

Young Tigers seal Super Sixes berth

SPORTS REPORTER

A record-equalling century from Ariful Islam helped Bangladesh thrash the USA by 121 runs in Bloemfontein yesterday as the young Tigers sealed a place in the Super Sixes of the ongoing ICC Under-19 World Cup.

Ariful became the third batter to notch three tons in the Under-19 World Cup as his run-a-ball 103, laced with nine fours, saw Bangladesh pile up a commendable 291 for seven after being asked to bat.

India's Shikhar Dhawan and Jack Burnham of England are the two others who scored three centuries in the competition. However, while both Dhawan (2004) and Burnham (2016) scored all three of their hundreds in one single edition, the 19-year-old Ariful scored his first two centuries in the previous edition of the tournament in 2022.

In reply to the mammoth total, the USA were bundled out for 170 in 47.1 overs, with Bangladesh skipper Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby scalping four wickets.

Ariful starred in a 112-run fourth-wicket partnership with Ahrar Amin, who scored 44 off 49 deliveries.

After starting the tournament with a defeat against defending champions India in Group A, this was the young Tigers' second consecutive win.



Shakib Al Hasan has so far had a hazy start in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League. The Rangpur Riders all-rounder, who recently had to make multiple foreign visits to have his eye checked, could only manage to score two after coming in at number eight in their 28-run defeat to Khulna Tigers in the day game at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. [Bottom] Meanwhile, fans made their presence felt on the first day of the Sylhet phase, especially when the home side faced Comilla Victorians in the evening game.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Leach bowls with injured knee

AFP, Hyderabad

England spinner Jack Leach bowled with an injured knee on day two of the opening Test against India but he will be back and "raring to go," assistant coach Jeetan Patel said Friday.

Leach, a left-arm spinner, bowled just 16 overs on a grinding day for the tourists in Hyderabad as India piled on 421-7 to stretch their first innings lead to 175.

"He banged his knee last night, the first dive down at fine-leg. Then he banged it again today and it's giving him a little gyp to be honest," Patel, a former New Zealand spinner, told reporters.

"You noticed in the outfield he was a little sluggish trying to get to balls, but he stuck at it and I thought he actually bowled really, really well."

"He'll be back, he's one of the strongest guys in the team. We've had to share the load and the I thought the guys did really well."

Joe Root and debutant Tom Hartley took two wickets each and had to share the load due to Leach's injury.

Leach, 32, bowled six spells including two of four overs each in the entire day. He gave away just 30 runs and bowled four maiden overs.

Shakib and batting woes stifle Rangpur

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Khulna Tigers maintained their hundred percent record while Rangpur Riders slumped to their second defeat in three matches as the Bangladesh Premier League caravan moved to Sylhet.

The two matches on the public holiday saw a massive turnout of crowd at the Sylhet District Cricket Stadium, and the first match produced an upset, if it could be termed so, as much-fancied Rangpur Riders suffered a 28-run defeat against Khulna Tigers, which also broke the batting second-and-winning-the-game sequence that had been set in Dhaka.

Like the previous matches, Rangpur Riders' batting did not click. Brandon King has not fired as either an opener or at number three in the three games, and same is the case for Rony Talukdar. Babar Azam secured victory from the grasp of defeat in the game against Sylhet Strikers after Rangpur had found themselves at 39 for six in chase of a small target in their previous game. However, yesterday, Shamim Hossain contributed 30 but the rest left too much to do for Mohammad Nabi, who hit a 30-ball 50 to make the 28-run defeat seem a little interesting.

The biggest worry for Rangpur, however, would be how Shakib Al Hasan can contribute without the bat.

Rangpur needed 85 off 41 deliveries when Shakib came in to the sound of



the expectant crowd that was chanting his name. The crowd had to wait for quite some time to watch Shakib bat as he came in to bat at number eight. The eye problem has been an issue for him for a while and he had just recently returned from Singapore following an eye checkup. A conservative approach would be undertaken by the BCB medical team to help Shakib manage the condition troubling his retina.

Shakib had a change in his stance too, like the one he had at last year's World Cup game against the Netherlands. His

stay lasted four deliveries as he nicked one off Dasun Shanaka, who bagged a four-for.

"Shakib wasn't here for a while and as you know, he has an eye problem. In this situation, you can bowl but batting takes some preparation. Since he couldn't prepare, he batted lower down the order," Rangpur head coach Sohel Islam told reporters after the match.

"He didn't talk about problem. Rather he was pondering how he can undergo extra preparation tomorrow and recover to get into a good shape.

"So far what has been discussed is that he needs to be given time [to recover]. After a few sessions, things will go back to normal and he needs to be given that time," Sohel added regarding Shakib.

Stress or not, Shakib did not look comfortable with the bat. How long the eye will take to recover is still uncertain. For Rangpur, the problems are thus two-fold, Shakib and their batting.

"We weren't able to play as the kind of batting unit we are. Since we didn't bat well in the first two matches as well, batters were psychologically in the backfoot a little," he said.

Given their Powerplay effort, Rangpur need someone to do the job in Shakib's stead as he will need time to contribute as an all-rounder, having bowled four economical overs yesterday during the opening game of the Sylhet phase.

Kings continue domination over Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings continued their unbeaten record over Abahani in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-0 win at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday.

Robson Robinho's bicycle kick in the 26th minute at the end of a header from Dorielton Gomes following Miguel Ferreira's corner helped the defending champions to the lead before Ferreira's clever finish on 72 minutes kept their record perfect for the league as they sit on top with 15 points from five matches, keeping six-time champions Abahani on seven points.

It was Kings' second win over Abahani in two matches this season, the first being a 4-0 thrashing in the semifinals of the Independence Cup. Overall, it was a ninth win for Kings against Abahani in 14 meetings, with the two wins for the Sky Blues having come in cup matches.

The win also consolidated Kings' lead as second-placed Mohammedan were held to a goalless draw by Chittagong Abahani at the Rafiq Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh.

Mohammedan, who are now on 10 points, had to play majority of the match with 10 men after Sanoar Hossain received two yellow cards early in the match.

Meanwhile, two second-half goals from national team forward Sazzad Hossain saw Sheikh Jamal DC beat Brothers Union 2-0 at the Muktijuddho Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi, taking their tally to six points from four matches.

SHORT CORNER

Klopp to take over as Germany coach?



Jurgen Klopp's announcement he would step down as Liverpool manager at the end of the season was greeted with shock in his native Germany on Friday, leading to speculation he could be set for a move to the national side. Klopp has long been considered a candidate to take over the national team, particularly amid Germany's struggles in recent years.

Shoaib Malik, Barishal refute suspected foul play

Fortune Barishal owner Mizanur Rahman went back on his words and brushed aside rumours of suspected foul play by their Pakistani recruit Shoaib Malik, who flew to Dubai after the Dhaka phase of the 10th Bangladesh Premier League. Malik's sudden departure raised a few eyebrows, especially considering how he bowled three no-balls in an over.

Australia get slight advantage over West Indies

Australia took the late wicket of Tagenarine Chanderpaul to even the contest after a fascinating second day's play in the second Test against the West Indies in Brisbane on Friday. At stumps, the West Indies were 13-1, a lead of 35 runs.

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Sabalenka, Zheng await 'a great battle'

REUTERS, Melbourne

Aryna Sabalenka has blown all-comers off court on her march to the final of the Australian Open and China's Zheng Qinwen will need to produce something extraordinary to deprive her of back-to-back titles on Rod Laver Arena on Saturday.

The Belarusian is the first woman since Serena Williams in the middle of the last decade to reach consecutive finals and, while she has a long way to go to match feats of the American great, they do have something in common.

When combined with mental strength and consistency, raw power is a quality that almost guarantees success in the women's game.

Sabalenka has always had the power and, since addressing the frequent on-court meltdowns that once blighted her career, has shown a frightening level of consistency at Grand Slams.

While Sabalenka would match compatriot Victoria Azarenka's feat of 2012 and 2013 by retaining her



Aryna Sabalenka hasn't yet dropped a set in this competition.



Zheng Qinwen's idol Li Na is the only Chinese player to have won a Grand Slam singles title at the Australian Open, lifting the trophy in Melbourne exactly a decade ago in 2014.

Zheng has already assured her rise into the Top 10 for the first time after the tournament.

title, Zheng is hoping to give China its second Australian Open crown a decade after Li Na won the first.

Zheng, voted the most improved player on the WTA tour last year, was the only seed in the top half of the draw to survive into the quarterfinals and knows she will have her work cut out in her first Grand Slam final.

"She's [Sabalenka] the biggest hitter on the tour. She got the biggest serve, biggest forehand, big

backhand. She's a really complete player," the 12th seed Zheng said after her semifinal win.

Sabalenka beat Zheng 6-1 6-4 in their only previous meeting in the quarterfinals of last year's U.S. Open but said she was wary of the 21-year-old's forehand.

"She's playing really great tennis," Sabalenka said. "She's a really nice girl and really playing really great tennis once again. It's going to be a great battle."



'Belief' propels NextGen ahead of old-guard

Jannik Sinner ended defending champion Novak Djokovic's bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title on Friday, snapping the Serb's astonishing 33-match winning run at Melbourne Park to reach his first major final.

Sinner beat the 10-time champion 6-1, 6-2, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 on Rod Laver Arena to set up a title decider against third seed Daniil Medvedev, who fought back from the brink to defeat Alexander Zverev 5-7, 3-6, 7-6(4), 7-6(5), 6-3 in another thrilling semifinal.

It means there will be a new name on the trophy this year.

Sinner, 22, and 20-year-olds Carlos Alcaraz and Holger Rune are spearheading a young generation aiming to unseat the old guard, still headed by Djokovic, who won three of the four majors last year.

"What I think we have in common is we believe in ourselves in one way, and this helps a lot," Sinner said.