

## Tigresses 'couldn't understand what they wanted'

SPORTS REPORTER

Familiar batting woes returned for Bangladesh in a disheartening 10-wicket loss in the 2024 Women's Asia Cup semifinal against India in Dambulla yesterday, with skipper Nigar Sultana Joty mentioning that she had no clue about what they wanted to achieve in a shambolic batting effort.

"We couldn't understand what we wanted," Joty, at the post-match presentation ceremony, reflected on the huge-margin loss as India restricted the Tigresses to a meagre 80 for eight before chasing it down with ease in just 11 overs.

When opener Dilara Akter flicked Renuka Singh for six over deep square leg in the very first over, it appeared the batting unit had the resolve to challenge an in-form Indian outfit, who had romped to the semifinal unbeaten.

However, Dilara was dismissed in the very next delivery, holing out to deep midwicket while trying to play a similar shot. The Tigresses went on to lose three wickets in the Powerplay, the last of those of in-form opener Murshida Khatun, who had hit a career-best 59-ball 80



against Malaysia in the previous game, as Bangladesh slumped to three for 21 in 4.5 overs.

"Losing too many wickets in the Powerplay hurt. When top order is not making runs, it is difficult for teams to come up with runs," Joty rued that phase of play.

Unable to recover, Bangladesh slumped further to 44 for six and were eventually restricted to a low total.

Renuka, who was named player of the match, was the pick of the bowlers for India with all three of her wickets coming in the Powerplay. That set the tone for another batting mishap as apart from Joty's 51-ball 32 and a cameo 18-ball 19 from Shorna, no other batter was able to reach double figures.

Joty also praised Shorna for the type of character she showed down the order.

"Shorna has a job to do in the five-

six overs, unlucky today as she did not get much strike. She is showing her capability, she came from the Under-19s and is showing character," Joty said.

India, unscathed, cruised to the target as Smriti Mandhana, who came out to open the innings, hit a 39-ball 55 while her opening partner Shefali Verma remained unbeaten on 26.

For Bangladesh, it was another quizzical batting effort.

Bar the 191 for two that the Tigresses posted in the Group B game against Malaysia, the batting effort showed no signs of improvement as of late. Oftentimes, Bangladesh batters went into their shell, and against India, they failed to apply themselves against some tight bowling.

Ahead of the T20 World Cup at home in October, questions remain as to how the batting unit can thwart such disasters.

"It is about mentality. They are capable of playing shots, but against India, they played differently. We need to work on our batting, we are losing games because of it. Before the World Cup, we will try and rectify our mistakes," Joty added.

## Joy, Aich strike fifties against Pak Shaheens

SPORTS REPORTER

Skipper Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Aich Mollah struck fifties before Bangladesh High Performance Unit were bowled out for 258 in their first innings on the opening day of second four-day match against Pakistan Shaheens at the DXC Arena in Darwin on Friday.

Joy scored 69 off 90 balls with eight fours and a six while Aich scored 55 runs as the pair shared a 54-run stand for the fifth wicket after Bangladesh were reduced to 104-4 at one stage.

Bangladesh lost both the batters in quick succession to be left reeling at 188-7 before Mahidul Hasan Ankon (31), Rejaur Rehman Raja (28) and Ripon Mondol (17) made some vital contributions to help the team cross the 250-run mark before being all out in 67.3 overs.

Shaheens pacers Khurram Shahzad finished with 3-69 which included the wickets of opener Parvez Hossain Emon (30), Amite Hasan (seven) and Ankon while Kashif Ali, Faisal Akram and Kamran Ghulam bagged two wickets each.

Pacer Ripon then struck twice as he removed both the Shaheens openers Sahibzada Farhan (4) and Haseebullah (18) to leave their opponents at 39-2 at stumps.

Mohammad Ali (one not out), who was sent in as night-watchman, will be at the crease with Omair Bin Yousef (seven not out) at the start of play on second day.

## Rony's quest for a comeback

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Pacer Abu Hider Rony sees his call up to the High Performance Unit for the tour to Australia as a lifeline for his international career and believes it can open a path for him to make a comeback to the Bangladesh side after a lengthy gap.

The 28-year-old was a surprise inclusion in both the one-day and T20 squads of the HP unit, which will leave for Australia tonight, for their forthcoming white-ball series against Pakistan Shaheens and Big Bash teams.

Rony, who played two ODIs and 13 T20Is between 2016 and 2018, has been a consistent performer in the domestic circuit for years but has hardly been considered for the senior side or for other developmental teams in years.

The left-arm pacer last toured with the national team during a three-match T20I series against India in 2019 and since then, has been in the wilderness when it comes to playing for the Tigers in any format.

"It's an incredible opportunity for me. I think the opportunity arrived because I have consistently performed well in the domestic circuit," Rony told The Daily Star recently.

"If I can do well there, I can hope to make a comeback to the senior side. I will try my best to utilise the opportunity," said Rony, who previously toured Australia twice – first during the Under-19 World Cup in 2012 and then in 2018 with the HP Unit.

The fact that the national side already has two left-arm pacers in Mustafizur Rahman and Shoriful Islam in the mix works against Rony's chances of making a comeback.

To overcome this hurdle, Rony has been working on sharpening his batting skills



as he believes that can help him stand out among his peers. His performances with the willow in recent domestic matches also show that this extra emphasis has not gone to waste.

During the 2023-24 season of the Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League, Rony, who emerged as the highest wicket-taker in the List A competition with 31 wickets in 16 matches, made 250 runs at a strike rate of 121.9 and scored two fifties for eventual runners-up Mohammadan Sporting Club.

"From the beginning of my career, I had a good command over batting. Earlier, I never put too much effort into it. But now, I have been trying to do well in this department alongside my bowling. It's very difficult right now to survive in

Bangladesh cricket with only bowling," he said.

"In order to make a comeback to the national side, I think my batting is very important. I'm still working to improve my batting alongside my bowling. If I can do well in both departments, I can contribute much more for the team. I really enjoy the dual role and I think I need to hone this skill further."

"It has definitely become really tough to make a comeback to the national side. Our pacers have been doing very well. I think there is a healthy competition between the pacers which is good for the team. Those of us who are trying to break into the national team need to perform exceptionally well. We are enjoying this competition," he concluded.

## Sagorika wants to build on impressive debut

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football's latest sensation Mosammat Sagorika said she would like to build on her debut hattrick as the women in red and green take on Bhutan in the second of their two FIFA international friendlies in Thimphu today.

The 19-year-old forward came off the bench in the second half of the first match and hauled Bangladesh from a goal down to lead them to a convincing 5-1 win against the South Asian minnows.

Bangladesh had gone to Bhutan without a few of their key players, yet trailing by a goal for 48 minutes against a side that Bangladesh had thrashed 8-0 in their previous meeting was beyond anyone's imagination.

Sagorika, however, eased the pressure of the visitors with a fine hattrick and now she is looking for more goals.

"Scoring on debut is a big thing, and I scored three. It was beyond my imagination. I would want to score more goals so that we get a bigger margin of victory in the second match," Sagorika said ahead of the second match, which will kick off at the Changlimithang Stadium at 6:00 pm today.

Sagorika may get a chance in the starting eleven today as coach Peter Butler said he would change personnel and try to give most players game-time,



with an eye on October's SAFF Women's Championship.

"I will keep the system but the personnel will change. We'll give quite a few number of players (the chance) to share the workload. I think the most important thing is we try and mix the game up," said the Englishman, adding that it would be foolish to expect Bangladesh to roll over an ever-improving Bhutan side.

Captain Sabina Khatun, who scored a goal in the first match, said they would try to rectify the mistakes from the first match. "If you followed the first match, you would've realised that Bhutan are in a much better position than they were during the SAFF Championship. But we tried to play our natural game which is why we got the result. We want to rectify the small mistakes from that match and try to win it too."

## Mominul hits ton in drawn practice game

SPORTS REPORTER

Mominul Haque hit a century in the drawn two-day practice game between BCB Red and BCB Green at the Zahir Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Carrying on from an overnight score of 47, BCB Red's Mominul hit 123, laced with 15 fours and a six, before perishing to Nasum Ahmed, out caught and bowled.

BCB Red declared on 274 for 9 in their first innings with a 143-run lead. Mehedi Hasan Miraz was the pick of the bowlers for BCB Green, picking up three wickets for 64 runs while Nasum and Shafiqul Islam picked up two wickets each.

Mushfiqur Rahim, who got 50 in the first innings, struck 48 for BCB Green as they reached 147 for 6 at stumps on a rain-interrupted day to draw the practice game.

Ahrar Amin and Habibur Rahman remained unbeaten on 31 and 15 respectively while Tajul Islam bagged two wickets for BCB Red. Earlier BCB Green were skittled out for 131 in their first innings on the first day.

The second practice match, slated to be a three-day game, is scheduled to begin on July 29 in Chattogram.

## SKY ready to take India forward 'in own style'

AFP, Delhi

India's Suryakumar Yadav said Friday he was not going to repeat the mistakes of his domestic captaincy ahead of his first trial as Twenty20 skipper against Sri Lanka.

Suryakumar, 33, this month picked up the baton from much-loved predecessor Rohit Sharma, who announced his retirement from the 20-over format after India's World Cup victory in June.

He pipped all-rounder Hardik Pandya to the post after concerns over the latter's frequent injury absences.

But his previous captaincy of state team Mumbai had aroused concerns over his leadership style, after complaints from teammates prompted his 2015 sacking.

"Lot of things have changed since then. I am a different person now," the batsman told reporters in Kandy ahead of Saturday's series opener.

"I have got married and I have learned a lot from other captains. I will take the team forward in my own style," he added.

"Our brand of cricket remains the same. What the captaincy has done is it has given me new responsibility and I am looking forward to the challenge."



Star batter Virat Kohli also retired after the T20 World Cup and India's 15-man squad will give Suryakumar the opportunity to experiment with the top order, anchored on openers Shubman Gill and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Sri Lanka also have a new short-format captain after a humiliating first-round World Cup knockout prompted Wanindu Hasaranga's resignation just six months after his appointment.

His replacement Charith Asalanka captained Jaffna Kings on Sunday to a title win in the island's 20-over Lanka Premier League tournament.

"It's a huge challenge for us to play the world champions. We are ready for the challenge as we prepared well for this series," Asalanka said.

"Bit disappointed that we are not at full strength," he added, saying that injury and illness had hurt the team's pace strength.

Fast bowler Nuwan Thushara was ruled out of the series with a fractured thumb while Dushmantha Chameera is unwell.

Sri Lanka have brought in right-arm seamer Asitha Fernando and left-arm quick Dilshan Madushanka as replacements.

The three-match series concludes Tuesday in Kandy before a three-match ODI series begins in Colombo on Friday.

## OLYMPICS CORNER



### 'Raw meat'

AFP, Paris

France may be the home of haute cuisine but the British team have been less than impressed about the food on offer at the Paris Olympic village, especially "raw meat".

Britain have brought in an extra chef as a result and complained about a shortage of the right food at the village, and the quality of what's on offer.

Some British competitors have headed off to Team GB's base elsewhere in the city to get fed and pick up packed meals to take back for dinner.

"There are not enough of certain foods: eggs, chicken, certain carbohydrates," Andy Anson, the British Olympic Association chief executive, said of the apparently disappointing offering at the village.

"And then there is the quality of the food, with raw meat being served to athletes." Anson called the food problem "the biggest issue at the moment".

### Paolini hunting medals, and Rafa selfie

REUTERS, Paris

Italian Jasmine Paolini's breakout year could be about to get even better as she prepares for the Paris Olympics with strong medal prospects in singles and doubles and the chance to grab a selfie with French Open king Rafa Nadal.

The 28-year-old Tuscan returns to Roland Garros just weeks after reaching the French Open final – a feat she repeated at Wimbledon where she also ended as runner-up.

Those stunning runs have elevated Paolini to fifth in the WTA rankings and she will be one of the players expected to have a deep run in her second Olympics where she is seed fourth.

Paolini will be busy on Saturday as she plays Ana Bogdan of Romania in the singles and will also team up with veteran Sara Errani in the doubles against New Zealand pairing Erin Routliffe, the world number one, and Lulu Sun.

"My goal for these Olympics is to ask Rafa for a selfie," she joked. "I have one with Roger (Federer) and one with Novak (Djokovic) from the previous Olympics, so my goal is to ask for one with Rafa."

### Brazil great Zico robbed

AFP, Paris

The Brazilian former footballer Zico filed a complaint with French police on Friday after having his bag stolen which contained cash, watches, and diamond jewellery.

The 71-year-old, who appeared in three World Cups, was in transit at the time of the theft and had left his car window open.

The Parisien daily reported the goods Zico lost to be worth 500,000 euros (\$542,000) while a source close to the matter told AFP this sum was highly exaggerated. The Selecao legend is in Paris as a guest of the Brazilian Olympic team as the 2024 Games get underway this weekend.