



Bangladesh T20I skipper Litton Das (R) managed to end his lean patch in white-ball cricket, scoring his first fifty in 14 T20I innings during the Tigers' second game against hosts Sri Lanka at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium on Sunday. Having survived one dropped catch and a stumping opportunity, Litton smashed a 50-ball 76 and also stitched together a 69-run third-wicket stand with Tawhid Hridoy before another crucial 77-run fifth-wicket stand with Shamim Hossain that eventually helped Bangladesh post a challenging 177 for seven in 20 overs. Shamim, meanwhile, justified his role as a finisher in the eleven, hitting a 27-ball 48 that saw the Tigers finish on a strong note after being asked to bat first.

PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: REUTERS

India pacer Mohammed Siraj celebrates with teammates after removing England opener Ben Duckett on day four of the third Test at Lord's yesterday. Siraj's two for 31 set the stage, and pace spearhead Jaspit Bumrah cleaned up the tail, finishing with two for 38, to bundle England out for 192 in their second innings, setting India a 193-run target. However, for India, it was off-spinner Washington Sundar who ended with the best bowling figures, scalping four for 22 runs.

## 'Hope to finish with 350 Test wickets'

Despite being in the international scene for nearly seven years, off-spinner Nayem Hasan hasn't played much for Bangladesh, being considered mostly as a backup option to the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, Taijul Islam and Mehidy Hasan Miraz. For the first time in his career, the 25-year-old featured in back-to-back away Tests recently in Sri Lanka. Nayem recently talked to *The Daily Star's* Samsul Arefin Khan about the Sri Lanka tour, his preparation and goals. The excerpts are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** In Sri Lanka, you finally got to bowl in an away Test for Bangladesh. In your first innings with the ball, you claimed a fifer, and finished the series with nine wickets. Are you satisfied with your performance in Sri Lanka?

**Nayem Hasan (NH):** Alhamdulillah, I'm happy with my performance. If we could have won any matches, I would have felt happier. The most satisfying thing for me is to contribute to a winning cause.

**DS:** Did bowling in an away Test for the first time feel any different?

**NH:** Everyone was saying that it was my first match [abroad]. But I never thought of that because I had toured with the 'A' team, the Under-19 team and the Emerging team before. It's true that it feels different when you play after a long time. Before going to Sri Lanka, I played against New Zealand 'A' team and I think it helped me a lot. I think I had a good preparation for the Sri Lanka series.

**DS:** How do you prepare yourself when you play matches after a long gap?

**NH:** I don't have anything else to do other than play. I practice regularly and follow my routine to improve myself. We have regular camps for Bangla Tigers. I always try to be ready and



wait for my opportunities. Sometimes, performance is not in your hands. But I need to work hard and keep faith in Allah.

**DS:** In your career so far, you have mostly been seen as a third or fourth spin-bowling option in Tests. How do you feel about it?

**NH:** I don't think of myself as the third or fourth option. It's true that sometimes I feel bad when I don't get to play. But for me, the team always comes first. I always think that whenever I get the opportunity to play, I have to fulfil my role and help the team win. If I see myself as the third or fourth spin-bowling option, I won't have the same hunger.

**DS:** Having played only 14 Tests in seven years, do you consider yourself unlucky?

**NH:** I hope to finish my career with 350 Test wickets.

**NH:** I don't feel like that. When Harbhajan [Singh] was in the Indian side, Ashwin [Ravichandran] made it into their playing XI. He finished his career with more than 500 [537] Test wickets. When I was with the Bangladesh U-19 side, I got the opportunity to play for the national team. Most of the players get into the national side at the age of 24 or 25. But when I was only 17 and a half years old, I got into the national side. For this, I consider myself lucky. Everyone thinks that I'm unlucky but I want to think positively and consider myself lucky in this aspect. I have learnt a lot of things in these seven years and I hope it will help me in future.

**DS:** You bat reasonably well in domestic matches. Do you think you could have cemented your place in the playing XI if you had concentrated more on your batting?

**NH:** I have been working on my batting. I also got starts in Sri Lanka but couldn't bat longer in both matches. Hopefully, I will not make the same mistake next time.

**DS:** Age is in your favour as you are just 25. What's your goal by the end of your career?

**NH:** I hope to finish my career with 350 Test wickets.

## Last-gasp Trishna decides thrilling contest

SPORTS REPORTER

A stoppage-time strike from Trishna Rani Sarkar helped defending champions Bangladesh maintain their winning run in the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship with a dramatic 3-2 victory over title-rivals Nepal at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday.

The thrilling contest reached its climax when, in the dying seconds of stoppage time, substitute Umehla Marma launched a counter-attack down the right flank. She entered the box and delivered a precise cut-back for fellow substitute Trishna, who calmly slotted the ball into the far post from just outside the six-yard box, sparking wild celebrations in the stands.

Bangladesh, the tournament favourites, had taken a comfortable 2-0 lead in the first half with goals from Sinha Jahan Shikha and Mosammam Sagorika. Their slick passing, quick transitions, and intelligent positioning initially overwhelmed the Nepali defence, much like their 9-1 win over Sri Lanka in the tournament opener.



However, the tide turned in the second half as Nepal piled on the pressure and capitalised on Bangladesh's defensive lapses. Within a span of nine minutes – from the 77th to the 86th minute – they levelled the scoreline through well-taken goals by Anisha Rai and Meena Deuba.

The match also saw a major flashpoint just 11 minutes into the second half when Sagorika and Nepal's Simran Rai were both shown red cards following a scuffle.

Despite losing their two-goal cushion and being reduced to 10 players, the young charges of Peter Butler did not back down. Instead, they regrouped, fought back, and ultimately found the decisive goal in the final moments of the game.

The victory lifted Bangladesh to the top of the four-team standings with six points from two matches – three points ahead of Nepal and Bhutan. Earlier in the day, Bhutan boosted their campaign with an emphatic 5-0 win over Sri Lanka.



**Bangladesh players jump for joy after beating Kazakhstan 6-2 in a place-deciding match to finish third in the Women's U-18 Asia Cup in their maiden appearance in Dazhou, China yesterday. The men's team, meanwhile, finished fourth following a 5-2 defeat against Malaysia in a place-deciding match.**

## CWC ends with cheers, critiques and controversy

AGENCIES

The curtain has fallen on the first-ever expanded FIFA Club World Cup. FIFA president Gianni Infantino was quick to label the month-long event a "huge success."

But as the dust settles, football's global community is left grappling with what the tournament truly achieved – and what it failed to deliver.

Conceived as a flagship competition meant to unite the footballing world, the 32-team tournament finally made its debut after a pandemic-induced delay of four years.

Its ambition was undeniable, but so was the skepticism. Critics, especially in Europe, saw it as an unnecessary strain on an already overloaded calendar. Former Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp didn't mince words, calling it the "worst idea ever implemented in football."

Yet on some fronts, the event exceeded expectations. Nearly 2.5 million fans attended games across the United States, with an average crowd of almost 39,000 – just shy of the Premier League's numbers. South American supporters, in particular, brought colour and passion, injecting energy into stadiums that were sometimes only half full.

Still, there was no ignoring the empty seats, the sluggish pace caused by oppressive summer heat, or the thunderstorm delays that disrupted several matches.

Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez summed up the concern bluntly: "Playing in these temperatures is



very dangerous." FIFA has hinted that covered stadiums will be prioritised in future US-based tournaments, but climate and scheduling remain unresolved headaches.

On the pitch, European dominance held firm but there were flashes of genuine competition: Fluminense's run to the semifinals, including a shock win over Inter Milan, showed the rest of the world could still land punches.

The tournament also showcased FIFA's financial muscle, with a staggering \$1 billion prize pool – most of which flowed back to Europe. But for clubs from Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and beyond, the exposure and money could help them retain talent a bit longer.

Infantino has made clear this new Club World Cup is here to stay, scheduled every four years with the next edition in 2029. Whether it will grow into a universally embraced spectacle or remain a controversial mega-event is yet to be seen.

For now, the Club World Cup has made its mark. Grand, flawed, and defiant – it may not have won everyone over, but it has announced its arrival.

## BAN-PAK T20I SERIES Tickets to go on sale online from July 15

SPORTS REPORTER

Tickets for the upcoming three-match T20I series between Bangladesh and Pakistan will go on sale online from July 15.

The ticketing details for the home series, scheduled for July 20-24, were disclosed during a press conference in Mirpur on Sunday where Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director Mahbubul Anam and Modhumoti Bank PLC officials were present.

Apart from the complimentary tickets, the remaining 70 percent will be available for online purchase. Tickets, priced between Tk 300 and Tk 3500, can be purchased through BCB's official eTicket platform, www.gobcticket.com.bd.

The unsold tickets will be sold at two designated booths near the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. Locations of these booths will be announced via BCB's media digital platforms.

A maximum of four tickets can be purchased per registered account for each match, while both physical and e-tickets will be accepted for stadium entry. Modhumoti Bank PLC, who has a three-year contract with the BCB till early 2027, will provide technical and logistical support regarding ticketing issues.

Mahbubul also informed that they will also provide 100 free tickets for those who were injured during the July movement.

## Grass makes it 'more special' for Swiatek

AGENCIES

Iga Swiatek stormed to her maiden Wimbledon crown on Saturday with a ruthless 6-0, 6-0 demolition of Amanda Anisimova, sealing her sixth Grand Slam title and proving she's no longer just the "Queen of Clay."

The 24-year-old Pole had long struggled on grass, but after reaching her first grasscourt final last month in Bad Homburg, she rode the momentum all the way through a triumphant fortnight at the All England Club.

"I think the fact that it's on grass makes it more special – and more unexpected," Swiatek admitted. "In Roland Garros, I know I can play well. Here, I needed to prove it to myself."

Swiatek refused to rank her major triumphs but said Wimbledon and the 2022 U.S. Open stood out for the surprise factor. "No one expected that. It wasn't a relief – it was just good tennis."

Her performance in the final was near-perfect, as she overwhelmed a nervy Anisimova, drawing on experience to handle the pressure. "Finals can be ugly with so much stress," she said.

"I just wanted to enjoy Centre Court and playing well on grass. Who knows if it'll happen again?"

Swiatek credited improved consistency and a dependable serve for her dominant run, a shift from her previous grasscourt stumbles. "I don't think I ever served so well for three weeks straight," she said. "I didn't let points go for free."

With this landmark win, Swiatek has cemented herself as a true all-surface champion. From clay to hardcourt to grass, she now stands among the most complete players in the modern game – no longer chasing history, but steadily making it.

