

Pinky wins race against Joti

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Fargana Hoque Pinky opened a new chapter in the country's cricket history yesterday as she became the first Bangladeshi woman cricketer to score an ODI century.

Every athlete dreams of setting a maiden record for their nation, and Pinky is no exception. However, the right-hander -- who moved up in the batting order to open the innings in the all-important fixture against India -- had an added incentive, courtesy of her captain, Nigar Sultana Joti.

"The one who sits beside me (Nigar Sultana Joti), always told me that 'I will make the century first'. I always heard it. I never replied. I always told her 'Ok, you will do it'. So, 70 to 80 per cent credit goes to her for my hundred because I wanted to show her that I would make it first," said Pinky with a grin while Joti was also smiling at the time.

Pinky further informed that her teammates always held the belief that she would be the first one to reach the landmark. Prior to her 56th ODI, she had registered nine fifties and her previous-best score was 71, made against Pakistan in Hamilton in 2022.

"I never scored [an international] hundred before but recently saw Mushfiq bhai (Mushfiqur Rahim) and Shanto bhai (Najmul Hossain) scoring two hundreds; but I scored hundred in domestic cricket," she added.

"The plan was that if I batted long, we have four-five players who can play big knocks. I always had faith in my skill. When you play a big innings against a big team, it will boost you up in future."



Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joti and teammates erupted with joy once pacer Marufa Akhter got last Indian batter Meghna Singh out caught-behind in the third ball of the final over to tie the series-deciding ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Kaur loses temper on field, labels umpiring 'pathetic'

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During the ODI series decider between Bangladesh and India in Mirpur yesterday that ended in a dramatic draw, the pressure of a high stakes encounter had apparently got the better of Harmanpreet Kaur.

The India skipper created a scene after having failed to accept an umpiring decision that went against her favour.

Prior to Kaur's dismissal, as India were chasing 226, stumper batter Yastika Bhatia was not pleased with the leg-before decision that got her out. She tried to argue with the umpire soon after, perhaps indicating that there may have been an issue with height and angle of the ball; even though Sultana Khatun's delivery had struck in line with stumps.

When it came to Kaur, also a victim of leg before, the India captain was visibly livid after getting out and she proceeded to hit the stumps with the bat before pointing fingers at the two on-field umpires. Moreover, Kaur made the so-called "pay me" gesture -- signalled by repeatedly rubbing one's thumb over the tip of the index finger and middle finger -- and showed a thumbs-up aimed towards the stands as she left the field.

Kaur said after the game: "I think a lot of learning for us from the game. Even apart from the cricket, the kind of umpiring that was happening we were very surprised. The next time when we come to Bangladesh we will make sure we have to deal with this type of umpiring and prepare ourselves accordingly."

"... as I mentioned earlier some pathetic umpiring was done and we are really disappointed about some decisions given by the umpires," she reiterated.

'A respectable step forward'

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Prior to the start of the home series against a strong India side, women's cricket in Bangladesh was still searching for a big break to showcase what the team was capable of.

Despite losing the T20I series with a game in hand, the team bounced back superbly and showed great character to clinch the third T20I by four wickets as belief started to grow among Nigar Sultana Joti and Co.

Exciting young pacer Marufa Akter was in her full force in the first ODI, picking up four wickets to help the Tigresses clinch their maiden win against India in the fifty-over format by 40 runs in a rain curtailed encounter through DLS method.

The win came as a huge morale-boost for the women in red and green, and despite the comprehensive defeat in the second ODI, the hosts showed great character in the third and series-deciding affair.

Fargana Hoque Pinky wrote a piece of history by smashing the first ODI ton for Bangladesh in women's cricket, helping the hosts post their second highest total of 225 for four. And then just as India looked headed for a comfortable win, the Tigresses again bounced back to tie the game and share the series.

According to Joti, the series has given Bangladesh women's cricket a respectful step forward. The skipper said that the players were able to grab the spotlight -- the spotlight that was never on them before.

"I am not entirely happy since I thought we could have done better. But it was pleasing to see how the

members of the board backed us and said positive things. I am happy to see how the fans and media came in and supported and promoted us, so overall I am happy," Joti told the media after the game.

"I always wanted this team to take one step forward and I think we have taken a respectable step forward after this series. There were many who didn't know us, apart from one or two players. At least those people now recognise who is Nahida, Pinky or Marufa. So, I think this is an achievement since the people of Bangladesh now know who plays in the women's team," she added.

Although there were many positives to take for the Tigresses from both the T20I and the ODI series, the 25-year-old was not fully satisfied and wants further improvement in the coming days.

"Definitely I am not satisfied as we couldn't win the series, we just levelled. But I would say we rectified few mistakes from the other day and it was good today.

Chairman of the BCB's women's wing, Shaiful Alam Chowdhury Nadel, felt that the success was the reflection of the support provided by the board.

"We are very happy as we have seen Pinky scoring a maiden hundred for Bangladesh in ODI format and I think it's a stepping stone for women's cricket in the country. The board president provided all the necessary support and we have increased the salary and match fees, so the board is always behind the players and is continuing to provide facilities," said Nadel.



We could have done better in the second game, but yes, there are many areas for us to learn and if we can rectify those mistakes, I think we will be able to play better cricket in the coming days," said Joti.

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Argentine superstar Lionel Messi made a magical debut to his American adventure on Friday. The Argentina World Cup winning captain scored on a curling free-kick deep into second-half stoppage time to put an exclamation point on his first game with Inter Miami jersey, which officially became the third club in the Argentine talisman's career after his spells at Barcelona and PSG. Messi lifted his new team to a 2-1 victory over Cruz Azul in both teams' Leagues Cup opener. "To be honest, as soon as I saw the free kick given, I thought this is the way it's meant to end. Especially when you've got players like Leo and Sergio on the pitch, that's what they produce," said the former England midfielder and club's co-owner David Beckham.

PHOTO: TWITTER



USA, Japan make fast WC starts

AFP, Brisbane

England squeezed past Haiti 1-0 as they began their Women's World Cup title bid in unconvincing fashion on Saturday, but holders the United States and former champions Japan were far more comfortable.

European champions England have been touted as the prime challengers to a United States team chasing an unprecedented third World Cup crown in a row.

But they will have to play far better than they did in front of nearly 45,000 spectators in Brisbane, where a youthful Haiti side making their World Cup debut could have snatched a point at the end.

In contrast to England's laboured performance, the United States and Japan were rampant against other supposed minnows.

The United States cruised to a 3-0 win over Vietnam -- it should have been many more -- before Japan crushed Zambia 5-0.

Sophia Smith was the star of the show for the US team at Eden Park in Auckland, scoring twice and setting up captain Lindsey Horan for the third in front of just over 41,000 fans.

Bangladesh, India in same group in two SAFF events

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Bangladesh will play against India in the group stages of two SAFF age-level tournaments for boys which will be held in September in Nepal and Bhutan.

The draw ceremony of both events -- SAFF U-16 Championship and SAFF U-19 Championship -- were held at the SAFF Secretariat in Dhaka yesterday.

Six teams from the seven SAFF members, barring Sri Lanka who are under a FIFA suspension, were divided into two groups through the draw. The U-16 championship pit Bangladesh, India and Nepal in Group A while Bhutan, Maldives and Pakistan were pitted in Group B. The event will be held in Thimphu, Bhutan from September 1 to 10.

India are the defending champions of this tournament as they beat Nepal 4-0 in the final of the tournament which was last year held for under-17 age group.

The SAFF U-19 Championship will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal from September 21 to 30, with defending champions India drawn alongside Bangladesh and Bhutan in Group B. Nepal, Maldives and Pakistan make up Group A.

India had beaten Bangladesh 5-2 after extra time in the final of the event, which was held for under-20 age group, in August last year.

The draw ceremony was conducted by SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal and Bangladesh Football Federation's acting general secretary Imran Hossain.

Police finish BPL in third position

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Bangladesh Police finished in third position, leaving Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel KC in fourth and fifth positions respectively, as the Bangladesh Premier League came to an end yesterday.

There were three matches held at three different venues on the final day of the league, with all three aforementioned sides notching victories and hence no change on the eventual positions of those three teams.

Police beat Chittagong Abahani 3-2 in Munshiganj to finish on 35 points in third position -- their best ever in top flight football -- after having finished in ninth and eighth positions in their two previous campaigns.

Mohammad Abdullah, Mateo Palacios and Robiul Hasan gave Police a 3-0 lead at half time before David Ojukwu and Mohammad Nahian scored two late goals for the port city side, who finished in eighth position with 21 points.

Mohammedan finished fourth with 32 points after a 3-1 thrashing of Rahmatganj MFS in Cumilla, with Sunday Emmanuel, Arif Hossain and Soleymane Diabate getting on the score sheet for the Black and Whites. Emon Hossain pulled one back in stoppage time for Rahmatganj, who finished ninth -- just above the relegation zone, with 19 points.

The day's other match saw Sheikh Russel edge already-relegated Muktijoddha Sangsab 3-2 at the Bashundhara Sports Complex in Dhaka.

Kenneth Ikechukwu and Mohammad Ibrahim gave the hosts a 2-0 lead early in the match before Emmanuel Ikechukwu and Landry Ndikumana brought Muktis into level terms. Dipok Roy's 78th minute strike, however, earned Sheikh Russel all three points which saw them finish on 30 points. Muktijoddha ended the campaign with 15 points and will be relegated to Bangladesh Championship League along with Azampur FC.