

Bosschaart hails Feyenoord character after dumping out Milan

REUTERS

Feyenoord interim boss Pascal Bosschaart was full of praise for his team's character, after recent upheaval at the club, when they came back from conceding an early goal to draw at AC Milan on Tuesday and reach the Champions League last 16.

The Dutch club's preparations for last week's first leg were far from ideal when Feyenoord sacked Brian Priske two days before the playoff game, but Bosschaart led them to a 1-0 win at home and they finished off the job at the San Siro.

"This says about the team that they have character. I think that's what I'm most proud of," Bosschaart told Ziggo Sport. "You have to remember that they come from a very difficult phase, have received a lot of criticism, a change of coach, and then an unknown person comes in front of the group who occasionally throws in some empty slogans."

"That is a very difficult phase for them but I do think we are very clear, very transparent and very honest and this group responds very well to it, so I am proud of it."

Bosschaart's side could not have had a worse start in Milan, when former player Santiago Gimenez put the hosts ahead in the opening minute, but they fought back in the



second half, after Milan had Theo Hernandez sent off.

"If you concede a goal within minutes, the plan you wanted to execute will be different again," Bosschaart said. Everyone will now say that we took the upper hand after the red card but I also thought in the first half that we played quite well. Only after the red card it might be a little easier."

Feyenoord could return to the San Siro in the next round, where they will face either Inter Milan or Arsenal, but for now Bosschaart needs to let their achievement sink in.

"It's beautiful. We are one round further, so very special," Bosschaart said. It's fantastic but I have to say, it hasn't really landed with me yet."



Bayern cement last 16 spot after Davies' last-gasp equaliser

Bayern Munich secured their place in the last 16 of the Champions League with a 94th minute strike by Alphonso Davies on Tuesday to secure a 1-1 draw on the night and a 3-2 aggregate win. Celtic had led 1-0 since the 63rd minute, courtesy of former Bayern reserve player Nicolas Kuehn's strike, and the Scottish side had been on the verge of taking the German giants to extra time and pulling off their first-ever win in Germany but Davies stepped up as Bayern's saviour, tapping in after Celtic keeper Kasper Schmeichel had kept out Leon Goretzka's header. They will next face either fellow Bundesliga side Bayer Leverkusen or Atletico Madrid depending on Friday's draw.

Bayern Munich have reached the Champions League round of 16 in each of the last 17 seasons (since and including 2008-09) and in each of their last 21 appearances in the competition.

Alphonso Davies' equaliser (93:12) was Bayern Munich's latest equalising goal in a Champions League game (excluding extra time) on record (since 2003-04).

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE Sandiha bags six, Sheltech stun Mohammedan

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheltech Cricket Club stirred things up in the opening day's fixtures of the Dhaka Women's Premier League with a 53-run win over defending champions Mohammedan Sporting Club at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

However, Gulshan Youth Club's off-spinner Sandiha Islam Asha was the highlight of the day for her six-wicket haul against Khelaghar Samaj Kallyan Samity at ULAB Cricket Ground.

Although skipper Nigar Sultana Joty fell for naught, Sheltech posted 249 for nine, courtesy of opener Ishma Tanjim's 68 and No. 3 Sumaiya Akter's 83. The duo put on a 79-run stand to create the platform for a big score before Ishma departed. Sumaiya hit seven fours and two sixes during a 101-ball 83 before falling to Fariha Trishna, who finished with three for 54.

Fahima Khatun's run-a-ball 28 saw Sheltech reach a commanding score and while Sharmin Supta hit 73 for Mohammedan, the defending champions were bundled out for 196 as Fahima bagged three for 33.

At ULAB, Sandiha not only came to bowl as the sixth bowler and completed a six-for inside six overs, conceding just nine runs to help Gulshan Police to Khelaghar for 64 in 28.4 overs. In reply, Gulshan cruised to a seven-wicket win in 17 overs.

Abahani, meanwhile, won against Bangladesh Police at BKSP Ground 1 by four wickets, courtesy of a solid bowling effort. Apart from Rochona Tripty's 28 and Aporna Dey's 22, none of the others reached double figures as Bangladesh Police were bundled out for 98. Reya Akter Shikha bagged three for 13 while Rupa Roy and Fatema Jahan scalped two wickets each for Abahani.

Abahani were in a bit of trouble after early wickets but opener Farzana Haque Pinky guided them through the chase with an unbeaten 72-ball 55 to seize a four-wicket win.



Gymnast Menton chasing bold Olympic dream

Menton Tony Mro began his gymnastics journey in 2013 as a Grade-1 student at Bandarban's Quantum Cosmo School. Over the years, he has participated in numerous national age-group, youth, and senior-level gymnastics championships, earning nearly 50 medals, including gold medals in the pommel horse and all-around events at the 2019 Singapore Open. After clinching three golds and one silver at the 37th National Gymnastics Championships, which concluded on Tuesday at the NSC Gymnasium, he spoke to **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman** about his journey, as well as his personal and collective aspirations for Bangladesh gymnastics. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): You returned home empty-handed in your debut appearance in the 2021 Bangladesh Games, but you stunned all by winning two golds and one silver in your second appearance at the senior level. How did you transform yourself?

Menton Tony Mro (MTM): During the Covid outbreak, we received uninterrupted training at the Quantum Cosmo School before joining the national training camp in 2022 under Korean coach Cho Sung Dong until June 2024. I never gave up because I dream of becoming a world-class gymnast in the pommel horse event... To be honest, I got more than I expected from the championships.

DS: How much are gymnasts benefiting from the National Gymnastics Championships, held after a four-year gap?

MTM: If the national championships are held every year, the number of gymnasts and teams will increase, and the gymnasts will also be able to evaluate themselves in competitions.

DS: Quantum Cosmo School dominates all gymnastic competitions. What is the secret behind its success?

MTM: The gymnasts of Quantum School rise early every morning to meditate before starting a 4-kilometre run. Then, they do two hours of training before going to school to study. In the afternoon, there is another three-and-a-half-hour training session before doing

homework for school at night.

DS: What facilities does the school provide for the gymnasts?

MTM: Initially, there were almost no facilities in 2013 because every apparatus was either broken or old. There was not even a proper floor facility, but compared to 2013, the facilities at Quantum School are now more or less good.



to improve ourselves, but we can't reach the same level as we did under the Korean coach.

DS: How do you see the Bangladesh Gymnastics Federation's target to qualify directly for the 2028 Olympic Games, especially without a foreign coach?

MTM: We still believe in qualifying directly for the 2028 Olympic Games. We are not giving up our hopes despite the departure of the Korean coach. We don't want to dwell on what we have lost; rather, we want to progress with whatever we have in our hands.

DS: What is your personal target?

MTM: As a Quantum gymnast, I am still motivated by the dream of winning an Olympic gold medal. We are improving ourselves gradually. However, I want to be the first Bangladeshi gymnast to qualify directly for the Olympic Games on merit. I am confident that one day, I will enter the Olympics by proving my performance.

DS: The 2028 Olympics are still far away. Do you think the appointment of a foreign coach and proper facilities can help Bangladeshi gymnasts qualify?

MTM: Firstly, an athlete needs mental and physical stability, and secondly, motivation. Without proper facilities and a good coach, you can't achieve the target. Nevertheless, the appointment of a foreign coach and improved facilities will help gymnasts realise their dream.

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