



Celebration of the three goals from Rakib Hossain, Tariq Kazi and Sheikh Morsalin which ended Bangladesh's two-decade-long wait for a win over Maldives in the SAFF Championship and revived their hopes of reaching the semifinals during their 3-1 win at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru yesterday.

PHOTO: SAFF

We came back stronger after the first match. This win was needed for us because we had planned for the Maldives match for a long time. We executed the plan well today. I think it was the outcome of total team work.

Tapu Barman, centre-back

It has been a great victory for us. We are really happy because we have been under pressure but were really determined to win this match. Our style of play has transformed and we are also playing attacking football. With these goals against Maldives, I believe our goal-drought is on the verge of ending.

Rakib Hossain, forward

We were mentally in a difficult position after losing the first match. Our target was to achieve a good result from this match. We were committed and kept talking among ourselves about how to snatch the victory over Maldives. To be honest, every player has pushed themselves to win the match.

Bishwanath Ghosh, right-back

I had a dream to score for the national team at a big stage and I fulfilled it in the crucial match. Happy about it but the big thing is that the team won the match.

Sheikh Morsalin, attacking midfielder

We will celebrate this triumph tonight. We all are very happy with this win because we needed three points and we achieved it. We have two days in hand ahead of the Bhutan match and we will be going for the win against Bhutan.

Jamal Bhuiyan, central midfielder

Panic evaporates after VICTORY

ANISUR RAHMAN FROM BENGALURU

Bangladesh players usually make a lot of fun at the dressing room during international matches but a panic had set in ahead of their crucial SAFF Championship encounter against Maldives at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru yesterday.

The players hardly talked with each other before taking on the island nation, but all the tension, anxiety and uncertainty evaporated after a morale-boosting 3-1 victory – the first over Maldives in the competition in 20 years, keeping Bangladesh's hopes of a semifinal berth alive.

After the final whistle, some of the players lay on the ground while some ran towards the bench to celebrate the victory. Tapu Barman and Jamal Bhuiyan were heard shouting vamos, vamos as the win made the environment for the players and the team management easy.

"There was panic at the dressing room and we hardly talked to each other before the start of the game though we usually make fun before international matches. The dressing room was really vibrating after the match and we are happy with this important victory," said winger Rakib Hossain, who scored the equalising goal before the break.

Coach Javier Cabrera termed the victory as a great achievement while



giving credit to the players.

"It is a great achievement. We knew how important it was to get three points because it was difficult right after conceding the goal. The atmosphere was not the same before the goal and the boys did an incredible job to come back. All the credit goes to them," Cabrera said at the post-match briefing.

The Spaniard said he was confident about leaving the field with a victory.

"During half-time at the dressing room, they wanted more and more and we were absolutely convinced that we

would win the game. They did it and they do believe in themselves and that is what they also do and proved that they have the opportunity to qualify for the semifinals," said the 38-year-old, who saw his side suffer a 2-0 defeat against the same opposition in his first assignment with Bangladesh.

"The idea was to continue the momentum because we started very well. Playing against the clock, the idea was to keep doing the same and started the second half strongly and not gave them any chances and go for another goal. We were completely convinced that we could score at least two goals. And that condition made the team achieve the victory."

Replying to a query about individual performers, Cabrera said, "Bishwanath did well because he has been a fighter who is always ready to give you more than you want. Morsalin is also a young player who has been playing well for his club. But it has been a total teamwork and I don't want to find one or two because everyone fights for each other and that is the way to win matches."

"We have to face Bhutan the same way we faced [Maldives] today. Again I am impressed with Bhutan in the first half against Maldives and they got more chances but they were unlucky to concede the penalty. Bhutan is a dangerous opponent and what we know is that we have to achieve three points to reach the semifinals," said Cabrera.

Sri Lanka advance in WC qualifying

AFP, Bulawayo

Sri Lanka powered into the Super Six stage of the Cricket World Cup qualifying tournament with a crushing 133-run win over Ireland on Sunday that eliminated their opponents.

The result also guaranteed Scotland and Oman will join Sri Lanka in progressing from Group B.

Opener Dimuth Karunaratne made a run-a-ball 103 and Sadeera Samarawickrama hit 82 as Sri Lanka compiled an imposing total of 325 all out off 49.5 overs after being put in to bat in Bulawayo.

Mark Adair took 4-46 and Barry McCarthy claimed 3-56 but Ireland's pace spearhead Josh Little conceded 78 runs in eight wicketless overs.

Wanindu Hasaranga finished with 5-79, giving the Sri Lankan leg-spinner 16 wickets in three qualifiers so far in Zimbabwe.

Alcaraz returns to world number one

REUTERS, London

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz fired a Wimbledon warning as he comfortably beat Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4 to claim the Queen's Club title on Sunday and return to world number one.

In baking temperatures, the 20-year-old had too much firepower for his wily Australian opponent as he claimed his first grasscourt title in impressive fashion.

It was only Alcaraz's third tournament on grass, but the way he marched through the draw augurs well for his prospects at Wimbledon where he will be seeded number one.

De Minaur, the first Australian to reach the London final since Lleyton Hewitt in 2006, had chances for a break of serve when leading 4-3 in the opening set but could not take them.

Alcaraz then broke serve in the following game before wrapping up the set on serve.

De Minaur double-faulted to hand over a service game early in the second set and there was no way the muscular Spaniard was going to pass up the opportunity to claim the title.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladesh players and officials celebrate one of their wins during the Special Olympics which concluded in Berlin, Germany yesterday. A 113-member Bangladesh contingent, including 79 players, won 24 gold, four silver and five bronze medals in the competition.

Tillakaratne sees value of nurturing upcoming talents

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team head coach, Hashan Tillakaratne, believes patience is needed if the Tigresses are to find a foothold in international cricket.

Bangladesh suffered big losses against the big sides in the T20I World Cup in South Africa this year, losing all their games. Tillakaratne, however, is certain that his side "will bring many exciting results in times to come" if given necessary "support and encouragement".

"Yes, they have the experience and the method to overcome all challenges. But then again, [in] women's cricket, you need to be more patient with them; it's not like men's cricket," the Sri Lankan told the



media yesterday.

"They need that space; they need that confidence. You have to give them. I'm sure they are in a good frame of mind."

The Tigresses, who have a big assignment coming up as India are set to arrive next month for a T20I and ODI series, have been undergoing individual sessions at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium – which is set to host an international match for the first time since 2012 – ahead of India's arrival on July 6. The ODI series beginning from July 16, also part of the 2022-2025 ICC Women's Championship, is a huge series to determine



qualification for the 2025 World Cup while showing whether progress is in order.

"Going through the process is very much important. We have a very busy schedule. India is coming, then we have Asian Games in Pakistan. So, yes, we play to our potential, I am sure," added Tillakaratne, also a World Cup winner, who was roped in by the Bangladesh Cricket Board after he coached Sri Lanka women's side to the Women's Asia Cup final last year in Sylhet.

Players like Shorna Akter, Afia Protasha and Rabeya Khan showed during the U-19 World Cup that younger stars are ready to take the next step. While veterans like skipper Nigar Sultana, Jahanara Alam, and Salma Khatun are still in the picture, Tillakaratne has been following the process of bringing in newer stars.

"Especially after the U19 World Cup, there are so many young and talented girls coming through. That is a very positive sign for Bangladesh cricket."

"We need to nurture them and we need to train them carefully, give them confidence, and bring them to the international stage. That is what we have been doing."



Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club players celebrate their 56-31 goals victory over Arambagh Krira Sangha in the last match of the Cute Women's Handball League at the Shaheed Captain M Mansoor Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday. The victory saw Mariners clinch the title with maximum nine points. Mishti Khatun of RN Sports Home, who finished runners-up, was adjudged the best player of the league.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED