

'Scope created' as women's cricket enters new era

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket received another boost as the International Cricket Council (ICC) added five women umpires from the country to its official roster for the first time.

Supriya Rani joined the ICC panel as a match referee, while Shathira Jakir Jessy, Rokeya Sultana Chowdhury, Doly Rani Sarkar, and Champa Chakma were selected for the ICC development panel.

"It's a big achievement for our cricket, and especially for women's cricket. Their hard work over the last two years grabbed the ICC's attention, which is why they were given the opportunity," chairman of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) umpires' committee, Iftekhar Ahmed Mithu, made the announcement yesterday while speaking with reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

"The most notable achievement is Supriya Rani's inclusion on the panel as a match referee with [Niyamur Rashid] Rahul and [Akhter Ahmed] Shiper bhai. Now, our women cricketers will now be inspired to pursue a career as umpires, in addition to playing the game," he said.

Supriya told The Daily Star yesterday, "It's extraordinary and it hasn't sunk in yet. Thanks to BCB and its umpiring committee, who have given us so many opportunities in the past two years. They have accommodated us in all sorts of matches; both in men's and women's matches. They believed that we were worthy and liked our work, which is why we got the opportunities."



Supriya got her license to officiate games in 2011 but had to wait for more than a decade to ply her trade as an umpire after the opportunities were created within the country's cricketing sphere. Having captained Dhaka University for several years, Supriya elevated herself in the game by playing divisional cricket and had eventually signed for Abahani, where she played for three years.

"I passed as an umpire in 2011 but there were no opportunities back then. I started to work as an umpire in 2022. I was an umpire in that season, and also did it this season in third division cricket. I started being a match referee this year in second-division cricket," she added.

Despite recent progress, the women's game in the country still lacks structure. Women cricketers face various challenges in continuing to play the sport, and uncertainty looms large while pursuing a career in cricket, forcing many to leave the game. However, in recent years, match-officiating has opened up new opportunities for them.

"There are a lot of opportunities. Women are not given the respect they deserve, they have to earn it. I believe that scope has been created here for women to be respected. We are enjoying our work very much.

"Our dreams are very big but we have just started. There are a lot of chances but we have to make ourselves worthy. The main thing is how much we can improve ourselves," Supriya added.

Former national player Jessy has big dreams in this avenue.

"It is very exciting for me. It feels like a dream come true. I want to become the world's number one umpire. Perhaps at this moment, we can't better Australia or England through playing but I want to bring pride to my country by enhancing my skills as an umpire," Jessy told The Daily Star.



Bangladesh's recognised batters were put to shame by nightwatchman Taijul Islam's defiant team-high 47 off 80 balls, which helped the home side stretch their first innings total to 188 against Sri Lanka on the second day of the first Test in Sylhet yesterday. [Inset] Pacer Nahid Rana continues to impress on debut, dismissing two Lankan top-order batters in their second innings to raise his wicket-tally to five before the visitors ended the day with a 211-run lead.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



"We got wickets in the end, but we were unlucky not to pick up more wickets. They are leading by 211 runs. If we can get early wickets tomorrow [Sunday] morning, we could be looking at a 250 chase."

Bangladesh batting coach
DAVID HEMP

"The way the pitch is behaving at the moment sees some variable bounce. It's not easy to score runs. I think if we can stretch the lead to 300 or more it'll be very advantageous to us. I think 300 plus is a good score to defend."

Sri Lanka fast bowling coach
DHARSHANA GAMAGE

SCORES IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka: First innings 280 all out in 68 overs and second innings 119-5 in 36 overs (Karunaratne 52, de Silva 23 not out; Shoriful 1-27, Rana 2-42, Taijul 1-12, Miraz 1-5)

Bangladesh: First innings 188 all out in 51.3 overs (Taijul 47, Shahadat 18, Liton 25, Shoriful 15, Khaled 22; Fernando 4-48, Rajitha 3-56, Kumara 3-31)

Taijul's knock shows the mirror to batters

SPORTS REPORTER

In the last ball of the morning session on Day 2 of the Sylhet Test yesterday, Taijul Islam ran a couple of runs off pacer Vishwa Fernando to reach 41, crossing into the 40s for the first time in his Test career.

Taijul, who will complete a decade in the Bangladesh red-ball team this year, has batted 75 times in Test cricket including his innings against Sri Lanka.

Prior to yesterday, he had reached the 30s only twice before, his best being a 39-run knock against West Indies in Chattogram in 2018.

With a paltry Test average of 9.56, Taijul is a tail ender in Bangladesh team whose main job with the bat is to give some support to the recognised batters lower down the order and occasionally do the job of a night-watchman.

But a look at Bangladesh's first innings scorecard shows that Taijul was the Tigers' best batter on display by far, top scoring with 47, almost double of the second best 25 from Liton Das.

Taijul also didn't slog his way to scoring those runs as he survived 80 balls after being sent in as a night-watchman late on Day 1 and batted for almost two-and-a-half hours.

While the left-hander deserves credit for the grit he showed against quality fast bowling from Sri Lanka, his innings also highlights that perhaps there weren't that many demons on the pitch and the failure

of the Bangladesh batters was caused by their lack of application.

Although the seven recognised batters in the Bangladesh camp could muster only 85 runs together, even they admitted that the pitch wasn't as difficult as the team's scorecard suggests, said the batting coach David Hemp.



"All the batters are saying that the wicket is good. You get value for good shots. Couple of balls in the last session stayed a bit down. But those were wide deliveries. Apart from that, if you don't execute properly with the ball, you get punished," Hemp said after the day's action.

Not just Taijul, even tail enders Khaled Ahmed and Shoriful Islam contributed, making 22 and 15 respectively to give the total some respectability.

Bangladesh had already lost three top-order batters in Zakir Hassan, skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque cheaply in the 10 overs they had to bat late on Day 1.

Resuming on Day 2 on 32 for three, Bangladesh's hopes of surpassing Sri Lanka's first innings tally of 280 was virtually over after they lost three more batters - Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Shahadat Hossain Dipu and Liton - in the morning session.

Taijul's innings and late order's contribution kept the deficit to 92 and then the bowlers reduced Sri Lanka to 119 for five by the end of play.

Although, Sri Lanka are in pole position heading into the third day with a lead of 211, Hemp is holding out hope that a quick collapse of the visitors followed by a completely different batting performance from the hosts will turn this match upside down.

"We got wickets in the end, but we were unlucky not to pick up more wickets. They are leading by 211 runs. If we can get early wickets tomorrow [today] morning, we could be looking at a 250 chase.

"I think they were guilty of getting stuck at the crease or playing at balls that weren't hitting the stumps. It is something that we will discuss overnight into tomorrow [today], so that we are really clear about how we are going to set about being aware of how to cope with their bowlers," Hemp said.



Scaloni 'calm' despite Martinez's goal drought

SPORTS DESK

Even though Argentina won 3-0 against El Salvador in a FIFA friendly on Friday, victorious coach Lionel Scaloni had to address the long-standing goal drought of striker Lautaro Martinez.

Defender Cristian Romero, and midfielders Enzo Fernandez, and Giovanni Lo Celso got their names on the scoresheet as the reigning world champions, without injured Lionel Messi, won their very first match of 2024.

It meant that Martinez has gone 16 consecutive games without scoring a goal, spanning a total of 772 minutes, in which he played the full 90 minutes in three fixtures.

Martinez had last scored for the Albiceleste before the Qatar World Cup in September, 2022, but has been impressive for Inter Milan.

"The truth is that it [Martinez's goal drought] doesn't worry me," said Scaloni in the post-match press conference.

"As you say, he had a good game, not only movement-wise, but at the physical level it's fine. Obviously, a striker wants to score a goal, and when he doesn't, we don't like it, but we are calm," he added.

On the other hand, Martinez said that he is more focused on being a team player.

"I will continue working hard and let's hope in the next game I'll have a chance to score; and maybe show those people who talk so much that they're wrong."

Fahima intends to rely on strength to stifle Aussies

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh leg spinner Fahima Khatun said that the Tigresses intend to play to their strengths to stifle Australia in order to stay alive in the three-match ODI series.

The Tigresses lost the series opener by 118 runs at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur on Thursday and will have to thwart the world champions in the second ODI today to prevent a series win for the visitors.

It was the bowlers who had the Aussies reeling at five down for 78 in the first match before Annabel Sutherland notched up a fifty (58 off 76) and built a 67-run stand with Alana King, who smashed five sixes and two fours in an unbeaten 31-ball 46, to rescue the visitors, eventually helping them to 213 for seven.

Bangladesh failed to put up a fight with the bat and were bundled out for 95 in 36 overs.

"Our target will be the same in the second match. We will look to use our strength in bowling and field well to limit them to the lowest total possible," Fahim told



reporters in the pre-match press conference yesterday.

"I believe that our bowlers bowled very well because they've scored 300-plus totals against other teams. They struggled

against our bowlers and managed to go past 200 due to our mistakes.

"We have been working hard as a fielding group for the past few months. The lapses [missed

catches and fielding] just happened I suppose; otherwise, we could've restricted a team like Australia below 150," the leg-spinner said.

Fahima was on the receiving

end of some big blows as she was taken for 29 runs in the final over of the innings. After conceding a single in the first ball, the subsequent five went for four sixes and a four, all hit by King.

"The team management entrusted me to bowl the final over. I tried my best, perhaps it was King who ended up playing really well. It's a part of the game. We will try to play well tomorrow," Fahima said.

Sutherland acknowledged that her side were taken aback by the difficulty that the conditions in Mirpur brought but said she was glad to have fought it out.

"The conditions were very difficult, more than what we had thought. I am happy to have adapted to such difficult conditions considering the way the ball spun and bounced. It [Australia's batting effort] showed the importance of partnerships throughout an innings. You have to understand the value of your wicket and stay in the crease so that you can capitalise later on. I am happy to spend time in difficult conditions," Sutherland said.

CBF speaks out on Alves and Robinho's 'brutal crimes'

AFP

In a statement on Friday, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) described the rape convictions of former internationals Robinho and Dani Alves as "shameful", expressing its support for "the victims of the two brutal crimes committed by former players".

Robinho has begun a nine-year sentence in Brazil for taking part in a gang rape in Italy in 2013, while Alves, also aged 40, received a four-and-a-half-year conviction for raping a young woman in a Barcelona nightclub in 2022.

The Brazilian team and national federation had faced criticism for their silence concerning the cases of former Real Madrid and Manchester City forward Robinho and former Barcelona and Sevilla full-back Alves.

CBF president Ednaldo Rodrigues added that in an environment where "machismo reigns", men must "fight not only sexual violence, but all kinds of violence".

Ahead of their international friendly against England yesterday, Brazil full-back Danilo, who will captain the national side against England, called on the football authorities to raise awareness among young players, to put themselves "in women's shoes in a more empathetic way".