

TIGERS MAKE HISTORY in Mirpur thriller

SPORTS REPORTER

A brilliant fast-bowling display and some power-hitting from Jaker Ali saw Bangladesh win the second T20I by eight runs and clinch the three-match series 2-0 with a game in hand, despite a nervy ending that threatened a comeback for Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on Tuesday.

What could have been a portrayal of total dominance by the Tigers over Pakistan, turned into a nail-biting affair in the end – thanks to Faheem Ashraf's 32-ball 51 run cameo and a few misfielding by the hosts, giving a reprieve to Faheem on 38 via a dropped catch. Still, the Tigers prevailed, clinching their first-ever victory in a multi-game bilateral T20I series over Pakistan.

From losing seven for just 47 in 11.5 overs, Pakistan turned things around at the death, needing just 13 from the final over of Mustafizur Rahman after Faheem and debutant Ahmed Daniyal combined to amass 15 in the penultimate over, bowled by Rishad Hossain.

When Faheem was castled by Rishad in the final delivery of the 19th over, it seemed as if Bangladesh had once again tightened their grip in the game. But Daniyal struck Mustafizur for a boundary in the first delivery of the final over, keeping everyone on edge. However, he eventually departed in the next ball while trying to clear the field as Bangladesh won the thriller.

After Jaker's 48 ball 55 helped Bangladesh post a respectable 133 all out in 20 overs, it was the pacers that turned up the heat in Mirpur, reducing the visitors to 15 for five in 4.4 overs.

It started with Pakistan losing their first wicket -- that of opener Saim Ayub's -- in the very first over, owing to a collective fielding effort by the Tigers that saw a superb dive in the outfield, quick collection and swift removal of the bails



“It was tough after the early wickets. Mahedi took chances, and I tried to support him—that was the plan. I just looked to take the game deep and wait for balls in my zone. Our bowlers have done well throughout the series. Pakistan fought hard today, but we had the last laugh.”

Player-of-the-Match Jaker Ali.

by wicketkeeper and skipper Litton Das.

After that, pacers Shoriful Islam and Tanzim Hasan Sakib looked to be men on a mission. Shoriful had Mohammad Haris trapped in front with a jaffer that came back sharply in towards the right-hander before having Fakhar Zaman glove one back to the keeper.

Sakib made the Nawaz -- Hasan and Mohammad -- edge back successive deliveries to the keeper, as Bangladesh restricted Pakistan to just 17 for five in the Powerplay.

With half of their side already back in the hut, Pakistan never looked threatening in their pursuit of an undaunting total till Faheem made things interesting with a resilient effort. The spinners came into the act soon, with Mahedi Hasan having Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha caught at long-on and Khushdil Shah trapped in front to leave the visitors seven down and

gasping for breath.

Faheem stitched stands of 41 and 33 for the eighth and the ninth wickets with Abbas Afridi and Daniyal, respectively, creating panic in the Bangladesh dug out.

Like the final phase of the game, things did not go quite as planned for the Tigers in the first half of the game either. The Tigers made the same mistakes that Pakistan had made in the first match of the three-match series, just 48 hours previously at the same venue.

Poor shot selection, soft dismissals, unnecessary hastiness -- the script that Pakistan had followed when they were bundled out for 110 in 19.3 overs on Sunday -- were the traits of Bangladesh's innings yesterday, after being asked to bat first.

Had it not been for a six-laden knock from Jaker at the death, Bangladesh might as well have accumulated something

similar to that of Pakistan's total in the first game. However, with Jaker showing some true muscle power to dispatch as many as five maximums by capitalising on some full and loose deliveries from Pakistan, the Tigers were able to provide the bowlers with something to defend on a traditionally low and slow Mirpur surface.

It was the nature of the Mirpur surface and the ability to adjust to it that dominated in the post-match pressers of both sides in the first game, with opener Parvez Hossain Emon -- the player-of-the-match of that contest for his unbeaten 56 -- refuting Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson's claims of Mirpur surface not being "up to international standards".

According to Emon, Bangladesh were able to adjust better to the Mirpur wicket and would have gone on to make around 160 in that game had they batted full 20 overs as they chased down Pakistan's meagre total in the 16th over.

However, the way Emon and most of the Bangladesh batters threw their wickets away at inopportune moments could make one question whether the hosts were actually able to grasp the approach needed to bat on surfaces that Mirpur typically offers.

To put it into context, Bangladesh were four down for just 28 in 5.5 overs, with the first four batters throwing their wickets away in an attempt to score quickly from the word go.

From there on, Bangladesh bounced back through a 53-run fifth-wicket stand between Jaker and Mahedi (33 off 25) and some sparsely added runs in the last few stands.

In the end, it was an exceptional bowling effort in the initial overs that saw Bangladesh eventually edge the game, but it would be naive of the Tigers to think that they had every part of the game in their control.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh and Pakistan players observe a minute's silence, sporting black armbands, ahead of their second T20I at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium on Tuesday. In observance of the National Mourning Day, the gesture was a mark of respect to the victims of the tragic fighter jet crash at Milestone School and College in Uttara on Monday, which claimed several lives.

“Our team played really well. We fell short in the powerplay but Mahedi and Jaker batted brilliantly. It looked like a 130-140 wicket, and we knew we could defend it. We bowled well early but some dropped catches cost us later. I want to dedicate this series win to those who lost their lives in the recent jet crash.”

Bangladesh captain Litton Das

“We always believe we can win, and that belief is strong in this team now. The way we played after being 15 for 5 was outstanding. This is the kind of belief I want from my team. It was a thriller -- definitely worth the money to watch.”

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 133 all out in 20 overs (Emon 13, Jaker 55, Mahedi 33; Salman 2-17, Daniyal 2-23, Afridi 2-37)

Pakistan: 125 all out in 19.2 overs (Khushdil 13, Ashraf 51, Afridi 19, Daniyal 17; Mahedi 2-25, Shoriful 3-17, Mustafizur 1-15, Sakib 2-23, Rishad 1-42)

Result: Bangladesh won by eight runs.

Player-of-the-match: Jaker Ali

Butler's charges to 'do their best' in AFC U-20 Qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Following Bangladesh's emphatic 4-0 win over Nepal on Monday, which helped the team emerge unbeaten champions of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship, head coach Peter Butler offered an in-depth analysis of the team's growth, collective mentality, and future ambitions as they gear up for sterner challenges ahead -- including the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers next month and the senior AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia in March 2026.

Bangladesh will leave for Laos on August 2 for the U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers -- scheduled to start on August 6 -- with South Korea, Laos and Timor Leste in the same group.

Eight group winners and three best runners-up teams will qualify for the final round -- a mission Butler believes is difficult but not beyond reach.

All through the SAFFU-20 Championship, Butler said he was barely interested in winning the title, instead his focus was on future campaigns. Hence, he rotated all 23 members of his squad during the six matches of this tournament, giving ample opportunity to fringe players.

"I wanted to give all 23 players a little bit of game time and it's coming along nicely. But we just have to keep humble, keep working hard, wanting to work to improve and the girls program will go places," the Englishman said following the victory against Nepal.

What Butler's rotation policy since the beginning of his tenure a little more than a year ago has done is it gave enough confidence to players who would have otherwise not found a platform to perform. This approach, he explained, is rooted in building a competitive environment where players push each other and earn their positions through effort and performance.

Players like Mosammam Sagarika, Nabiran Khatun, Umehla Marma and Shanti Mardi -- few of whom have been with the senior side but hardly find a place in the XI -- have given enough evidence throughout this tournament that they will give their more senior compatriots a run for their money in near future.

His defensive unit, especially Afeda Khandaker and Nabiran, earned special praise for their commanding presence against Nepal's direct playing style. "They were like a brick wall. Colossal. Defensively, we were rock solid," Butler noted, expressing his satisfaction in how the team executed a high-intensity, pressing style.

However, the coach is mindful of managing young players' development. "It's a pathway. I'm not the type of coach to promise anything. Everyone's got to earn the right...their time will come -- it's a marathon, not a sprint."

As Bangladesh prepare for tougher continental challenges, Butler remains grounded. "We have to be realistic. We're coming up against more than capable teams. This is a journey and an opportunity for our girls to test themselves against stronger opposition like Korea. We'll do our best. That's all I can say."

Strikers must stay calm'

After her dazzling return against Nepal in the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship finale on Monday, all eyes have been on Bangladesh's **Mosammam Sagarika** -- the 17-year-old striker from Thakurgaon who netted four goals after serving a three-match suspension for a red-card offence. Named the tournament's Most Valuable Player for her tally of eight goals in just three appearances, Sagarika met with reporters at a city hotel yesterday. Here are excerpts from the conversation:

How did you celebrate after returning to the team hotel?

Mst Sagarika: We didn't celebrate much. There was a tragic accident in the country, and we were all deeply saddened by it. Out of respect, we even avoided taking pictures after the match.

Were you aiming to match or surpass your 10-goal tally from the previous SAFF edition?

MS: As a forward, I always hope to be the top scorer and best player. I couldn't finish as top scorer this time, but I'm happy to have earned the best player award despite playing only three matches.

How do you view the competition among the forwards, especially with Trishna Rani Sarkar performing well in your absence?

MS: Trishna played really well -- maybe even better than me. With so many forwards in the squad, everyone is motivated to perform their best to secure a place in the team.

What did you take away from your three-match suspension?

MS: It taught me that getting into confrontations isn't helpful. Strikers must stay calm -- when we do, we're able to make a bigger impact up front.

Did the suspension fuel your performance in the final?

MS: Definitely. Missing three games made me more determined. When I got the chance again, I wanted to make the

most of it -- and I'm proud I could contribute something meaningful for the country.

After winning the final, did you speak with your father, who once discouraged you from playing?

MS: He wanted to come to Dhaka to watch the matches, but couldn't -- my mother was unwell and there wasn't a place for him to stay. Still, he's really happy I was named the tournament's best player.

How have you grown as a player between the two SAFF editions?

MS: My dribbling was a weakness before, but I've worked hard and improved. My goal-scoring instincts have sharpened too, though I still want to keep getting better.

With the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers next month, how confident are you?

MS: We're prepared, but we'll need to step up our game. This tournament was just the beginning -- we'll be facing stronger teams, but we trust Peter Butler sir and hope to bring back good results.

You've spent a lot of time on the bench with the senior national team. Do you think this performance can help you break into the starting eleven?

MS: That decision is up to the coach. If he's happy with my performance, maybe I'll get that chance. I believe I can contribute more if I start for the senior team.



Crunch time in Manchester with series on the line



Since 2014, England have won eight Tests out of the 10 they've played at Old Trafford in Manchester. They lost one and drew the other.

In nine Tests played at the venue between the sides, England hold the upper hand with four wins in nine matches. India are winless at the venue as the other five contests ended in draws.

AGENCIES

India face a tough selection conundrum in their bowling attack as they prepare for the must-win fourth Test against England at Old Trafford, starting today.

With the series on the line and trailing 2-1 after a narrow 22-run defeat at Lord's, the visitors must make a call on their third seamer, with both Akash Deep and Arshdeep Singh sidelined due to injuries.

Captain Shubman Gill confirmed on Tuesday that Akash Deep is out with a groin issue, and right-arm pacer Anshul Kamboj, a late addition to the squad, is in line to debut. India must now choose between the uncapped Kamboj and the out-of-form Prasidh Krishna, as they aim to support the returning Jasprit Bumrah, who is set to lead the attack in what could be his final appearance of the series due to workload management.

Bumrah's availability provides a timely boost, having missed the second Test but returned in the third, albeit in a losing cause. Assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate confirmed that India are likely to go with Bumrah, highlighting the stakes involved.

India's team balance could also be bolstered by the return of Rishabh Pant, who trained extensively on Monday after recovering from a finger injury. His inclusion would strengthen both the batting and wicketkeeping departments. Meanwhile, England will look to wrap up the series in Manchester, sticking with a settled XI barring one enforced change -- left-arm spinner Liam Dawson replaces the injured Shaheen Shah. Dawson, who last played Test cricket in 2017, returns on the back of strong county form.

Despite their lead, England have concerns of their own, particularly with a fragile top order. Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett have lacked consistency, and Ollie Pope has only shown flashes of form. Still, captain Ben Stokes has kept faith in their aggressive template.

The battle between all-rounders Stokes and Ravindra Jadeja could once again be pivotal. Stokes starred with bat, ball, and a key run-out at Lord's, while Jadeja's unbeaten 61 nearly pulled off a remarkable comeback for India.



Md Maroof ur Rahman Mazumder has been appointed as the Managing Director of Saudi-Bangladesh Industrial and Agricultural Investment Company Ltd (SABINCO). With a career spanning over two decades, Mr Maroof is a distinguished leader in the banking and financial services sector, specializing in debt capital markets, loan syndications and advisory services. He began his professional journey in 2002 at Arab Bangladesh Bank Limited and quickly rose through the ranks at Trust Bank Limited, where he led corporate banking and loan syndication. Later he joined Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh in 2009 as Head of Capital Markets and served for 14 years where he played the key role for the development of Bangladesh Debt Capital Market by raising more than USD 10 billion fund both in local and foreign currency. He was promoted to Executive Director in recognition of his outstanding performance, overseeing a wide array of debt capital market and loan syndication transactions across multiple sectors, including large local and foreign corporates, financial institutions, and government agencies. His portfolio includes landmark deals such as financing for Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, and major multinational companies like Grameenphone, Robi, Lafarge Holcim and many large local conglomerates, financial institutions and banks.

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Before joining SABINCO, he was Managing Director and CEO of NDB Capital Ltd, a subsidiary of National Development Bank of Sri Lanka. Mr Maroof was also instrumental for advising the Government of Bangladesh for the debut sovereign rating by S&P and arranged a number of road shows in Singapore, Hong Kong, Mumbai and London to attract offshore investors. Known for his leadership, he has fostered high-performance teams and mentored countless professionals in the banking industry. He holds an MBA from IBA, Dhaka University, and a B.Sc. in Civil Engineering from BUET.