

## A half-cooked vintage ODI show

ASHEAQ-UL-ALAM

The ongoing three-match series between Bangladesh and Afghanistan has so far felt like looking inside a time capsule and finding a 50-over series at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium from the 90s in all its glory.

The sun beating down on a glass shine pitch, batters applying caution throughout the middle phase, and scores of around 250 proving to be more than competitive – all of this feels like someone has rolled back the clock a few decades.

On a pitch like this, it's important for at least one top-order batter to bat deep into the innings, eat up dot balls if necessary in the middle phase, and then take the attack to the opponents in the slog overs.

On Saturday, Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto tried to do exactly that but eventually, his homage to the classic ODI anchor's innings fell short in the final act – he lost his wicket when his team needed him to accelerate.

Shanto came to the crease in the fourth over after Tanzid Tamim departed following a 17-ball 22. The southpaw, who had made 47 in the previous match, didn't



let the momentum drift away as he and Soumya Sarkar took Bangladesh to 59-1 after the first Powerplay.

The skipper maintained a nice tempo against the new ball but after Afghanistan's star spinner Rashid Khan started operating, Shanto began playing more cautiously.

Perhaps the batting collapse from

the previous match was weighing heavy on his mind. In the series opener, after Shanto departed as the third batter, the Tigers lost their final seven wickets for just 11 runs in less than four overs to lose by 92 runs.

While Soumya (35 off 49), Mehedi Hasan Miraz (22 off 33), and Towhid Hridoy (11 off 16) departed, Shanto held

one end up but was scoring at a snail's pace in yesterday's game.

After reaching 30 off 35 balls, it took him exactly 62 balls to score his next 30. His patient knock had reduced Bangladesh's scoring rate considerably but it ensured that the innings didn't implode like it did in the previous match.

After seeing off spells from Rashid and Allah Ghazanfar, who had taken six wickets in the previous match, Shanto saw an opportunity to begin his assault from the 41st over against left-arm spinner Nangeyalia Kharote.

After playing a dot ball first up, Shanto charged down the wicket and attempted to hit him over long off. However, he mistimed the shot, and the ball nestled into the hands of Mohammad Nabi.

Shanto had to walk back after making 76 off 119 with a strike rate of 63.86, slower than all of his previous 50-plus knocks in ODIs. Debutant Jaker Ali (37 off 27) and a returning Nasum Ahmed (25 off 24) played handy cameos to get the score to 252-7, but Shanto, undoubtedly, would feel disappointed after failing to put the finishing touch to what could've been a vintage ODI knock.



Following two straight home defeats, Real Madrid bounced back to winning ways as Vinicius Junior netted a hat-trick and Jude Bellingham got his first LaLiga goal of the season in Los Blancos' 4-0 win over Osasuna at the Santiago Bernabeu yesterday. Real sit second in the league with 27 points from 12 games, six behind leaders Barcelona.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Four records on opening day of national swimming

SPORTS REPORTER

Four new national records were set on the opening day of the Max Group 33rd National Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Championship at the Syed Nazrul Islam National Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday, although the legitimacy of the records might be called into question given the absence of an electronic timer.

The national meet got underway with hand-timing system for the fourth consecutive edition as the malfunctioning electronic timer has never been used at the venue since its installation in 2019, leaving swimmers frustrated.

Samiul Islam Rafi, the national record holder in three events last edition and Bangladesh's male representative at Paris Olympics this year, set a new record in 50m backstroke with a timing of 26.79 seconds, shaving off 0.11 seconds from his previous record last year.

Juthi Akter, like her Navy teammate, set a new record in women's 50m backstroke with a timing of 32.74 seconds, eclipsing her own record from 2021 by just 0.01 seconds.

Romana Akter of Bangladesh Army set a new record in women's 100m breaststroke with a timing of 1min 18.27sec, chalking off Mariam Akter's 2021 record by 0.73 seconds.

The last record of the day came in men's 200m butterfly event where Navy's Kajol Mia broke his own record from last year with a timing of 2min 09.41sec, his previous best being 2min 10.25sec.

A total of 10 swimming events were held on the opening day, with Navy leading the medals tally with seven gold, six silver and three bronze medals. Army were in second position with three gold, four silver and five bronze medals. BKSP got two bronze medals to their name.



## BFF committee heads named SAFF winners to get Tk 1.5cr reward

SPORTS REPORTER

The first meeting of the newly-formed executive committee of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) named chairmen of the important departments, 14 days after the elections took place.

The Tabith Awal-led committee sat for a three-and-a-half-hour long meeting at the BFF House yesterday morning, the focus of the meeting being sorting out the game's local governing body's finances and starting work on various issues as quickly as possible.

With that aim in mind, the chairmen of the committees were decided, and executive member Amirul Islam Babu read out some of the names to the media following the meeting.

With the BFF going through financial constraints and the finance committee under some strain due to the scandalous mishandling of funds by the previous committee, newly-elected president Tabith decided to keep the most important portfolio under his jurisdiction.

Babu, re-instated as the head of media committee, informed reporters that only the finance committee has been formed for a four-year tenure while the other committees will be of one-year tenure each, and the terms of those will be extended on review after each year.

Former vice-president Imrul Hasan, now the senior vice-president, is heading the finance committee since Abdus Salam Murshedy, the former senior vice-president, had stepped down from his role following the fall of Awami



League government.

Imrul, also the chairman of Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings, however, was retained as the chief of the Professional Football League Committee.

Tabith, who served as a vice-president in two previous terms and worked as deputy chairman of National Teams Committee, will lead the NTC this time, according to Babu.

The women's football wing will, meanwhile, be led by Mahfuza Akter Kiron, a member of Asian Football Confederation and the only female member of the BFF committee.

Among the other committees, vice-president Nasser Shahrear Zahedee will helm the Development Committee while former national team captain Iqbal

Hossain will lead the District Football Association Committee.

Meanwhile, Babu announced that BFF will reward Tk 1.5 crore to SAFF Women's Championship winning team.

"The SAFF champion women's team will be given Tk 1.5 crore by the federation. We will soon arrange a programme to distribute the amount in front of you. Those who were part of the team in the tournament will receive the money," Babu said, adding that the fund will be arranged soon from BFF.

The women's team, who defeated hosts Nepal 2-1 in the final to clinch back-to-back titles, have been handed over a cheque of Tk 1 crore by the sports ministry while Bangladesh Cricket Board has also announced a Tk 20 lac reward for the team.

## Blueprint for current U-19 team different from 2020: Naveed

Bangladesh will vie to defend their ACC U-19 Asia Cup, scheduled to be held in the UAE from November 29, which will be the first big test of the current batch of the young Tigers. The U-19 boys recently had a successful outing against their UAE counterparts, winning the lone three-day match and one-day series at home quite dominantly. Bangladesh U-19 team head coach Naveed Nawaz, who had guided the 2020 batch to World Cup success, recently talked to the Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan from Melbourne over phone on many aspects including their recent series, plans for Asia Cup and the new blueprint for next World Cup. The excerpts are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** The recent UAE series was the first international assignment of the current U-19 team. How satisfied are you with their performance?

**Naveed Nawaz (NN):** Result-wise, we can be happy. But my target was to understand the brand of cricket we want to play and the challenges we will be getting in the future. Obviously, the opposition wasn't really strong but I'm sure when we go to the Asia Cup and play Sri Lanka in December, we are going to face much tougher opposition.

**DS:** Which players impressed you the most in the UAE?

**NN:** Our fast bowlers did really well in the three-day game and when we came back to Mirpur [for one-dayers], we saw our spinners doing well. And of course, the batters – Zawad, Rifat, Tamim and Aleen – have been scoring runs. But you have to get better and you have to have a better understanding of the game so that you can do the same thing against the tough opponents.

**DS:** There were two skippers – Tamim [Azizul Hakim] and Aleen [Kalam Siddiki] – in the series, why?

**NN:** Before the series, we played almost



10-15 warm-up matches during camps. We gave the captaincy to six to seven players. From there, we shortlisted Aleen and Tamim. We wanted to try them out in the series and evaluate their performance as a leader.

**DS:** Have you settled on the group of players for the current U-19 batch or will there be further changes?

**NN:** We are keeping the records of all the players, even from the practice matches. Some were satisfactory and some were not. We tested them in many ways. After that, we have shortlisted about 23 or 24 players [from 39]. We are keen to look at the YCL [Youth Cricket League] next year and see if we can find new players.

**DS:** Do you think the Asia Cup will be

first real test of the current batch?

**NN:** This Asia Cup is meant for 2005-borns. The age cut-off is 2005 September [September 2006 is World Cup cut-off]. I'm sure most teams will send older players in the Asia Cup. I think it will be a mix of older players and players who are eligible to play in the 2026 World Cup. We are yet to finalise yet what will be our strategy moving forward but I'm sure that 80 to 90 percent of the squad will comprise of players who are eligible to play in the next U-19 World Cup.

**DS:** In the next U-19 World Cup, scheduled in 2026 in Zimbabwe and Namibia, do you plan to go with the successful blueprint of 2020 or a different one?

**NN:** The blueprint will be different. This squad is quite different from that one. In 2020, we had many batters, we didn't have many all-rounders but we had a couple of good fast bowlers and good spinners. We always depended on six batters, one all-rounder and four bowlers and it was our combination in the 2020 U-19 World Cup. In this World Cup, it's going to be a bit different. There are a couple of all-rounders in the team. It all depends on how these players respond against stronger teams.

## Amite, Ariful score tons, Sabbir takes fifer

SPORTS REPORTER

The opening day of the fourth round of the National Cricket League (NCL) 2024-25 witnessed two centuries and a fifer across four different venues in the country yesterday.

At the Cox's Bazar Academy Ground, skipper Amite Hasan struck an unbeaten 109 off 228 balls – his eighth first-class ton – while opener Pinak Ghosh (99 off 218) missed out on a century by just one run as league leaders Sylhet Division scored 244-3 at stumps against Khulna Division.

All three Sylhet wickets were taken by Khulna off-spinner Mahedi Hasan, who also broke a 168-run third-wicket stand between Amite and Pinak when he removed the latter.

The fixture, however, had made headlines the previous day as it saw national team pacer Ebadot Hossain, playing for Sylhet, return to competitive cricket after a gap of 16 months following a long layoff due to an ACL injury.

At the other Cox's Bazar venue, pacer Enamul Hoque Ashiq and left-arm spinner Ashrafur Hasan took three wickets each to help Chattogram Division reduce Barishal Division to 236-7 at stumps. For Barishal, Tasamul Haque made a team-high 53 while Moin Khan remained not out on 43.

At the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi, despite Ariful Haque's ninth first-class ton – an unbeaten 103 off 161 balls – Rangpur Division were bundled out for 189 runs in their first innings after being asked to bat first by Rajshahi Division.

Rajshahi all-rounder Sabbir Hossain was the chief wrecker of the Rangpur innings, claiming 6-47 – his maiden first-class fifer. Rajshahi, in reply, reached 39-1 at stumps, still trailing by 150 runs.

Meanwhile, at the Sylhet Academy Ground, Shamsur Rahman made 86 off 209 balls to help Dhaka Metro finish the first day at 233-6 against Dhaka Division.

## Arsenal confident ahead of Chelsea trip

AFP, London

Mikel Arteta expects Arsenal to bounce back from their nightmare spell when they visit Chelsea for a crucial clash on Sunday.

Arteta's side are without a victory in their last three Premier League games and have won just three of their last eight in the competition.

Beaten 1-0 by Inter Milan in the Champions League on Wednesday, hot on the heels of last weekend's loss at Newcastle, the north Londoners are desperate to end their slump in this weekend's London derby at Stamford Bridge.

"Obviously when you don't win, it affects the mood and the energy. The positive is there is nobody inside or outside of this building who wants to win more than I do," he told reporters on Friday.

"Today I had a meeting with them about it and I can sense it straight away. They are paying attention, they are hungry, they want to work."

Chelsea are currently one spot above the fifth-placed Gunners, who trail leaders Liverpool by seven points.

Another defeat this weekend would be a huge blow to Arsenal's hopes of winning the title for the first time since 2004.