

Batters show rare consistency FOR TIGRESSES

SPORTS REPORTER

For the second successive game, Bangladesh women's team batters showcased a level of consistency that is usually missing from them and guided the team to a five-wicket win in the second WODI against Ireland to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series in Mirpur yesterday.

The Tigresses typically bank on their spinners to topple opponents in home conditions while their batting, which has become over-reliant on skipper Nigar Sultana Joty in the last few years, often ends up being the cause behind defeats.

But in the ongoing series against Ireland, the batters have been at the forefront for the hosts.

After scoring their highest ever WODI score of 252-4 in the series opener on November 27, Bangladesh batters once again created history yesterday by completing their highest successful run chase in the format in home soil, reaching 197-5 in 43.5 overs.

Opener Fargana Hoque struck her second half-century of the series, making the highest 50 off 89 balls after scoring 61 off 110 in the series opener.

Sharmin Akhter Supta, who has returned to the national side after 16 months, made 43 in the match on the



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

back of the 96 she had scored in the first WODI.

Skipper Joty also chipped in with a 39-ball 40 as the hosts clinched a series victory in this format after one year.

Joty was glad to see the batters scoring

runs in consecutive games, something she had demanded from them before the second WODI.

"Today [Saturday] in the morning, I told the cricketers that it's important to be consistent. I told them to score runs just

like they had done in the first game," the Bangladesh skipper told reporters after the match.

"Batting was our most visible problem, because of which we were losing many matches. So, it's a matter of great relief for the team to see the batters' scoring runs," she said, adding that their challenge is now to deliver a similar batting performance in the series-concluding contest, scheduled at the same venue on Monday.

Meanwhile, Ireland skipper Gaby Lewis credited Amy Hunter (68) and Orla Prendergast (37) for their 91-run third wicket stand which helped the visitors post 194-6, a stark improvement from the first match where they were bundled out for only 98.

"How we batted, we adapted well. We put together partnerships, which was great. Orla and Amy did brilliantly in the middle period for us, putting up that big partnership which gave us a competitive total, I thought.

Overall, the series so far has been a learning experience for the Irish team, said the skipper.

"This series is definitely a learning experience for us. Especially as we are such a young team. If you look at our spinners, they are quite young compared to other teams that come out here. There are lot of lessons to be learnt," she concluded.

Sabbir, Sofor impress early in NCL last round

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi Division opener Sabbir Hossain struck his second century in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL), but his side could only manage 226 runs in their first innings on the opening day of the final round match against champions Sylhet Division in Chattogram yesterday.

Sabbir scored 116 off 137 balls and shared a 109-run opening stand with Habibur Rahman (57). However, Sylhet pacer Sofor Ali, playing his first game this season, claimed his maiden five-wicket haul with figures of 5-69, while fellow pacer Tofael Ahmed took 4-40, triggering a batting collapse in Rajshahi's innings after they opted to bat first. Sylhet ended the day at 49 for two.

At the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura, fifties from Sohag Gazi (78 not out) and Fazle Mahmud (64) helped Barishal post 289 runs in their first innings against

Dhaka Division after being sent in to bat. Dhaka did not open their account, facing only one over before stumps.

At Rajshahi's Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium, Dhaka Metro finished day one at 161-3, taking a one run lead after bowling out Chattogram Division for 160 in the first innings.

Left-arm spinners Rakibul Hasan and Arif Ahmed took four wickets each, dismantling the Chattogram batting line-up, which lasted only 45.2 overs after opting to bat first.

Meanwhile, on a rain-affected opening day in Khulna, Khulna Division, sent in to bat first, reached 79-2 against Rangpur Division after only 25 overs were possible at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium. Khulna opener Anamul Haque Bijoy remained unbeaten on 50.



Jansen never thought he 'would get ten wickets'

AGENCIES

South Africa's chances of reaching the World Test Championship final received a boost when they completed a 233-run over Sri Lanka on the fourth day of the first Test at Kingsmead on Saturday.

Set a massive 516 runs to win, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 282.

Left-arm fast bowler Marco Jansen, the destroyer in Sri Lanka's record-low first innings of 42, took four for 73 to finish with match figures of 11 for 86. He was named player of the match.

"Never thought I would get ten wickets. It is a dream and that is what we work for. The second innings we felt the wicket was low and slow and a bit flatter. Getting wickets was going to be tough," said Marco Jansen.

The result lifted South Africa to second place in the WTC table, which is calculated on average points earned.

With their remaining three matches to be played at home – the second Test against Sri Lanka followed by two against Pakistan – South Africa are well-placed to qualify for the final at Lord's in London next June if they carry on winning.

"That's always been one of our goals as a team," said South African captain Temba Bavuma. "The conversation has always been there. We've not been loud about it but that conversation will probably become more alive now."

Referring to the Test championship, Bavuma said his team needed to continue to focus internally on what they needed to do, rather than be concerned about factors beyond their control.



The Proteas have now pipped Australia and sit second in the ICC World Test Championship points table. Sri Lanka on the other hand, have slipped from third to the fifth spot.

'No panic stations in Aus change rooms'

ICC

Ahead of the Pink-Ball Test, starting from December 6, Australia pacer Scott Boland shared that the hosts are raring to have a go in Adelaide.

Scott Boland believes despite the scoreline of the defeat in the first Test against India, Australia didn't do much wrong on the field.

The 35-year-old pacer, who missed out on making the cut for the playing XI in Perth, is now among the top contenders as a replacement for Josh Hazlewood, who was ruled out of the next Test owing to a 'low grade left side injury.'

Speaking ahead of the second Test against India in Adelaide, Boland shared that the Aussie dressing room atmosphere is still on the up.

"There's definitely not panic stations in our change rooms. There's obviously going to be some chats around individual performances and everyone wants to perform really well every game they play. But yeah, it's like, we've lost one game. It's not toys out of the cot, I don't think," Boland said on Saturday.



Fabio Silva

Las Palmas stun Barcelona

AFP, Barcelona

Las Palmas claimed a surprise 2-1 victory at La Liga leaders Barcelona on Saturday, spoiling the hosts' 125th anniversary celebrations.

Sandro Ramirez sent the visitors ahead early in the second half and although Raphinha hammered home an equaliser, Fabio Silva struck to claim three points and take his team up to 14th.

Barcelona still lead champions Real Madrid by four points but Los Blancos, who host Getafe on Sunday, have played two fewer games than Hansi Flick's team.

The Catalans have now gone three league games without a victory, after a run of 11 wins in 12 prior in the top flight.

Barcelona wore white shorts as part of their anniversary celebrations, as they used to back at the start of their history.

Slot wary despite City's shaky form

REUTERS, LONDON

Manchester City are second-favourites to win a Premier League game for the first time in more than 2,500 days, according to one British bookmaker, but Liverpool manager Arne Slot is reading nothing into the champions' meltdown ahead of Sunday's big clash at Anfield.

City's staggering loss of form resulted in five successive defeats in all competitions and while they ended that losing streak on Tuesday, a 3-3 home draw with Feyenoord in the Champions league, having been three up, only fuelled the sense that the wheels have fallen off Pep Guardiola's juggernaut.

Premier League leaders Liverpool will go 11 points clear of City if they beat them on Sunday and the way Slot's side are playing, few would bet against that happening.

Liverpool, however, suffered a setback on Friday as central defender Ibrahim Konate confirmed he has suffered an injury.

France international Konate, who has been superb at the heart of a Liverpool defence that has conceded only eight Premier League goals in 12 games, appeared to hurt his knee in a 2-0 victory over Real Madrid in the Champions League on Wednesday.

According to reports in British media, the 25-year-old could be sidelined for five to six weeks due to the injury.

A victory over European champions Real on Wednesday made it 17 wins from 19 matches in



"They are still a very good team and one of the reasons why Pep is the best in the world, he always comes up with solutions for his problems," the Dutchman told reporters on Thursday.

"One might be (midfielder) Rodri is out now but he will come up with a solution, hopefully it is after Sunday. I wouldn't be surprised if Pep comes up with another brilliant idea."

Even when City were in their pomp, visits to Anfield have always been difficult.

Nine times Guardiola has taken a City side to Liverpool and only once did he taste victory -- a 4-1 win behind closed doors in February 2021. Five times City were beaten with three other games ending in draws -- including last season.

Mbappe's problem is Real's problem, says Ancelotti

AFP, MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said Saturday superstar striker Kylian Mbappe's struggles this season are due to his team's overall lack of consistency.

The French forward missed a penalty as Spanish and European champions Real Madrid lost on Wednesday in the Champions League against Liverpool, their third defeat in five matches in the competition.

Mbappe, who joined in the summer at the end of his Paris Saint-Germain contract, was criticised for his performance and has netted just two goals in his last nine games for Madrid.

"Mbappe's problem is the problem that we all have. The idea is to try to give our best version, not just of him but myself, other players," Ancelotti told a news conference ahead of Sunday's La Liga clash against Getafe.

"It's not a problem about one player, the problem that we have is one of a team that has not been capable of being consistent. It's not a problem about one player.

"We have to try and improve that, do everything we can... among other things (Mbappe) is new here and adapting, among other things he's scored eight goals and has participated in attack, giving assists.

"Yes he can play better, but we can all do better and we will try to."



PHOTO: FACEBOOK