

**Pakistan appointed Mohammad Rizwan as skipper yesterday for the white-ball tours of Australia and Zimbabwe, replacing Babar Azam who stepped down this month. Rizwan will lead the squad with Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi also named after being dropped from the last two Tests against England in the series Pakistan won 2-0 on Saturday. "It is an honour to lead Pakistan. We will fight hard to bring good results on the tours, said Rizwan.**



## Chaotic off the pitch, sublime on it

SPORTS REPORTER

Success and controversy are apparently walking hand in hand for Bangladesh in their title defence of SAFF Women's Championship in Kathmandu.

The charges of Peter Butler had started their campaign with a frustrating 1-1 draw against Pakistan, and have ever since created controversies off the field, all the while putting up stunning displays on the pitch, the latest of which was in the semifinals at the Dasharath Stadium yesterday in a 7-1 thrashing of Bhutan.

Following the emphatic 3-1 win against five-time champions India, which ensured Bangladesh their passage to the last four as group winners, it was expected that the team would put an end to the controversies there and stay united till the end of the campaign.

Yet, captain Sabina Khatun created more controversy with a Facebook post, apparently a dig at the coach, before coming up with an apology post pretty soon. Former coach Golam Rabbani Choton shared his opinion on media, riling up Butler even further, just ahead of the semifinals.

There was uncertainty over whether Sabina would play a part in this match after having skipped Saturday's training, reportedly with a bout of fever. Well, she started and scored a brace, silencing the criticism and controversy surrounding the team.

It was, however, Tohura Khatun, the wizard from Kalsindur who starred for the defending champions with a hat-trick as Bangladesh ran riot against a team they had routed 8-0 at the same stage of the competition two years ago.

The 21-year-old striker scored her first in the 15th minute of the match, after

**"I have been in Bangladesh for eight-nine months and I have realised that it was always going to be trouble, so I just take it with a pinch of salt. I am far too professional to be irked by or be provoked by people who have not played at the level I have played at, who have not coached at the level I have coached at and don't have that level of professionalism and common decency"**

BANGLADESH COACH PETER BUTLER

Rituporna Chakma had given Bangladesh a seventh-minute lead with a bullet of a shot, with a wonderful curling effort from the edge of the box following a bewildering pirouette to shrug off her marker.

Sabina, the top-scorer of last edition, opened her account with a tap-in on 27 minutes before Tohura doubled her tally with a strike almost identical to her first eight minutes later.

Sabina rounded off the Bhutanese keeper to grab her second of the game two minutes later before Bhutan pulled one back, thanks to some defensive miscommunication from Bangladesh on 41 minutes.

While the coach took off a number of forwards and brought on some fresh legs in the second half, Tohura still had the legs to complete her hat-trick with a placing shot in the 58th minute before defender Sheuli Azim completed the rout with a header in the 72nd minute.

The Bangladesh coach praised the team's effort and the work he has done since taking charge eight months ago.

"It was nice to come here today and pull up a performance with a group of girls who have not disappointed. We have worked extremely hard for the last six-seven months to create that competitive nature and environment that you need if you want to progress," Butler told reporters at the post-match press conference while pointing finger at people who are trying, according to him, to destabilise the team.



## BARCA slay hosts Real

Two goals inside two minutes from Robert Lewandowski and strikes from Lamine Yamal and Raphinha – all goals being scored in a one-sided second half – saw Barcelona crush hosts Real Madrid 4-0 inside a closed-lid Santiago Bernabeu in a LaLiga game on Saturday. Lewandowski's strikes stemmed the flow of attacks from Real Madrid, who were caught by Hansi Flick's offside trap 12 times with eight of those calls against star forward Kylian Mbappe. The Clasicos win saw Barca stay on top of the league with 30 points, six ahead of second-placed Real.



I would say at the moment we're in a flow. We can celebrate this win, I gave the players two days off... it's a good day to celebrate this, but also to be focussed, focussed on the next matches we have.

— Barca coach Hansi Flick

We don't have to throw everything in the bin, we just have to forget the last 30 minutes – we can't give up, we just have to learn. We came out of the last defeat well and we have to do the same, I am certain we will do better.

— Real coach Carlo Ancelotti



Hansi Flick is the first coach to win his first Clasicos clash by more than three goals in any competition since Jorge Valdano with Real Madrid in January 1995 (5-0). He is also the first Barca coach to make his Clasicos debut at the Santiago Bernabeu with a win since Terry Venables on 2 September 1984 (0-3).

Real Madrid ended a run of 42 straight games unbeaten in LaLiga (W31 D11), only one game behind the historical record in the competition by Barcelona between April 2017 and May 2018 (G43 W34 D9).

Aged at 36 years and 66 days, Robert Lewandowski became the oldest player to score a brace in El Clasicos in the 21st century in any competition.

Robert Lewandowski has scored 14 goals in the ongoing LaLiga season, three more than any other player in the top five European leagues (Erling Haaland – 11 goals).

Real were caught offside 12 times over the course of the match, their most in a league game since March 2013 (also 12 vs Celta Vigo), with two of those incidents seeing Kylian Mbappe goals disallowed.

## A two-fold challenge for Shanto

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Bangladesh's all-format captain Najmul Hossain Shanto expressed a wish to step down from captaincy after the ongoing South Africa Test series, the first match of which the Tigers lost by seven wickets in Mirpur last week and the final game to be played in Chattogram from tomorrow.

Shanto is understood to be waiting for a discussion with Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Faruque

Ahmed before making up his mind regarding captaincy. Bangladesh have produced positive results under Shanto – the Tigers' maiden Test



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

series sweep over hosts Pakistan in Rawalpindi in August-September being the highlight. However, pressure can be telling for someone who has to oversee a team in all formats.

Even someone like Mominul Haque, who was captain only in Tests, was made to relinquish his role after a string of bad performances with the bat.

Like Mominul, Shanto too is a key top-order batter. If Mominul's batting had become an issue, Shanto might as well feel that the toll of captaincy might hamper his batting

in the long run. Thus, not only the team management but even on a personal level, Shanto would desperately want his willow to do the talking in the second Test against South Africa.

In the last 12 months, Shanto has played nine Tests and averaged just above 25. His only ton during this period was also as the skipper – during the home Test series against New Zealand in November-December last year when he had to stand in as a replacement for then Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

However, in the six Tests prior to that New Zealand series, Shanto had averaged just over 48, a purple patch where he scored three of his five Test tons.

But since he officially took over the captaincy role, his batting took a hit, drawing criticisms, even though his tactical nous as a leader has been praised.

Shanto's last big contribution with the bat came last month in Chennai in the first Test against India in which he hit 82.

Shanto's batting method and technique, however, looked similar during and before his captaincy. The question remains whether he is feeling the pinch of having too much on his plate now.

The final Test against South Africa is a series decider with World Test Championship points up for grabs.

Shanto and Co had a gruelling training session in Chattogram yesterday. Chattogram has offered good batting surfaces over the years and it could be what is needed to ease Shanto's predicament as a batter.

For Shanto, having a positive outing with the bat in the final game against the Proteas might just help him get his form back and acquire the mental assuredness to make a call on his captaincy.

## New hope in football revolves around Tabith

ANISUR RAHMAN

When legendary footballer Kazi Salahuddin was elected as the president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) some 16 years ago in 2008, hopes were that the former footballer-turned-organisator would revive the country's declining football and elevate it to a new height. But unlike his playing days, Salahuddin failed to deliver by and large as an administrator. By announcing he would not compete in the BFF elections, Salahuddin ended his 16-year tenure as the BFF boss, opening the door for Tabith Awal to get elected as the president in the polls held in Dhaka on Saturday.

Tabith, a businessman, politician, and former footballer, won the elections by a landslide, receiving 123 of the 128 votes casted by

the delegates and will be the BFF president for the next four years.

After four consecutive reigns under Salahuddin, former footballers and members of the country's football fraternity are expecting something good from the newly elected committee, especially from new president Awal and senior vice-president Imrul Hasan, in the next four years.

"After Imrul was elected senior vice president unopposed, it was widely expected that Tabith was going to become president and it happened yesterday [Saturday]. I think this pair can be good for our football," former Bangladesh footballer Golam Sarwar Tipu told The Daily Star.

The former national coach also explained the logic behind his thinking, "Tabith himself was a player. He is a capable organiser



as he runs a football club [NoFel Sporting Club]. Besides, he is passionate towards football, a well-behaved person and doesn't impose any decision on anyone. So, I want to keep my faith in him. Let's see what happens.

"Imrul is an experienced organiser

who is running Bashundhara Kings brilliantly and built up a good sports structure there. So, the pair of Tabith and Imrul can do something different for football," Tipu added.

Even though Salahuddin has stepped aside, seven members of

the previous executive committee – Tipu Sultan, Mahi Uddin Selim, Jakir Hossain Chowdhury, Mahfuza Akter Kiran, Satyajit Das Rupu, Imteaz Hamid Sabuj and Bijon Barua – were elected in the new 14-member committee.

Four fresh faces were elected as vice-presidents – Nasser Shahrear Zahedee, Wahid Uddin Chowdhury Happy, Sabbir Ahmed Arif and Fahad Mohammed Ahmed Karim. "I thought the incumbent members would go through difficulty but they hardly faced any problem in getting into the committee again. Let's see what they do under new leadership," said Tipu, who is however not familiar with the four vice-presidents who were elected for the first time.

Former footballer Ashraf Uddin Ahmed Chunnun wants to reserve his judgement on the new

committee for now, saying, "It's too early to comment on the newly elected committee but I hope the country's football bounces back under new leadership."

The former national forward also emphasised on grassroots football which has been overlooked over the years.

"There is no alternative to going back to the grassroots football – setting up district, school and university competitions. The current committee should first make short, mid and long-term development plans," said Chunnun, adding that vice president Zahedee could be an important figure in developing the country's football.

"Zahedee has been running Shams Ul Huda Football Academy for a long time. He is dedicated to football and the committee should utilise him," said Chunnun.