

Comilla Victorians pacer Aamer Jamal celebrates after picking up a five-wicket haul against Khulna Tigers in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture in Mirpur yesterday. Jamal returned five wickets for 23 runs -- the season's first fifer and the second of his T20 career -- to help bundle out Khulna for 115 in chase of Comilla's 150-run target.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Dots behind dull BPL contests

SPORTS REPORTER

Halfway through the ongoing 10th edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), a constant feature of the country's only franchise-based T20 competition has been low scoring contests. And the main reason behind this could be narrowed down to the approach of the batters.

As baffling as it may sound, the tournament is yet to witness a 200-plus total, with Chattogram Challengers' 193 for four in their 10-run victory against Fortune Barishal in Sylhet being the highest total so far.

The lowest total of the BPL was also registered by Chattogram when they were bundled out for just 72 against Comilla Victorians, also in Sylhet.

Twelve out of 23 matches witnessed teams posting a total below the 150-run mark, with teams successfully

defending the total on three occasions. A total of 24 fifties have been struck but no batter was able to score a century till the 23rd game of the season.

Usually, conditions and surfaces have been brought to the fore to justify the low-scoring affairs. However, a delve into the overall approach of the batters in the BPL might reveal a different story.

A significant number of dot balls have been conceded in this edition so far. Durdanto Dhaka leads the chart in this aspect, playing out 46.60 percent dots in six games.

Meanwhile, Khulna Tigers conceded 70 dots in one game -- the highest by any teams in a single game this edition.

If anything, this list of dots proves that while the types of pitches do have a role in doling out low-scoring contests, the bigger role is clearly played by the mindset of the batters shown in the BPL.

### Percentage of dots played by BPL teams

<b>Durdanto Dhaka:</b> 46.60 percent in six games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 57
<b>Chattogram Challengers:</b> 43.99 percent in seven games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 64
<b>Sylhet Strikers:</b> 43.74 percent in seven games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 62
<b>Comilla Victorians:</b> 40.177 percent in six games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 50
<b>Khulna Tigers:</b> 39.82 percent in seven games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 70
<b>Fortune Barishal:</b> 39.77 percent in seven games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 60
<b>Rangpur Riders:</b> 38.44 percent in seven games. Most dot balls conceded in a game- 53

\*\*Stats updated till the 23rd game

### New Zealand lead WTC standings

ICC

Inaugural ICC World Test Championship (WTC) winners New Zealand have boosted their chances of appearing at next year's final by moving to the top of the standings with a comprehensive 281-run victory over South Africa yesterday.

The Kiwis moved ahead of the finalists from the second edition, Australia and India, and now sit top of the current standings with a 66.66 percent points percentage.

New Zealand have only played three Tests during this current WTC cycle.

Last year's champions Australia dropped to second following the result at Bay Oval, with India falling to third and South Africa plunging back to seventh and below fourth-placed Bangladesh, Pakistan in fifth and the West Indies in sixth.

## The concern ahead of T20WC summarised by BPL

SPORTS REPORTER

Much had been made about Bangladesh's T20I fortunes in the past. The ongoing BPL was supposed to be the platform for local batters to find more T20 gear in their batting, but so far the tournament itself has not been able to induce excitement.

T20 cricket is said to be about runs. When runs are not scored, the excitement comes from close contests. It could be argued that bowling has hardly been of the quality to restrict oppositions to within 150 or less so frequently. Yet, more or less, teams have consistently found it difficult to chase down those 150-plus or even lower scores.

There were even no 200+ scores in Sylhet, known as a batting paradise, this time around. Not just locals but foreign stars have also struggled. Even Mohammad Rizwan's strike-rate has come under the cosh. The feeling is that batters have not found their feet properly but for every foreigner, there are more locals that can take the opportunity and perform.

One foreign player, who's side is languishing at the bottom end, said on condition of anonymity that not enough drives have been seen from his side's local batters to fight and



**"We try every year [to have better wickets]. It can't be that always the wicket is to be blamed. Those who can take calculative risks, and play well can get runs. Even here it was possible to get 170."**

Comilla Victorians skipper  
**Liton Das**

stay alive even with five games left.

Overall, this BPL paints a gloomy picture -- one that might be the precursor to the picture the Tigers may paint at the upcoming T20 World Cup this year.

Liton Das, who finally got some runs under his belt yesterday, felt that calculative risk was a facet that was not being utilised. Indeed, batters have often gone for shots with high-risk and low-guarantee of success. When a full toss could be dispatched over extra cover, they have gone for the heave over mid-wicket

-- a popular choice this BPL among batters -- to not only miss out on a boundary but also lose their wickets by finding fielders.

"We try every year [to have better wickets]. It can't be that always the wicket is to be blamed. Those who can take calculative risks, and play well can get runs. Even here it was possible to get 170," Comilla Victorians skipper Liton said at the press conference.

"The start we had, we could have gotten 170. We didn't play well in the middle overs and there were many dots. It's because we are only trying to go for big shots. There are options for ones and twos. We have lacking as batters about how to score in the middle overs. Even Bangladesh team suffers from this," Liton said.

"Would the wicket change if I say something? We have to accept the facts. The challenge is to score 150 on a 150-run wicket," he added.

It is a skill gap that Bangladeshi players cannot wrap their heads around. When 150 becomes a challenging score, it might become a regular trend that batters, bar a few in the national side, do not quite know how to score runs when facing better wickets than BPL's.

## Onus on girls to extend dominance

SPORTS REPORTER

Captain Afeida Khandokar, forwards Mosammat Sagorika, Munki Akhter, Puja Das, and others looked relaxed as they had a light practice session on the eve of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship final against India today.

The girls certainly have reasons to be stress-free as they are on the verge of another triumph in the regional age-level tournaments which were introduced for various age groups in 2017.

At the age level, Bangladesh lifted trophies a record four times, one more than India. Bangladesh won all of those titles -- U-15, U-18, U-19, and U-20 -- at today's venue, the Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.



Bangladesh are now set for their fifth final at home and expecting to keep their winning record intact. The fact that they have defeated India thrice in the final of the U-15, U-18, and U-19 championships also bodes well for the girls in red and green.

"Definitely, we will have some advantage playing on the ground where the girls train regularly," head coach Saiful Bari Titu said. "They know what they have to do tomorrow [Thursday]."

Titu, who took charge of the side following the departure of successful coach Golam Rabbani Choton, believes his charges are inspired enough to deliver the best.

"The girls have always been inspired because they became champions before too. The mentality of the girls is different than others and I think I don't need to motivate them much for the final because they know what they have to do in the final," said the experienced coach.

Captain Afeida was confident as well ahead of the all-important clash against India, a team they beat 1-0 in the group stage.

"We are not taking any extra pressure for the final because it will put us under pressure," Afeida said. "We have full belief in the hard work we did for this tournament and we will take to the ground with the belief of doing well."

## Will Jordan's show open path to Premier League?

AFP, DOHA

Jordan coach Hussein Ammouta hopes their surprise run to the Asian Cup final will spark broader development in the country's football and propel Jordanian players into the Premier League.

Second-half goals from the impressive attacking duo of Yazan al-Naimat and Mousa al-Tamari sent Jordan into the final for the first time with a 2-0 win over South Korea.

South Korea's coach Jurgen Klinsmann and skipper Son Heung-min admitted that Jordan, the lowest-ranked team left in the tournament, fully deserved their semi-final victory on Tuesday.

"The players delivered a heroic performance," the Moroccan



PHOTO: REUTERS

Ammouta said after taking Jordan into the final for the first time at their fifth Asian Cup.

No matter what happens on Saturday in the final, the widely

admired Ammouta says their landmark achievement must be the spark for something longer lasting in Jordanian football. "We need to invest in

infrastructure, in the training and formation of our players to reach higher levels," he said.

"We need to pay attention to age categories." Ammouta says that change is already afoot, citing the example of the impressive Tamari, who together with Naimat terrorised South Korea's shell-shocked defence.

Tamari left Jordan's domestic league in 2018. First came a move to Cypriot giants APOEL, before leaving for Belgian football two years later with Oud-Heverlee Leuven.

Last summer, after 10 goals and nine assists for the top-flight Belgian side, Tamari sealed a free transfer to Montpellier in France.

Tamari is the only member of Jordan's Asian Cup

squad playing in Europe and Ammouta says for the national side to build on their success in Qatar more need to follow in his footsteps. "What you saw today was the fruit of several years of work," Ammouta said after the South Korea triumph.

We have Mousa al-Tamari in the French league and hopefully we will have four or five Jordanian players in the French league or the English Premier League.

"When you look at Japan or Korea you see players who are playing abroad and they have great value to their national teams.

"This is what we should start planning for -- how will we produce players who will play in the world's biggest leagues? This a building block that's part of a bigger plan."

### SHORT CORNER

#### Messi wows Tokyo fans

Inter Miami's Lionel Messi pleased Tokyo fans on Wednesday in a friendly match that ended in a 4-3 penalty shootout loss to Vissel Kobe after the game ended goalless.

#### Bumrah rises to the top

Jasprit Bumrah claimed the No.1 spot on the latest ICC Men's Test Bowler rankings on Wednesday, becoming the first quick from India claim the top Test ranking.

#### Champion swimming couple now guiding national youth team

South Asian Games gold-medallist swimmers Mahfuza Khatun Shila and Shajahan Ali Rony, now a married couple, will guide the national swimming team at the international competition titled BIMSTEC Youth Water Sports Competition, which is scheduled to start from February 7 in New Delhi, India.

\*\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

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Request for Expression of Interest for selection of Chief Information Technology Officer (CITO) in the rank of General Manager

Rupali Bank PLC, one of the largest state owned commercial banks in the country, is looking for a Chief Information Technology Officer (CITO) on contractual basis for a period of two (02) years.

Deserving candidates for the position are invited to visit the bank website for Job description and guidelines to apply:  
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❖ Application should reach no later than 04/03/2024.  
❖ Short listed candidates will be contacted for interview.

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Rupali Bank PLC.  
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