER

As part of their plan to provide a platform for youngsters to showcase their talents overseas, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) arranged for the Prime Bank-BCB Combined School Under-16 team to go to Mumbai.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board formed the under-16 squad from the recently concluded school cricket tournament. The squad left for India yesterday and will be facing Mumbai under-16 team on the tour.

The visitors will play two three-day matches, starting on April 28 and May 3. The youngsters will then take part in three one-dayers, scheduled on May 8, 9 and 11, respectively. All the matches of the tour will take place at the Sachin Tendulkar Gymkhana ground in Mumbai.

Squad: Zawad Abrar, Azizul Hakim, Md Rifat, Debashish Sarker, Kalam Siddiki, Tawaf Mashrafi, Ahsan Al Mumin, Turjo Sarkar, Samiun Basir, Kayes Rahman, Yeasir Arafat, Sheikh Imtiaz, Md Sobuj, Samiul Islam, Shahria Al Amin, Sanjit Majumdar.

Big Bash ramps up pay to lure top talents

REUTERS, Melbourne

International players in Australia's Big Bash League (BBL) are set for a big pay-rise after a shake-up of the domestic T20 tournament's contracting system, amid a global battle for talent.

Overseas players who nominate for the draft will earn A\$420,000 (\$278,000) if selected as a "platinum" pick, the highest tier in the draft system, or a rise of 23.5% on the previous tournament.

"Gold" pick players, the second highest tier, will pocket 15% more per season (A\$300,000), and third-tier "silver" picks will earn 14% more (A\$200,000), organisers said on Wednesday.

The eight BBL clubs will now have a total player payments pool of A\$3 million, up from A\$1.9 million, to allow for the hikes.

Each club will be able to sign up to two local players with national contracts on a new "Marquee Supplementary List".

That will allow the clubs to pick Australia's high-profile players for odd games if they become available for selection during the country's international home summer.

"The new player contracting rules and uplift in total payment pools will allow both the ... BBL to remain internationally competitive in an increasingly dynamic market," Cricket Australia's BBL chief Alistair Dobson said on Wednesday in a statement.

Franchise-based Twenty20 leagues, offering fast-paced action and live music, have proliferated in recent years in the wake of the success of the trend-setting Indian Premier League.

Australia's domestic women's T20 tournament, the WBBL, has also tweaked its contracting system and will introduce a draft for international players, emulating the men's tournament, organisers said.

Ancelotti apologises after Castellanos' night

AGENCIES

Girona striker Taty Castellanos, on loan from MLS side New York City FC, won't forget 25 April 2023 in a hurry. Meanwhile, it was a night to forget for Real Madrid and coach Carlo Ancelotti, who had to apologise to the fans for what had transpired in Girona.

Castellanos, the Argentinian striker, became the first player in 75 years to score four in a LaLiga game against Real Madrid as the Catalan side recorded a famous 4-2 victory over Champions League specialists Real Madrid.

The 24-year-old, who has scored 50 MLS goals, became just the 10th man to score four or more goals against Real Madrid. In fact, he became the first player to score four goals against Real Madrid since Robert Lewandowski netted four times for Borussia Dortmund in the first leg of the 2012-13 Champions League semifinals.

Castellanos also became the fifth player to score four home goals against Real Madrid with the others being Vantolra (Barcelona 5 - Real Madrid 0, 1934-35), Martinez (Espanyol 5 - Real Madrid 4, 1930-40), Emilin (Oviedo 4 - Real Madrid 0, 1944-45) and Echevarria (Oviedo 7 - Real Madrid 1, 1947-48).

Ancelotti's Madrid are 11 points behind Barcelona having played one extra match, with this defeat virtually killing any hope



they had remaining of defending the title.

"The team were nervous from the off and then we lost control. It looked as though half-time would help us but then we conceded again and it was an uphill battle. The fans are hurting and we apologise. We're hurting too but we know we will be in good shape for the Copa final and the Champions League semis," Ancelotti apologised to fans after the game.

Ancelotti was hampered by striker Karim Benzema taking a knock in the win over Celta Vigo at the weekend, while goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois did not travel because of a stomach problem among other absentees.