

Joty wants to set the tone in landmark game

SPORTS REPORTER

It will be a special occasion for Nigar Sultana Joty when the Bangladesh skipper leads her team onto the Sharjah Cricket Stadium for the opener of the ninth edition of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup against Scotland today.

Joty is set to become the first Bangladeshi woman to play 100 T20Is, and the 27-year-old will want to mark her landmark appearance with a win to set the Tigresses on course for a chance to rewrite their abysmal records in the mega event.

"Playing your 100th T20I is a different kind of feeling," Joty said on the eve of their first World Cup game in the UAE.

"I am very happy and, at the same time, I feel amazed that I am about to play my 100th T20I as it feels like just a few days back I started my career. However, it'll be the happiest [moment] and most memorable for me if I can contribute and help Bangladesh win in my landmark game," Joty added.

It augurs well for Bangladesh that they would be starting the tournament, in which they have suffered severely in the past, by facing a side they have beaten every time in the shortest format -- the Tigresses won all four of their T20I encounters against Scotland so far.

However, Joty was not ready to be overwhelmed with complacency.

"We won every match [T20Is] we played against Scotland, so that's a good sign for us.



But there is no opportunity to take any team lightly as every team came here [into this World Cup] with similar capacities. So, everyone will have that hunger to win matches. Hence, we will take one game at a time and will be mulling over the plans with which we can beat them [Scotland]," the wicketkeeper-batter said.

Bangladesh bounced back in their second World Cup warm-up game with a 23-run win over Pakistan after suffering a 33-run defeat in their first practice match against Sri Lanka in the UAE.

And head coach Hashan Tillakaratne was eager to carry that momentum into the first game.

"The first warm-up game did not go as we expected. But the girls played really well in the second game against Pakistan. So, Bangladesh would go into the tournament with a lot of positivity."

"The momentum starts from the first game, so, it's very much important that we play our A game and get a positive result," Tillakaratne said.

TIGRESSES IN T20 WORLD CUP

In the five editions they played, Bangladesh have won only two matches in 21 appearances and are on a 16-match losing streak since their victory over Ireland in Sylhet in 2014.

They have struck just eight sixes, while Australia top the chart with 78 sixes in 44 matches.

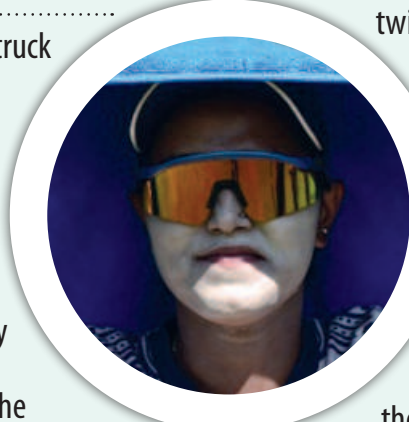
There have been 23 century partnerships overall, led by the unbeaten 169 from England's Nat Sciver-Brunt and Heather Knight against Thailand in 2020. Bangladesh, however, feature only two 50+ stands, with their highest partnership of 64, between Nigar Sultana and Salma Khatun against England in 2016.

There has been only one instance of a 200+ total, when England amassed 213 for five against Pakistan in 2023. Bangladesh have scored 100 or more runs on 10 occasions and crossed the 120-run mark

twice, with their highest being 126 for eight against Sri Lanka in Cape Town in 2023.

Fahima Khatun and Salma Khatun have played the most matches for Bangladesh in the competition, with 20 appearances each.

Nigar Sultana Joty has been the team's highest scorer in three editions of the tournament: 2015/16, 2019/20, and 2022/23.



FOCUS SHIFTS TO T20IS

Bangladesh are set to kick off their preparations for the upcoming three-match T20I series against hosts India today, shifting their focus to the shortest format after a tough Test series. All-format captain Najmul Hossain Shanto, along with his T20I squad teammates, made the journey from Kanpur to Gwalior yesterday, where they joined Mahmudullah Riyad and others who had flown in from Bangladesh earlier. In the format, the Tigers last faced India during the T20 World Cup in June, losing by 50 runs, and have not played a match since the tournament. The two sides have faced off in 14 contests, with India winning 13 times.

Itinerary (Bangladesh time)

Oct 06:

1st T20I, Gwalior, 7:30 pm

Oct 09:

2nd T20I, Delhi, 7:30 pm

Oct 12:

3rd T20I, Hyderabad, 7:30 pm

More skill and depth needed despite pacers' improvement

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Gwalior

Fast bowlers tend to go for runs, especially in Test cricket where fielders are kept in attacking positions and runs often come thick and fast. Bangladesh bowlers faced that scenario in Chennai in the first Test, and then in the second Test, they were introduced to a form of batting where the boundaries of formats vanquished as Kanpur had seen two days without a ball being bowled.

In Kanpur, the crowd was a vocal one. They egged the team on to take the route of high risk vs high reward. On the receiving end of that fatality was the Bangladesh bowlers. Khaled Ahmed and Hasan Mahmud, in particular, never recovered from the onslaught on the fourth day.

Hasan went for 66 in six overs, Khaled 43 in four overs. Not much room for error there. It was the expected lengths and lines they usually bowl but this time their nerves and skills were put to the test as batters wanted to attack, not just score but score quickly.

From the very first over, Hasan was under the cosh. From the very first delivery, Khaled was rattled by big sixes as Rohit Sharma charged first ball and then nonchalantly flicked one square of the wicket for six.

The reaction, being spot on about the mindset with which to bowl, should be rapid. An intention to bowl attacking



deliveries to bag wickets should be there but they went into a shell early. Not enough faith on those wicket-taking deliveries they might produce and body language slugged.

Shakib Al Hasan said after Day 4 that he was fully expecting that sort of attack from India. "After the first two overs, we reacted but we should have reacted after the first two balls," Shakib told broadcasters.

While the batters are once again to blame for poor decisions in all four innings, in Kanpur they were especially poor on a wicket that did not have much for bowlers

after the 35-over Day 1. But the bowlers' struggle in more placid wickets back home compared to away venues where there are run-fest or sporting wickets, the wickets column gives some indication.

Taskin Ahmed, the spearhead of the attack, had five wickets in two matches at home compared to 13 in five away Tests over the last three years. Khaled had 10 home Test wickets in eight Tests compared to 18 wickets in five away Tests during that period.

Asked to draw a comparison between the performances of batters to that of bowlers in India Test series, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha pointed out: "The fast bowler do really well when the conditions help us. In this game, the conditions were different and of course the Indian approach also didn't allow us to be at our best. We need to think about and learn from this very quickly. Now we know how to react quickly enough."

There is a case for putting in extra yard on surfaces back home such as Chattogram's for instance, or even Mirpur. The help for seamers are there early but ebbs away as time goes by. On a barren track in Kanpur, without some of their regular pacers, the Tigers struggled. But aggression to take wickets has to come through, and reacting to changes in batters' mindset, in order to face up to unique challenges modern Test cricket provides.



Barca lure Szczesny out of retirement

REUTERS

Barcelona have signed Wojciech Szczesny as a free agent, the LaLiga club said on Wednesday after the Polish goalkeeper reversed his decision to retire and come to the team's aid after they lost Marc-Andre Ter Stegen to a long-term injury.

German keeper Ter Stegen underwent surgery after suffering a rupture of the patella tendon in his right knee over the weekend and he is expected to miss the rest of the season.

Inaki Pena, 25, is expected to cover for Ter Stegen but Barca have now reinforced their squad with Szczesny, who had announced his retirement last month after terminating his contract with Serie A side Juventus.

The 34-year-old former Poland international had one more year left on his contract at Juve, where he had replaced Italy great Gianluigi Buffon in goal.

Szczesny won the league and domestic cup three times each in more than 250 appearances for Juve but lost his place to close-season recruit Michele Di Gregorio.

Barcelona are top of the LaLiga standings with 21 points from eight games and Hansi Flick's side next visit Deportivo Alaves on Sunday.

A hattrick, three braces, and a goal fest

AGENCIES

Tuesday's fixtures in the Champions League, this time being played in a different format with a total of 36 teams competing instead of 32 like the previous editions, saw a goal fest with a total of 32 goals being scored in the nine games on the night.

Last season's beaten finalists Dortmund were the biggest winners on a night that also saw Barcelona, Manchester City, and Inter Milan claim one-sided victories, and Champions League debutants Brest won 4-0 at Red Bull Salzburg.

The clash between Arsenal and French champions PSG in London was the big game of the day as the second round of matches in the new format of European football's elite club competition got underway.

The Gunners were worthy winners with Kai Havertz heading in the opener in the 20th minute and Bukayo Saka doubling their lead before half-time.

It is a first win in the Champions League this season for Mikel Arteta's Arsenal, who drew 0-0 away to Atalanta on matchday one two weeks ago.

"Really, really happy with the performance," Arteta told



broadcaster Amazon Prime. "The Champions League brings different demands but I think we handled it really well."

Adeyemi hattrick

Thanks to a first-half hattrick from Karim Adeyemi and a brace from Serhou Guirassy with strikes in either half, Dortmund conjured up a 7-1 win over Scottish champions Celtic at home.

It is Dortmund's biggest winning margin in the Champions League alongside a 6-0 win away to Legia Warsaw in 2016.

"There's no such thing as a perfect game, but it was very, very good," said midfielder Emre Can. "This has to be the standard we aim to set."

Big wins as well for Barca, City, and Inter

Barcelona beat Swiss champions Young Boys 5-0 to bounce back from a 2-1 loss at Monaco a fortnight ago and their first defeat of the season in La Liga last weekend at Osasuna.

Robert Lewandowski scored twice either side of goals by

Raphinha and Inigo Martinez before a late Mohamed Ali Camara own goal wrapped up the victory.

"We knew after the game against Monaco in the Champions League we had to give a quick reply in the next game, which was this one, and we did that well," Raphinha told broadcaster Movistar.

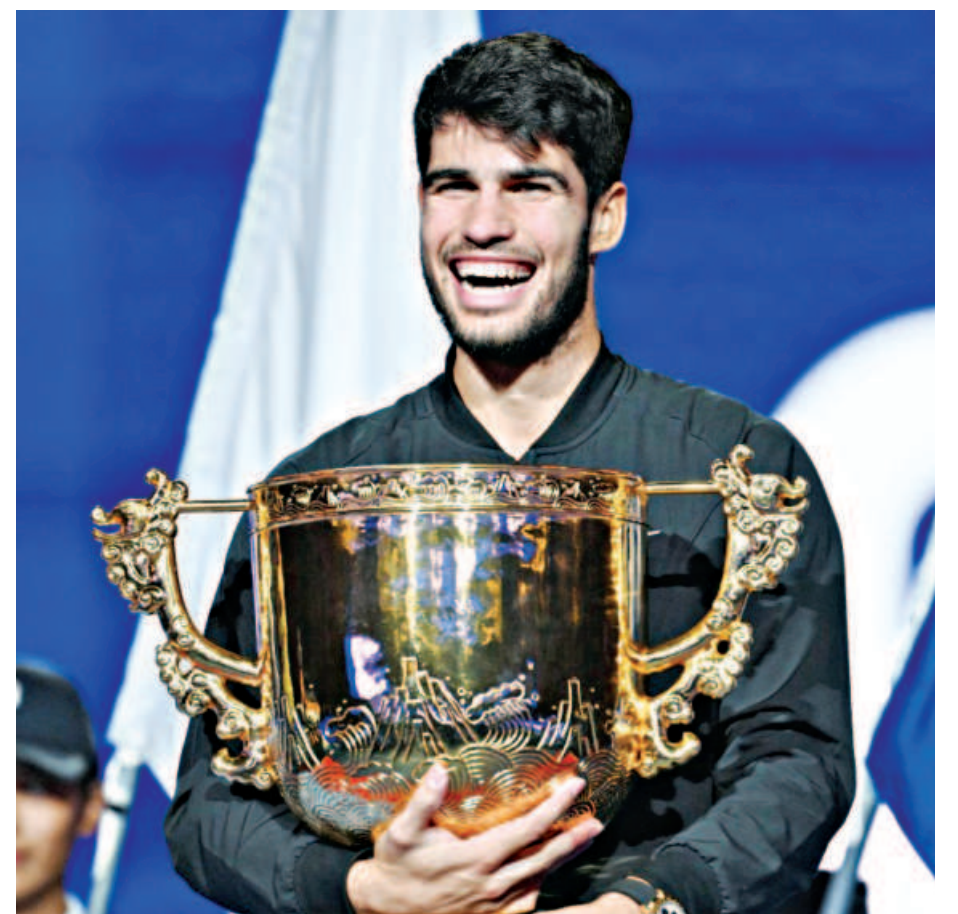
Winners of the Champions League in 2023, Pep Guardiola's City were comfortable 4-0 winners away to Slovan Bratislava in Slovakia, with Ilkay Gundogan, Phil Foden, Erling Haaland and James McAtee getting the goals.

Inter, who lost to City in the final in Istanbul two seasons ago, won by the same scoreline at home to Red Star Belgrade.

German champions Bayer Leverkusen got their second straight win in this season's competition as a Victor Boniface goal early in the second half allowed them to beat AC Milan 1-0.

Meanwhile Brest, the French Champions League newcomers, also made it two wins out of two with a remarkable 4-0 victory away to Salzburg in Austria.

VfB Stuttgart and Sparta Prague drew 1-1, with the game between PSV Eindhoven and Sporting Lisbon also enduring the same fate.



Carlos Alcaraz roared back from a set down to end number one Jannik Sinner's runs of 14 victories in a row and win his first China Open title on Wednesday. The four-time Grand Slam champion, who is set to return to number two in the world behind Sinner, edged a captivating final 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) for his fourth ATP crown of the year and 16th overall.

PHOTO:AFP