

SPORT



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

One hat-trick, two venues

SPORTS REPORTER

Midfielder Shanti Mardi scored a hat-trick while Munki Akter added one as Bangladesh cruised to a 4-1 victory over Bhutan in their SAFF U-20 Women's Championship fixture inside the Bashundhara Residential Area on Tuesday, consolidating the top spot in the four-team competition with a third win in three matches.

However, the round-robin fixture might not be most remembered for Shanti's first hat-trick in international age-level football, but instead for the fact that her last two goals came more than three hours after the first, and on a different kind of surface and at an entirely different venue altogether. Yes, you've read it right.

When Shanti had put Bangladesh ahead with a seventh-minute left-footed strike, smashing home a rebound, it seemed like business as usual at the Bashundhara Kings Arena, where Bangladesh have been enjoying a bit of a



goalpost. Despite the heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms, the match kicked off on schedule. But as the half progressed, it became clear that natural play was anything but possible on this heavy pitch, and the risk of injuries to players became a major worry.

It took the match commissioner and his team till the end of the first half to decide the pitch wasn't good enough for football to continue, and preparations were made to make the ground playable with groundstaff trying to pull the water out of the puddles on various parts of the pitch.

But more than an hour's tireless effort, the match officials were forced to relocate the second half to the nearby practice ground, which boasts an artificial turf.

Lengthy halts in play due to extreme weather conditions are not uncommon in world football. In fact, the Federation Cup final between Abahani and Bashundhara Kings was held over a week's gap due to bad light owing to heavy rain in Mymensingh in April this year.

However, whether there is any instance of an international fixture, albeit an age-group one, played on two venues, could be a topic of research.

The match did resume three hours after it had been halted, with Bhutan equalising through Sangay Wangmo eight minutes after restart. However, Shanti restored Bangladesh's lead before substitute Munki Akter scored a brilliant solo goal in the 75th minute. Shanti wrapped up the victory by completing her hat-trick in the 79th minute.

Tigers scent rare series win

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will aim to draw confidence from their clinical display in the second match as they seek to end their series-winning drought on Sri Lankan soil in the series deciding third and final T20I at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo today.

Over the past month, the visitors narrowly missed out on securing their first-ever series win in Sri Lanka in both Tests and ODIs – squandering both chances due to a lack of consistency throughout the respective contests.

Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka began with a draw in the two-match Test series opener in Galle, where they dominated in most of the proceedings – but they surrendered miserably in the series-deciding second Test in Colombo to concede their sixth series defeat in Sri Lanka out of seven series. The other series ended in a 1-1 draw in 2017.

In the following series, Bangladesh registered a hard-fought victory in the second ODI in Pallekele – but the lack of consistency from their batters let the side down in both the series opener and series deciding contests, resulting in their conceding big defeats in both matches. It also kept Sri Lanka's undefeated record across seven series (five wins, two draws) against Bangladesh intact on their home soil.



The T20 series fate now hangs in the balance, just like the previous two series, after Bangladesh – who lost their opening match by seven wickets in Pallekele – clinched a dominating 83-run victory in the second match in Dambulla to be in a position to finish their roller-coaster

journey in Sri Lanka on a high.

"The way we played the last match, I think the boys got good confidence and the momentum also shifted towards us. I hope we can finish it well," Bangladesh's senior assistant coach Mohammad Salahuddin told reporters in Colombo

yesterday.

"When you play well and win matches, the inspiration will come. I think the way we played and won the last game was a big inspiration for us," added Salahuddin, who claimed that they are only focusing on their next game.

One of the biggest reliefs for the Tigers

'What would I gain from favouritism?': Salahuddin on criticism



in the previous game was their skipper Litton Das showing signs of coming out from the long lean patch he had in white-ball cricket, as he made a brilliant 50-ball 76 and was supported well by players like Tawhid Hridoy and Shamim Hossain, who played timely innings to help Bangladesh post a challenging total of 177 for seven.

The win not only snapped Bangladesh's six-match losing streak in T20Is but also handed them a golden opportunity to wrap up their Sri Lanka tour on a triumphant note ahead of this month's three-match T20I series against Pakistan at home.

SHORT CORNER

Umehla Marma: The girl from tomorrow



Bangladesh forward Umehla Marma returned to the starting eleven when the hosts faced Bhutan in a SAFF U-20 Women's Champions fixture in Dhaka yesterday.

In vividly challenging circumstances, on a rain-soaked surface at Kings Arena with threats of lightning and thunders also looming, Umehla produced her own sparks. Wearing the No. 11 shirt – a number that signifies flair – Umehla is two-footed, often cutting inside with her left as an inverted winger or initiating attacks with passes between the lines from deeper regions; and, like a leader without an armband, rarely hesitating in tracking back to aid defensive transitions when needed.

FIFA imposes transfer ban on Fakirerpool

Fakirerpool Young Men's Club have been slapped with a transfer ban by FIFA after the Bangladesh Premier League outfit failed to clear last season's wages of Uzbek footballer Sardor Jakhonov. The transfer ban means Fakirerpool can't sign any players in ongoing transfer window until the club clears Jakhonov's unpaid wages worth approximately Tk 25 lakh.

CR7's Al-Nassr gets Jorge Jesus as new coach

Al-Nassr appointed Portuguese Jorge Jesus as coach on Monday, two months after he left their bitter Saudi Pro-League rivals Al-Hilal. Jesus, who replaces Italian Stefano Pioli, has signed a one-year contract with Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr.

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RECORDS TUMBLE AT SABINA PARK

Australia pacers made a statement in Jamaica on Monday, bowling out the West Indies for the second lowest Test total ever in a day of staggering numbers. Australia romped to a 176-run win, sweeping the three-match series.

● Australia bundled West Indies out for just 27 runs in their second innings on the third day of the third Test. This is West Indies' lowest ever total in Tests and the second-lowest overall, just behind New Zealand's 26 against England in 1955.

● It's also the lowest total Australia's men have kept a side to in Tests.

● Mitchell Starc finished with figures of 6/9, the best innings figures of any player in their 100th Test, bettering Muthiah Muralidaran's 6/54 for Sri Lanka against Bangladesh in 2006.

● Starc also became the fourth Australian bowler to reach 400 Test wickets.

● Starc had taken just 15 deliveries, the fewest ever in Test history, to complete a five-wicket haul.

● Starc has now taken 81 wickets in 14 Pink-ball Tests, 38 more than the next best – Nathan Lyon.

● Seven Windies batters registered ducks, most in a Test innings, beating nine instances of six naughts.

● Scott Boland's hat-trick was the first in a Pink-ball Test.

● With his 3/34 and 3/2 at Sabina Park, Boland's Test bowling average now stands at 16.53, the best of any bowler in the last 110 years of Test cricket (minimum 2000 balls bowled).



'World's oldest marathon runner' dies aged 114

AFP, New Delhi

India's Fauja Singh, believed to be the world's oldest distance runner, has died in a road accident aged 114, his biographer said Tuesday.

Singh, an Indian-born British national, nicknamed the "Turbaned Tornado", died after being hit by a vehicle in Punjab state's Jalandhar district on Monday.

"My Turbaned Tornado is no more," Fauja's biographer Khushwant Singh wrote on X.

"He was struck by an unidentified vehicle... in his village, Bias, while crossing the road. Rest in peace, my dear Fauja."

Singh did not have a birth certificate but his family said he was born on April 1, 1911. He ran full marathons (42 kilometre) till the age of 100.

His last race was a 10-kilometre (six-mile) event at the 2013 Hong Kong Marathon when 101.

He became an international sensation after taking up distance running at the ripe old age of 89, after the death of his wife and one of his sons, inspired by seeing marathons on television.

Although widely regarded as the world's oldest marathon runner, he was not certified by Guinness World Records as he could not prove his age, saying that birth certificates did not exist when he was born under British colonial rule in 2011.

Jadeja criticised for cautious approach in Lord's thriller

AFP, New Delhi

Ravindra Jadeja was praised Tuesday for almost taking India to an unlikely Test win at Lord's, but former greats said a little more risk-taking with the bat might have got his side over the line.

Jadeja, batting at number seven, hit a painstaking unbeaten 61 as he shepherded the tail from 112-8 at Lunch chasing 193 for victory against England in the third Test.

But he eventually ran out of partners after more than four hours at the crease as India were all out for 170 after Tea on a nerve-shredding final day.

Jadeja, who came in at 71-5 and saw India slump to 112-8 at lunch, chose to protect Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj from England's attack by scoring singles to keep the strike and controlling his attacking instincts.

Former batting great Sunil Gavaskar said on Sony Sports that scoring quicker and putting pressure back on England's bowlers might have resulted in "a partnership of 60-70 which would have made a difference".

"India never got that (partnership)," he said.

"You could say that Jadeja could have taken the odd chance and not necessarily the aerial route when Joe Root and Shoaib Bashir were bowling. But full marks to



him (Jadeja)."

Jadeja hit just four fours and one six in his 181-ball stay before Bashir bowled number 11 Siraj to trigger jubilant England celebrations.

"I'd like to look a little deeper into that whole innings," former batsman Sanjay Manjrekar said on ESPNcricinfo.

"There was one attempt at playing a shot that went for six.

"But I don't think there were too many attempted attacking shots.

"For me, one telling moment was when he got to his fifty and India were still a few runs short.

"You saw the reaction of the dressing room there were people applauding but I don't think there was excitement around and belief that Jadeja would take them through."

England lead the series 2-1 with two to play.

The fourth Test starts at Manchester's Old Trafford on July 23.

Tigresses to play two warm-up matches before WC

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team will play one practice match against Sri Lanka and one against Sri Lanka 'A' team prior to the Women's ODI World Cup, which will be held in Sri Lanka and India from September 30 to November 2.

The warm-up fixtures will take place between 25-28 September, with seven teams playing two matches each, plus Australia, who will feature in just one.

Four venues have been designated for the warm-up matches – the Centre of Excellence Ground and M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, along with the R Premadasa Stadium and Colombo Cricket Club Ground in Colombo.

India 'A' and Sri Lanka 'A' will also feature in the warm-up fixtures, with India 'A' scheduled to play one match and Sri Lanka 'A' set to play two.

The warm-up fixtures kick off on September 25, with 2017 finalists India and England facing off while South Africa take on New Zealand in Bengaluru. At the same time in Colombo, Sri Lanka will play Pakistan, while Bangladesh go up against Sri Lanka 'A'.

The next round of warm-up games is set for September 27, with Australia facing England in their only fixture. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka will take on Bangladesh, and India will play New Zealand.

The final round of warm-up fixtures will be held on September 28, with South Africa facing India 'A' and Pakistan taking on Sri Lanka 'A'.

Bangladesh will play their first match of the World Cup against Pakistan on October 2 in Colombo.