

## Young Tigers face UAE in Asia Cup

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19 team will begin the ACC U-19 Asia Cup campaign today as they take on hosts UAE at the ICC Academy Ground in Dubai.

Bangladesh, placed in Group B, will face Japan and Sri Lanka in their next two games scheduled for December 11 and 13 respectively. Group A features India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal.

The top two teams from each group will qualify for the semifinals.


Bangladesh finished third in the recently-concluded quadrangular series in India. The young Tigers, however, are aiming to reach the final.

Before boarding the flight to UAE, age-level selector and former cricketer Hannan Sarkar informed that the performance of the Asia Cup will be crucial for them to form the final squad for the ICC Under-19 World Cup, to be held in South Africa in January next year.

SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh 1st innings**  
172 all out;  
**2nd innings:**  
38 for 2 (Zakir 16 not out, Shanto 15, Joy 2; Patel 1-13, Southee 1-8)

**New Zealand 1st innings:**  
180 all out (Phillips 87, Jamieson 20, Mitchell 18; Taijul 3-64, Miraz 3-53, Shoriful 2-15, Nayeem 2-21)



Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto walks back to the pavillion following a 15-run knock in Bangladesh's second innings of the second Test against New Zealand at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. (Inset) Earlier, Mehedi Hasan Miraz took a fine tumbling catch to help bundle out the visitors for 180 in their first innings.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## ‘200-220 will be defendable’

SPORTS REPORTER

The ongoing second and final Test between Bangladesh and New Zealand in Dhaka appears to be perfectly poised after another rain-hit day, but off-spinner Nayeem Hasan reckons the hosts are “ahead” in the game following third day’s completion on Friday.

Nayeem believes that if Bangladesh can score around forty runs more than their first innings total, 172, they will back themselves to win the match, leading to a series victory on the back of a 150-run win in Sylhet.

“We are ahead in the game and we need to maintain that as long as we can. If we can post 200- 220 runs hopefully, we will be able to defend that,” the 23-year-old said after the third day’s play.

However, Bangladesh would be a touch disappointed that they were unable to grab the first innings lead, despite New Zealand being reeling on 55 for five at one point after the opening day.

New Zealand bounced back courtesy of a superb counter-attack from Glenn Phillips, helping his side to eventually build an eight-run lead before getting all out for 180.

Although Nayeem, who dismissed the first two batters on the day, mentioned that it would have been preferable if the Tigers had taken the lead, he appears confident in his side’s batting skills.

“Look, they came here to play as well, and there could be a partnership where someone does well. Phillips stepped up on this occasion, which allowed them to take the lead. It would have been nice if we could have taken the lead. But at the end of the day, we are ahead. And if we bat well, we can put up a good total,” he remarked.



## Fatalist Phillips’ mantra to succeed in Mirpur

SPORTS REPORTER

When batting to preserve one’s wicket, usually aggression is the first thing a batter needs to forgo in Test cricket.

However, in a track such as the one served at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka for the second Test between Bangladesh and New Zealand, batting aggressively is the only way one can hope to survive long enough to make an impact, proved Kiwi batter Glenn Phillips yesterday.

Phillips, who resumed his innings on five, showed ODI-like aggression from the start of Day Three, not allowing the Bangladesh’s spinners to settle down on a length.

Thanks to him, New Zealand added 134 runs in 24.3 overs on the day before losing their remaining five wickets, earning an eight-run lead.

Phillips’ scintillating 87 off 72 deliveries crushed Bangladesh’s hopes of getting a sizable first innings lead after having reduced the Kiwis to 55-5 on Day One and turned the Test into virtually a one innings contest.

At the end of the day’s press conference, the 27-year-old said that his aggressive approach

stemmed from the realisation that in the unpredictable pitch in Mirpur, attacking is the best form of defence.

“You’re only going to be out there for so many balls and there’s one with your name on it. You’ve gotta score off the ones that are available,” Phillips said after the third day’s play.

On pitches like these, understanding that sometimes being a little bit more aggressive is almost the best remedy where if you can put a bowler off their length a little bit, then you can get them to bowl in the area that you would feel a bit more comfortable with,” he added.

In an innings where Phillips hit nine fours and four sixes, Phillips celebrated successfully getting his bat down in time to a Nayeem Hasan delivery as he wanted to avoid losing his wicket to the off-spinner for the second straight innings.

Phillips also said that he had decided the way he would approach his innings beforehand and would’ve accepted it even if he hadn’t succeeded.

“The fact is that some balls keep incredibly low and move quite quickly and then some spit quite heavily and bounce a lot... With the two extremes, I guess it’s understanding, as I said, picking a poison and going “which one am I

happy with’ and accepting the fact that if the delivery that’s outside of your game plan happens, you make peace with it.

“And for me, [it was about] understanding the way that Naem got me in the first game and then how I wanted to play in this game,” Phillips said.

Bangladesh’s two top scorers from the first innings – Mushfiquur Rahim (35) and Shahadat Hossain Dipu (31) – played more deliveries than Phillips but couldn’t go past 30s.

Phillips made use of the deliveries he faced, unlike the Bangladeshi duo and his innings opened up the game.

The Bangladesh batters have seemingly taken a note out of Phillips’ approach as they reached 38 for two before bad light ended play.

But picking the right ball to go after like Phillips is not an easy task, evidenced by captain Najmul Hossain Shanto’s dismissal while trying to hit Tim Southee over mid-off in what ended up being the penultimate ball of the day.

The onus will be on the rest of the batters to take the attack to the Kiwis on Day Four and put enough runs on the board so that the spinners can spin Bangladesh to a historic series win.

## Amite ton lights up final day

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East Zone’s top-order batter Amite Hasan notched up his seventh first-class ton on Day 4 of his side’s Bangladesh Cricket League 2023-24 encounter against South Zone at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Amite put away 10 fours and a six for his 102-run knock as East declared their second innings at 249 for six after they piled on 402 in their first innings, giving South a 370-run target.

After bundling out South for 282 on the previous day, East lost both their openers and night-watchman Nasum Ahmed for nought having faced five overs as they went to stumps on three down for one run.

An 85-run stand by Amite and Shamsur Rahman, who scored 67, steadied the ship for East as they declared after playing 67.3 overs.

South’s Anamul Haque Bijoy scored 55 in their reply and after 16 overs, the match was drawn with South on 80 for the loss of three.

East’s Nasum added two wickets to his five-wicket-haul in the first innings and with seven in the match, he was adjudged the player of the match.

The other match between Central Zone and North Zone was also drawn at the Sylhet Academy Ground.

North’s top-scorer of the match Towhid Hridoy got dismissed for 165, having added 33 runs to his overnight tally of 132 to help his side to 277 in reply to Central’s first-innings total of 281.

Central openers Naim Shiekh and Rony Talukdar put on a 54-run stand taking 11 overs after which the match was drawn.

## Kings eye AFC Cup knockout berth

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Bashundhara Kings are set to fly to India this morning to final AFC Cup group stage encounter against Odisha FC with the hope of making it to the knockout stage of Asia’s second-tier club competition for the first time.

The Bangladesh Premier League champions lead the four-team group with 10 points from five matches, one more than second-placed Odisha FC. Kings need only a draw to emerge group champions to advance to the zonal semifinals for the first time after having failed to do so in the last two editions where they had finished behind eventual group champions Mohun Bagan.

In 2021 and 2022, Kings had difficult equations going into their last group matches as they needed victories in their respective games while having to pray for the outcome of other group other match to go their way.

The country’s new powerhouse did their job by winning their last matches both times but the outcome of the group other matches did not go their way as Mohun Bagan won their last matches in both editions.

However, this time Kings have it in their hand ahead of Monday’s unofficial final in Bhuvneshwar against hosts Odisha FC, a side they had beaten 3-2 in Dhaka.

The Indian outfit, though, have been in good form as they posted three successive victories by scoring 14 goals in their last three matches.

Kings had made a poor start in the AFC Cup by losing 3-1 against Maziya S&RC but since then the Bangladeshi outfit have remained unbeaten, putting some bold displays despite conceding the lead in the last four matches.

## Favourable Copa draws for Argentina, Brazil

REUTERS, Miami

Defending Copa America champions Argentina and South American heavyweights Brazil were drawn in favourable groups for next year’s edition on Thursday, while hosts the United States will come up against 15-time winners Uruguay.

World Cup winners Argentina kick off the tournament at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on June 20 with a Group A match-up against Canada or Trinidad and Tobago, who will meet in a CONCACAF playoff in March.

Argentina will also face Peru and Chile in a rematch of the 2016 centenary edition final, where Lionel Messi’s side lost on penalties in the first tournament played on U.S. soil.

Nine-time winners Brazil, runners-up at the previous tournament, have been drawn in Group D with Colombia and Paraguay as well as another CONCACAF qualifier, either Honduras or Costa Rica.



The U.S. face Bolivia and Panama in their first two Group C matches before taking on heavy-hitters Uruguay, who are tied with Argentina for the most Copa titles (15).

The Americans are hoping to improve on their best result in the tournament following their top-four finish in 2016.

CONCACAF Gold Cup winners Mexico are in Group B alongside Jamaica, Venezuela and Ecuador.

The top two in each of the four groups proceed to the quarter-finals.

The draw was held at the James L. Knight Center in Miami, the host city of the final on July 14 at the Hard Rock Stadium.

**Group A:** Argentina, Peru, Chile, Canada/Trinidad and Tobago playoff winner

**Group B:** Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, Jamaica

**Group C:** United States, Uruguay, Panama, Bolivia

**Group D:** Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Costa Rica/Honduras playoff winner

## Arsenal primed for Emery reunion

AFP, London

Arsenal’s grip on the Premier League’s top spot will be under threat from their old boss Unai Emery when the leaders travel to surging Aston Villa on Saturday.

If the Gunners slip up, Liverpool will seize pole position with a win against Crystal Palace, while reeling Manchester City aim to get back on track at Luton. Here is a look at three talking points ahead of this weekend’s action.

**Emery has a point to prove**

When Unai Emery arrived at Aston Villa in October 2022, his new team were languishing just three points above the relegation zone.

Now, they sit third in the table ahead of a seismic showdown against leaders Arsenal that would have seemed impossible during the dark days before Emery’s transformative appointment.

Villa’s 1-0 win against Manchester City on Wednesday was the club’s most significant result for years, showcasing the impressive work done by Emery to revive a moribund club and infusing his players with belief they can do something special this season.

It is fitting that the latest test of Emery’s revolution comes against Arsenal, who sacked him in 2019 midway through a second troubled season in north London.

City manager Pep Guardiola labelled Villa as title contenders on Wednesday after Emery’s 50th match in charge served to underline his remarkable impact.

“I can come back in my mind and think how we were when we started this process,” Emery



said. “We lost against Leicester and Arsenal at home. We couldn’t concede eight goals in two matches like we did.

“It was a key moment when we reacted in a meeting with the players, focusing more our idea and our style, building and being very demanding in it. The players, they reacted very well.”

**No panic for slumping City**

John Stones has urged Manchester City to keep their composure amid a worrying slump that threatens to derail their bid for a fourth successive title.

City’s winless run extended to four league games on Wednesday as Aston Villa’s 1-0 victory increased the sense of concern surrounding Pep Guardiola’s side.

The treble winners were comprehensively

outplayed, leaving Guardiola to admit he needed to “help” his “struggling” team.

Trailing Arsenal by six points, Stones believes City can use the pain of their stumble to stop the rot in a tricky assignment at Luton on Sunday.

The Hatters have already drawn with Liverpool at home and came within seconds of a point against Arsenal, before losing 4-3 on Tuesday.

**Liverpool ready for fixture demands**

As Liverpool head into a crucial period for their title ambitions, Jurgen Klopp’s irritation at a joke about his team’s quick turnaround to play Crystal Palace on Saturday laid bare the German’s desire to keep pace with leaders Arsenal.

The Reds boss branded a television presenter “ignorant” following his side’s 2-0 win at Sheffield United on Wednesday when he mentioned second-placed Liverpool travel to Palace at Klopp’s “favourite kick-off time.”

That was an ill-fated reference to Klopp complaining on previous occasions when Liverpool have been forced to play at 1230 GMT on a Saturday after a Wednesday evening match.

“That’s really brave to make a joke about that,” Klopp grumbled, but he will be reassured to hear Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk’s willingness to take on the challenge of coping with the gruelling schedule.

“Listen, we are in December and there are so many games to come. For us now, it’s a good start to December and we have plenty of big games to come. We should all look forward to it,” he said.