

# BOOTERS look for reversed fortune in Hong Kong

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look to overturn their home defeat as they face Hong Kong, China, in the Asian Cup Qualifiers today at a packed Kai Tak Stadium in Hong Kong. Kick-off is scheduled for 6:00pm Bangladesh time.

With just one point from three matches, the men in red and green have only a slim chance of progressing to the finals. Their hopes were dealt a blow following a 4-3 loss at home to Hong Kong on October 9. To stay in contention, Bangladesh must win all three of their remaining fixtures – against Hong Kong, India, and Singapore – while relying on other results to go their way. A draw tonight would end their qualification hopes.

Coach Javier Cabrera is likely to bring changes to the starting eleven, particularly after scrutiny over his line-up in the home leg. Fit-again centre-back Topu Barman, who made a late appearance in that match in Dhaka, is expected to start alongside Tariq Kazi. There may be alterations to the full-back positions as well.

Midfielder Shamit Shome, who scored with a fine header after coming on in the second half, is also expected to start. Cabrera previously noted that Shome was not at his best due to



PHOTO: BFF

travel, limited training, and jet lag, but now looks ready to feature from the outset.

Captain Jamal Bhuyan, who made an impact after coming on in the second half, later said he wanted himself to be in the starting XI. With Jamal being a fan favourite, Cabrera will be under pressure to start the seasoned campaigner in this do-or-die fixture.

Despite the pressure, Cabrera wants his team to replicate the fighting spirit and ambition they showed in Dhaka.

"It was a very competitive match, and we go into tomorrow with the same mentality and ambition. We

know we need three points to keep going."

Cabrera remained optimistic, believing Bangladesh have performed closely against their opponents but are yet to overcome the final hurdle.

"We're close to breaking the wall that takes us to the next level. We believe we're already there in terms of performance – but now it's about getting the win," he said.

Meanwhile, Raphael Markies, the Hong Kong forward who netted a hatrick in Dhaka, is focused on finishing the job.

"It was a crazy night (in Dhaka), but the job is only half done," said Markies. "This game is very important for us."

“ Always good to have fans cheering for you. I know it’s going to be sold out tomorrow, but a part of the fans will be from Bangladesh. So we appreciate that very much. I don’t think it’s going to be very cold. I think maybe 21/22 degrees (Celsius). I think it’s going to be perfect for the players to play in these conditions.

Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuyan regarding the spectators and the weather

## Will batters fire in dead rubber 3rd ODI?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh go into the dead rubber third and final ODI against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday not only to salvage some pride but also to figure out a method to handle Afghan spin, in particular Rashid Khan.

"I think they are playing Rashid, not the ball," Bangladesh's spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed had said after the 81-run defeat in the second ODI which saw them lose the series.

A mental block against Rashid may have played a part, however, it's also plainly visible that the Bangladesh batters have consistently failed to pick his googly from the hand nor, have they figured out an alternative way to contend with it.

The 27-year-old has accounted for eight wickets in two games so far this series, taking full advantage of a Bangladesh middle-order packed with right-handers.

The management has the option of bringing in left-handed Shamim Hossain into the middle-order to counter the wrist spin of Rashid, but it remains to be seen whether they take the bet.

Meanwhile, the top-order has found no respite against Azmatullah Omarzai, who has picked up six wickets in two games this series.

Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Saif Hassan have shown glimpses of fire but not been able to carry on but the bigger problem is Najmul Hossain Shanto's poor form.

Since his 77 against New Zealand in the ICC Champions' Trophy this year in February, Shanto's highest score in his last five innings is 23. At No.3, he has to carry the lion's share of the responsibility to build the innings.

Further down the order, Tawhid Hridoy and skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz too have not left an impact, both guilty of not rotating the strike enough, inviting scoreboard pressure.

Bangladesh have now lost three back-to-back ODI series against Afghanistan and Miraz's captaincy stint has not started brightly either, suffering consecutive series losses since taking over from Shanto in June this year.

With the 2027 World Cup qualification equation now coming to the limelight, the Tigers have their task cut out to not only find answers to the challenges posed by Afghanistan but also to find a fresh approach in how they play ODI cricket.

### SHORT CORNER

#### Noman derails South Africa to 216-6

Spinner Noman Ali grabbed four wickets to restrict South Africa to 216-6 at the close of play on day two of the first Test in Lahore on Monday, despite a fighting half century from Tony de Zorzi. Spinners dominated on a turning Gaddafi Stadium pitch as all the day's 11 wickets went to slow bowlers, with South African left-armers Senuran Muthusamy taking a career-best 6-117 to dismiss Pakistan for 378.

#### India close in on Test series sweep

India closed in on a 2-0 series sweep in the second Test despite some spirited West Indies batting led by centuries from John Campbell and Shai Hope on Monday. Needing 121 for victory after bowling out the West Indies for 390, the hosts reached 63-1 at stumps on day four at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium.

\*\*Read The Daily Star website for full stories.

## Hard-hitter Shorna finally turns up



PHOTO: BCB

SPORTS REPORTER

Known for her hard-hitting in domestic cricket, Bangladesh all-rounder Shorna Akter had long struggled to showcase her abilities in international cricket.

But on Monday, the 18-year-old finally delivered on her promise with a blistering unbeaten 51 off 35 balls, steering Bangladesh to a competitive 232-6 against South Africa in their ICC Women's World Cup fixture in Visakhapatnam.

Prior to this match, Shorna had career strike rate of 60.88 in WODIs after 21 matches. But in contrast, in the last Women's Dhaka Premier League, a 50-over domestic competition, she had made 277 runs in six innings for Abahani Limited at an impressive strike rate of 112.60.

Against South Africa, Bangladesh were looking for acceleration after reaching 150-2 in 40 overs but lost skipper Nigar Sultana Joty in the 41st, dismissed by left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba after making 32.

The dismissal brought Shorna to the middle, who wasted no time, finding the boundary in the second ball she faced and launched the first six of the innings in the following over.

Her innings gathered momentum as she punished South African bowlers all around the park. During the 47th over, she smashed pacer Tumi Sekhukhune for a six and two fours in successive deliveries, collecting 18 runs from it.

Shorna cleared the ropes again off pacer Nadine de Klerk in the penultimate over, becoming the first Bangladeshi to hit three sixes in an innings in WODIs.

In the final over, she brought up her maiden fifty in just 34 balls, the fastest half-century by a Bangladeshi in WODIs, surpassing Joty's 39-ball effort against Scotland earlier this year.

Her powerful late surge, along with Ritu Moni's unbeaten 19 off eight balls, propelled Bangladesh to their second-ever 200-plus total in a World Cup match, the previous being 234 for seven against Pakistan in 2022.

Thanks to Shorna's heroics, Bangladesh added 82 runs in the final 10 overs, setting up a solid platform to push for another memorable World Cup win – and signaling the emergence of a genuine power-hitter for the Tigresses.

## Neymar must be fit for Brazil recall: Ancelotti

REUTERS, Tokyo

Neymar remains in Brazil's plans but the forward needs to be fully fit to earn a recall to the squad as he looks to reignite his international career ahead of next year's World Cup, coach Carlo Ancelotti said on Monday.

Neymar, 33, has not featured for Brazil in two years, with injuries hampering his ability to perform consistently since returning to Santos last year after a stint in Saudi Arabia.

Ancelotti, speaking ahead of Brazil's friendly against Japan in Tokyo on Tuesday, praised Neymar's talent but stressed the importance of his physical condition.

"Neymar can play at his highest level

in this team without any problems," the Italian told reporters. "When he is in good physical condition, he has the quality to play not only in Brazil but in any team in the world because of his talent."



The former Barcelona and Paris St Germain forward last wore the famous yellow jersey in October 2023, when he suffered serious knee ligament damage that has plagued comeback attempts.

Brazil head into Tuesday's match buoyed by an emphatic 5-0 victory over South

Korea last Friday, a performance that showcased their ability to entertain with the "beautiful game."

However, Ancelotti emphasised that balance and teamwork remain paramount.



Ghana completed a stunning turnaround by securing a spot at the 2026 FIFA World Cup with a 1-0 victory over Comoros, topping Group I with 25 points. Mohammed Kudus scored the decisive goal early in the second half, sending an ecstatic Accra crowd into celebration. The triumph marked redemption for Otto Addo's side after their shock failure to qualify for the 2025 AFCON. Addo, who refused to resign despite criticism, rebuilt the team with renewed belief and a fresh coaching staff. Ghana, quarterfinalists in 2010, become the fifth African nation to book their ticket to Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK