

# BATTERS FIND MOMENTUM before bowlers hold nerve

ABDULLAH AL MEHIDI

Bangladesh put on an all-round effort to keep their Super Eight chances in their own hands following a 25-run win over Netherlands yesterday in the teams' T20 World Cup match at the Arnos Vale Ground in Kingstown.

ball 64. Along with Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Shakib picked up 54 runs in the first six overs despite the Tigers losing two wickets. After Tanzid departed to a 26-ball 35, Shakib allowed the rest of the batters to pivot around him, with Mahmudullah Riyad scoring an important 25 as Bangladesh later picked up 47 runs in the last five overs to



overs and conceding 12 runs for a wicket as Tigers killed off the game slowly. Shakib credited Rishad and Mustafizur's effort. The surface at Arnos Vale Ground was an unknown quantity for both sides. Shakib said they had to keep wickets in hand so that they could accelerate at the back end.

"Rishad and Fizz, the way they bowled, took the game away from Netherlands," he said.

"Hardly any international game was played here in the last 4-5 years. So, we didn't know what a good score was and had to keep wickets till 14-15 overs and take it from there. 160 in a World Cup game is always tricky. Netherlands had their moments. Ten runs an over on this ground in the last 7-8 overs, wind going in one way, made it tough to defend. But credit to bowlers for pulling it off," he added.

The Tigers' bowlers have had the opportunity to bowl first in both their first games but when asked to defend in the death overs, the sharpness and skill of the bowlers were exhibited. However, a better batting effort would help the side gain momentum as Bangladesh now look to ensure a Super Eight berth with a win over Nepal in their next game.

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh:** 159-5 in 20 overs (Shakib 64 not out, Tanzid 35, Mahmudullah 25; Aryan Dutt 2-17, Paul van Meekeren 2-15)

**Netherlands:** 134-8 in 20 overs (Sybrand Engelbrecht 33; Rishad Hossein 3-33, Taskin 2-30, Mustafizur 1-12, Sakib

1-23, Mahmudullah 1-6) Result: Bangladesh won by 25 runs **Player-of-the-match:** Shakib Al Hasan

All they required was for Shakib Al Hasan to provide that spark. The Bangladesh ace all-rounder turned up with the bat in what was a significantly better showing from the top-order, and in the Powerplay effort as well. In the end, the Tigers needed their bowlers to shine as they turned back the tide after the Dutch were in a decent position in chase.

Shakib hit his first T20I fifty in 19 innings and paced himself well enough to hold the innings together during an unbeaten 46-

notch 159 for five.

"It was important for someone from top four to bat through the innings. Happy to contribute. It was a tough pitch at the start; we held our nerves. [It] was a challenging total, not a winning one, but bowlers chipped in perfectly," Shakib said at the post-match presentation after being handed player-of-the-match award.

Netherlands were 104 for three in 15 overs and appeared to be coasting

towards Bangladesh total before Rishad Hossain turned the game around. Sybrand Engelbrecht, in particular, was going great guns before he miscued a Rishad delivery that turned and bounced, leading to a top-edge before Tanzim Sakib took the catch. In

that very over, Bas de Leede danced down the track, only to be beaten by turn, before Liton Das's sharp reflex got Bangladesh truly back in the game.

Mustafizur Rahman then did what he does best, producing 17 dot balls in his four

## Rishad turning the tide with turn

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh are not accustomed to seeing what leg spinner Rishad Hossain is dishing out in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

One cannot only be spellbound by the 21-year-old's game-changing wizardry but must also be charmed by his congruity with orthodoxy in his craft, especially at a time when being orthodox is deemed as the doom for most spinners, particularly in the 20-over format.

In that quest to further put sheen on his limited skillset and solidify his stature as a leg-break bowler, Rishad seemed to have found the missing link in his arsenal – the ability to get his leg breaks to turn.

With this addition, at least in the first three matches of the T20 World Cup, he has become a real trump card for the Tigers and ardent fans of the country's cricket have tasted a proper serving of what a leg-spinner brings to the table.

Rishad stamped his importance in the side as a difference-maker with his latest exploits against the Netherlands – a crucial tie in Bangladesh's path to the Super Eights.

The task at hand for the Netherlands in the game after the 14th over was to get 56 runs off 36 deliveries in pursuit of Bangladesh's 159-run total, with the score at three down for 104.

The Dutch had skipper Scott Edwards and Sybrand Engelbrecht well-set in the middle, having put together a 42-run stand and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto brought on Rishad to personify the role of a leggie.



He tossed one that turned away sharply from Engelbrecht and the batter could not help himself which led to his dismissal. A ball later, he looped one in that drifted towards Bas de Leede and to his surprise, turned away sharply. The right-handed batter was lured into the shot and lost track of his back leg as Liton Das whipped off the bails in a flash.

He came back to the bowl the 18th and picked another wicket, finishing with three for 33, to cap off a memorable day for Bangladesh which will be remembered for Rishad's game-changing acumen.

The 21-year-old had shown what he's made off earlier in the tournament as well, when he turned the match on its head against Sri Lanka by picking up two in an over in contrasting styles.

The first was the typical leg-spinner's wicket where Charith Asalanka fell by trying to take Rishad on and the way he took the next wicket was nothing less than a dream sight for fans of Bangladesh cricket as he bowled a ripper that turned away from leg-stump, took the outside edge of Wanindu Hasaranga's bat and found its way into the hands of first slip.

The key component that has stood out is Rishad's ability to get his leg breaks to turn. Before coming into this World Cup, fans and experts alike had come to terms with this key limitation of his.

Rishad's strength lies in his accuracy, the elevation from which he releases the ball, the ability to extract bounce and a natural drift. But right from the onset of this tournament, he has, almost magically, added the ability to turn the ball.

Against Sri Lanka, Rishad caught everyone's attention when he registered an average turn of 3.6 degrees, which at that point was the most in that ground in the tournament.

Many, including his mentor Sohel Islam, have credited the type of wickets in the USA for the turn.

"The turn is not an issue. From what I've seen, it's his accuracy. Turn depends on the surface. If the surface is sticky then turn will be more and if it is flat, turn will be less. The main thing is whether he is being able to get bounce and drop the ball," Sohel told The Daily Star.

But getting this amount of turn cannot only be due to the surface. It might be small tweaks he has made under the supervision of Mushtaq Ahmed who himself was a legendary leg-spinner.

Whatever the reason behind Rishad's new found turn, Bangladesh are reaping the benefits of it. The fans are witnessing something they had never seen before in the Bangladesh national team. They've had to be in awe of leg-spin legends of other nations but are beginning to see samples of leg-spin artistry from one of their own.

## 'Approach and attitude': Booters' bright takeaways

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's qualifying campaign of the FIFA World Cup 2026 left little room for an optimistic postmortem, but forward Rakib Hossain reckons that the men in red and green have shown improvement in two aspects: a never-say-die "attitude" and "approach" in playing a comparative attacking brand of football than before.

The charges of Javier Cabrera returned home from Qatar yesterday after drawing curtains in Tuesday's 4-0 loss to Lebanon, leaving them with a solitary point from six Group I encounters in the second round.

Although an encouraging show in 2023 SAFF Championship had expectations escalated, Bangladesh conceding a whopping 20 goals quantified a lacklustre campaign.

Moreover, they displayed a polarising performance in their home and away fixtures – significantly worse in the latter since they only allowed four goals in home fixtures – against vastly superior opponents in Australia, Palestine and Lebanon.

For Rakib, "a change of team attitude has been the biggest achievement" despite unfavourable outcomes.

"Our target was to finish third, but silly mistakes made us suffer," Rakib said.

The 25-year-old forward believes that Bangladesh could rectify mistakes if they get to play much stronger oppositions on a regular basis, especially abroad where the playing field offers a faster pace than familiar conditions at home.

Rakib, however, remains hopeful that "something good awaits" his side in upcoming SAFF Championship and Asian Cup Qualifiers.



Christian Pulisic fires a low free-kick past Alisson as the U.S held Brazil to a 1-1 draw in a friendly in Orlando on Wednesday in a final tune-up for both sides ahead of the Copa America. Following a goal from Real Madrid forward Rodrygo in the 17th minute, Pulisic helped the U.S draw level and avoid a defeat against the record five-time world champions for only the second time in 20 matches.

PHOTO: AFP

## Chance to jump-start the German machine

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany begin their quest for a first major title in a decade as the Euro 2024 hosts play their Group A opener against Scotland on Friday to kick off the tournament and what the country hopes will be a month-long party for visiting fans.

Germany have won four World Cups and three European Championships but their stellar tournament reputation has been somewhat tarnished with a series of failures since their 2014 World Cup victory in Brazil.

They went out of the next two World Cups in the group stage, their worst showing in over 80 years, and exited the last Euros in the round of 16.

With the tournament on home soil, there is only one outcome that will satisfy Germany's fans, who are desperate for the success they once took for granted: winning the title.

Despite their 2022 World Cup disappointment, a string of terrible results since, including a 4-1 home defeat to Japan back in September, and a change of coach a month later, the Germans still have their eyes on the big prize.



Coach Julian Nagelsmann, who took over in October 2023, made that clear only days before the tournament. "The normal ambition: we want to win it," Nagelsmann said of the team's goal.

His team are banking on a mix of hugely talented young players, including Jamal Musiala and newly-crowned Bundesliga champion Florian Wirtz, and experienced veterans such as 2014 World Cup winners Manuel Neuer, Thomas Mueller, and Toni Kroos.

The big question remains their goal-scoring ability with Kai Havertz, far from a natural number nine, being their first-choice striker. Burly Borussia Dortmund forward Niclas Füllkrug will be on the bench.

They will need to underline those big ambitions against the Scots, who

are playing in back-to-back European Championships for the first time since 1996.

Scotland, clear underdogs, are hoping for an early upset that could help guide them through the group stage for the first time in 11 international tournaments.

Apart from success on the pitch, the host country is also banking on a wave of enthusiasm from their own fans as well as an estimated 2.7 million visitors for the June 14-July 14 event.

Large fan zones have been set up across all major cities, including Berlin's massive fan space, stretching from the iconic Brandenburg gate far into the west of the city.

The fan zones were an overwhelming success during the 2006 World Cup in Germany, helping to fuel the party atmosphere of that tournament, dubbed locally the 'summer fairytale'.

Conditions are not quite the same this time, with more than one in four Germans having no interest in the Euros, and security being top of the agenda.

Thousands of police will be deployed around the clock in an attempt to head off potential threats from Islamists, hooligans, violent individuals, and cyberattacks.