

Nine scored, but Butler urges 'more clinical' Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler lamented his team's finishing despite a resounding 9-1 victory over Sri Lanka in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday.

Mosammat Sagarika, one of nine senior national team members included in the squad, led the way with a hattrick. Munki Akter scored twice, while Shikha Jahan, Rupa Akter, Sapna Rani, and Shanti Mardi added one each. Layansika Jasotharan netted a late consolation goal for Sri Lanka.

"I thought we could have been more



a few different players," Butler said. "I thought Shanti [Mardi] came on and was outstanding. I thought we looked a little bit laboured, but that's understandable coming back from a long trip. Really not having a lot of time to prepare, but that's no excuse. There's no excuse for sloppiness."

The match was played on a rain-soaked pitch, and Butler acknowledged the challenging conditions, relieved as none of his players got injured. Bangladesh faced similar conditions in the Asian Cup qualifiers in Myanmar due to torrential rain but the pitches there fared better.

"The pitch didn't help. The pitch was very heavy. Obviously nobody's fault. But yeah, to score nine goals and still be disappointed to concede the solitary goal at the end, which was a little bit sloppy on our behalf. But just relieved we've come through unscathed with no injuries," he added.

Bangladesh will face Nepal, who beat Bhutan 6-1 in the day's other match, in their second match tomorrow at the same venue.

Italy seal historic T20WC berth

STAR SPORTS DESK

Italy, known for football and other European sports, have scripted a massive piece of history in the country's sporting folklore by sealing a historic place in next year's T20 World Cup.

The Azzurri will be one of the 20 teams to fight with the willow and leather in India and Sri Lanka, come February-March next year.

They achieved this incredible feat by finishing runners up in European regional qualifiers, despite a nine-wicket defeat to eventual winners of the qualifiers, Netherlands, in the last game on Friday.



After being restricted for 134/7, Italy needed to hold Netherlands for at least 15 overs in order to qualify.

Michael Levitt and Max O'Dowd got the hosts off to a flier in the Powerplay that took the momentum away from Italy early on but the visitors made sure to stretch the match till the 17th over to help themselves book a berth to India and Sri Lanka next year.

Netherlands, a regular feature in both ODI World Cup and T20I World Cup, sealed the top spot while Jersey missed out narrowly on net run-rate despite knocking out Scotland in a nail-biter earlier in the day.

Middle-order timidity laid bare

SPORTS REPORTER

Out of the 12 players who rolled their arm over in the first T20I between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Pallekele on Thursday, the only one who finished with an economy rate of below six runs per over was the hosts' Dasun Shanaka – a batting all-rounder who only occasionally bowls in T20Is.

Shanaka, with his military medium pace bowling, conceded only 22 in four overs and also nicked off Tawhid Hridoy.

In a career spanning 103 T20Is, Shanaka has bowled in only 53 matches, and the last time before Thursday he had bowled four overs in a T20I was more than five years ago, against India in January 2020.

The second-best economy rate among the Sri Lankan bowlers belonged to leg spinner Jeffrey Vandersay, who conceded 25 runs in his four overs, and also took the wicket of Bangladesh captain Litton Das.

This was an excellent performance for Vandersay, who was making his comeback to Sri Lanka's T20I side after three-and-a-half years.

Shanaka and Vandersay operated through the middle phase, bowling eight of the 10 overs between overs 7-16, in which Bangladesh made just 62 runs for the loss of three wickets.

Together, they conceded a mere 47 runs off 48 balls and also claimed a couple of wickets, and it



was their bowling that canceled out Bangladesh's promising start.

The Tigers had reached 54-1 after the Powerplay, and with Pravez Hossain Emon, who was going great guns, still unbeaten, they were in an ideal position to build towards a big total.

Sri Lanka were also without ace pacer Matheesha Pathirana in the match, leaving their bowling for the middle phase a little light.

But rather than taking calculated risks to further unsettle the Lankans, the Bangladesh batters let the game drift along, allowing a part-timer like Shanaka and a returning Vandersay to complete their quotas without any pressure.

This languid approach from Litton (6 off 11), Hridoy (10 off 13), Mohammad Naim (32 not out off 29), and Mehidy Hasan Miraz (29 off 23) was even more surprising, considering Bangladesh had announced a batting heavy playing XI.

A stroke-maker like Shamim Hossain could play only five deliveries, and it

two of which he deposited for sixes, while Rishad Hossain and Mohammad Saifuddin did not get to bat.

In contrast to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka did not allow the opposition's part-time option to bowl any cheap overs.

Chasing 155, the hosts had virtually killed off the match in the Powerplay, which yielded a record 83 runs. The hosts' batters then batted conservatively and strolled to the target in 19 overs with seven wickets in hand.

Kusal Perera batted during that period of calm and made 24 off 25. But even he pulled out a reverse sweep and hit Shamim for a six to take 11 of his over.

After that, captain Litton did not bring Shamim back into the attack, even though spinners Miraz and Rishad fared better than the pacers. By attacking the part-time option at the right time, Perera displayed match awareness, which the Bangladeshi middle-order batters were too timid to do.

Subrota claims GM Zia Memorial crown

SPORTS REPORTER

FIDE Master Subrota Biswas became champion in GM Zia Memorial 2025, beating IM Minhaz Uddin Ahmed in the ninth and final round at Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall Room on Friday.

Subrota finished with an impressive eight points from nine matches in the event -- organised to honour the memory of the late Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman.

FM Tahsin Taswar Zia, son of GM Zia, finished second with 7.5 points after tie-breaking with IM Kushagra Mohan, who also secured 7.5 points.

Three players -- Indian IM Subhayan Kundu, IM Manon Reja Neer, and Anata Chowdhury -- earned equal 6.5 points each, and the tie-breaker saw Kundu, Neer and Anata finish 4th, 5th and 6th, respectively.

U-18 ASIA CUP HOCKEY

Bangladesh boys suffer semifinal defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite leading till the 50th minute, Bangladesh suffered a 6-4 defeat to Japan in the first semifinal of Men's U-18 Asia Cup hockey in China on Friday.

Yuma Fujiwara slotted a hat-trick to help Japan stage a fightback against Bangladesh, who had led the match by 4-3 goals till the 50th minute.

Bangladesh took a 2-0 lead within 12 minutes, but Japan fought back by end of second quarter.

Bangladesh, who were runners-up in the last edition held in Dhaka in 2016, restored their lead on the stroke of the half-time but it was again Fujiwara, who levelled the margin with a field goal in the first minute of the fourth quarter.

Moududur Rahman Shuvo's charges reacted quickly to restore the lead three minutes later but Japan scored three more goals in the final quarter. Bangladesh will play the third place deciding match against Malaysia, who lost the second semifinal against Pakistan 4-3 in a tiebreaker.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh women's team were held to a 2-2 draw by Kazakhstan in a Super 4 match later in the day. The two teams will meet again tomorrow in the third-place deciding match.



India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah celebrates dismissing England skipper Ben Stokes on Day 2 of their third Test at Lord's on Friday. Bumrah finished with 5-74 as England were dismissed for 387 in their first innings. India were 145 for three at stumps. Photo: Reuters

PHOTO: REUTERS

Wimbledon awaits A NEW QUEEN

AGENCIES

Wimbledon is guaranteed to crown a new women's singles champion on Saturday, as Amanda Anisimova and Iga Swiatek prepare for their first-ever showdown in the tournament's final.

For both players, this match is a defining chapter -- for Anisimova, a moment of redemption; for Swiatek, a statement on versatility and perseverance.

Seeded 13th, Anisimova arrives at the final on the back of a remarkable resurgence. Just a year ago, she exited in the last round of qualifying and had plunged outside the Top 400 following a mental health break midway through 2023. The American's journey back has been nothing short of extraordinary. She returned to form with a title win in Doha and reached the Queen's Club final last month. Now, having knocked out World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka in a three-set thriller (6-4, 4-6, 6-4) in the semifinal, the 23-year-old finds herself on the verge of a maiden Grand Slam title.

"It goes to show that it is possible," Anisimova said after the win. "Just me being able to prove that you can get back to the top if you prioritise yourself -- that's been incredibly special."

Anisimova's grass-court growth has



been evident throughout the fortnight. Against Sabalenka, she won 24 of 40 second-serve points and saved 11 of 14 break points. Her fearless shot-making and backhand power have seen her win 28 straight matches in 2025 when taking the first set -- a stat that could prove vital against her next opponent.

Swiatek, meanwhile, continues to break new ground. The 24-year-old Polish star reached her sixth Grand Slam final with a commanding 6-2, 6-0 win over Belinda Bencic in just 71 minutes. A four-time French Open winner and 2022 US Open champion, this marks Swiatek's first Wimbledon final -- and her first title match on grass.

"Honestly, I never even dreamed that it's going to be possible for me to play in the final," Swiatek admitted. "But tennis keeps surprising."

She has won all five of her previous Grand Slam finals and boasts the best first serve point win percentage (78%) among players past the first round at this year's event. Under coach Wim Fissette, Swiatek has adopted a more aggressive serve-and-strike approach suited to grass, and it's paying off.

Their upcoming duel will be the third Wimbledon final in the Open Era between two players who've never previously met in WTA competition. However, they do share junior-level history -- with Swiatek having defeated Anisimova in straight sets during the Junior Fed Cup final.

As the Centre Court curtain rises on Saturday, one certainty remains: a new name will be etched into Wimbledon history.



Sinner sets up final against Alcaraz

Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates after victory over Serbia's Novak Djokovic (6-3, 6-3, 6-4) during their men's singles semifinal of the Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on Friday. The world's No. 1 player will face two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz of Spain in the final.

PHOTO: REUTERS