

Shanto's quest to end batting misery

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto is leaving no stone unturned to get his form back ahead of the upcoming tour of India, consisting of two Tests and three T20Is, beginning in Chennai with the opening Test on September 19.

Although the Tigers performed remarkably well under his leadership during their recent tour of Pakistan and whitewashed the hosts in the two-Test series – earning their maiden Test series win over Pakistan, Shanto failed to set an example with his bat throughout the series.

In the only innings he batted in the opening Test, Shanto made 16 runs before getting clean bowled by Pakistani pacer Khurram Shahzad and suffered the same fate against the same bowler in the first innings of the following Test after making only four runs.

Shanto showed some steel in the second innings of that Test but still failed to finish the game for the tourists as he was caught at short leg by Salman Agha after scoring a dogged 38 off 82 balls.

Since returning home after a successful Pakistan tour on Wednesday night, most Bangladeshi players chose to kickback and relax with their family members in the short break before the preparation camp for the India series, scheduled to begin today in Mirpur.

However, Shanto was an exception in this case as he stepped into the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on Friday with all of his gear just one day after returning to the country and completed an intense practice session on the following day as well under the supervision of Bangladesh Tigers head coach Sohel Islam.

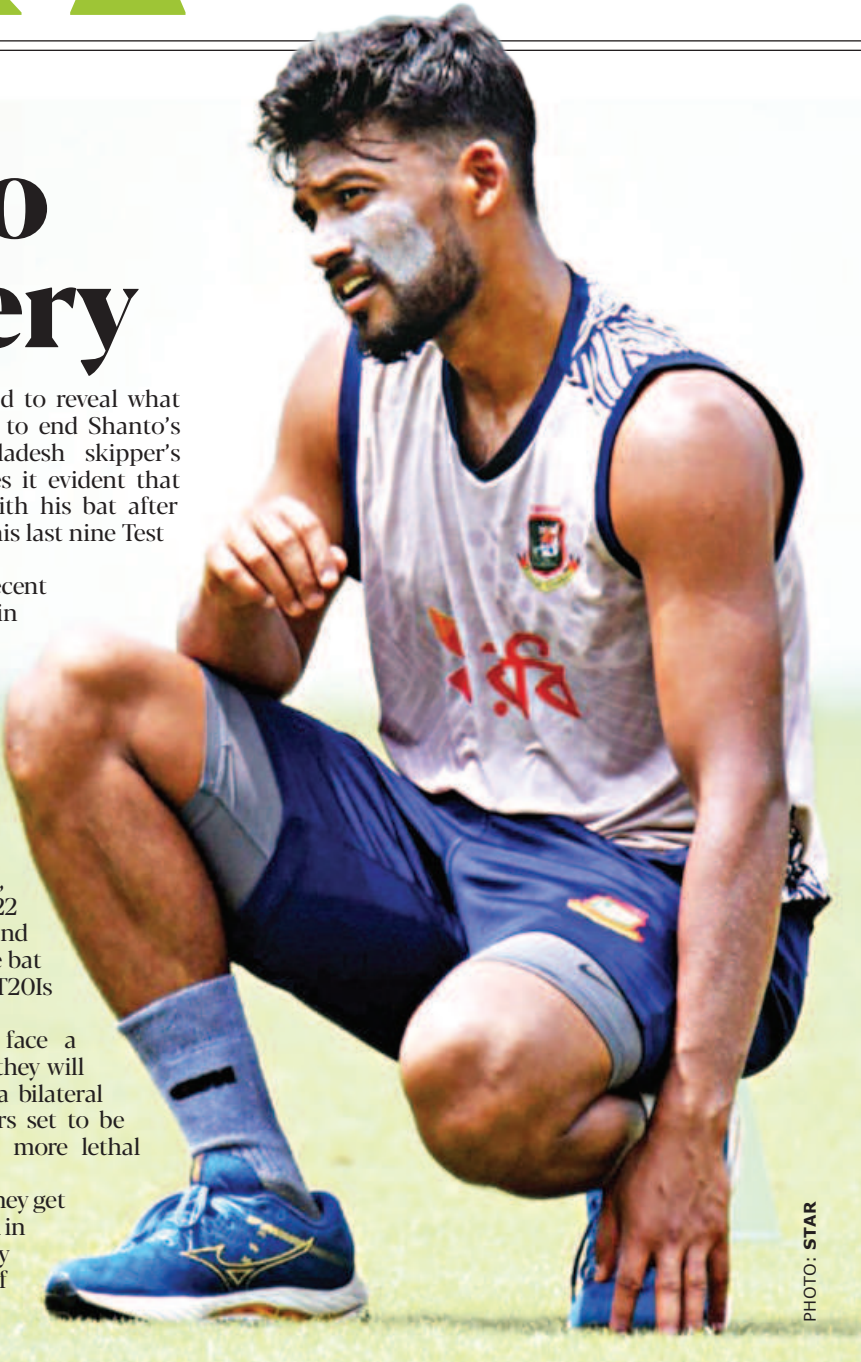
When contacted, Sohel refused to reveal what technical issues they worked on to end Shanto's batting misery but the Bangladesh skipper's prompt return to training makes it evident that he is desperate to contribute with his bat after failing to score a half-century in his last nine Test innings.

The last time Shanto had a decent outing in Tests was back in November 2023, when he scored 105 against New Zealand in the second innings of the opening Test in Sylhet. Since then, he has reached double digits in only four out of his nine Test innings.

Since that century, the southpaw has played some decent innings in the one-day format, scoring an unbeaten 51 and 122 respectively against New Zealand and Sri Lanka, but his returns with the bat have remained mostly ordinary in T20Is with only one fifty in 19 innings.

Bangladesh are expected to face a sterner challenge in India, where they will be touring for the first time for a bilateral series since 2019, with the batters set to be tested by a better rounded and more lethal bowling attack than Pakistan.

The Tigers will be hoping that they get the best out of Shanto as a batsman in India alongside his astute captaincy which has already received a lot of applause from all corners.



'Ugly or not', a win matters most for Brazil

AGENCIES

Brazil got back to winning ways in the South American World Cup qualifiers with a drab 1-0 victory over Ecuador on Friday thanks to first-half goal by Real Madrid forward Rodrigo.

After its first streak of losses in three successive qualifiers, Brazil did just enough to earn the win that lifted the struggling five-time World Cup champions to fourth in the standings with 10 points from seven games after their third win of the qualifying campaign, but remain eight points adrift of leaders Argentina.

They are eight points behind leaders Argentina and only two points over Ecuador in sixth, the last spot guaranteed a berth at the 2026 finals.



With the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico expanded to include 48 teams, the top six finishers in South American qualifying will be guaranteed a place at the tournament. The seventh placed South American team enters an inter-confederation play-off.

Playing their first match after a disappointing Copa America defeat to Uruguay in the quarter-final, Brazil had another lacklustre performance, dominating possession but failing to create clear chances throughout the match.

Brazil misplaced too many passes and struggled to connect up front, out of ideas on how to beat Ecuador's rock solid defensive block.

"We needed this win, doesn't matter if it was ugly or not. I'm happy with the victory and to have scored, and I hope it helps us getting better and progressing to the level that we want to reach moving forward," Rodrigo told Brazilian TV Globo.

Brazil will face Paraguay at Asuncion on Tuesday while Ecuador is set to host Peru in Quito on Monday.

Booters look for another win in Bhutan

SPORTS REPORTER

Fresh from a 1-0 win over Bhutan in the first match, Bangladesh will look to wrap up their two-match FIFA friendly series against the Himalayan nation with another victory when the two sides meet at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu today, with the match scheduled to kick off at 6:00pm.

The charges of Javier Cabrera set their sights on improving FIFA ranking through two wins against Bhutan, who are currently ranked 182nd while Bangladesh sit two places behind them.

The task was not easy for the men in red and green against the Dragon Boys in the first match, especially owing to a very short training camp following a three-month break from football and because of playing on a pitch which is 7000 metres above sea level.

Except for the fortunate strike from Sheikh Morsalin in the sixth minute of the game, Bangladesh could not put up an impressive display, something they did during the World Cup Qualifiers against higher-ranked sides three months ago. There was not much build-up play, or pressing the opposition players and a lack of quick attacks on the break – all of which pointed to the fact that the players were still some way off from proper fitness.

Yet everyone will be expecting to enjoy the second match against the Himalayan nation and will be eager to show their technical ability by controlling the game and attack the



opposition sharply.

"We have already played a match against them and know them mostly. The formation that Bhutan employed in the first match was unlike anything they did in the past. They usually used to play in 4-1-4-1 2 or 4-2-3-1 formation but this time they played with a five-man defence. We had to make some adjustments in the meeting and training such as how to press them, how to block them and how to attack them. We also worked on how to exploit their weak points in the counter-attacks and that's all that we worked today,"

assistant coach Hasan Al Mamun said after a training session in Thumphu yesterday.

"We have already completed 50 percent task but there is still 50 percent left. Tomorrow is the final for us because our target is to secure three more points in the second match and make the people happy," said captain Jamal Bhuiyan, who came off the bench in the second half of the first match.

With winger Rakib Hossain not available for selection due to an ankle injury he suffered in the first match, the coach is likely to bring a few changes in the starting eleven.



An emotional Luis Suarez and his family stand next to a replica of the Copa America trophy he was presented during his farewell ceremony after the 2026 FIFA World Cup South American qualifiers match at the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo on Friday. Suarez, however, bade a frustrating farewell to his 17-year international career as Uruguay were held to a 0-0 draw by Paraguay. The 37-year-old forward reached 143 appearances for his country, finishing as their all-time leading scorer with 69 goals.

PHOTO:AFP



Italy went behind after 12 seconds but came back to beat France 3-1 in a highly entertaining Nations League game at the Parc des Princes on Friday. France's Bradley Barcola found the net in the opening minute before Federico Dimarco brought Italy level at the half-hour mark. Davide Frattesi struck early into the second half and Giacomo Raspadori netted the third to silence the home crowd.

PHOTO: AFP

US OPEN

History-makers Sinner, Fritz set up final showdown

AFP, NEW YORK

Taylor Fritz became the first American man since 2009 to reach a Grand Slam final on Friday, setting up a US Open title showdown against world number one Jannik Sinner.

Fritz, the world number 12, twice fought back to defeat compatriot Frances Tiafoe 4-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-4,



6-1 in his semi-final.

Australian Open champion Sinner became the first Italian man to make the New York final with a 7-5, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 win over an ailing Jack Draper of Britain.

"He overwhelmed me at the start and I was freaking out a little," said 26-year-old Fritz after securing victory with a 16th ace.

"I just told myself to stay in it, hold serve and apply scoreboard pressure.

"I did all I could to stay in it. If I hadn't have done that I'd regret it forever. In the final, I will come out and give it everything."

Andy Roddick was the last American to make a men's singles final at the Slams at Wimbledon in 2009. He was also the last man from the country to capture a major title when he won the 2003 US Open.

Fritz was just five years old at the time.

Earlier, in a gruelling three-hour match, Draper, the first British man in the semi-finals since Andy Murray won the title in 2012, was undone by 10 double faults and 43 unforced errors.

He also vomited on the court, blaming anxiety for the illness.

"It was a very physical match. He's so tough to beat so I'm excited to be in the final," said Sinner.

"It was a very physical match. He's so tough to beat so I'm excited to be in the final."

"In the final, it will be a very tough challenge. I'm happy to be in that position because if you are in the final on a Sunday it means you are doing an amazing job."

Miraz stepping out of Shakib's shadow

ASHEFAQ UL-ALAM



About eight years ago, in 2016, the ICC Under-19 World Cup took place in Bangladesh. Before the tournament, the ICC singled out Mehedi Hasan Mirazas the 'Future Star' of Bangladesh cricket.

But as is often the case with most U19 starlets in Bangladesh, a swift promotion to the senior side followed for Miraz, who made his Test debut that very year and played a starring role in the monumental Test win over England, with a 12-wicket haul in only his second match.

The honeymoon period ended soon enough though, and his frailties as an all-rounder came to the fore.

Cut to the present, the recent Pakistan series could prove to be the juncture that cricket historians later point to as the moment when Miraz eclipsed Shakib in the race, at least in the red-ball format.

Read the full story on The Daily Star website