

A tournament that will redefine women's cricket?

ASHFAQ UL-ALAM

Flurry of runs, defiant comebacks, constant rain interruptions -- what will the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 be remembered for down the line?

The eight-team tournament, which kicked off on September 30 in Guwahati, came to a conclusion on Sunday, with hosts India and South Africa battling it out in the final in Navi Mumbai.

At the time this report was filed, India had posted 298 for seven after being asked to bat, with the match beginning two hours later than scheduled owing to rain -- almost befitting considering how unlucky this tournament has been weather-wise overall.

Out of 31 matches over the course of 34 days, six ended in no results owing to rain and wet outfield. Never before had so many matches ended without a victor in a Women's World Cup.

The number of no results would have most likely been much fewer had the geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan not seeped into cricket.

Both countries no longer send their teams to their neighbouring nation and as a result, the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, Sri Lanka was added as the fifth venue for the event.

It hosted 11 matches in total -- including all of Pakistan's matches -- seven of them were affected by rain and five ended in no result.



But even with poor weather, the 2025 edition has arguably been the most entertaining one in the tournament's history considering the high volume of runs being scored.

Before the final, teams crossed the 300-run mark a total of eight times in this year's event -- most ever in a single edition and double of the previous best which happened in the 2022 edition held in New Zealand.

A surprising fact is that the number of

centuries from the 2022 to 2025 editions -- excluding the final -- has improved by only one, going from 13 to 14, even though the teams put up bigger totals more consistently.

This signals a change in how teams are approaching batting in WODI -- making a more conscious effort to reach the 300-run mark -- and also how the women's game is evolving at a rapid rate.

An even bigger indication of this evolution, however, is who made it to this

year's final, and who did not.

Since the very first edition back in 1973, Australia and England have been a near constant in the final, with at least one of them being in the final in the first 12 editions.

This set pattern was smashed by India and South Africa, who eliminated seven-time champions Australia and four-time winners England respectively in the semifinals.

Hosts India, after being the last side to earn a place in the semifinals, knocked out the defending champions by scripting an incredible 339-run chase in a match that is already being considered the greatest successful chase in the history of women's cricket.

Jemimah Rodrigues played the innings of her life to send Harmanpreet Kaur's side to the final on home turf.

South Africa's journey to the final was no less dramatic than India's.

After beginning their campaign by getting bundled out for just 69 against England in Guwahati, the Laura Wolvaardt-led side won five games in a row to reach the knockout stage, where they avenged their earlier defeat by crushing the English side by 125 runs.

Regardless of the eventual winners, women's ODI cricket is set to crown new champions -- something that hasn't happened in men's ODI World Cup since 1997 -- which could become the starting point of a new era of greater competition.

Ankon, Mazid hit tons but Mominul falls short

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahidul Islam Ankon's career-best 122 off 272 deliveries at Sylhet Academy Ground, his fourth first-class hundred, helped Dhaka to 310 all out against Sylhet on Day 2 of the second round of the National Cricket League's (NCL) longer version on Sunday.

Dhaka had been in trouble at 120 for five by the end of Day 1 and were reduced to 175 for seven. Ankon and Sumon Khan then rescued with a 125-run stand. Sumon made a brisk 74 off 99 deliveries before falling to Khaled Ahmed, who finished with three wickets alongside Ebadot Hossain. Ankon was the last man dismissed before Sylhet made 33 without loss, as play ended early due to bad light.

In Cox's Bazar, Mominul Haque missed out on a hundred as Chattogram posted 358 in their first innings against Barishal. Mominul fell for 92 to Ruvul Miah early in the day, while Barishal captain Tanvir Islam bagged four wickets. Barishal reached 115 for two at stumps.

Meanwhile, in Cox's Bazar, Abdul Mazid's unbeaten 119 -- his 14th first-class ton -- powered Mymensingh to 555 for six before declaring against Rangpur at the Academy Ground. Earlier, Naim Sheikh and Mahfujul Islam Rabbi had also struck centuries. After their long spell in the field, Rangpur finished Day 2 on 18 for two.

In Mirpur, Rajshahi's Shakhir Hossain Shuvro fell 11 short of a century, scoring 89 off 172 balls in his side's total of 268 all out against Khulna, who ended the day at 68 for one before bad light intervened.

ASIAN ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Frederick sets sight on compound medals

SPORTS REPORTER

Long-term coach Martin Frederick has set his sights on achieving success in the compound events for hosts Bangladesh at the upcoming Asian Archery Championships, after announcing a 16-member squad for Asia's premier competition. The tournament is scheduled to take place from November 8 to 14 across two venues in Dhaka.

There were few surprises in the squad, which includes a number of experienced campaigners who have regularly represented Bangladesh, especially since top recurve archers Ruman Sana, Abdul Hakim Rubel, and Diya Siddique left for the United States in search of better opportunities.

Ruman, Rubel, and Diya had previously brought international recognition to Bangladesh, winning medals in recurve events at various competitions -- including the 2021 Asian Archery Championships in Dhaka, where Bangladesh claimed one silver and two bronze medals. The silver came in the recurve mixed team event, while the men's and women's recurve teams each earned bronze.

This time, however, Frederick has shifted his focus towards the compound events, particularly after Bangladesh's compound archers have shown consistent performances and strong scores in recent international tournaments.

"In 2021, we won three medals here but failed to win any in Bangkok in 2023. I want to repeat our success from 2021. Reaching the podium is our goal. Our compound team has grown stronger, and our compound mixed team is particularly promising. I will work towards that podium finish," the German coach told reporters after the conclusion of the Archery League at the Tongi Stadium yesterday.

"We've made great progress in the compound division, especially in the mixed team event. The recurve women's team is our weakest area, and we'll need to work hard there. But we have a young team with potential, and they need time to develop. So, perhaps we shouldn't expect too much just

yet," added Frederick, who has been coaching in Bangladesh since early 2018.

Ramkrishna Saha, Sagar Islam, and Ety Khatun are optimistic too about achieving good results on home soil.

"Last time we won bronze in the recurve team event, so this time we're aiming to reach the final," said Ramkrishna. "The men's recurve team always strives for success, and we've prepared well, especially through the recently concluded Archery League."

SQUAD:
Recurve Men: Abdur Rahman Alif, Sagar Islam, Rakib Mia, Ramkrishna Saha

Recurve Women: Shima Akter Shimu, Ety Khatun, Shonali Roy, Monira Akter

Compound Men: Mohammad Ashikuzzaman, Himu Bachar, Newaz Ahmed Rakib, Sohel Rana

Compound Women: Bannya Akter, Pushpita Zaman, Kulsum Khatun, Mithila Akter



Liverpool's welcome win ahead of Real test

AGENCIES

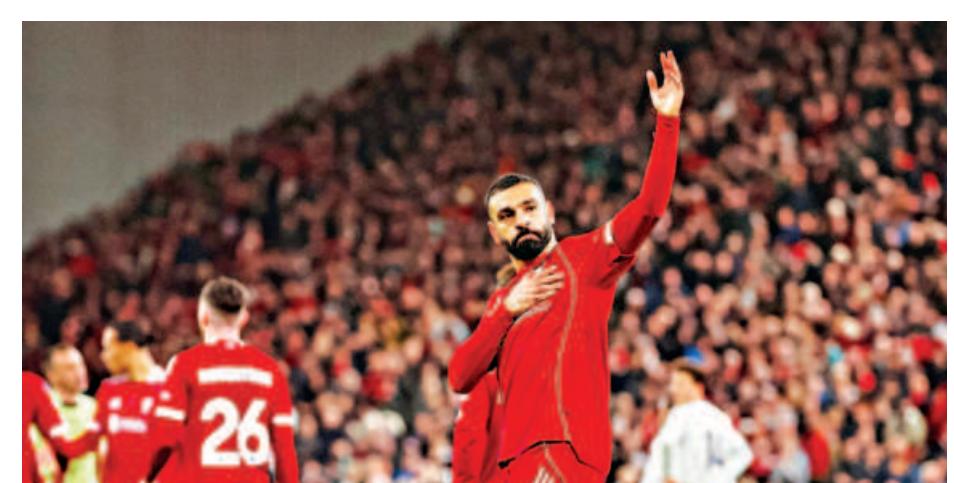
Liverpool returned to winning ways at the perfect time on Saturday night, beating Aston Villa 2-0 at Anfield to end a miserable run of form and restore some confidence ahead of a crucial week that includes clashes with Real Madrid and Manchester City.

Mohamed Salah was once again at the centre of it all, capitalising on a costly mistake from Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez in first-half stoppage time.

The Egypt forward calmly slotted into an empty net to give Liverpool the lead and, in the process, reached a remarkable milestone -- his 250th goal for the club. Only Ian Rush [346] and Roger Hunt [285] have ever reached that landmark in Liverpool's storied history.

Salah's strike eased the tension around Anfield, which had grown after a sequence of six defeats in seven matches across all competitions. Ryan Gravenberch sealed the win midway through the second half, his shot from the edge of the box taking a deflection off Pau Torres to beat Martínez and make it 2-0.

"It's very important," Salah told TNT Sports after the match. "We had a few losses in the Premier League and Champions League, but I'm glad we're starting to come back on track. It's a big plus before very important games against Madrid and City."



The victory lifted Arne Slot's side to third in the Premier League table, seven points behind leaders Arsenal. For Slot, under increasing pressure after a string of poor results, this performance was a much-needed display of resilience and unity. "Everybody here felt the importance of the game -- the players and the fans," the Dutch manager said. "We showed we're still fighting."

Virgil van Dijk echoed those sentiments, praising his teammates' character after a difficult spell. "We're not out there to lose games. We want to work our socks off and win, and today we did that," the captain said.

While Villa started brightly, striking the post early on through Morgan Rogers, Liverpool gradually asserted control, creating 16 shots to the visitors' nine.

The result snapped Villa's four-match winning run and offered Liverpool renewed belief ahead of their Champions League showdown with Real -- scheduled for Wednesday at 2:00am Bangladesh Time and their Premier League trip to City on Sunday, November 9, at 10:30pm Bangladesh Time.



Kylian Mbappe netted twice as Real Madrid eased to a 4-0 victory over struggling Valencia on Saturday, with Jude Bellingham and Alvaro Carreras also scoring to help the LaLiga leaders claim their 13th win from 14 matches in all competitions this season. The win extended Real Madrid's lead at the top to 30 points, seven clear of Villarreal and eight ahead of Barcelona.

PHOTO: AFP