

Nigar ‘proud’ of team after ‘deserved’ victory

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team notched up their maiden Twenty20 series win at home when they defeated their Pakistani counterparts by 20 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram on Friday.

It was a complete team performance from the Nigar Sultana-led side, who had earlier won the first match by five wickets.

"I am very proud of the way we played today [Friday]. I think we deserve it. Each and every individual has worked very hard for this," Nigar said in the post-match presentation.

The first six names in the Bangladesh batting line-up got into double figures, with Shorna Akter top-scoring with an unbeaten 27 off 22 balls, as the hosts put up 120-6 after being asked to take first strike.

Right-arm pacer Diana Baig was the most successful bowler from the visitors with a couple of wickets but was also the most expensive of the lot, leaking 34 runs from her four overs.

Pakistan never got going in their reply and could only muster 100-7 in their 20 overs.

Earlier, lusty blows from opener Shamim Sultana (18 off 13 balls) and one down Sobhana Mustary (16 off 11 balls) gave Bangladesh a rollicking start, reaching 48-1 after six overs.

Sobhahna got run out by Sidra Ameen immediately after the powerplay and then Umm-e-Hani and Sadia Iqbal struck in quick succession to drag the run rate below six.

But Shorna and Ritu Moni then added 38 runs for the fifth wicket off 31 balls to help the home side post a decent total.

Shorna, who hit one six and one four in her stay at the middle, was named the player of the match.

"After Joty got out, I was trying to rotate the strike and take the match deep. I tried to hit boundaries when they were on offer," Shorna said.

One-down batter Bismah Maroof was the standout batter for Pakistan, making 30 off 44 balls. But once she edged a ball from Fahim Khatun to keeper Nigar in the 14th over, Pakistan's chances in the match ended.

This was Bangladesh women's team's third series win in T20s and their first series win in four years.

The third and final match of the series will be played on Sunday at the same venue.



Bangladesh women's cricket team celebrate their 20-run victory, which helped them take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series, against Pakistan in the second T20I at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

Shuvo ton helps Sylhet dominate Barishal

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Shamsur Rahman Shuvo hit 160 in the National Cricket League's third round as Sylhet Division dominated proceedings against Rangpur Division in a Tier 1 game at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday.

Carrying on from an overnight score of 267 for four, Sylhet posted 415 all out as Shuvo and Tawhidul Islam produced a 180-run stand for the fifth wicket. Shuvo hit 15 fours and two sixes during his 252-ball 160 while Tawhidul struck 62 off 203 deliveries. Rangpur pacer Asadullahil Galib bagged a hiler for 107 runs.

Sylhet pacers Syed Khaled Ahmed, Abu Jayed Rahi and Rejaur Rahman Raja asserted Sylhet's dominance with the ball, sharing six wickets between themselves with Khaled bagging three for 39 and Rahi scalping two for 22. Tanbir Hayder's unbeaten 50 saw Rangpur reach 114 for six at stumps.

At Sylhet Academy Ground, Chattogram Division's Shykat Ali bagged two more wickets on Day Two to complete a five-wicket haul for 38 runs as Rajshahi Division's innings ended on 309 in a Tier 2 game.

Parvez Hossain Emon struck 53 at the top before Mominul Haque and Yasir Ali strung together a 110-run stand for the fourth wicket. Yasir departed for 48 while Mominul missed out on a ton, departing to Rajshahi skipper Taijul Islam, out bowled after a 115-ball 88 laced with eight fours. Chattogram reached 309 for five with Shamim Hossain and Irfan Shukkur at the crease at stumps.

At Bogura's Shaheed Chandu Stadium, a lower-order fightback from Moin Khan at number eight ensured that Barishal reached 221 in their first innings against Khulna Division in a Tier 2 match. Moin scored 76 during a 98-run stand with No 10 Kamrul Islam Rabbi, who scored 30 off 103 deliveries. Following the exchange, Khulna once more struggled with the bat. Nurul Hasan struck a team-high 45 before he was run out as Khulna reached 122 for six at close with a 43-run lead.

Australia target victory over New Zealand ‘mates’

AFP, Dharamshala

Australia skipper Pat Cummins believes Saturday's World Cup clash with New Zealand will be a battle between "mates" as the push for semi-final places enters a critical phase.

Five-time champions Australia are back on track for a last-four spot having won three matches on the trot after an unimpressive start which saw them lose their first two games.

STATS

- Australia and New Zealand have faced each other in 141 matches out of which the Aussies have come out on top on 95 occasions, with the Blackcaps taking 39 wins and seven meetings seeing no results.
- Five-time champions Australia also have the edge in World Cup meetings, with eight wins against New Zealand's three.
- New Zealand tasted their first defeat of the ongoing tournament in Dharamshala against hosts India.
- Australia have never played at the venue.



some of them are really good mates. If anything, it makes you want to beat your mates even more. It will be intense out there."

In 2015, New Zealand edged a low-scoring group game by one wicket in Auckland before Australia gained revenge with a seven-wicket stroll in the final.

Mitchell Starc, David Warner, Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith and Josh Hazlewood are all survivors from the 2015 final. Cummins played in the group game.

Current New Zealand squad members Kane Williamson, Trent Boult, Matt Henry and Tim Southee also played that final.

"It always seems like there's great contests. And on a personal note, as well, we know a lot of the New Zealand guys, we have played a lot against them and with them. So, it's always good fun," added Cummins.

Cummins said he was delighted by Australia overcoming early losses at this World Cup to India and South Africa.

They have since seen off Sri Lanka, Pakistan and then the Netherlands by a huge 309 runs.

"I think in the first two games not only did we not win, but I think we didn't really nail the style that we wanted to play," said the captain.

"I think in the last few games you've seen us be a bit more aggressive - batting and bowling."

Most of the aggression in the rout of the Dutch came from Glenn Maxwell who hit the fastest World Cup century off just 40 balls in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Barca forced to lean on youth in El Clasico

AFP, Barcelona

La Liga champions Barcelona host bitter rivals Real Madrid in the first Clasico of the season on Saturday, forced into leaning heavily on players from their fated La Masia youth academy.

An injury crisis has ravaged the Catalan club, leaving them without several key players, across defence, midfield and attack.

Last weekend 17-year-old striker Marc Guiu pulled Barcelona, third, a point behind leaders Real Madrid with a goal just 33 seconds into his debut, while Lamine Yamal and Fermin Lopez strikes secured comeback draws against Granada and Real Mallorca.

The first team already features several young players who spent time at the club at youth level, including midfielder Gavi and defenders Alejandro Balde and Ronald Araujo, but the current situation has further exacerbated Barcelona's dependence on the youth system.

Injured stars Robert Lewandowski, Frenkie de Jong and Raphinha are fighting to return to play at least some part in the game at the Olympic Stadium, but Jules Kounde, Pedri and Sergi Roberto are set to miss out.

Real Madrid have had some injury problems of their own, but defender Nacho Fernandez will be allowed to play after his three-match ban for a dangerous tackle was shortened to two.

England international Jude Bellingham, the division's top scorer with eight goals, is Madrid's leader, and his arrival for 103 million euros (\$109 million) from Borussia Dortmund this summer was in stark contrast to Barcelona's activity.



Still mired in financial problems, Barcelona were limited to signing players on free transfers or on loan, along with a low-cost move for midfielder Oriol Romeu, to try and fill the big shoes of former captain Sergio Busquets.

"We're in a moment where we have to bet on players from here, and they are ready," Barca coach Xavi told reporters last week.

"When things don't go well, you have to double down on the bet, we have to bet on the youngsters, homegrown. I see they are hungry."

With Barcelona fragile, scraping by without various key players and failing to consistently find the good football Xavi admits is demanded of the club, Madrid have the chance to strike a morale blow against them by inflicting their first league defeat.

Los Blancos have not regularly found top gear yet either but have come closer to it.

"We know exactly what we need to do - everything we can to win it," said Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Abahani off to winning start

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Title aspirants Abahani began their Independence Cup campaign on a winning note as the season's curtain-raising tournament got underway yesterday.

Goals from Nabib Newaj Jibon and Rabiul Hasan helped the two-time champions clinch a 2-0 victory over Bangladesh Air Force FT in Gopalganj.

Two other games on the opening day saw Bangladesh Police FC also register a 2-0 win over promoted Brothers Union in Munshiganj, while Rahmatganj MFS held former champions Sheikh Russel to a goalless draw at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka. The latter result meant that Abahani sit on top of Group B.

At Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium, Abahani fielded a solitary foreign player in Iranian defender Milad Sheikh Soleimani as their other foreign recruits are yet to reach the country, informed Abahani manager Nazrul Islam. The Sky Blues, however, did not have to break a sweat.

It did not take long for the charges of Diego Cruciani to break the deadlock. After Air Force goalkeeper Monju Mia brought down forward Enamul Islam Gazi inside the box in the sixth minute and, following five minutes of delay centering on the decision, Nabib converted the spot-kick.

Abahani enjoyed a two-goal cushion before the interval as national winger Rabiul struck in the 36th minute, driving a powerful shot from outside the box.

At the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium, Brothers Union resumed top-flight football action after two seasons with a defeat as Police FC did not allow them to stage an upset in the Group A encounter.

Kyrgyz forward Manas Karipov and Colombian Edis Horacio Garcia were the architects behind the Police's win as they assisted each other to score one goal apiece on either side of the break.

Atalanta fans take detour to salute Ilicic

REUTERS

Atalanta fans making the journey from Bergamo to see their team play Austrian side Sturm Graz in the Europa League, made a stop in Maribor, Slovenia, not to visit the city's famous castle but to surprise a former player on Thursday.

Ex-players can come in for many different forms of treatment from their former fans, but Josip Ilicic, who spent five years at Atalanta, is still very much in the hearts of the club's supporters.

Ilicic left the club in August, 2022, his contract terminated by mutual agreement, after the player had struggled for some time with mental health issues.

The fans gave him an emotional send off before their home game with Torino on Sept. 1 2022, and over a year later it's clear just how heartfelt that farewell was.

Ilicic joined his former club NK Maribor a month after leaving Atalanta, and the fans from Bergamo arrived at the club's training ground on Thursday morning to surprise the 35-year-old Slovenian.

Two buses arrived, carrying 120 fans who had left Italy at midnight, and there were handshakes, hugs and chants for the beloved player, and plenty of photos taken with a visibly emotional and happy Ilicic.

The fans left him a present of the banner they had used on that farewell night in Bergamo last year.