

ODI LIFT ON THE LINE

on ‘never-before-seen’ pitch



SPORTS REPORTER

After a 3-0 whitewash against Afghanistan, Bangladesh must recover quickly to avoid a fifth successive ODI series defeat. The upcoming home series against the West Indies offers a chance for respite, but familiar questions loom over their batting and the Mirpur wickets.

While head coach Phil Simmons said they are building towards the 2027 ODI World Cup through chops and changes to find the right profiles, the nature of wickets back home has hardly helped the batters' cause -- which raises the question: what exactly are they building towards?

The wicket in Mirpur, meanwhile, has drawn intrigue. Its dark soil suggests a spin-friendly surface, though West Indies head coach Darren Sammy described it as "something we've never seen before," acknowledging the unique challenge of subcontinental conditions for his batters.

Simmons, however, saw it differently. "It looks like a normal Mirpur wicket. So it usually has some sort of turn in it, which is good," he told reporters on Friday.

Bangladesh's reliance on spin could resurface, especially given the absence of a Rashid Khan-type threat in the West Indies attack.

Mirpur typically produces 250-run wickets, but even that has seemed distant of late, with inconsistent batting and poor shot selection proving costly.

Simmons hinted that mindset, more than skill, remains the issue. "We have the tools to put up 300," he said, referencing past successes in the Caribbean but also pointing to limitations.

"Well, in discussion, sometimes your composition and the tools you have determine how you're going to play. We don't have the tools like England to come out like that," he added.

Turning tracks do not necessarily mean low-scoring affairs. Bangladesh's headache stems from the fact that, bar Saif Hassan in recent series, few batters have applied themselves according to the demands of conditions and match situations.

Simmons conceded that the search for a stable opening pair continues. "We're still finding the right combinations," he said.

For Bangladesh, the series presents multiple objectives: to secure results, find respite through the tried-and-tested Mirpur formula, and at the same time develop consistency in batting for the future. Whether these ambitions align while ranking points are at stake remains the bigger question.



I'm glad you brought it up because I, first of all, don't agree with players having anything to do with social media. It is your right as a person to be on social media, to say what you want on social media. But as an international player, as a national player for Bangladesh, my players should not be on there.

Bangladesh head coach PHIL SIMMONS said in a pre-match press briefing yesterday, referring to batter Mohammad Naim's social media reaction to the hostility he faced recently.

A golden age of substandard batters

ASHEFAQ UL ALAM

Bangladesh opener Mohammad Naim's fortunes went from bad to worse to worst in a span of 72 hours.

On October 14, he was dismissed for an ugly seven off 24 balls in Bangladesh's third ODI against Afghanistan. The following day, he, alongside other players, got jeered by fans at the airport in Dhaka, and on the 16th, he was dropped for the three ODIs against West India at home, set to begin on Saturday.

In an ODI career spanning five years, Naim has only played nine matches and has made a mere 102 runs. Most tellingly, he is yet to play an innings of authority, a knock that would prove that he belongs in ODIs.

The irony is that Naim, who averages a paltry 12.75 for the Tigers in ODIs, possesses the third highest average among all Bangladeshis who have played a minimum of 50 List A matches.

What is even more ironic, considering the shambolic state of the team's batting department in the recent past, that the



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

of many experienced faces, Bangladesh's batting in ODIs is looking more vulnerable than it has in many years.

But why is that?

A lost league and broken pipeline

The Dhaka Premier League (DPL) is the only List-A domestic tournament in Bangladesh, the place where the country's cricketers learn how to play in the 50-over format.

The DPL gradually losing its zeal in the past decade or so has been on the news many times, but its true ramification is being felt right now.

For years in Bangladesh, cricketers have broken into the national setup from a same pattern.

The management earmarks talented players from age-level cricket, picks them for the developmental teams, sends them in tours with the 'A' team or the HP team, and eventually picks them for the national side.

Whenever Bangladesh needs reinforcements, selectors don't automatically select the in-form player from DPL, instead, they reuse players who were dropped a few series earlier, as the common consensus is that runs in the DPL is not enough to earn a Bangladesh cap.

This pattern creates a divide, with players who don't get spotted at an early age having little to no chance of making it into the national setup, making DPL only a source of earning a steady income for cricketer, not the last stop before playing for Bangladesh.

No other Test-playing country has such an overdependence on age-level cricket and pays such little attention to its top 50-over league. And till DPL regains at least some of its past glory, Bangladesh will continue to suffer in ODIs.

batted at least 50 times in List A cricket, Tawhid Hridoy possesses the highest average, 46.16 in 106 innings.

Naim is third, averaging 44.31 in 121 innings, and in between them is Mahidul Islam Ankon, the man who replaced Naim for the West Indies series and is yet to debut for Bangladesh, who averages 44.53 after 90 innings.

All three of them are in their mid-20s, with considerable experience behind them and a long career ahead, and should be leading the charge as the next generation of Bangladesh batters in the

50-over format.

But the reality is quite different. Ankon is yet to be tested at this level, Naim in his few chances has looked underprepared for ODIs and Hridoy, after a great start to his ODI career, is now scoring runs at a snail's pace in the middle-order.

Looking at the Tiger's current ODI setup, a few other names of young batters pop up like Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, and Saif Hassan, but all of whom are yet to emerge as the next big hope in ODI batting for Bangladesh.

Because of their failures and the exit

Tariq terminates Kings contract

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings centre-back Tariq Kazi announced the termination of his contract with the club, citing unpaid wages.

"Today, I have legally terminated my contract with Bashundhara Kings due to outstanding salary payments," Tariq announced in a Facebook post on Friday.

"There are moments in a footballer's life when silence becomes too heavy to carry," Tariq wrote. "For over a year, I lived through a period of inconsistent and delayed salary payments, months of uncertainty that tested my strength both as a professional and as a person. It wasn't only a financial challenge; it was an emotional burden that true professionals quietly endure."

The 25-year-old Bangladesh international, capped 33 times for the national team, joined the five-time Bangladesh Premier League champions in 2019 from Finland having been naturalised as a Bangladeshi citizen. Since then, he has been a mainstay in defence for both club and country, winning four league titles with the Kings.

Tariq also called for greater transparency and fairness in Bangladesh football.

"As I know too well, there are many players across the country facing even more difficult situations -- professionals who continue to suffer in silence as clubs systematically fail to meet their salary obligations. Their struggles often go unheard, but their dedication keeps the game alive," he said.

Despite repeated attempts, no Bashundhara Kings official could be reached for comment.



Bronze for BFF, but gold standard still distant

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) received the AFC President's Recognition Award for Grassroots Football in the Bronze category on Thursday night at a dazzling ceremony in Riyadh, marking a rare positive moment amid concerns over the country's continued struggle to produce quality footballers.

Under new president Tabith Awal, the BFF was recognised for expanding local tournaments, partnering with youth academies on educational programmes, and promoting inclusivity through initiatives such as child safeguarding, women's empowerment in the Hill Tracts, and the Street Children Festival.

The honour acknowledges the new committee's active year, but also highlights a long-standing weakness: the neglect of grassroots development that has left men's football stagnant. Despite 17 years of professional league football, most top-tier clubs lack genuine youth academies, existing only on paper to meet formal requirements -- something the BFF has long overlooked.

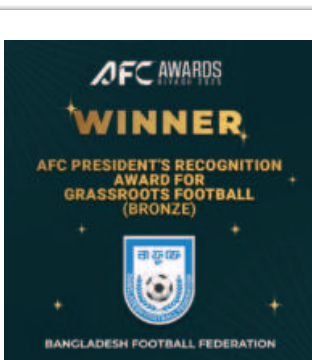
Globally, clubs form the backbone of player development, and without such systems, Bangladesh's progress will remain limited. While expatriate players like Hamza Choudhury and

Shamit Shome have revived interest, sustainable growth depends on a nationwide youth structure and stricter enforcement of development standards at club level.

The AFC also recognised Bangladesh's grassroots work in women's football, where an unconventional system -- keeping players in year-round training at the BFF dormitory -- has yielded remarkable results. Within a decade, Bangladesh's women reached the AFC Women's Asian Cup, proving the impact of structured development even without a domestic league.

This is not the BFF's first international recognition: under previous president Kazi Salahuddin, it won the AFC "Aspiring Award" in 2015. However, progress stalled as football's growth remained Dhaka-centric, and by 2023, FIFA sanctioned the federation over fund mismanagement, banning its general secretary for three years and restricting financial support.

Now, under Tabith, the challenge is to avoid repeating past mistakes and turn the AFC Bronze award into a springboard for sustainable reform -- one that could, in time, lead Bangladesh towards the AFC Grassroots Gold standard achieved by nations like the UAE.



Rivalries renew as Europe's leagues resume

AGENCIES

European football returns this weekend as the Premier League, La Liga, Bundesliga and Serie A resume following the international break.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool vs Manchester United

Liverpool hope to end a three-match losing run across competitions as they host rivals Manchester United, with Mohamed Salah seeking to extend his prolific record in the fixture. New boss Arne Slot needs a strong response after recent defensive lapses, while Ruben Amorim's side chase their first Anfield win since 2016.

Pressure on Postecoglou

Nottingham Forest coach Ange Postecoglou is still searching for his first win after seven league games. With fans growing restless and Sean Dyche linked as a possible replacement, Saturday's home clash against Chelsea could define his future.

LA LIGA

Barca's injury woes and Yamal's return

After a 4-1 defeat to Sevilla, Barcelona regroup with Lamine Yamal and Fermin Lopez returning from injury. Hansi Flick's depleted side host Girona as they



look to regain momentum before next week's Clasico against Real Madrid, with Pedri urging the team to show resilience.

BUNDESLIGA

Kane leads Bayern into Der Klassiker

Harry Kane's extraordinary form -- 18 goals in 10 matches -- headlines Bayern Munich's showdown with Borussia Dortmund. Both sides remain unbeaten, but Bayern's ruthless attack faces Dortmund's improved defence under



Niko Kovac in a clash that could shape the early title race.

SERIE A

Inter's title credentials on the line

Cristian Chivu's Inter, winners of five straight in all competitions, visit leaders Roma in a crucial top-of-the-table clash. With Lautaro Martinez in fine form but Marcus Thuram still sidelined, Inter Milan aim to prove their Scudetto credentials before next week's trip to Napoli.