

All that went right for Bangladesh against Afghanistan



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MADIHA ATHAR KHAN

On Saturday, Bangladesh won their first match in the men's ODI Cricket World Cup for the third year in a row: against Afghanistan in 2015, in 2019 against South Africa, and this time against Afghanistan. Bangladesh has started their World Cup 2023 journey with a convincing win. Tuning out all off-the-field buzz, the Tigers presented themselves as a cohesive unit to complete their largest win by deliveries remaining as they met the target score of a meagre 157 runs with 92 balls left.

was the most economical bowler (at 2.77 runs per over), as his deliveries provided virtually no room for the Afghan batters to play attacking cricket. Mounting pressure saw the opposition make poor choices of shots, which the Bangladeshi fielders took proper advantage of. Throughout Afghanistan's batting innings, Bangladeshi bowlers maintained a high level of discipline in their line and length, capitalised on the regular wickets, and prevented any partnerships from

his innings of 57. Najmul Hossain Shanto remained not-out at 59.

The Afghan team is a strong opponent in T20 cricket and many of their star players have regular outings in franchise cricket. This means that they have better control over the T20 format. To excel in ODI cricket can be an opportunity as much as it can be a challenge. In the 20-over format, there is barely any room to breathe – from the get-go, one has to play attacking cricket. In contrast, the 50-over game lets one settle in, read the pitch, and take their time to find the rhythm of the field and the purchase that bowlers are getting from it. ODIs also allow a player who has not been in form the time to get their groove back. But the mental pressure and stamina involved in dominating a whole day's match cannot be equated with the skills that the



Bangladesh will look to make the most of their momentum as they prepare for the next match against the defending World Cup champion, England.

PHOTO: AFP

Their previous best was 52 balls remaining against the Netherlands.

Afghanistan's openers got off to a relatively good start, on a pitch that was considered to be suitable to bat on after Bangladesh won the toss and chose to field. Shakib led from the front by bringing himself onto bowl in only the sixth over. Indeed, the pitch turned out to be good for spin as, by the end of the day, both Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Shakib Al Hasan shared six wickets between themselves. In his second over, Shakib provided the first breakthrough for Bangladesh by returning opener Ibrahim Zadran to the dugout. The score was 47-1.

There were quite a few bowling changes which possibly raised eyebrows but ultimately resulted in the right outcome. Shakib brought himself on for a second spell in the 13th over and this time, too, he picked up a wicket in his second over. Afghanistan added 36 runs before Rahmat Shah was caught out by Liton Das off Shakib's bowling, just when a partnership seemed to have been building. From then on, Bangladesh kept chipping away at the Afghanistan batters, making sure they never got comfortable. Still, at 112-3, it seemed possible that the Afghans would go on to put up a fighting total. However, seven wickets were wrapped up by the Tigers for only 44 runs. Miraz – who later became Player of the Match –

emerging. Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, and Taskin Ahmed all provided good support to the spinners and picked up wickets.

Bangladesh's run chase was a frill-free affair, as the team did just what was needed to secure their first victory in this World Cup. As we have seen in the recent past, there is a lack of stability in the Tigers' top order and this continued as both Tanzid Tamim and Liton Das fell in quick succession. This being Tanzid's first World Cup, it is naturally a daunting situation for him. Moreover, this was only his sixth international match, which arguably explains why he seemed a bit nervous on the pitch and attempted a few too many shots. And while Liton Das had a spectacular 2022, he has found it difficult to regain his rhythm since his injury. However, Miraz was seen to play all across the batting order and has scored runs consistently. His form, coupled with Najmul Hossain Shanto's terrific run of 2023, provides a lot of mettle in Bangladesh's top order. Together, these two built a partnership of nearly 100, which meant that the Tigers were almost across the finish line. Even though Afghan bowlers barely had any runs to defend, their fielders let them down. They have the lowest catch efficiency of all the teams playing in this World Cup and, to reinforce that status, the Afghans dropped Miraz twice in

Afghans have mastered. They are great hitters of the ball, can score runs quickly, and have a fighting spirit (with a decent bowling lineup). But an ODI match allows the teams a comfortable enough stretch of time to shift momentums back and forth between two opponents. When the game is not going in one's favour, it becomes a big test of perseverance and patience to see through the rough patch till the team can play freely. Afghanistan can have a better journey ahead, as they look to break their 13-match losing streak with this World Cup by focusing on the less exciting aspects of the game: rotating the strike, building partnerships, and holding on to catches.

Bangladesh will look to make the most of their momentum as they prepare for the next match against the defending World Cup champion, England. Regardless of the strength of the opposition, if the Tigers play confident cricket and rely on their strengths, they can prove to be a challenge for any opponent. They have two inform players in Shanto and Miraz, with the latter building a good foundation to be a worthy all-rounder successor to Shakib. The Tigers' pace attack has also matured, and there are good options in Nasum Ahmed and Mahedi Hasan if an extra spinner is needed who can also add batting depth to the lower-middle order.



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

A youth scavenging for mental wellness



Afia Jahin is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

AFIA JAHIN

To be honest, it doesn't feel right for me to write about mental health wellness. Not that I never feel mentally or emotionally (yes, those are separate aspects of one's psychological wellbeing) ill. I mean, do I burn out "easily"? Do I struggle to find time to process my emotions due to a work schedule that feels all-consuming? Or feel inadequate for not being able to do my job and regulate my emotions in a productive way? Do I feel happy, but always fail to hold on to that feeling for longer than a half hour? Do I try to convince myself that the concept of perpetual happiness is a scam, and that we, as humans in a suffocatingly capitalistic system, are not supposed to even be able to feel happy that often? Do I feel like I'm burdening someone if I share too much with them of what's going on in my head, because they, too, are struggling – as are we all? Yes to everything.

But it is with these thoughts of acknowledgement that the curtain draws on me dealing with my own mental health. Not that I haven't tried to go further. Every few months, when it does get Very Bad, I will scour every women's group on Facebook for resources, therapist reviews, online consultations, etc. Each time, I will decide on a therapist, with my primary requirement being a relatively cheap session fee. In fact, it is the session fees of most therapists which act as a primary deterrent to seeking help for the mentally ill. In Dhaka, you will be hard-pressed to find a mental health professional charging a fee-per-hour of less than Tk 1,500. While this may not be too much in the current economic climate, it is far from pocket change for students and young adults who may require multiple sessions a month. And with this hurdle in place, many go without booking a visit at all, fearing that their hard-earned money may go to waste if the therapist is not a good match for them. This brings us to the issue of patient-therapist compatibility.

In every instance of a decision to get help, I am reminded of the countless negative experiences

encountered by strangers and my close ones when seeking professional mental health treatment.

When a friend of mine had gone to a therapist during her school days, for example, the professional ended up revealing to her parents all that she had unburdened. Needless to say, that led to even more worries on her family's end and put my friend off of seeking help again for years to come. In another instance, last year, one therapist (who does all his "marketing" on social media) was alleged to have asked multiple of his young female patients out on coffee dates. He continues to practise and be preachy. There are also well-meaning therapists who prescribe religion as a tool to better one's state of mind. But while this is an approach to mental wellness that works for many people, isn't it best to seek religious guidance and mental health help from the respective experts in each field? Moreover, if religious advice is what a particular therapist will offer, they should advertise their services as such instead of springing it on patients who are looking for a more general evaluation of their mental health.

It is perhaps due to such gaps between what patients need and what Bangladeshi therapists can offer that many young people turn to mental health content on social media as an accessible alternative. A few years ago, this only consisted of nutshell posts on Facebook or Instagram condensing lifestyle articles from experts. But now, with the advent of TikTok, mental health awareness is more mainstream than ever. The minute-long bites of footage – ones made by therapists, psychologists, or wellness coaches in the West – have solidified the usage of many mental wellness terms in young people's vocabulary. Look no further to understand why "gaslighting" became Merriam-Webster's word of the year in 2022, or how every negative action may be described as being "toxic."

Because there is now so much mental health knowledge available

to us per scroll, it is easier than ever for one to recognise (not diagnose) the symptoms of their specific mental or emotional illness, if any. But on the flipside, many TikToks on the mental health trend are basically serious mental illnesses condensed into a few minutes of quirky video. And most of these are made by content creators (not professionals or experts of any sort) to be shareable, rather than educational. Being thus exposed to unfiltered misinformation on something as personal and impactful as one's mental health, younger netizens run the risk of worsening their situation. Such content coming from experts and influencers on the same platform/s can easily mislead viewers to weigh both on the same scale, which is highly problematic and may mislead them further.

The simple fact is that, especially in Bangladesh, mental health is not prioritised enough by authorities or individuals. Even though the current youth population is already making strides in destigmatising mental illness – by openly discussing their mental health and forgoing the shame their predecessors learned to associate with it – the country's medical community must do more to actually meet their needs. Not only do we need more mental health professionals at government-run medical facilities, they must also evolve to adequately help younger Bangladeshis who are eager to improve their mental health.

Lastly, as difficult as it may be for those around them to sympathise with someone who suffers invisible mental health issues, in this country, it is close to impossible for said sufferer to seek the professional help they require. It is overwhelming enough to have a mental health issue. But the inaccessibility of proper counselling and treatment, coupled with all manner of conflicting information spewed by influencers on social media, could very well make their issues seem insurmountable to a mentally ill individual. To say nothing of the fatigue that comes with confronting one's own mental illness. Simply being aware of it, without having access to the resources to treat it, can be debilitating for many. On this World Mental Health Day, I'd like us all to realise this: if someone we know is always complaining about how unhappy they are, chances are that this is all they can afford or bring themselves to do.

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CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

