

Taskin shines in clinical win

SPORTS REPORTER FROM SYLHET

Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed picked up from where he had left off in the series against Pakistan, claiming 4-28 against Netherlands in the first of three T20Is to set up a convincing eight-wicket win for Bangladesh at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

"After injury I was struggling for rhythm but day by day it's getting better. I worked hard on the last few days in training and hard work always pays off."

Taskin Ahmed said after the match



SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh vs
Netherlands,
1st T20I

Netherlands: 136 for eight in 20 overs
(Nidamanuru 26, O'Dowd 23, Pringle 16;
Taskin 4-28, Saif 2-18)

Bangladesh: 138 for two in 13.3 overs
(Litton 54 not out, Saif 29 not out, Tanzid
29; Dutt 1-30, Pringle 1-16)

Result:
Bangladesh won
by eight wickets

**Player of the
match:** Taskin
Ahmed

experience to get wickets in Mirpur.

But against Netherlands in Sylhet, Taskin was noticeably quicker, claiming his first two wickets with some extra bounce he extracted off the pitch and the latter two through slower deliveries.

On Saturday, Taskin gave Bangladesh the early breakthrough as he removed Dutch openers Max O'Dowd (23 off 15) and Vikramjit Singh (four off 11) and in his first 10 balls, conceded just two runs.

Taskin was impressive in the death overs as well as he took the wickets of Kyle Klein (nine off 12) and Noah Croes (11 off 13) to finish with an impressive bowling figures for the third straight T20I and helped Bangladesh restrict their opponents for just 136-8 in 20 overs after sending them to bat first.

Saif Hassan, who returned to the T20I after nearly four years, also chipped in with a couple of wickets in his two overs of off-spin.

With a four wicket haul, Taskin now has 10 wickets in four T20Is against the Dutch at an economy of 6.5 and an average of 10.4.

In reply, captain Litton Das hit a splendid 54 not out off 29 balls while Saif struck an unbeaten 19 ball 36 as Bangladesh chased down the target in just 13.3 overs and went 1-0 up in the series. The second match will be held at the same venue on Monday.

Reds, Gunners fight to stay perfect

REUTERS

Liverpool and Arsenal will both try to remain perfect in the Premier League today when they meet in Merseyside, England.

Liverpool (2-0, 6 points) have had the far more adventurous route to their flawless record, twice giving back late leads only to score match-winning goals even later.

Last Monday, it was Mo Salah setting up Rio Nguimoh deep in second half stoppage time to seal a 3-2 victory at Newcastle United, but the good news for Reds manager Arne Slot is that so far, his side appears less reliant on the veteran Salah for their attacking production, thanks in no small part to their summer transfer business.

In particular, former Eintracht Frankfurt attacker Hugo Ekitike is off to a quick start at Anfield with two goals and an assist.

Meanwhile, Arsenal (2-0, 6 points) have yet to concede in the new campaign and last Saturday romped to a 5-0 home victory over Leeds United that was realistically decided when Bukayo Saka scored the Gunners' second goal in first-half stoppage time.

But Saka, Kai Havertz and Martin Odegaard are already dealing with injuries, with the former two expected to miss at least several weeks.

That will put the focus on summer signings like Noni Madueke, Viktor Gyokeres and Eberechi Eze, who were acquired in part to help the Gunners combat exactly these kinds of situations.

NCL triumph brings no revival for Sylhet cricket

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

Looking in from the outside, cricket in Sylhet seems to be thriving.

Sylhet division are the reigning champions of the first-class competition National Cricket League (NCL), earning their maiden title last season, and many players from this part of the country, like Zakir Hasan, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Nasum Ahmed, Jaker Ali Anik, Ebadot Hossain and Khaled Ahmed are currently representing Bangladesh in different formats.

But hidden behind the velvet robe of NCL glory and the honour of being a nursery for national stars is the bare skeleton of a cricketing system that is grinding to a halt, with pre-board election chatter overshadowing on-field stagnation.

The sorry state
After their triumph in the NCL in October, expectations were sky high regarding the sport's overall development in this part of the country. The region was crying out for infrastructural revamp, more competitive leagues and a structured talent hunt programme.

But the NCL silverware did not bring with it any of the desired perks. On the contrary, the last 12 months or so have been one of the most testing periods for cricket in this division.

In August last year, the National Sports Council (NSC) dissolved all divisional and district sports associations in the country following the student-led mass uprising

that led to the ouster of the Awami League government.

Since June, an 11-member ad-hoc committee formed by the NSC has been running the Sylhet Divisional Sports Association, and the four districts under the division also have ad-hoc committees now.

But according to local organisers and coaches, the lengthy inactive period prior to the formation of the committees has stagnated the region's cricket.

"There was no programme or competition in Sylhet after winning the NCL title last season," Sylhet divisional team manager Ali Wasiquzzaman Chowdhury told The Daily Star on Friday.

"The [Sylhet] International Cricket Stadium is mainly engaged for the national team, first class players and other programmes. But for the other players, there is no scope. The district stadium has to be shared with football, hockey and other sports," Ali said, detailing the shortage of training facilities in the region.

"Once there were cement wickets in every area in the town. But now, if you roam around the city, you will see only two to four wickets. The situation has changed a lot. In the last few years, the area-wise teams have vanished."

Ali also said that the Sylhet District Cricket League, the most prominent 50-over tournament in the region, did not take place last year owing to political unrest.

"Due to the situation in the country, the tournament didn't take place last year. In the last 35 years, this league has happened almost every year. We don't have leagues in Sunamganj, Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts. Sunamganj, Moulvibazar haven't had a league in 12-13 years. But

still there are people who will go to the board as councillors without doing anything," he added.

Main focus on BCB polls?

Considering the lengthy inactive period, the primary focus of cricket administrators in Sylhet right now should be on revitalising the game.

However, the buzzword in the annals of Sylhet's cricket administration right now is the forthcoming Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) elections in October.

It is learnt that three members of the Sylhet Divisional Sports Association's ad-hoc committee – Dr. Md. Enamul Haque Chowdhury, Rahat Shams and Enamul Haque Jnr – are frontrunners to get the sole Sylhet divisional councillorship for the polls. Sylhet division head coach Rajin

Saleh is likely to get the councillorship from the Sylhet District Sports Association.

"Previously, there was only one party. But now, there are many parties and the situation is different... As there are different types of pressure, the authorities will have to give it a lot of consideration before giving someone a councillorship," a local organiser said, requesting anonymity.

Sylhet will host the next BCB board meeting on September 1, and the divisional association will accord a felicitation to the NCL winning team on the seventh – both events will be attended by BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul.

Some feel that these visits could be the perfect backdrop for settling the councillorship issues behind the scenes, but Sylhet division's ad-hoc committee member Rahat claimed that they are planning to capitalise on these events by getting the nod from the president on various development plans.

"We have divided the BCB president's 'triple century' plan into nine different segments at a granular level. Among them, coaching development, school cricket development, women's cricket development, regional cricket branding, sustainable fundraising and stakeholder management will be executed soon after getting clearance from the BCB. "We will invite 350 people, which would include different stakeholders, during the reception programme. We will try to secure the cricketing resources required for the development of Sylhet cricket," he said.



American hopes suffer blow

REUTERS, New York

Sixth seed Ben Shelton retired from his US Open third round clash with Frenchman Adrian Mannarino on Friday before 17th seed Frances Tiafoe was knocked out in a big blow to American hopes of ending their 22-year wait for a men's Grand Slam champion.

Twenty-three American men began the tournament looking to win the title and emulate compatriot Andy Roddick, who claimed the Flushing Meadows crown in 2003.

But Friday's shock results meant fourth seed Taylor Fritz was left standing as the country's best title hope at the year's final major after he fought past Swiss Jerome Kym 7-6(3) 6-7(9) 6-4 6-4 at Louis Armstrong Stadium.

Fritz could be joined in the fourth round by Tommy Paul, the only other American man left in the draw, with the 14th seed set to face a tricky challenge when he takes on Kazakh 23rd seed Alexander Bublik at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Saturday.

Shelton grabbed his left shoulder and winced in pain after hitting a forehand early in the fourth set in a tight clash at Louis Armstrong Stadium and pinched



at the spot as he prepared to receive a serve from Mannarino in the second game.

He managed to hold his own for a while against left-hander Mannarino, who produced some moments of magic, but looked dejected at the break and shed tears into his towel before pulling out, to gasps from the home crowd.

"When he started having pain, he was leading in the match," said Mannarino, who rallied from

a set down to draw level at 3-6 6-3 4-6 6-4 when the match was abandoned.

"He probably would have won. It's unfortunate for me and very lucky for me. I don't really know what to say right now. I suppose I'm happy to get through. I wish him the best."

"I was having good fun on the court - there were some long rallies. I lost some of them, won some of them. It was fun to play. Ben's such an amazing player, it was a great match."

"I was enjoying my time on court, even if I was losing."

American fans were left to swallow another bitter pill around an hour later, when Tiafoe, who last failed to reach the Flushing Meadows fourth round in 2019, crashed to a 6-4 6-3 7-6(7) defeat by Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff on Grandstand.

Struff regained his composure after a flurry of double faults towards the end of the contest to send out last year's semi-finalist.

"I think everybody knows sometimes it's tough to serve out the match," Struff said.

"I tried to stay calm and tried to refocus and I managed to get some energy back so I was very happy about that."



Bangladesh's Mohammad Abdullah (L) chest-bumps with a teammate after one of his two goals during their 8-3 win over Chinese Taipei in the 2025 Men's Hockey Asia Cup at the Rajgir Sports Stadium in Bihar, India yesterday. The result has all but guaranteed them third place in Pool B, setting up a must-win clash against South Korea tomorrow to keep their Super 4s hopes alive in the eight-team competition.

PHOTO: AHF



Munshiganj (red) and Madaripur (green) players vie for possession in the curtain-raiser of the National Football Championship at the Birsreshtho Fl. Lt. Matiur Rahman Stadium yesterday. Hosts Munshiganj prevailed 2-1 with second-half strikes to mark a winning start, bringing together all 64 districts in a nationwide festival of football organised by the Youth and Sports Ministry and the Bangladesh Football Federation.

PHOTO: BFF