

# Tigers’ must-win clash after MIDDLE-OVERS LAPSE

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will feel a little disheartened following their five-wicket loss to the West Indies in the first ODI in St. Kitts, perhaps feeling they did not falter much. Sherfane Rutherford’s turnaround performance was a game-changer on Sunday, but on flat decks such as the one on offer at Warner Park, there are a few areas the Tigers must improve to bounce back in the second fixture of the three-match series at the same venue today.

Bangladesh felt that their score of 294 for six was enough. Runs came from opener Tanzid Tamim, who struck a run-a-ball 60. Mehedi Hasan Miraz came in at number four after two quick wickets and steadied the ship. The Bangladesh skipper tried to consolidate at the beginning after getting a life on one, and then another loose shot saw him almost get caught at point on 31. But in trying to push the tempo, he departed for a 101-ball 74.

In fact, the only bit of real acceleration came from the 74-ball 96-run sixth-wicket stand between Mahmudullah Riyad and Jaker Ali. In reply, the home side made a strong comeback despite a slow start,



proving once again that the tempo of the 50-over format is evolving.

Despite a tight and effective start with the ball, Bangladesh were lulled into a sense of comfort when the Windies’ required rate climbed to eight runs per over. There appeared to be more of an impetus with a conservative approach instead of going for wickets in the middle overs, and the plan backfired. Rutherford and Justin Greaves completely took the game away with a 57-ball 85-run stand at the death, the former hitting eight sixes

during his tremendous 80-ball 113.

“It is challenging in their own backyard, and our bowlers, despite bowling well, could learn a lot from these kinds of matches, like how to handle pressure... they will learn from these kinds of matches, and I feel there are lots of positives from this game for us,” Miraz said after the game.

The bowlers put in the hard lengths as the Windies needed to dig deep early, but the lack of wickets in the middle overs saw set batters take the game on.

There is a feeling Miraz’s 74 off 100 was not the tempo required, but he had held the innings together. The Windies learned early where he can be nullified. He had added the pull shot, but in ODIs, dot balls can hurt, and the Tigers played a lot more of them than the hosts.

“Our batsmen did well, and the bowlers bowled well initially, and we could have won the game if we had improved in certain areas,” Miraz opined.

For a batting-friendly pitch, Bangladesh’s key areas for improvement include pushing for more runs during the middle overs and showing more intent with the ball.

Posting 294 would have given some faith, but the spinners were taken to the cleaners, and the pace trio, who were tight at the beginning, had no answers later on. Despite the setback, Miraz said they can still come back to win the series.

“We still have a chance because we have just lost one game, and if we can win the next game, we can have the opportunity to win the series,” he opined, as the Tigers seek to square the series in a do-or-die affair.

# Tigresses end dreadful year with another awful performance

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The recently concluded three-match WT20I series against Ireland marked the end of a forgetful year for the Bangladesh women’s team, which witnessed an extraordinary downfall in their performance in both white-ball formats compared to the preceding year.

A lack of depth in the batting department, which remained overly dependent on skipper Nigar Sultana Joty, inconsistent bowling performances, poor fielding and some surprising team selections were all big factors in the Tigresses’ lacklustre results in 2024.

The Tigresses played 19 WT20Is this year and lost 16 of them, with their three wins coming against weaker teams like Thailand, Malaysia and Scotland.



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Although they qualified for the semifinal of this year’s Women’s T20 Asia Cup and also ended their 10-year wait for a victory in the T20 World Cup with a win over Scotland in October, they remained winless in home WT20Is throughout the year, losing all 11 matches, with the latest humiliation being the crushing 3-0 defeat against Ireland.

Bangladesh’s participation in WODIs was limited to only six matches in 2024, in which they lost three games to Australia before somewhat turning things around against Ireland late in the year when they beat them 3-0, with both series being played on home soil.

Just last year, Bangladesh beat teams like South Africa, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the shortest format, even clinched a 2-1 series win over Pakistan and drew a WT20I series 1-1 against South Africa in South Africa.

Moreover, the women’s team enjoyed a decent time in WODIs, winning four out of their 11 matches which included a 2-1 series win against Pakistan and a 1-1 drawn series against India. They also defeated South Africa for the first time in the format and they did so in away conditions.

However, their performance suddenly took a U-turn this year and the women’s wing head Habibul Bashar did not attempt to deny it.

“This year the batting didn’t click at all. Not only against teams like Australia and India, the batters failed in the Asia Cup and the World Cup as well. It was the main reason behind the poor results,” Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

“Batters consistently failed in the games. We are witnessing a big gap in the middle-order, especially in number five and six along with the opening position. If we can’t get an immediate solution, we may see similar dismal performances in the coming days as well.”

Meanwhile, Bashar added that the team’s catching has also been below par.

“I think those dropped catches did matter a lot and those missed chances really hurt us,” said Bashar, mentioning Ritu Moni dropping Laura Delany in the final over of Monday’s WT20I against Ireland, who later hit three successive fours to snatch the win away from the hosts in a thrilling contest.

“Ireland isn’t a top side. If we make such mistakes against them, it’s difficult to expect good results against top sides,” Bashar concluded.



## Daffodil win Ispahani-Prothom Alo Inter-Uni football

SPORTS REPORTER

Daffodil University beat American International University, Bangladesh (AIUB) 2-1 to win the Ispahani-Prothom Alo Inter-University Football Tournament at their home ground in Birulia, Savar yesterday.

Daffodil, who were eliminated from the group-stage in the last edition, were pegged back when AIUB skipper Foyez Ahmed found a clinical finish inside the box in the 13th minute. But Daffodil took no time to get back in the contest as Amit Hasan fired home long-range just two minutes later. Mahmudur Rahman Jewel took Daffodil ahead just moments before half-time and they held their own throughout the second half to send the home crowd into absolute elation.

Daffodil started the tournament with a 5-2 thrashing of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) and followed it up with an 8-0 demolition of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University to qualify for the group final, in which they edged International University of Business Agriculture and Technology 1-0 to cement a spot in the quarters. They beat Science and Technology University 1-0 to make the semifinals where they comprehensively defeated last edition’s runners-up Fareast University by a 3-0 margin.

# Cabrera excited about facing India in Asian Cup Qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Javier Cabrera expressed quiet optimism regarding Bangladesh’s fixtures in the third round of Asian Cup Qualifiers, which pitted his charges against India, Hong Kong and Singapore in Group C.

The Spaniard said he was excited to get India as an opponent while exclaiming that the makeup of the group has left each team with a chance to qualify for the final round.

The draw was held in Malaysia yesterday, splitting 24 teams into six groups, with only the group winners slated to join the 18 teams already qualified for the Asian Cup to be



BANGLADESH'S ASIAN CUP QUALIFYING FIXTURES	India vs Bangladesh	25 Mar, 2025
	Bangladesh vs Singapore	10 Jun, 2025
	Bangladesh vs Hong Kong	9 Oct, 2025
	Hong Kong vs Bangladesh	14 Oct, 2025
	Bangladesh vs India	18 Nov, 2025
	Singapore vs Bangladesh	31 Mar, 2026

held in Saudi Arabia in 2027.

Each team will get to play six games against three opponents – home and away – starting on March 25, 2025 and concluding on March 31, 2026.

“I think it’s a very exciting group, challenging also. Everyone in this group can lose points with everyone. The level between India and Hong Kong is very similar, even Singapore. I think we have enough level to compete with all of them,” the 40-year-old coach told reporters at the BFF House following the draw.

Despite Bangladesh being the lowest-ranked team (185) in the group, Cabrera feels that his team can snatch points in home matches from India (127), Hong Kong (156) and Singapore (161), taking inspiration from some fighting displays against higher-ranked sides in the World Cup

Qualifiers earlier this year.

“We know we are very strong at home. We have to be very very reliable in our home games. We did a great job in the home games in the World Cup Qualifiers Round 2 with opponents much stronger than the ones we are going to face. So definitely the first target would be to get many points from the home games,” Cabrera said.

The Bangladesh coach was especially excited about the prospect of facing India, against whom the Red and Greens have put on some spirited displays over the last decade despite the widening gap in ranking.

“It’s always a very special game for everyone in the country, especially for the players,” Cabrera said of the two matches scheduled against the Blue Tigers – away to India on March 25 next year and at home on November 18 next year.

“It’s a great opportunity for us to see where we are against India. The team has performed at a great level against India in the last years, even in the Asian Games last year we played against them,” Cabrera added.

Meanwhile, the Spaniard, whose contract with BFF runs out at the end of this year, was looking positively ahead towards an extension.

“It’s not still decided. We are in conversation. I’m very positive. Everyone knows I’m very happy to be the coach of this team. We have gone a long way already, developing this team and evolving. And I believe the next year can be a great opportunity for this cycle of three years to confirm the work that we have done,” the coach said.



## Proteas ascend as WTC table evolves

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said a lot of his teammates had a “proper taste of what Test cricket is about” after their 109-run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test in Gqeberha on Monday.

The victory, inspired by a five-wicket haul from spinner Keshav Maharaj, secured a 2-0 series win for the Proteas and propelled them to the top of the World Test Championship standings, with an average points tally of 63.33, overtaking Australia (60.71).

South Africa can make certain of qualifying for the final at Lord’s in England next June if they beat Pakistan in

a two-match series, starting December 26.

Australia had a brief stint at the top of the standings following a terrific performance against India (57.29) in Adelaide, leading to the losing side slipping to the third spot.

England’s back-to-back wins over hosts New Zealand (44.23), combined with slow over-rate penalties, saw the Black Caps drop from fifth to sixth in the WTC standings, severely hurting their chances of reaching the final. Sri Lanka (45.45) and England (45.24), meanwhile, occupy the fourth and fifth spot, respectively.

## Troubled Real await stiff test at Atalanta

Defending champions Real Madrid are up against it as they brace for a stiff test on a trip to reigning Europa League winners Atalanta on Tuesday. The record 15-time winners have lost three of their first five matches and find themselves 24th in the standings with six points, with places 25 to 36 eliminated at the end of the group phase. In-form Atalanta lead Serie A and have not been beaten yet in the Champions League, sitting fifth courtesy of three wins and two draws. Meanwhile, league leaders Liverpool travel to Girona, looking to extend their winning run.

If Carlo Ancelotti’s side lose this match, it would be the first time in European Cup/Champions League history that the winners of the previous edition have had a three-game losing streak the following season.

Real have been severely thinned down in defence as they will be without Ferland Mendy, Eduardo Camavinga and David Alaba.

Los Blancos, however, welcomed back Brazilian wing wizards Vinicius Jr and Rodrygo from injury. Both had missed the trip to Liverpool last game week.

Atalanta are fresh off a 2-1 win at home against Milan in the weekend and top Serie A, courtesy of a club-record run of nine straight wins in the league.

Meanwhile, Liverpool are the only team with a 100% record coming into Matchday six. They’ve won all five of their league-phase games and top the table with just one goal conceded overall.

Arne Slot’s winning run is already the longest by a manager from the start of a spell with an English club in the competition (5).

