



‘THE EAGLE’ IN BANGLADESH’S GOAL

To hopeful forwards chasing through balls with tunnel vision for goal, beware of ‘The Eagle’, Rupna Chakma. Perched in the middle of the Bangladesh goal, Rupna is always ready to deny the dreams of opponents’ glory before they even take flight with a bird’s eye view as precise as that of the sharp-eyed creature.



Not taking foot off the pedal as celebrations reserved

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite reducing the match against Turkmenistan to a dead rubber following a historic Asian Cup berth, Bangladesh are not taking their foot off the gas ahead of the last Group fixture of the qualifying campaign in Yangon today.

Peter Butler’s charges have defied heavy odds in the first two matches by thrashing much higher-ranked Bahrain 7-0 before getting the better of pre-tournament favourites Myanmar – the top-ranked side of the group at 55 – at their own backyard.

With qualification already in the bag, Bangladesh will now play Turkmenistan, the lowest-ranked side (141) in Group C, in the last group fixture at 6:30pm (Bangladesh time) at the Thuwunna Stadium.

Ritu Porna Chakma, who drove the team to the victory against Myanmar with two



wonder strikers, said the Asian Cup qualification was “a result of the hard work of the whole team”, and revealed that the team is staying focused till the end and reserving their plans of celebration.

“We didn’t celebrate at all (after learning about the qualification). We have one match left, and we have planned to celebrate after that match,” Ritu Porna said in a video message shared by the Bangladesh Football Federation.

Butler, who quietly orchestrated this historic achievement, is willing to show Turkmenistan the respect he believes they deserve.

“We have to remain professional to the end and stay focused. We have Turkmenistan and we shall show them the respect they deserve,” Butler told The Daily Star in a text exchange on Thursday.

Bangladesh women’s team (currently ranked 128th)

have never played against Turkmenistan, but they can be expected to show the same kind of composure and flair that they have mesmerised everyone with in the first two matches.

Goalkeeping coach Masud Ahmed Uzzal, meanwhile, informed that there were slight injury concerns for a few players and the head coach gave those players a chance to recover, while taking the rest through a practice session.

Young captain Afeida Khandaker said the team was in a jovial mood as they are eyeing much bigger prizes now, urging fans to continue supporting them

“We wish everyone continues supporting us the way they have done so far, so that we can do better in future. I want to see the team at the World Cup. Since now we have this opportunity, we will definitely try to make it count,” Afeida said.

Serve, set, match!

REUTERS, London

Talk about a man in a hurry – 10th seed Ben Shelton required just 55 seconds to finish off Australian Rinky Hijikata and reach the Wimbledon third round on Friday as he completed a 6-2 7-5 6-4 victory

The American was left frustrated the previous evening when the contest on Court Two was suspended because of fading light with Shelton about to serve for the match.

That did not sit well with the 22-year-old who was heard to shout “just one more game” to the umpire.

After a night to sleep on it, Shelton made no mistake when play resumed, serving three aces and an unreturned second serve to take his place in the last 32, with the crowd chanting, “One more game”.

The big-serving Shelton has enjoyed a consistent run in the Grand Slams, now having reached at least the third round in his last eight appearances, including a semi-final run in Australia at the beginning of the year.

Shelton will play Hungarian lucky loser Marton Fucsovics in the next round when victory would see him match his best result at Wimbledon having reached the last 16 this time last year.



No Shanto for SL T20Is

SPORTS REPORTER

Former skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto was left out as Bangladesh announced a 16-member squad on Friday for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, starting on July 10.

Since he opted out of T20I captaincy, Bangladesh played two series in the UAE and Pakistan. The left-hander, struggling with his form in the format, was drafted in the squad for both series, but was picked for only one game (against UAE) while he was sidelined throughout the Pakistan series.

Opener Naim Sheikh was rewarded with a spot for his domestic form, and seamer Mohammad Saifuddin also made the cut as the Tigers also left out pacers Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud, and Khaled Ahmed.

Pacers Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman returned, and left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed was preferred instead of Tanvir Islam, who was part of the squad that played against Pakistan in May.

The second T20I is scheduled for July 13 in Kandy, and the final match will be on July 16 in Colombo.

SQUAD

Liton Das (Captain), Tanzid Tamim, Parvez Emon, Naim Sheikh, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Nasum Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mohammad Saifuddin.

Battered Tigers seek redemption

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh go into the second ODI against Sri Lanka on Saturday hoping to haul themselves up after suffering a calamitous batting collapse in the first ODI, knowing that only a win would keep the three-match series alive.

In the series opener, Bangladesh lost eight wickets in the space of 27 deliveries to see the match slip completely out of their hands, falling to a 77-run loss.

If Bangladesh are to stage a quick turnaround, the players must regain their confidence and come up with a definitive plan of action against Lankan spin.

Advice on what the Bangladesh management need to do to help their players snap out of the previous defeat from an unlikely source – the head coach of the opposition side Sanath Jayasuriya.

“It [batting collapse] can happen to any team. As long as the management, the captain gives them the confidence, that’s the key to keep them from feeling under pressure,” Lankan legend in the pre-match press conference yesterday.

“Obviously they will feel down and it’s not easy to come out of it. But as long as you trust them, they will come out,” Jayasuriya added.

Bangladesh had made a promising start to their 245-run chase in the first ODI in Colombo, mostly owing to the 61-ball 62 from opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim.

Tanzid and Najmul Hossain Shanto had put together an impressive 71-run second wicket stand which ended abruptly when the latter got run out on 23 and soon after Tanzid was brilliantly caught at mid-off,



Bangladesh trail the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka 1-0 after losing the first ODI by 77 runs. Bangladesh have only once won a bilateral ODI series after losing the first game. It was back in 2015 when the Tigers bounced back in the final two matches to beat South Africa 2-1 at home.

Bangladesh have now lost 11 ODIs at a stretch at the R Premadasa Stadium, the venue for the first two ODIs.

after which panic consumed the side.

Judging by how Tanzid analysed his own performance in the first ODI, it seems the opener is yet to recover from the disappointment.

“I don’t think I played well because I couldn’t do what the side needed from me. If I could do what was needed, I would say I played well.”

Jayasuriya, meanwhile, spoke about how his players had faith in their abilities to stage a comeback even after Bangladesh had reached 96-1 after 16 overs.

“We wanted to keep things as tight as possible and it happened through that breakthrough from Milan [Rathnayake] getting the run out before Janith [Liyanage] took the catch to change the game. We kept putting pressure with our three spinners,” Jayasuriya said.

To add to the visitors challenges, they will be without head coach Phil Simmons in the second ODI who left for a scheduled doctor’s appointment in the UK.

Liton Das, Towhid Hridoy and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, all three right-handed middle-order batters failed to keep Wanindu Hasaranga and Kamindu Mendis in check. But as per Tanzid, the team has analysed a way past the Lankan spin threat.

“We had a long discussion and coach gave us some information. Those who get set in these kinds of wickets, need to finish the game... The left-handed batters should play more deliveries against Hasaranga since he isn’t as effective against left-handers as he is against right-handers. We hope to use this information in the next game.”

European giants set for high-stakes CWC showdowns

AGENCIES

FIFA Club World Cup quarterfinal fixtures on Saturday are set to witness heavyweight clashes as four of Europe’s elite sides go head-to-head in the US. Reigning Champions League winners PSG face German champions Bayern Munich in Charlotte, while Real Madrid meet Borussia Dortmund in New Jersey.

PSG arrive in red-hot form, having dispatched Lionel Messi’s Inter Miami 4-0 in the last 16. While their group-stage slip-up against Botafogo raised questions, the French champions quickly regained momentum.

This will be PSG’s 63rd match in all competitions going back to the start of the Ligue 1 season last August, and Luis Enrique is hoping for one last push from his exhausted players before they can enjoy a short summer break.

Bayern, meanwhile, reached this stage by overcoming Flamengo 4-2, thanks to a Harry Kane brace. The English striker continued his prolific season, scoring 41 goals in 50 appearances since last August. Vincent Kompany’s team have



netted 16 across four matches and may now feel they have a point to prove after falling short in the Champions League – Bayern lost in the last eight in Europe to an Inter

Milan team eventually humiliated 5-0 by PSG in final.

PSG eventually conquered Europe, but Bayern defeated the French side 1-0 in the league phase

of the Champions League back in November.

Real’s clash with Dortmund promises a compelling subplot of its own. Under new coach Xabi Alonso, Los Blancos squeezed past Juventus 1-0 thanks to a Gonzalo Garcia header from a pinpoint Trent Alexander-Arnold cross. The England international, signed from Liverpool, has adapted quickly in a right wing-back role and adds a new dimension to Madrid’s attack.

Dortmund, coached by Niko Kovac, reached this stage with a hard-fought 2-1 win over Monterrey but will miss Jobe Bellingham due to suspension. Their squad has evolved since losing 5-2 to Real in this season’s Champions League group stage after a loss in the 2024 final of the competition. French superstar Kylian Mbappe, returning from illness, could feature prominently against the Bundesliga side and may face his former club PSG in a potential semifinal.

With four European titans vying for global glory, Saturday’s quarterfinals are set to deliver drama, intensity, and high-stakes football.



Harry Brook and Jamie Smith turned things around for hosts England on Day 3 of their second Test against India at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Friday. Both Brook (140*) and Smith (157*) smashed brisk tons and stitched together a mammoth 271-run unbroken sixth-wicket stand – their highest for the wicket against India – to help the hosts recover from five for 84 to reach 355 for five at Tea in response to India’s first innings collection of 587 runs.

PHOTO: REUTERS