

Bangladesh fail to earn full points despite Hamza’s impressive debut

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh wasted a host of early chances in a goalless draw against India in their first AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers fixture in Shillong on a historic night which saw Leicester City midfielder Hamza Choudhury make his debut for the men in red and green.

Hamza, who joined the team only six days ago, made his mark with a dominant display in defensive midfield, nullifying much of India's attacking threats, but it was the glaring missed chances missed that would disappoint the visitors.

Javier Cabrera, who opted for a 4-2-3-1 formation with Jamal Bhuiyan on bench, fielded Hamza and Mohammad Hridoy as double pivot in front of four defenders -- Saad Uddin, Tapu Barman, Tariq Kazi and Shakil Ahad Topu.

In front of Hamza and Hridoy were Shahriar Emon, Sheikh Morsalin and Mojibur Rahman Jonny. Rakib Hossain played as a lone striker while Mitul Marma stood between the sticks.

Bangladesh's high-pressing football helped keep control of the game to the visitors, however, glaring misses by Jonny,



Emon and Hridoy meant the men in red and green could not reap the rewards.

India goalkeeper Vishal Kaith made a terrible start as he gifted two scoring opportunities to Bangladesh -- first in the opening minute when his shot went straight to Jonny, who failed to hit the target from an acute angle.

Ten minutes later, Kaith's goal-kick came straight off the back of Shakil Ahad Topu and dropped inside the box, but Hridoy's weak attempt was cleared off the line by Subhashish Bose.

Emon then failed to keep a free header

on target from a superb cross by Sheikh Morsalin seven minutes later before Topu Barman, who was wearing the captain's armband, had to limp off following an injury after 21 minutes, with Rahmat Mia replacing him as the coach switched the four-man backline.

Bangladesh had another excellent opportunity in the 41st minute when Jony ran on to a through-ball inside the box but his heavy first touch allowed Kaith to clear the danger.

India's only real effort of the first half came in the 30th minute when Liston

Colaco's cross was headed towards goal by Udanta Singh, cleared in front of goal by Rahmat Miah. Farukh Chowdhury's shot on the rebound was easily grasped by Mitul.

Cabrera made a double substitution on the hour-mark, with Faysal Ahmed Fahim and Chandon Roy replacing Shahriar Emon and Mojibur Rahman Jony. Later, Sohel Rana and Mohammad Sohel Rana came in for Sheikh Morsalin and Hridoy but India were the dominant force in the second half as Bangladesh players started to tire.

Hamza played the full 90 minutes and impressed with his authoritative presence in the middle of the park, helping the visitors scrape through some nervy moments.

Fahim, against the run of play, unleashed a powerful shot which was well kept out by Kaith in the 88th minute as Bangladesh had to be content with a point away from home in the first match of the Group C fixture.

Cabrera's men will host Singapore, who too were held to a goalless draw at home by Hong Kong, in their second match of the campaign in Dhaka on June 10.

Doctors optimistic about Tamim’s return to cricket

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Tamim Iqbal was transferred to Evercare Hospital in Dhaka yesterday, a day after surviving a major heart attack during a Dhaka Premier League match at the BKSP in Savar.

Doctors at KPJ Specialised Hospital in Savar, where Tamim had undergone stenting surgery, confirmed the former Bangladesh captain had passed the most critical phase and shown significant improvement over the last 36 hours. While they initially advised him to remain hospitalised for at least a day, Tamim and his family opted to shift to the capital.

According to hospital officials, Tamim may still seek further medical care abroad.

"Tamim's family would later decide whether to take him abroad or continue treatment in Dhaka," said Dr Rajib Hasan, media director at KPJ Specialised Hospital.

"As he is doing well, it will be wise not to move him much," he suggested.

With Tamim recovering, the question arises: will he return to the field? Although he retired from international cricket earlier this year, the 36-year-old remains active in domestic competitions, recently leading Fortune Barishal to the Bangladesh Premier League title and



captaining Mohammedan SC in the ongoing DPL.

Dr Rajib, who has been monitoring Tamim's condition since his admission, believes a return to cricket is possible but contingent on medical clearance.

"Usually, everyone returns to normal activities after such surgery... But if he wants to return to sporting activities, he must take consultation from a medical board after three months. If everything goes accordingly, then there is no reason for him not making a return to the field.

"If there is damage to his heart, then there can be a concern regarding his comeback. But several tests have shown he has no heart damage," he further informed.

Dr Rajib also noted that Tamim's fitness played a key role in his resilience.

"He is very strong. It's an advantage of being a sportsperson. If the same happened to me, my bones could be broken into pieces," he explained.

Tamim earlier in the day shared his gratitude in an emotional social media post, reflecting on the fragility of life and the support he received.

"I was fortunate to have some incredible people around me during this crisis. Because of their prudence and endless efforts, I have overcome this danger and come back," he wrote.

"Some incidents remind us of reality, remind us of how short life really is. In this brief life, if nothing else, we should all stand by each other during crises -- that is my request to you all," he added.

For now, Tamim's health remains the priority, with his future in cricket resting in the hands of time and medical assessments.

BCB extends Simmons’ contract till 2027

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced that it has retained the services of former West Indies batter Phil Simmons as their head coach until the ICC ODI World Cup in October-November 2027.

Simmons, who had been under contract with the BCB up to the end of the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, had his initial stint with the Bangladesh team between October 2024 and February 2025.

"I am delighted to be given the opportunity to work with Bangladesh cricket on a long-term basis. The talent within this team is undeniable, and I believe we have the potential to achieve great things together," Simmons was quoted in a press release.

"Having worked with some exceptional players already, I can see the immense promise in this squad. Their skill and passion for the game inspire me daily.

"My time with the Bangladesh team over the past few months has been incredibly rewarding. The energy, commitment, and ability within this group have been nothing short of impressive. I'm excited to continue helping these players reach their full potential," he added.

Other than the Champions Trophy where Bangladesh went winless, Simmons served as Bangladesh's head coach in series against South Africa, Afghanistan, the West Indies in his first stint with his most notable triumph being winning an away Test against the Caribbean side and winning the T20I series 3-0 against the same opponents.



Scantily run DPL still churning out performances

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Liton Das raged with a 62-ball 83 for Gulshan Cricket Club but his knock was trumped by Gazi Group Cricketers' skipper Anamul Haque Bijoy who hit a 144 off 142 balls to help Gazi to a four-wicket win at BKSP as the Dhaka Premier League (DPL) goes into a break before Eid festivities.

This year's DPL has been competitive so far with Gazi and Mohammedan Sporting Club just one win behind league toppers Abahani while Prime Bank Cricket Club and Agrani Bank Cricket Club having five wins each, positioning themselves at fourth and fifth respectively.

There have also been some high scores this season with Prime Bank breaching the 400-run mark and the top five run-getters striking at more than 90.

Yet, the current DPL is being played under a cloud of concerns regarding reduced salaries. Players have had to unwillingly remain content with the developments as clubs talked about economic downturn. Some national team players have cut adjusted deals, reducing the number of games they feature in to match the reduced budget.

"Payment is a big issue since in Bangladesh this [DPL] is the biggest



tournament," Dhanmondi Sports Club's Nurul Hasan Sohan, fifth amongst the highest run-getters, told The Daily Star.

"Salaries were cut by around 50-60 percent. Obviously, it doesn't affect the players in terms of performance but it's a big issue for the players considering everything. Then again, from another point of view, the more mentally fresh you are, without having to think about other things, the better

your performances will get," he added.

After the break, the league will commence in April when heat will also become another worrying factor.

In the last few years, playing under the April heat has been particularly difficult for the players. With some players nursing injuries, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is also trying to manage the workload of national team players and in this year's reduced budget DPL, players of higher categories are likely to seek breaks enabled by workload management.

"Premier League's second phase will be more challenging due to heat. We are going to provide CCDM a guideline on managing through extreme heat. If the heat index is in the red zone then playing is difficult. But right now, although heat is there, the humidity is not prominent," BCB chief physician Dr. Debashish Chowdhury said on DPL's heat issue.

Yet performances are being carved out, as youngster Samiun Basir Ratul, making his DPL debut, picked up a fiver for 27 runs in Legends of Rupganj's 172-run win over Rupganj Tigers in Mirpur yesterday. Meanwhile, Brothers Union carved out a 29-run win over Partex Sporting Club at BKSP.

Tuchel makes it two out of two

AFP, London

England extended Thomas Tuchel's 100 percent start to his reign as Reece James' first international goal inspired a 3-0 win against Latvia in Monday's World Cup qualifier.

Tuchel's side once again laboured to break down defensive opposition for long periods at Wembley.

But three days after struggling to beat Albania 2-0 in Tuchel's first game in charge, England eventually mustered enough composure and quality to kill off 140th-ranked Latvia.

James broke the deadlock with a superb free-kick late in the first half as the Chelsea right-back made an impressive first England start since September 2022.

It took James' moment of magic to break the deadlock in the 38th minute as he curled a sublime free-kick over the Latvia wall and into the top corner from 25 yards.

James' surprisingly subdued celebration was a contrast to the relieved Tuchel's fist-pumping delight on the touchline.

Hamstring injuries had sidelined James for most of last season, as



well as several months in the current campaign.

But James was a key figure when Tuchel's Chelsea won the 2021 Champions League and the 25-year-old could emerge as a significant weapon if he can stay fit.

England captain Harry Kane put the result beyond doubt in the second half with his 71st international goal, before Eberechi Eze came off the bench to bag his maiden goal for the

Three Lions.

England were never completely convincing at the back, but goalkeeper Jordan Pickford made his presence felt.

The paucity of their opponents in a weak Group K means England are already well on the way to the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Tuchel is the first England boss to win his first two competitive matches since Fabio Capello.

The German now has 75 days to prepare for England's next qualifier in Andorra on June 7.

Tuchel has yet to deliver on his desire to produce a team that plays with more courage than the "afraid" group that reached the Euro 2024 final under his predecessor Gareth Southgate.

But Tuchel has already shown he isn't concerned about ruffling the feathers of his superstars.

He kept the players guessing over his line-up until just a few hours before kick-off, with England's starting line-up lacking a single player from Manchester United, Manchester City or Liverpool for the first time since 1992.



Jackson Irvine celebrates with teammates after he curled home in the 16th minute to give Australia the lead in their 2026 World Cup qualifier against China in Hangzhou on Tuesday. Another first-half goal from Nishan Velupillay ensured Australia a step closer to automatic World Cup qualification with a comfortable 2-0 victory in the contest. The away win, hot on the heels of their 5-1 win over Indonesia last week, leaves the Socceroos second in Group C on 13 points with two to play, three points ahead of Saudi Arabia with a much better goal difference.

PHOTO: AFP