



“When we came into the series, it was always a goal to win every match you play and we certainly hope to. We know how tough it is to play here like we had seen in the last two series having lost here emphasises that. As a group, we would like to take the opportunity to do that tomorrow. We had a tough time before and the focus for us, regardless of whether we are winning or losing a series is the way we want to go about things. It doesn't change considering whoever the team is, it's about everyone knowing what their role is. It's an exciting opportunity for the group to have an opportunity to win a series here.”

New Zealand wicketkeeper BATTER HENRY NICHOLLS



Veteran Mahmudullah Riyad, who played a 49-run knock in the previous game, will hope to play a commanding knock to help Bangladesh win their third and final ODI against New Zealand and level the series in Mirpur today The Kiwis, meanwhile, were all jolly during practice yesterday as they look to clinch their first bilateral series win on Bangladesh soil in 15 years.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Salahuddin backs Riyad for WC inclusion

SPORTS REPORTER

A lot of confusion persisted for days but Bangladesh selectors are finally set to announce the World Cup squad today when the Tigers take on New Zealand in the third and final ODI in Mirpur.

According to prominent coach and former Bangladesh fielding coach Mohammad Salahuddin, the entire selection process ahead of such a big event has been messy.

“Maybe if you had asked me six months ago, I would have said that we were in a position to do something special in the World Cup. But with what happened in the last six months, are we really in a position to do something special? That is my question as the team is yet to get settled and we don't have much time. And I think the entire process regarding the World Cup team has been a mess, Salahuddin said when asked about the Tigers' chances in the World Cup during a multimedia show by The Daily Star yesterday.

Even though top-order batter Najmul Hossain Shanto said in a press conference yesterday that the players are well aware of the roles they need to play in the World Cup, Salahuddin suggested otherwise.

“I think there are still a few players who are not sure in which position they are going to play. So, there are doubts among the players and when

‘Better to return home with something than nothing’

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Since the inclusion of cricket in Asian Games, Bangladesh cricket teams never returned home empty-handed, and the women's team have helped retain the tradition by winning a bronze medal in the 19th Asian Games Hangzhou yesterday.

The Tigresses handed a five-wicket defeat to former gold medallists Pakistan, thanks to an all-round display by Shorna Akter, who took three wickets to restrict Pakistan to 64 for nine in 20 overs and then scored an unbeaten 14 to steer Bangladesh to the victory target with five wickets in hand and 10 balls spare.

Though Bangladesh's target was to improve on their two silver medals in the two editions that cricket had been staged previously – in 2010 and 2014 – the third-place finish will come as a consolation as the country's first medals in this edition.

“Every team comes with an aim to win the highest honour. But it is pleasing for us to come back again and rectify the mistakes we made on Sunday (against India). It is better to return home with something than nothing. The whole team is proud and happy,” captain Nigar Sultana Joty said after the victory.

Asked whether the team had regrets for not being able to play in third successive final, the Bangladesh captain said, “Of course there is regret because people think of gold after winning silver, but we slipped to the bronze medal match. But more importantly we are not returning home empty-handed and at the back of mind, we feel good that we have won the bronze medal.”



SHANTO

a portrait of assuredness

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh cricket team had big dreams and expectations surrounding the upcoming ODI World Cup in India.

“Hopefully, this time our goal will be to win the 2023 World Cup,” former ODI captain Tamim Iqbal had said back in 2021.

The experienced stars' performances and youngsters coming through the ranks had prompted many of the national team players speak positively about Bangladesh's World Cup possibilities.

Some of that expectation had been curbed by the performances in the recent Asia Cup. Following the multi-nation event, coach Chandika Hathurusingha had said in an interview that those who are dreaming of winning the World Cup should wake up from their sleep.

It was an unprecedented remark, considering it came from the head coach and that too very close to the World Cup. Tamim, who recently stepped down from captaincy, was surprised by the comment and asked how a dream can be fulfilled if it is not there?

Yesterday, Najmul Hossain Shanto came to the press conference as the 16th ODI captain of Bangladesh, with Liton Das rested for the third ODI against New Zealand. Shanto projected the kind of assuredness that puts his struggle with trolling and finding a foothold in international cricket in context.

Despite the dent in Tigers' aspirations, Shanto seemed vibrant. Just like he is getting used to scoring runs in international cricket, Shanto was responding

to the questions without a seed of doubt.

When asked to comment on Hathurusingha's remarks, Shanto responded with an emphatically positive tone.

“No, actually we are still seeing the same dream which we were seeing before. The players wanted to finish within the top four when we started the World Cup qualification [ODI Super League] and we finished in top three. Since then we dreamt of getting good results in the World Cup, something we didn't do before but we have the ability. We still have the same dream,” Shanto said nonchalantly.

Shanto's assuredness at this moment is encapsulated by the very struggles he faced when he did not perform as a player. His responsibility would be big too. The number three batting position is key to settling the batting side for big things. His role would be a pivotal one to avoid a batting slump like those that have been seen in recent games.

“After getting a good start, our work is to build big partnerships. That would be the goal and that's what everyone is working on. Those of us who are batting in the top-order would try to ensure that whoever gets set, would look to see how big an innings we can play. Hoping it [top-order slump] would be rectified soon,” the left-handed batter said.

Enjoying his journey in international cricket, Shanto wore the burden of being made the captain for one match like an emblem, showing mental toughness that would be necessary to reinstate the broken momentum ahead of the World Cup.



you have doubts, you can't focus on your game. So, it's really very difficult. We were a good side in ODIs, so, naturally, the expectations from the fans are high. It's important to settle things soon,” Salahuddin added.

According to sources, chances are high that Mahmudullah Riyad will make it into the squad following his 49-run knock in the second ODI against New Zealand.

Salahuddin also backed Mahmudullah and informed that having experience in the side will help the team do well in pressure situations.

“As I said, we have fifty thousand runs in the team between the four experienced players and if you cut down that to two then it will come down to 15 thousand or less, meaning you would be going with less experience in the World Cup.

“Experience does matter and it's very important, especially the players who play in the middle or down the order need to be able to perform under pressure. The role of the batters down the order is such that his knock of 20 could win or even lose you a game. So, it's important that the batter uses his head to navigate the innings,” he said.

According to the most successful coach in the domestic competition, the seniors must make sure their individual performance helps the team win a major competition.

ECB vows to ‘change’ cricket

AFP, London

English cricket chiefs have vowed to “change” the game after a damning report revealed racism, sexism, classism and elitism in the sport.

The Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC) published its report in June revealing “widespread” discrimination in the game.

The commission, set up by the England and Wales Cricket Board, made 44 recommendations, including a call for an “unqualified public apology” from the board for its failings, which the ECB made immediately.

The ECB published its response on Monday, saying it would be “taking forward most of the ICEC's recommendations”. “The ICEC report was a massive moment for the sport and a responsibility we take extremely seriously, to bring about the changes we all want to see,” said ECB chief executive Richard Gould.

‘Scoreline does not reflect girls’ real performance’

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Bangladesh women's football team suffered a second successive defeat in the Asian Games, losing 6-1 against Vietnam at the Wenzhou Olympic Sports Center Stadium on Monday.

Following an 8-0 drubbing at the hands of Japan, the women in red and green came into the match with hopes of putting on a better show against Vietnam, who beat Nepal 2-0 in their first match.

The charges of Saiful Bari Titu did put on a better performance than they did against Japan but still could not stop Vietnam from raking up the goals. Vietnam, who played the latest FIFA Women's World Cup, went 2-0 up in the first half before adding four more in the second half.

“The scoreline does not justify the performance put in by the girls,” said head coach Saiful Bari Titu. “We conceded the first goal after a silly mistake while the second was struck from a long ball.

“From the start of the second half, we pressed high and that forced Vietnam to defend deep. We had also better ball passion, passing, and throwing, and even we created a few chances though we could not convert any.

“What we could not do against Japan, we did it against Vietnam, even Nepal could not do

what we did against Vietnam. But the scoreline does not reflect the real performance of the girls,” Titu added.

CAREER-BEST SCORE FOR SHOOTER ARNAB

Despite having little to no hopes from the men's 10m Air Rifle individual and team events, Bangladesh shooter Sharar Arnab ended up scoring his career-best of 626.2 points to finish 18th among 54 shooters in the Asian Games yesterday. Shooters Tamjid Bin Alam and Robiul Islam finished 22nd and 28th, respectively, by scoring 625.5 and 623.9. Bangladesh finished seventh among 14 teams, scoring a total of 1875.6 points.

SWIMMER RAFI FINISHES LAST IN HEAT

Swimmer Samiul Islam Rafi, who on Sunday improved his 100m backstroke timing, finished 22nd among 32 swimmers in the 50m backstroke event by clocking 27.20 seconds in Heat-3, finishing last among eight participants.

BOXER ABU TALHA IN 2ND ROUND

BOXER Abu Talha was given a bye in his first round of the 51kg weight category, like New York-based boxer Zinnat Ferdous. Talha will now compete in the pre-quarterfinal against winner of the match between Dayanch Annaseyidov of Turkmenistan and Khalid Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia on September 28.



Two towering headers from Alvaro Morata, who was left unmarked on both occasions, early in each half saw hosts Atletico Madrid outclass their city rivals Real Madrid in a 3-1 win at the Metropolitano stadium in LaLiga on Sunday. Real Madrid, who entered the weekend as leaders, are now third on 15 points, one behind Barcelona and Girona.

PHOTO: AFP