

# Soumya, Saif show how it's done



## Bangladesh edge Nepal in volleyball thriller

Hosts Bangladesh recorded a hard-fought 3-2 sets victory over Nepal in their second match of the CAVA (Central Asian Volleyball Association) Cup at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on Thursday.

With their second win in as many matches, Bangladesh moved to the top of the six-team table, alongside Turkmenistan, who earlier in the day defeated Sri Lanka 3-1. In another fixture, Afghanistan swept past Maldives with a straight-sets win (25-17, 25-20, 25-12).

Fresh from a commanding 3-0 victory over Maldives, Bangladesh made a flying start against Nepal, clinching the first two sets 25-23, 25-20. However, Nepal fought back strongly to claim the next two sets 25-23, 25-16, forcing the contest into a decider. In a tense fifth set, the men in red and green held their nerve to edge out Nepal 16-14.

Bangladesh won the third ODI against the West Indies by 179 runs – their second biggest win in the format in terms of runs.

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

A sense of disbelief was palpable at the press box at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur after Bangladesh openers Soumya Sarkar and Saif Hassan unleashed a batting carnage against the West Indies in the series-deciding third ODI yesterday.

The Mirpur wicket, which came

Soumya Sarkar and Saif Hassan's 176-run partnership was the first century opening stand for Bangladesh in ODIs after 45 innings.

under heavy criticism during the opening two matches, appeared to have made a complete U-turn when the two openers tore into the visiting bowlers during their record-breaking 176-run stand off 152 balls.

The wicket, notably, was the same one that was used for the opening ODI on October 18, on which the hosts were bundled out for just 207.

The same black soil pitch that frustrated batters earlier suddenly turned into a batting paradise. However, once both openers departed – Saif for 80 off 71 balls and Soumya for 91 off 86 – the Mirpur track seemed to return to its usual state.

The remaining batters managed only 120 in the second half of the innings, as

Credit must be given to their openers, especially at the beginning. It's been a tough ask for the batters in general in this series, but you have to give credit to those who came out and really showed that impetus at the start.

Shai Hope, West Indies captain

they finished on 296-8.

Bangladesh then ensnared the West Indies in a spin trap, bundling them out for just 117 in 30.1 overs to complete a 179-run win – their second biggest ever in ODIs in terms of runs – to take the three-match series 2-1.

Nasum Ahmed and Rishad Hossain took three wickets each while Tanvir Islam and Mehidy Hasan Miraz shared the remaining four wickets. With this win, Bangladesh also secured their first ODI series triumph after four consecutive series defeats.

On a surface where most batters struggled, Soumya and Saif stood

apart with their intent, composure, and fearless stroke-making, effectively exorcising the Mirpur demons.

On a wicket offering turn from the very first over, both batters adopted contrasting yet effective approaches.

Saif punished loose deliveries with authority, while Soumya started cautiously – scoring only 10 off his first 17 balls – before breaking free with a six off Roston Chase in the sixth over.

Once settled, both openers rotated the strike smartly while finding boundaries regularly, leaving the West Indies bowlers bereft of ideas.

Their aggression forced skipper Shai Hope to turn to pace-bowling all-rounder Justin Greaves in the 10th over, abandoning the all-spin approach that had worked in the second ODI. But it had no affect as Soumya and Saif continued their assault.

Soumya reached his 14th ODI fifty off just 48 balls, while Saif brought up his maiden ODI half-century in 44 deliveries.

They put together the first century opening stand for Bangladesh in ODIs after 45 innings – the last one being the unbeaten 102-run stand between Litton Das and Tamim Iqbal against Ireland in Sylhet in March 2023.

The pair also surpassed Bangladesh's previous best opening stand against West Indies – 144 between Tamim and Soumya in Dublin in 2019. The 10 sixes struck by the two openers helped Bangladesh equal their highest number of sixes in an ODI innings (14), a record previously set against Zimbabwe in 2020.

Although the rest of the batters failed to follow suit, Soumya and Saif's innings serves as a reminder that with intent, confidence, and clean stroke-play, it is possible to succeed even on the much-maligned Mirpur wicket.

# Skipper Litton returns for WI T20Is

## BANGLADESH SQUAD

Litton Das (captain), Tanzid Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, Saif Hassan, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Nurul Hasan Sohan, Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Nasum Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Tanzim Sakib, Taskin Ahmed, Shoriful Islam.

## SPORTS REPORTER

Regular skipper Litton Das returned to lead the Tigers as the Bangladesh Cricket Board on Thursday announced a 15-member squad for the opening two T20Is against West Indies.

The 31-year-old wicketkeeper-batter has been sidelined for over a month after sustaining a side strain during the Asia Cup last month. The injury forced him to miss Bangladesh's final two Asia Cup fixtures, as well as the subsequent T20I and ODI series against Afghanistan in the UAE, and the ongoing home ODI series against the West Indies.

All-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, who featured in both the Asia Cup and the T20I series against Afghanistan, has been left out of the squad.

Meanwhile, Soumya Sarkar, who was named in the previous T20I squad but couldn't take part in the Afghanistan series due to visa issues, has also missed selection for the first two games.

The three matches will be played at the Bir Shrestha Shaheed Flight Lt Motiur Rahman Stadium in Chattogram on October 27, 29, and 31.

## SHORT CORNER

### Short, Connolly help Australia seal India series

A composed 74 from Matt Short and a maiden half-century by Cooper Connolly steered Australia to a two-wicket win over India on Thursday, sealing the three-match one-day series with a game to go. After India made 264-9 at a sold-out Adelaide Oval on the back of Rohit Sharma's 73, the hosts reached their target with 22 balls remaining.

### South Africa thrash Pakistan to draw Test series

South Africa beat Pakistan by eight wickets in the second Test in Rawalpindi on Thursday to draw the series 1-1 with Simon Harmer taking a maiden five-wicket haul. South Africa beat Pakistan by eight wickets in the second Test in Rawalpindi on Thursday to draw the series 1-1 with Simon Harmer taking a maiden five-wicket haul.

### Boys bag bronze in youth kabaddi

Bangladesh boys bagged bronze medal at the 3rd Youth Asian Games after thrashing hosts Bahrain 106-17 in their sixth and final group match at the Isa Sports Complex in Bahrain on Thursday. It was the second medal for Bangladesh, who earlier saw the women's youth kabaddi team also grab bronze medal on Tuesday.

\*For full stories, visit The Daily Star website

# 'I don't have much faith in hand timing'

Promising swimmer Samiul Islam Rafi has once again been named the best male swimmer at the recently concluded National Swimming Championships – his third consecutive title. The 21-year-old set six individual records – at on way to winning 11 gold and one silver medal. Since making his senior debut at the 2021 Bangladesh Games, the Rajbari-born swimmer has never looked back – amassing more than 30 gold medals. The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman caught up with the Rajbari-born swimmer to talk about his journey, progress, and aspirations. Following are the excerpts:

**The Daily Star (DS):** It's nothing new for you to break or set records at the national swimming championships. What new things did you experience this time?  
**Samiul Islam Rafi (SIR):** This time I tried a few new events and managed to succeed, even setting new records in some of them. Creating six individual records was beyond my expectations, although I had challenged myself to go further than before.

**DS:** Where do you think you stand in South Asia in terms of your timings?

**SIR:** The 50m events are my main focus. The timing I achieved in the 50m backstroke this time is comparable to South Asian standards and quite close to the Asian level. If I can continue according to plan, I believe I can achieve something special at the South Asian Games.

**DS:** Do you see noticeable improvement in your performance after training in Thailand for an extended period?

**SIR:** Of course. I've improved in various skills and techniques through training in Thailand. I feel I've developed a lot, though there are still

areas where I can get better.

**DS:** How do you feel about competing under hand timing instead of electronic timing?

**SIR:** To be honest, I don't have much faith in hand timing – it always leaves me a bit uncertain. Still, I can recognise my improvement even with hand timing. I previously clocked 26.90 seconds, and now it's 25.90 seconds, which is a huge improvement.

Many universities abroad offer swimming scholarships, but they don't accept hand-timed results. So, I think the federation should prioritise electronic timing to create more opportunities for swimmers to earn overseas scholarships.

**DS:** Where do you think Bangladesh swimming is facing stagnation?

**SIR:** There are a lot of limitations in Bangladesh, but I think the lack of long-term training programmes is the main issue holding us back. Even during the short training stint under Egyptian coach Saeed Magdy, we saw great improvement – setting 20 new national records in one championship is rare! If long-term training continues, I believe we could surpass India within a year and a half.



Now we are prepared for tomorrow's match, and we'll certainly try to give our best to win," said Rupna in a video message.

Swarna added that everyone was "serious and focused" during the final training session as they aim to secure victory against the Thais.

While the players are eyeing a win against Thailand – who, despite featuring in the AFC Women's Asian Cup final



## RESULTS

Athletic Club 3-1 Qarabag  
Galatasaray 3-1 Bodo/Glimt  
Monaco 0-0 Tottenham  
Atalanta 0-0 Slavia Praha  
Chelsea 5-1 Ajax  
Frankfurt 1-5 Liverpool  
Bayern Munich 4-0 Club Brugge  
Real Madrid 1-0 Juventus  
Sporting CP 2-1 Marseille

Teenage dreams lit up Stamford Bridge as Chelsea's young trio -- Estevao Willian, Marc Guiu, and Trique George -- each netted their maiden Champions League goals in a 5-1 rout of Ajax on Wednesday. Estevao, aged 18 years and 181 days, sprinkled Brazilian flair to become Chelsea's youngest-ever scorer in the competition. It also marked the first time in Champions League history that three teenagers scored in the same match. Meanwhile, in Germany, Bayern's 17-year-old Lennart Karl (17 years and 242 days) found the net to become the club's youngest scorer in the tournament.

PHOTO: REUTERS