

A series won, an opportunity missed

SPORTS REPORTER

When it comes to guessing which side of a tossed coin will come up on top, Bangladesh T20I captain Litton Das' track record isn't too great.

In the 18 T20Is he has captained Bangladesh, including the second T20I against Netherlands in Sylhet on Monday, Litton has won the toss only six times.

In the ongoing series, however, Litton called correctly in both matches so far – winning two tosses in a row in a bilateral series for the first time.

Arguably, his toss winning streak came in a series where toss was hardly a factor in the outcome as just like the opening game, which the hosts had won by eight wickets, the Tigers mauled the Dutch in the second T20I, winning by nine wickets and taking an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

On Monday, Nasum Ahmed, named player-of-the-match, picked up 3-21 while Mustafizur Rahman and Taskin Ahmed claimed a couple of wickets each to wrap up the Dutch for just 103 in 17.3 overs. In reply, Tanzid Hasan Tamim hit an unbeaten 54 off 40 as the hosts completed a



Bangladesh left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed celebrates picking a wicket as the Tigers rout the Netherlands in a nine-wicket win in the second of three T20Is at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. [Inset] captain Litton Das and opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim run between the wickets during their unbeaten 64-run stand, giving the home side an unassailable 2-0 lead.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

‘To go to the next level, Dutch cricket needs investment’

Netherlands pacer Paul van Meekeren has been a constant thorn in Bangladesh's way at ICC events. Meekeren has played one match each against Bangladesh in the 2016, 2022 and 2024 editions of the ICC T20 World Cup and picked up two wickets in every appearance. Moreover, the 32-year-old pacer claimed 4-23 during the 2023 ICC World Cup match in Kolkata, handing the Tigers a humiliating defeat. Meekeren has also played a season in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). In a recent conversation with The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan, Meekeren spoke about cricketing infrastructure in Netherlands, his performance against Bangladesh and his BPL experience. The excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): The series against Bangladesh was a last-minute arrangement. Are you guys underprepared for the series?

Paul van Meekeren (PVM): We've come off quite a bit of cricket. We have been playing in the ICC Cricket World Cup League and also the T20 World Cup qualifiers in the last few months. Then we had a couple of weeks off, which we probably wouldn't have really had if we knew that the series was happening. We had two or three weeks of training. We had a little bit of weather around, so it wasn't the ideal preparation, but it is what it is.

Unfortunately, we have a few guys missing due to unavailability, and then the weekend before we came here, we lost another couple of players when they ran into each other. So, we had to call up a few guys, some coming back into the team who haven't played for a while.

DS: Netherlands have been an Associate nation for a long time. What is keeping them from making the jump to full membership?

PVM: Getting sponsors could elevate the game back home. We don't have grounds like this [Sylhet Cricket International Cricket Stadium] in the Netherlands. Most clubs at the highest level play on a mat wicket. Some clubs in the highest league play on an artificial field – two football fields next to each other and then the cricket wicket in the middle. That's how most of us learned our cricket in Holland. That's how I learned my cricket.



Most of the grounds we train at have volunteer groundsmen. To get professional groundsmen who can prepare good wickets, you need money. To get more money, you need to become a full member. But for that, you need to put in performances and have the infrastructure. And if the infrastructure needs to be put in, you need to have respect for the money and sponsors.

I think for us to get to the next level, we need to get a sponsor who wants to go on a journey with us for 3-4 years, who wants to invest in Dutch cricket.

DS: How do you always manage to do well against Bangladesh at ICC events?

PVM: The night before the first T20I, I realised that whenever I've played against Bangladesh, I've done well. I hope I can come back to that level in the last two T20Is and be the Bangladesh killer again and maybe win a game.

DS: You have played in many franchise leagues, including a season for Khulna Tigers in the BPL. Where do you rate the BPL compared to other tournaments?

PVM: It's a fantastic tournament to play in. You see the passionate fans. It's a beautiful country. There may be a few off-field things that need to be sorted out, but there's a lot of potential in the tournament.

When I played here, we had the ADRS system, not the proper DRS. I believe that's in place now. So, some changes are being made. If they can get the off-field issues sorted out with the players, it could be one of the best franchise leagues in the world here.

DS: Has the negative media attention made overseas players like you reluctant to play in the BPL?

PVM: For us [Dutch players], not at all. It's not the only league in the world that has these issues. There are more leagues in the world that have these issues. If you ask any player here if they want to come to the BPL, they will say, "Yes, please." I don't think any player would avoid playing in the BPL. I think it's the other way around. They really, really want to play in it.

Women's WC prize money to eclipse men's

REUTERS, New Delhi

The International Cricket Council announced a bumper hike in the prize money for this year's women's 50-over World Cup on Monday, making it financially more lucrative than the 2023 edition of the men's event held in India.

The winner's purse of \$4.48 million is significantly higher than the \$1.32 million awarded to Australia when they won the 2022 World Cup and exceeds the \$4 million their men's team pocketed after lifting the 2023 World Cup in India.

The overall tournament prize money of \$13.88 million is a considerable jump from the \$3.5 million in 2022 and eclipses the \$10 million at the 2023 men's World Cup.

Each of the eight participating teams is guaranteed \$250,000.

The 13th edition of the women's World Cup will kick off in Guwahati on September 30.

The tournament, which culminates with the final on November 2, will be played across five venues in India, while Pakistan will play their matches in Colombo.



TOTAL PRIZE MONEY: **\$13.88 million**
WINNER'S PURSE: **\$4.48 million**
RUNNERS-UP'S PURSE: **\$2.24 million**
PARTICIPATION MONEY: **\$250,000**

BCB polls in first week of October

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Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will hold its elections in the first week of October, and a new probe committee has been formed to assess last season's Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) corruption-related reports and other issues, confirmed BCB director Nazmul Abedeen Fahim after a board meeting in Sylhet yesterday.

Key decisions from the meeting:

Elections: To be held in the first week of October; a three-member election commission will finalise dates and schedule.

Umpiring reform: Simon Taufel appointed for two years to assess, train and grade umpires, and build capacity among local officials. "We hope to become somewhat self-sufficient in future," BCB director Fahim said.

Coaching boost: A Level 3 coaching programme will be launched this month under BCB's initiative, with Ashley Ross leading sessions. "This will also be a very high-profile programme".

BPL consultancy: New York-based International Management Group (IMG) appointed on a three-year deal as marketing consultants for the BPL, in a move that could "take the league to a new level commercially".

BPL corruption review: A four-member team formed to study the independent inquiry report on corruption and mismanagement in the last BPL; recommendations due by September 7.



Record Isak deal headlines D-day

STAR SPORTS DESK

Liverpool have agreed a British record fee of £125 million to land Newcastle United striker Alexander Isak, ending the summer's longest-running transfer saga.

BBC reports suggest the deal could rise to £130m with add-ons, with the Swedish forward expected to sign a six-year contract at Anfield.

The Reds had already shattered their own transfer record earlier this summer by signing German playmaker Florian Wirtz for an initial £100m, rising to £116m with add-ons.

Liverpool also swooped in for Crystal Palace captain Marc Guhi for £35m, taking their spending to a staggering £451.2m (excluding add-ons) – the highest single-summer outlay in Premier League history. This makes them only the second English side to surpass the £400m mark in one window, after Chelsea's £401.2m spree in 2023.

City get Donnarumma

Manchester City are on the verge of signing out-of-favour PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma for £30.3m, with Ederson set to join Turkish side Fenerbahce. Ederson, 32, won six Premier League titles plus the



Champions League and FA Cup after joining from Benfica for £35m but has been sidelined this season and will move to the Turkey for £12.1m.

United sign Lammens to sort goalkeeping troubles

Manchester United have agreed a deal to sign goalkeeper Senne Lammens from Royal Antwerp for £18.1m plus add-ons on a five-year deal. It brings to an end United's interest in Aston

Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. The move directly aims to sort out United goalkeeping troubles. Turkey's Altay Bayindir made errors in the league and last season's number one Andre Onana sparks little confidence and was at fault for a goal in their EFL Cup exit to League Two side Grimsby Town earlier this week.

Villa close in on loan deals for Sancho, Elliott

Aston Villa are close to signing season-long loan deals for Manchester United's Jadon Sancho and Liverpool's Harvey Elliott. United winger Sancho, turned down a move to Roma earlier in the window, while there was also strong interest from fellow Italian side Juventus but will now join English midfielder Elliott at Villa Park. Villa have also signed Sweden captain Victor Lindelof on a free transfer from Manchester United.

Newcastle sign another forward

With the departure of Isak, Newcastle boss Eddie Howe strengthened his forward line with the club-record signing of Nick Woltemade from Stuttgart for £63m and now has followed it up by bringing in Brentford forward Yoane Wissa for a deal worth £55m.

DJOKOVIC ADDS TO GRAND RECORDS

Novak Djokovic made Grand Slam history at the age of 38 on Sunday with a commanding 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 victory over Jan-Lennard Struff.

His win over Struff was his eighth in as many attempts.

The victory moved Djokovic into his 64th Grand Slam quarterfinal, extending his all-time record.

Djokovic advanced to the last eight at Flushing Meadows for the 14th time.

Their combined age of 73 years and 60 days made this the oldest U.S. Open men's singles match in the fourth round or later during the professional era.

Djokovic now has a 36-0 record against qualifiers at Grand Slams.