

ANOTHER SEMIFINAL disguised as Super 4 clash

EKUSH TAPADER from Dubai

The Asia Cup has often thrown up fixtures that feel like knockouts long before the final itself, and the ongoing 17th edition is no different.

Bangladesh and Pakistan meet tonight in Dubai, once more with everything on the line -- effectively a semifinal disguised as a Super Four clash.

The situation seven years ago was strikingly similar, though in a 50-over format rather than T20. Then too, Bangladesh and Pakistan faced what was essentially a do-or-die clash, and the pre-match atmosphere leaned heavily towards Pakistan progressing and meeting India but, eventually, it did not happen.

This time, Pakistan pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi resisted the temptation to fuel talk of a final against India in yesterday's press conference. "India haven't reached the final yet... Right now, we're here to win the final and lift the Asia Cup."

Back in 2018, Shoib Malik preferred not to dwell on the opposition, but Afridi openly acknowledged the challenge Bangladesh pose. He pointed out captain Litton Das and others as players Pakistan could not take lightly. Litton, however, was rested as a precautionary measure following a minor injury as the Tigers took on India yesterday.

"Bangladesh have been playing really well recently... Whenever you play against such a side, you must attack first; we can't give them any opportunity."

On head-to-head T20 record, Pakistan hold the clear upper hand. Yet the picture is less one-sided in recent years. The last two



- Bangladesh have a bleak head-to-head T20I record against Pakistan, winning five and losing 20 of the 25 games.
- The Tigers, however, are unbeaten in Asia Cup T20Is against Pakistan -- Bangladesh won the only game played, securing a five-wicket win in Mirpur in 2016.
- Pakistan have played 36 matches at

the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, winning 19, losing 16, and tying 1. Of those 16 defeats, 8 came while batting first and 8 while chasing.

● Since the start of 2021, Pakistan have suffered 6 losses at the venue, 5 of which came when batting first (they also won 5 matches during this period). Their first-innings totals in those 5 defeats were 176-4, 147, 121, 127, and 171.

years have been nearly even: Pakistan with four wins, Bangladesh with three. The Tigers will still carry the memory of their home series win over Pakistan last July, where slower pitches worked in

their favour. Earlier this year, in Lahore, they had been well beaten on batting-friendly tracks. The Dubai surface is expected to fall somewhere between -- a wicket that offers enough for bowlers but

also bounce early for strokeplay.

Pakistan, for their part, have looked short of their best, especially in their consecutive defeats to India. Bangladesh, though relatively consistent, defeated Afghanistan in the group stage and Sri Lanka in their Super Four opener, keeping themselves firmly in contention to reach the final hurdle regardless of their result over India.

The key worry for Pakistan remains their misfiring top order, with Fakhar Zaman and Sahibzada Farhan in comparatively decent form. Bangladesh appear more balanced in that regard, with Towhid Hridoy rediscovering touch and opener Saif Hassan proving to be somewhat of a revelation. Wily fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman's rhythm, supported by spin options and discipline at the death overs, could well make the difference.

Pakistan's campaign has not been without recovery signs, but their victory over Sri Lanka reflected their resilience. Afridi is again leading with the ball, Abrar Ahmed has offered control, and even their depth has been questioned with Haris Rauf left out early on. Yet eyebrows were raised when Mohammad Nawaz was overlooked in successive matches, despite coach Mike Hesson once hailing him as the "world's best left-arm spinner" -- a claim that drew derision online.

Now, two-time champions Pakistan must win tonight to keep their final hopes alive, while the Tigers -- yet to secure silverware in multi-nation competition -- will again aim to be on the cusp of a historic chapter.

The backdrop is familiar, the stakes immense.



Among the objectors were 15 clubs that were denied councillorship due to various irregularities and are currently under investigation by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC). These clubs have appealed against their exclusion from the voters' list.

Initially, the BCB had included these 15 clubs in the Category-2 voters' list before submitting it to the EC. However, the EC later chose not to retain them in the list, citing "greater national interest" -- as mentioned in a letter attached to the draft list revealed on Tuesday.

Incumbent BCB director Iftekhar Rahman Mithu, representing Viking Cricket Academy -- one of the 15 excluded clubs -- argued that according to the BCB constitution, such clubs cannot be disqualified unless proven guilty.

"We have applied for natural justice now. I believe it's a violation of the BCB constitution... We are now waiting for tomorrow's hearing. If the verdict doesn't go in our favour, we will take legal steps," said Mithu, expressing hope for a fair decision from the EC.

In addition to the clubs' objections, multiple complaints were filed against the councillor nomination of former BCB president Faruque Ahmed, who was nominated by Rangers Cricket Academy despite reportedly submitting his form after the deadline.

Meanwhile, a representative reportedly filed a complaint on behalf of former cricketer Sayed Halim Shah, who claimed that Halim is a committee member of Old DOHS Sports Club, objecting about the councillorship of Tamim Iqbal.

In the objection letter, which did not bear Halim's name, it was claimed that Tamim has no affiliation with the club while being a running player. As Tamim is yet to retire from all forms of competitive cricket, he can't represent at the BCB, according to the complaint.

It has been learnt that the objection wasn't received as Halim, who lives abroad, didn't submit the letter physically, however, EC Sibgat Ullah didn't want to make a comment on the matter.

The Daily Star tried to contact Halim multiple times but he could not be reached.

Additionally, former BCB director Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan also submitted an objection after his councillorship from Nakhalpara Cricketers was denied due to the same issue affecting the 15 clubs.

Following today's hearings, the EC is expected to publish the final voters' list on Friday ahead of the BCB elections scheduled for October 6.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'I'm not finished yet': Mabia after career-best showing

SPORTS REPORTER

Less than four months after setting a new personal best, South Asian Games gold medallist Mabia Akter Simanta outdid herself again on Wednesday, lifting a career-best total weight of 210kg -- 92kg snatch and 118kg clean and jerk -- to win gold in the newly-introduced 69kg weight category in the 41st Men's and 18th Women's National Senior Weightlifting Championships at the Shaheed Captain M Mansur Ali Handball Stadium.

Earlier in May, Mabia had lifted 204kg -- 89kg in snatch and 115kg in clean and jerk -- in the 71kg weight category during the Asian Weightlifting Championships in China.

On Wednesday, the Bangladesh Ansar weightlifter was far ahead of her competitors as silver winner Unnati Biswas lifted 144kg -- 65kg snatch and 79kg in clean and jerk -- while Shayela Akter Jannat lifted a total of 128kg to win bronze.

"I was determined to perform because I was left out of the scholarship, and the coach didn't want to train me. I wanted to maintain my performance, and show my critics that I am not finished yet," Mabia told The Daily Star.

Mabia, who won gold in the 2016 and 2019 SA Games in the 63kg and 76kg category respectively, said it was a challenge to get down to the new weight.

"It has been challenging for me because I had to lose weight to compete in the 69kg weight category, newly introduced internationally in place of 71kg, the category I competed in China in May," she said.

"I am happy after breaking my personal record," said Mabia, who also thanked Bangladesh Ansar and Bangladesh Weightlifting Federation for their support.



It was a night to remember for an 18-year-old Franco Mastantuono, who netted his first Real Madrid goal in their 4-1 win over Levante at the Ciutat de Valencia stadium on Tuesday. Vinicius Junior opened the scoring on the night with a brilliant outside foot finish, and Mastantuono smashed one in the top corner, before Kylian Mbappe hit another brace. Mbappe leads the league's scoring chart with seven goals, as Xabi Alonso's Real Madrid stayed perfect with their sixth straight win in LaLiga, and seventh in all competitions.

PHOTO: AFP

ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD MARITIME DAY 2025

MESSAGE FROM



BANGLADESH MERCHANT MARINE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION
Our Ocean Our Obligation Our Opportunity

On World Maritime Day 2025, the Bangladesh Merchant Marine Officers' Association (BMMOA) joins the local and global community in celebrating the maritime industry's vital role in our daily lives and the global economy. This year's theme, "Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity," resonates deeply with Bangladesh, a nation rich in maritime heritage and immense potential.

The maritime sector is the backbone of international trade, transporting more than 80% of the world's goods. It is indispensable for our economy, ensuring the global supply of essential commodities like food, energy, raw materials, and manufactured goods. In Bangladesh, this sector is a key driver of economic growth, creating jobs, generating foreign currency, and supporting industrial development.

The maritime sector in Bangladesh is an interconnected ecosystem, with various stakeholders working in tandem to keep our economy afloat. From the seafarers who navigate the world's oceans to the port authorities, port operators, ship owners & shipping companies, shipping agencies, freight forwarders, C&F agents, shipbuilders, ship recycling yards, maritime training institutions, and government agencies -- each plays a crucial role. This synergy is the backbone of our maritime success. However, our progress is challenged by incommensurate research, a lack of modern infrastructure, and limited access to financing. Overcoming these hurdles will unlock immense opportunities.

Currently, Bangladesh's maritime sector earns approximately \$1.75 billion in foreign currency annually through shipping, shipbuilding, ship recycling yard, and the employment of our seafarers on international vessels. By resolving barriers like seafarer visa issues, improving financing and taxation for ship procurement, and establishing global standard policies for shipbuilding, we can increase these earnings to \$7 billion annually.

We urge the government to address these challenges, support entrepreneurs in the sector, and allow the maritime industry to play a more significant role in our nation's sustainable economic future.

The time to act is now. Let us navigate these challenges together and chart a course toward a prosperous maritime future for Bangladesh.

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