

Rushed decisions leave a BITTER TASTE

West Indies coach Darren Sammy beams in jubilant mood during an optional training session on Thursday ahead of today's third and final match against Bangladesh at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium in Chattogram, as his team has already secured the T20I series with victories in the first two matches. The home team did not turn up for practice ahead of the final game, which they will play to salvage some pride.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Ctg

When a team need 65 runs off 47 balls with seven wickets in hand while chasing a modest 150-run target to stay alive in a series, composure -- not urgency -- is what's required.

Bangladesh found themselves in that exact situation during the second T20I against the West Indies in Chattogram yesterday, when Jaker Ali walked out to bat at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium.

What followed, however, reflected a sense of needless haste -- from a player seemingly desperate to justify his selection, and from a team management that put him in that position.

Jaker was the lone change in the playing XI, replacing Nurul Hasan Sohan, who was dropped after scoring just five in the series opener. The decision raised eyebrows, especially considering the contrasting recent form of the two batters.

While Sohan had been instrumental in Bangladesh's 3-0 T20I sweep over Afghanistan in Sharjah earlier this month -- batting at a strike rate of 148.84 across three matches -- Jaker had managed only 119 runs in nine T20I innings at a strike rate of 109.17 since the last Asia Cup. During that period, he hit just two sixes and was left out of the playing XI in the preceding



ODI series in Mirpur.

"We tend to rush things. For example, Sohan was not out in all three T20 matches against Afghanistan. But after just one poor game, he was dropped. It's difficult for players to perform with that kind of instability," former Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful said, questioning the selectors' approach.

Jaker's role was to support the set batter, Tanzid Tamim, who was on 44 off 32 deliveries. Instead, Jaker managed only two runs off his first seven balls, increasing pressure on his partner. As the required rate climbed, Tamim attempted to break free and fell to Romario Shepherd after a well-made 61 off 48. In the same over, Jaker departed for an unconvincing 17 off 18 balls -- his innings marked by repeated, mistimed attempts to force shots toward the leg side.

"The balls he missed were all scoring opportunities -- either outside off or on the legs. But he targets only one area, which increases the chance of missing. He needs to vary his shot selection," Ashraful noted.

The former captain further criticised Bangladesh's overall T20 batting approach. "It seems everyone is focused only on power-hitting. When you're chasing 150, you don't need big shots from the start. They kept wickets and brought the game close, but couldn't finish it. Tamim played really well, but Jaker's dot balls created pressure," he added.

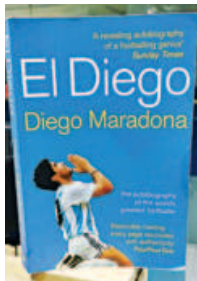
The consequence of that haste was bitter -- a 14-run defeat and a 2-0 series loss with one match remaining. The Tigers now face an uphill battle, not just to salvage pride but to reassess their approach and decision-making.



Aged 22y 195d, Australia opener Phoebe Litchfield became the youngest to hit a century in a Women's World Cup knockout game, and the second-youngest for Australia in the competition's history, with her 93-ball 119 against India in the second semifinal in Navi Mumbai yesterday. Hers is the sixth ton by an Australian in this edition, setting a new record for most individual tons in a single edition. Australia made 338 in 49.5 overs, the highest first-innings total vs India in World Cups.

PHOTO: AFP

FROM THE FIELD TO THE PAGES



The Daily Star's book review series on sporting icons, done by Ashfaq-Ul-Alam, kicks off with 'El Diego' -- the autobiography of Argentine legend Diego Maradona. Maradona, who would have turned 65 yesterday, was the embodiment of football's poetry and chaos, a rebel with unmatched *bronca*. By offering a glimpse into the mind of the flawed genius, this book allows readers to discover the man behind football's most intoxicating myth.

*Read the full book review on The Daily Star's website

'A little more courage and we'd have made the knockouts'

Bangladesh fought hard in the 2025 ICC Women's World Cup, losing three close contests and finishing with a single win, but their performances hinted at how far they have come on the global stage. Top-scorer Sharmin Akter Supta reflected on the campaign in an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star's* Abdullah Al Mehdi, sharing her thoughts on the missed opportunities, the team's progress, and what lies ahead for women's cricket in Bangladesh. The excerpts of the conversation are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): If you zoom out, what's your biggest takeaway from the whole experience?

Sharmin Akter Supta (SAS): When we first went to play the World Cup [in 2022], we were very new, but this time, I felt that we were capable in many ways. We could have planned a bit better, or shown a little more courage, or, if we had a bit more match experience, we might have played in the knockout stage this time. It's no longer the time to think about just playing well, or winning two or three matches.

DS: Losing three matches by such small margins must sting. Was there one defining factor that separated you from the winning teams?

SAS: I feel those teams got away due to their experience. We were not far behind in terms of skill, effort, or hard work. We haven't played that many matches under such pressure situations. We got that opportunity in the World Cup, but we failed.

The regret remains that we lost three close matches, and one of those opponents are playing the final. But one

thing I liked about the girls is that, even in some matches where we knew we were losing, we approached them with the same patience, hard work, and morale. This shows great professionalism.

DS: Could you revisit the Sri Lanka game, where you were cruising and then had to retire hurt after a fifty?

SAS: My cramp actually started long before I went out of the field. I tried hard and struggled to keep myself motivated.

I never thought we would lose that match. I still regret that if the cramp had happened an hour later, it would have been better, or even if I had gotten out earlier, I would have felt some consolation. I think the girls couldn't sleep properly for a day after that. It will remain our most heartbreaking memory.

DS: How impactful have the youngsters Marufa Akter, Shorna Khatun, or Rabeya Khan been at the World Cup?

SAS: Shorna, Marufa, and Rabeya are assets for the next generation of



Bangladesh. I have faith that they are the kind of players who can win the World Cup for Bangladesh.

DS: Without the best of preparation, did you feel you lacked that international exposure in the lead-up?

SAS: We had normal match practice where we played with the boys and amongst ourselves, but international matches are different. So, that gap was there; it can't be denied.

DS: Looking beyond this tournament, what makes you excited about the trajectory of women's cricket in Bangladesh?

SAS: Besides being born naturally hardworking and patient, the women in Bangladesh, especially in the sports sector -- be it football, cricket, handball -- all are progressing a lot. The way the BCB is now taking initiative, if this continues to increase, I think the progress of Bangladesh women's cricket will be much more visible very soon.



'HE DIED DOING WHAT HE LOVED'

STAR SPORTS DESK

Seventeen-year-old cricketer Ben Austin died after being struck while batting in the nets at Walley Tew Reserve in Melbourne's southeast on Tuesday. The Ferntree Gully Cricket Club teenager was warming up before a T20 match against Eildon Park when he was hit in the head and neck area by a ball thrown using a handheld ball launcher.

Ben, who batted left-handed and bowled right, was wearing a helmet but no neck guard. He was treated at the scene and rushed to the hospital in



critical condition before passing away on Thursday morning.

"This tragedy has taken Ben from us, but we find some comfort that he was doing something he did for so many summers -- going down to the nets

with mates to play cricket. He loved cricket and it was one of the joys of his life," said his father, Jace Austin.

The family also offered support to the teammate who threw the ball, saying, "our thoughts are with him and his family as well."

At Walley Tew Reserve, floral tributes, cricket bats, and tokens of love -- flowers, lollies, and drinks now line the nets where the young cricketer's final innings began. In 2014, Australia batter Phillip Hughes died when he was struck in the neck by a ball during a Sheffield Shield game between NSW and South Australia.

Kane-powered Bayern set new record

Harry Kane scored a brace as Bayern Munich set a European record of 14 successive victories to start a season with their 4-1 win at Cologne in the German Cup second round on Wednesday.

Bayern's victory bettered the record of 13 wins to start a season in all competitions set by Fabio Capello's AC Milan in 1992-93 -- the previous best in Europe's top-five leagues.

Kane has scored 22 goals and provided three assists in 14 games across all competitions this season. The 32-year-old Englishman has registered a goal contribution in all but one game so far.



PHOTO: FACEBOOK