

Star SPORT

DHAKA MONDAY JULY 21, 2025, SRABAN 6, 1432 BS

Pitch debate brews as Mustafizur shines

SPORTS REPORTER

Mustafizur Rahman came up with his most economical spell ever in T20Is on his return to the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, setting the stage for a seven-wicket win for Bangladesh over Pakistan in the first of three T20Is. However, after the game, varying opinions on the pitch grabbed more attention.

Mustafizur gave away just six runs for two wickets, outdoing his previous most economical spell of 3-7 against Nepal in the 2024 ICC T20 World Cup, as Bangladesh bundled out Pakistan for 110 in 19.3 overs.

Pakistan definitely had a hand in their own demise with poor and hurried shot selection on a pitch that demanded more caution.

When Mustafizur came into the attack in the last Powerplay over, Pakistan were 40 for 3. He soon made it 41-4 by getting Hasan Nawaz caught at third man.

Mustafizur conceded just two in the 12th over before returning to the attack for the 17th and 18th, where he gave away just three runs in 12 balls and claimed the wicket of Khushdil Shah, getting him caught at mid-off for a 23-ball 17, ensuring the visitors did not get the acceleration they desperately needed.

Before the series, Bangladesh skipper Litton Das had expressed concerns over the wickets in Mirpur during the July with rain around and after the match, Pakistan coach Mike Hesson lamented that the pitch was "not up to international standards".

But in reality, the pitch was not one of those low and slow quagmires that Mirpur produces every now and then as there was some bounce on offer which Mustafizur used to his advantage, using angles and cutters very effectively along with length deliveries that hurried batters.

The pressure Mustafizur put on the batters

helped the other bowlers, especially Taskin Ahmed, the most successful bowler with three wickets, who struck twice in the final over after Mustafizur had given away only a single in the penultimate one.

Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib also had a very good day, barring his fourth over which went for 14, finishing with 1-20.

The pace trio left an effect on a pitch where variations mattered and Mustafizur's spells handed Bangladesh the edge.

We scored 110 runs in 16 overs, and had we played 20 overs, we could have scored 160. Maybe they could not adjust, but that's what we tried to do.

Bangladesh's Parvez Hossain Emon debates Pakistan coach Mike Hesson's criticism about Mirpur pitch

"We all know how Mustafizur can execute in Mirpur. He was a threat to the batsmen. Sakib bowled really well in the middle. Taskin also bowled really well in the death overs," skipper Litton said after the match.

Bangladesh's chase had an early hiccup, losing two wickets for just seven, before Parvez Hossain Emon and Tawhid Hridoy's 73 run stand off 61 balls dispelled the jitters.

Hridoy departed for a 37-ball 36 but Emon stayed unbeaten on 56 off 39 as the Tigers chased down the target in 16.3 overs to take a 1-0 lead.

Emon, who was adjudged player-of-the-match, credited Mustafizur and Co for their efforts, saying, "Mustafizur bhai bowled really well. Obviously other bowlers also did well which is why we could keep them to a low score."



What to WATCH

SPORTS
SAFF U20 Women's C'ship
Bhutan vs Sri Lanka
Live from 3:00 pm
Bangladesh vs Nepal

Live from 7:00 pm
Australia vs West Indies
1st T20I
Live from 6:00 am

Nasima adopts Urmi's mantra to dethrone her

ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's top two female shuttlers -- Urmi Akhter and Nasima Khatun -- have long been teammates, representing the Bangladesh Army. Both learned the sport in Pabna, yet over the years, a quiet rivalry has developed between them, especially in the finals of national and summer badminton championships.

Until recently, Urmi had dominated this rivalry, winning three consecutive finals -- the National Badminton Championships in 2022 and 2023, and the Summer Ranking Championship in 2024. But this time in the 39th National Badminton Championship, it was Nasima who came out on top, ending Urmi's streak and claiming her maiden women's singles title.

Interestingly, Nasima adopted the very strategy Urmi had successfully used against her in the past three finals. The shift in approach proved decisive.

"I suffered defeats to Urmi in three straight finals, but this time I was confident and well-prepared to dethrone her," Nasima told The Daily Star yesterday. "I'm really happy that all my hard work finally paid off."

"Previously, I lost because of wrong decisions and losing my temper, unlike Urmi, who always stayed calm and composed. This time, even after losing the first game, I kept my cool, and I think that was the key to my victory," said the 19-year-old shuttler. She also credited her improved fitness and a focused training regimen under senior teammate Tanvir Morsalin for the turnaround.

Although Urmi hails from Khulna and Nasima from Pabna, both were groomed in Pabna during their early years. Interestingly, they never faced each other in local competitions during their youth but are now showcasing their talent on the

SCORES IN BRIEF

PAKISTAN

110 all out in 19.3 overs (Fakhar 44, Afridi 22; Mahedi 1-37, Taskin 3-22, Sakib 1-20, Mustafizur 2-6)

BANGLADESH

112-3 in 15.3 overs (Emon 56 not out, Hridoy 36, Jaker 15 not out; Salman 2-23, Afridi 1-16)

RESULT

Bangladesh won by seven wickets

PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH

Parvez Hossain Emon



England to host next three WTC finals

STAR SPORTS DESK

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has named England as hosts for the ICC World Test Championship final for the next three editions after its annual conference in Singapore held on Sunday.

The ICC has awarded the 2027, 2029, and 2031 WTC finals to England, citing their successful hosting of recent finals.

England have hosted the finals for the first three cycles of the Test Championship. The final of the inaugural edition was held at The Rose Bowl in Southampton in 2021, where New Zealand beat India.

The final of the second cycle took place at the Oval in London in 2023, with India once again ending up on the losing side and Australia emerging as champions.

The finale of the third cycle took place at the Lord's in last June, with South Africa beating Australia. In the conference, the ICC also received an update on progress relating to the support for displaced women cricketers of Afghan descent.

national stage.

Nasima began playing badminton in 2018, when she was in Grade 7. Her physical education teacher, Rashida Parvin, introduced her to a talent hunt programme run by the National Sports Council. Selected for a one-month training camp, she went on to participate in her first youth championship in 2019.

"I was always involved in sports at the school level, and my love for it led me to attend the badminton trial," said Nasima, who is now a 12th grade student at the Open University in Bogura. "There was no restriction from my family, although my mother was sometimes against it. But my expatriate father supported me a lot and provided the expensive gear I needed."

Since 2019, Nasima has represented Bangladesh at both junior and senior international levels. However, she has never had the opportunity to train under a foreign coach -- something she believes is holding back her development.

"Players abroad train year-round under foreign coaches. We don't have that kind of long-term training here," she said. "I haven't worked with a foreign coach since I started competing internationally. If we want to perform better on the global stage, we must have access to such training."

Nasima hopes that the newly formed badminton committee will take steps to address these issues by appointing foreign coaches and organising more domestic competitions to enhance players' exposure and experience.

Experiment over, Butler ready for title fight

SPORTS REPORTER

Having experimented quite a bit with his playing XI throughout the campaign, Bangladesh coach Peter Butler is expected to field a strong starting XI against Nepal in the title-deciding last match of the SAFF U20 Women's Championship, scheduled to kick off at 7:00pm today at the Bashundhara Kings Arena.

Butler has said time and again that results in this tournament mattered little to him as he wanted to give exposure to his players for bigger platforms. Speaking after the win against Sri Lanka in their penultimate fixture on Saturday, Butler said: "The title means nothing to me. I'm just here to develop players. If the title means something to certain people's egos, etc, that's fine. But I'm here to develop players and build a team for AFC (U-20 Asian Cup Qualifiers in August) and onwards and upwards for the future."

Butler has given all 23 of his players some game time during the first five matches of this four-team competition, all of which his charges have won.

However, it was the first match against Nepal which gave the Englishman plenty of food for thought as Bangladesh eked out a hard-fought 3-2 win, thanks to a stoppage-time goal from Trishna Rani Sarkar.

In fact, it was the only match of the



competition that Butler had fielded a first-choice starting XI, allowing the team to take a 2-0 lead in the first half. He took off some of his key players after the break and the mountaineers made a match out of it.

That victory has put the hosts in an advantageous position as Butler's charges will need only a draw to retain the title, coming hot on the heels of a historic Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers campaign. Nepal, on the other hand, have been the most prolific side in the tournament so far, enjoying a positive goal difference of 30 compared to Bangladesh's 24. This statistic means Nepal will win the title if they can beat Bangladesh by any margin as the overall points of the two sides will become equal on 15 and both sides will have one win each against the other.

The Bangladesh coach is wary of the threat from this high-scoring Nepal side ahead of the title-decider. "Nepal are a good side. They're higher ranked than us in the women's rankings... They've got good players. They've shown they can score goals. I've got the utmost respects for them," Butler said after the Sri Lanka win.

"If some of those girls in that dressing room of mine think they're in for an easy ride, they're in for the shock of their lives," warned the 58-year-old coach, who would be relieved to have Mosammat Sagarika, his first-choice striker, back in the side following a three-match suspension.

Outside food, water, and a taste of past returns to Mirpur

In a move that blends nostalgia with practicality, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has eased restrictions on bringing outside food and water into Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium -- reviving a long lost matchday ritual. Fans were seen entering with snack packets and water bottles during Bangladesh's first T20I against Pakistan on Sunday, a scene reminiscent of cricket days before the 2011 World Cup, as outside snacks and beverages were restricted as part of stricter ICC regulations since then. The change has brought both joy and relief to regular spectators. "We're no longer forced to buy overpriced food. It's a big relief for regular fans," said Amit from Old Dhaka, echoing the sentiments of many who welcomed this unexpected shift while speaking with *The Daily Star's* Ramin Talukder.

****Read full story on The Daily Star's website**



Harry Maguire on strike and Mohammed Siraj approaching -- the outcome, however, could not be guessed as both seemed to be sharing a light moment in the next frame. Meanwhile, the two skippers -- Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes and India's Shubman Gill -- seemed happy to have swapped their shirts, just like each member of both the squads did. This unusual yet happy blend of cricket and football happened on Sunday at Carrington, where the India cricket team paid a visit to the Red Devils' training ground ahead of their crucial fourth Test in Manchester on July 23.

PHOTO: BCCI

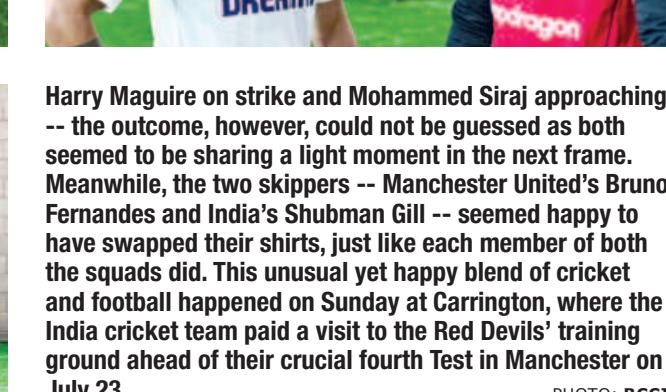


PHOTO: BCCI



Brigadier General (Retd)
Quazi Muhammad Shahjahan Hafiz
1928 - 2025

In Loving Memory

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of our dear Grand Father Brig Gen (Retd) Quazi Muhammad Shahjahan Hafiz, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather, who left this world peacefully on July 20, 2025. He has left behind his loving family, who will forever cherish his wisdom, kindness, and unconditional support for those he loved.

Shahjahan Hafiz lived a life full of love and joy. He was a man of great integrity, known for his generosity, humor, and unwavering love for Rabindra Sangeet. Whether through his career in the military, his devotion to family, he touched countless lives with his warmth and wisdom.

He has left behind three children, Bakhtiar Hafiz, Rudaba Akhter and Ihtesham Bin Shahjahan, seven grandchildren and three great granddaughters, who will carry forward his values, his gentleness, and the songs he left in our hearts. His stories will continue to live on in our voices, and his music will echo in our memories.

We will miss him deeply; his voice, his presence, his melodies. But we thank Allah for the gift of his long, meaningful life. His Doa Mehfil will be held on July 21, 2025 at Gulshan Society Masjid, Baad Asr. May Allah grant him Jannatul Ferdous.