

Tigers ready to step out of comfort zone

SPORTS REPORTER

After an ODI series in Mirpur, where Bangladesh fully capitalised on home advantage against the West Indies, the Tigers are set to embark on a new challenge against the same opponents today – this time in the T20 format in Chattogram, a venue that offers the closest thing to a neutral setting for both sides.

With around four months left before the next ICC T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, Bangladesh have only six T20Is scheduled – three each against the West Indies and Ireland – and skipper Litton Das wants those matches to be as challenging as possible.

“Honestly speaking, I want our players

» Bangladesh have won four successive T20I series since July this year -- their best ever run.

» Bangladesh have also won their last three T20Is against the West Indies, whitewashing them in a three-match series in the Caribbean in 2024.

» However, West Indies remain slightly ahead in overall head-to-head -- winning nine of the 19 T20Is against the Tigers. Bangladesh won the other eight, with two matches yielding no results.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

to be challenged in the two series,” Litton said about the West Indies series and next month’s home series against Ireland at the pre-match press conference on Sunday.

“I want the bowlers to be under pressure when bowling; it would help us in the upcoming World Cup,” he added.

Bangladesh enter this series having won their last four T20I series – against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Netherlands, and Afghanistan.

A series win over the Windies would extend their streak to five consecutive series victories. However, the management’s decision to abandon their usual approach of maximising

home advantage to ensure ‘winning momentum’ ahead of the World Cup deserves credit.

It marks a significant change in mindset following the ODI series, which Bangladesh won 2-1, but faced heavy criticism for doing so on the slow, spinning Mirpur surface perfectly tailored to their strengths.

Still, the visitors fought well in the ODI leg, levelling the series 1-1 with a Super Over win in the second match before being blown away by 179 runs in the decider.

Both teams have now travelled south to Chattogram for a three-match T20I series – a city where, surprisingly, the West

Indies have never played a T20I before.

The Caribbean side have played only three T20I series in Bangladesh, the last one in 2018, which they won 2-1. However, they have never featured at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matur Rahman Stadium, the venue for this series.

The ground is not entirely unfamiliar to them, though, as the West Indies have played three Tests and two ODIs there, while several of their players have also featured in Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) games at the venue.

Chattogram currently offers arguably the best batting surface in the country, edging out the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, which produced low scores during the latter stages of the recently concluded National Cricket League T20.

Even recent statistics support that claim. Since 2018, in all competitive T20 matches – including both international and domestic fixtures – the average run rate in Chattogram stands at 8.41 per over, higher than Sylhet’s 8.02.

Facing a West Indies side ranked three spots above ninth-placed Bangladesh in T20Is could truly test the hosts if the wicket plays true, as it usually does in Chattogram.

With skipper Litton back in the fold following an injury and Bangladesh’s recent form in the format, the hosts begin the series as favourites – but they will need to be at their best against the former T20 World Champions.

We need to find answers: Slot

REUTERS, London

Liverpool manager Arne Slot said opponents have identified a winning strategy against his Premier League champions and he needs to find a solution fast after a 3-2 defeat at Brentford on Saturday made it four league losses in a row.

Their title defence had begun well but defeats at Crystal Palace, Chelsea and Brentford, as well as last week’s 2-1 home defeat by Manchester United, have knocked the Dutchman’s side off the rails. The Reds have lost four of their opening nine games, as many as they did in the whole of last season.

Slot said the loss at Brentford was arguably the worst performance in their slump as Liverpool were deservedly beaten by a side who ruthlessly exploited their fragility.

“I’ve said this many times already that teams have a certain playing style against us, which is a very good strategy to play, and we haven’t found an answer yet,” Slot told reporters.

“Also going 1-0 down doesn’t really help as well after five minutes. But even today, when we don’t play well, we’re able to score two goals and create more chances from open play.”



RONALDO HITS 950

Cristiano Ronaldo is edging closer to the unprecedented 1000-goal mark, as he became the first to score 950 career goals when he found the net in Al-Nassr’s 2-0 win against Al-Hazm in a Saudi Pro League match in Buraidah on Saturday. After his 1,293rd career game, the 40-year-old announced he is “hungry for more”.

PHOTO: X

Afif hattrick, Naeem’s 11k runs headline NCL Day 2



Khulna Division’s Afif Hossain stole the spotlight on day two of the National Cricket League’s (NCL) first-round matches, claiming six wickets, including a hattrick, to bundle out Barishal Division for 126. Elsewhere, Abu Haider Rony’s unbeaten ton powered Mymensingh to 401 against Sylhet, Rangpur’s Naeem Islam crossed 11,000 first-class runs with his 34th century, while Chattogram’s Hasan Murad bagged a six-wicket haul.

» Afif finished with figures of 6-31 -- his second five-wicket haul in first-class cricket -- and became the 19th bowler to take a hattrick in Bangladesh’s first-class circuit. His best remains 7-66 against Rajshahi in 2018. After enforcing the follow-on, Khulna had Barishal at 119-4 at stumps, still 68 behind in Khulna.

» In Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Rony struck an unbeaten 107 off 105 balls, with 10 fours and six sixes, guiding

Mymensingh from 268-7 overnight to 401 all out. Sylhet ended the day on 198-five, trailing by 203 runs.

» At the Sylhet Academy Ground, Naeem reached 11,000 runs when he was on 47 and went on to score 111 not out as Rangpur posted 308-8, leading Dhaka by 87 runs.

» Murad’s 6-39 helped Chattogram bundle out Rajshahi for 196 before reaching 133-4 at the close of play, extending their lead to 338 runs.

Butler lauds changing mindset but warns of Thai strength

SPORTS REPORTER

As Bangladesh gear up for their second friendly against Thailand, coach Peter Butler acknowledged the hosts’ quality but praised his players for their positive attitude and focus in training.

The match kicks off today at 5:00pm (Bangladesh Time) at Bangkok’s 72nd Anniversary Stadium.

After criticising his players’

attitude in their 3-0 loss to Thailand on Friday, Butler said he was pleased with their improved mindset during recent training sessions at Rom Sai Football Ground, viewing the encounter as a vital step in their preparation for next year’s AFC Women’s Asian Cup in Australia.

“I’ve been pleased with the girls,” he said. “I’ve spoken to a few individually, and I’m happy with their approach and focus – especially a couple who can be real

match winners but didn’t show their true potential the other night.”

The coach admitted to tweaking the system slightly but was content with how the team played overall. “We’ve changed the system a little bit. I thought they actually played the better football, though some elementary mistakes – like conceding early – cost us.”

When asked about aiming for victory, Butler offered a dose of realism. “Can you tell me the

last time Bangladesh won in Thailand? Maybe sometimes you have to be careful what you wish for. We’re building momentum, but we have to be honest – we’re not yet at Thailand’s level. They’re a very good side, with depth even on the bench.”

He added, “We must aspire to their professionalism before dreaming of big wins. I want to win, but I live in the real world, not La La Land.”



BFF’S FIRST YEAR UNDER TABITH

Achievements vs Pending Issues

The Tabith Awal-led executive committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) completed its first year on Sunday since being elected on October 26, 2024. The committee, chaired by President Tabith, convened its 5th meeting at the BFF House yesterday to review its achievements and ongoing agenda, including reforms to the BFF constitution, the election policy, income-and-expenditure comparisons with Singapore, Asian Cup qualifier affairs, and revisions to the U-15 tournament bylaws. “We have spent one year successfully,” said BFF Media Committee Chairman Amirul Islam Babu.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN YEAR ONE

- » Lifted FIFA’s restricted financial plan for BFF
- » Secured sponsors for the national team and kits
- » Won the SAFF Women’s Championship
- » Received AFC President’s Recognition Bronze Award for grassroots development
- » Tabith Awal and Mahfuza Akter Kiron secured positions in FIFA committees
- » Introduced expatriate footballers to senior and U-23 teams
- » Organized coaching and FIFA talent development courses
- » Reinstalled two FIFA-funded artificial turfs
- » Boosted engagement on BFF social media
- » Conducted U-14, U-15, beach, and indigenous football tournaments

OTHER NOTABLE INITIATIVES

- » Entered international futsal and eFootball competitions
- » Provided overseas training for senior, U-23, U-15, and U-17 teams
- » Renewed contracts for women footballers
- » Secured maiden berths for women’s senior and U-20 teams in Asian Cup

PENDING ISSUES FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

- » Dhaka lower-division and district football leagues not yet rolled out
- » Women’s football league still pending
- » Promised Tk 1.5 crore for senior women’s team not disbursed
- » Alleged betting, match-fixing, and manipulation cases unresolved
- » Senior national team FIFA ranking stagnant (183 to 185, Oct 2024)
- » Partial formation of BFF standing and ad-hoc committees
- » BFF constitution still unreformed
- » Playground and infrastructure crisis remains unsolved

