



Leo has accustomed us to the extraordinary, He's someone we'll never see again. Today, perhaps we're surprised that he didn't score, but he gave us peace of mind with the third goal, an assist that only he can see. He practically sealed the game.

Coach Javier Mascherano after Inter Miami beat New York City FC 5-1 to reach their first-ever MLS Cup final

Naim bags crore as Habibur, Saqlain get rewarded

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

The players' auction returned to the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) after 12 years yesterday and its comeback was not without surprises as top order batter Mohammad Naim fetched the highest price among all local players and some young up-and-comers earned bigger bucks than the veterans.

Naim, placed in Category A with a base price of Tk 50 lakh, was roped in by Chattogram Royals for a whopping Tk 1.10 crore after winning a bidding battle against Sylhet Titans, Rangpur Riders and Noakhali Express.



Litton Das -- the only other player in Category A -- went for significantly less than Naim, as Rangpur scooped him up for Tk 70 lakh.

The Riders had to splurge a lot more for Tawhid Hridoy, who was in Category B with a base price of Tk 35 lakh, bidding Tk 92 lakh -- the second most for a local player -- to secure his services.

Uncapped cricketers Habibur Rahman Sohan and Abdul Gaffar Saqlain, who were in Category D with a base price of Tk 18 lakh, were rewarded for their great performances for Bangladesh 'A' in the recently concluded Asia Cup Rising Stars.

Habibur went to Noakhali for Tk 50 lakh, almost three times his base price. Saqlain, a 27-year-old medium pacer who debuted in List A cricket just last year and is yet to debut at the BPL, was bought by Rajshahi Warriors for Tk 44 lakh.

Veterans Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah initially went unsold from Category B. They were supposed to be recalled in the auction in Category C but upon the insistence of some franchises, were brought up again in the same category and were picked by Rajshahi and Rangpur respectively.

The franchises showed little interest for the overseas players as each team picked the minimum two. Sri Lanka's Dasun Shanaka fetched the highest amount out of the foreigners, \$550,000, to play for Dhaka Capitals. Two Associate Nation players also received teams, as Sylhet Titans picked Aaron Jones (USA) and Rangpur got Emilio Gay (Italy).

4:00pm, but it started almost an hour late, as fate seemingly scripted the moment perfectly for the 26-year-old.

"Everyone was shouting when my name was sold at that price," Naim described the mood in the team bus when he was bought.

Naim, who had finished as the highest run-getter last season with 511 runs, believed his domestic performances earned him this reward.

"I performed well last year and I've been rewarded for it. That's how it should be -- those who perform should be recognised. Alhamdulillah, I am very happy.

"Even if I were sold at my base price, my dedication would remain the same. I always play with passion for whichever team I represent -- and that won't change, Inshallah."

Meanwhile, Bangladesh T20I captain



Rajshahi Warriors' Nazmul Hossain Shanto leans in for a chat with Khaled Mahmud Sujon, seated beside fellow Noakhali Express official Talha Jubair, perhaps gathering some intel, as the Bangladesh Premier League 2026 player auction in Dhaka yesterday buzzed with over 400 local and overseas cricketers up for grabs and six franchises eyeing their next big catch.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND OUT WHO FETCHED HOW MUCH FROM THE BPL AUCTION

Naim, who is in Sylhet right now representing Mymensingh Division against Barisal Division in the National Cricket League (NCL), watched the auction with his teammates while returning to the hotel after the day's play ended early due to bad light.

"I didn't have very high expectations, but I was excited," Naim told The Daily Star on Sunday.

The auction was scheduled to begin at

AFC U-17 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

China shatter Bangladesh's dream

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's dream of qualifying for the AFC U-17 Asian Cup finals ended in disappointment as the boys in red and green suffered a 4-0 defeat to favourites China in their final Group A match yesterday -- a loss made heavier by two gifted goals.

Shuai Weihao netted a clinical hat-trick before substitute Zhao Songyuan applied the finishing touch, shattering Bangladesh's hopes of returning to the finals for the first time since 2006.

Having travelled to China with high ambitions, the young Bangladesh side fuelled belief with four consecutive victories -- 5-0 against Timor-Leste, 8-0 against Brunei, 5-0 against Sri Lanka and 2-1 against Bahrain. Those performances raised hopes of a spirited challenge against a dominant Chinese side who entered the final match with four wins and a staggering 38 goals. Yet Bangladesh failed to maintain their momentum when it mattered most.

Middle-order malfunction clouds World Cup build-up

EKUSH TAPADER FROM CHATTOGRAM

When Nurul Hasan Sohan walked in to bat in Chattogram on Saturday, Bangladesh needed 31 off 27 with six wickets in hand -- a routine chase by any measure. Seven balls later, the mood had shifted. What looked like a stroll in the second T20I against Ireland became an uneasy shuffle as the requirement tightened to 22 off 14.

Had Mohammad Saifuddin not struck a vital 17 off seven balls, Bangladesh might have slipped to an embarrassing defeat from a position of control and conceded the series with a match left to play.

Sohan's five off seven continued a worrying pattern -- in the recent West Indies series at home, he managed five off 10 and one off five. His hesitant technique repeatedly turns harmless deliveries into moments of tension, spreading unease through the dressing room.

Sohan was only recalled because Jaker Ali Anik had been struggling. Despite persistent failures, the management had backed Jaker, but outside his 20 off 16 in the opening match, his record remains bleak: six single-figure scores in his previous nine innings, and when he did reach double figures, he burned too many balls -- 17 off 18, 10 off 11.

For a No. 6 or 7, that sort of output is a liability.

With Jaker misfiring, Sohan returned.

With Sohan faltering, the team reverted to Jaker. The cycle feels endless. In the middle of it, Shamim Hossain Patwary -- earlier dropped after low scores -- became a flashpoint when Litton Das publicly questioned his omission. Chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu defended the



call, only for Shamim to be recalled for the final match. The left-hander, however, never had the platform to show much.

In truth, the failures of Jaker and Sohan reopened the door for Shamim.

By logic, Mahidul Islam Ankon -- selected specifically to be tested -- should now get his chance. Yet he appears destined to watch the series from the sidelines, another example of

the disconnect between selector plans and management preferences. Even if he debuts in the final game, how much can one outing reveal, especially with the T20 World Cup looming?

Ankon himself has not scored heavily in recent T20 competitions, but selectors still felt he was worth assessing. Their reasoning never truly aligned with the team's approach. With multiple selection issues spilling into public debate, the chief selector has gone quiet, leaving decisions firmly in management hands.

Those decisions orbit one unresolved dilemma: who is the least risky option? Bangladesh's middle and lower-middle order have slumped for over a year. Even when runs have come, they have lacked impact, and self-preserving batting has often worsened situations.

Bangladesh hoped the Ireland series would offer clarity ahead of the World Cup. It has not. The middle-order puzzle remains unsolved, and the discomfort lingers. The upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) may throw up temporary solutions, but the gulf between BPL and the international circuit makes snap judgements perilous.

The Tigers now look set to enter another World Cup with familiar uncertainties in key positions -- another turn in the same cycle of muddled planning.

SHORT CORNER

HC questions legality of disparity in salaries, benefits between male and female footballers

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why the discrimination in salaries, benefits, and opportunities between male and female footballers should not be declared illegal. The bench of Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi and Justice Raziuddin Ahmed issued the rule following a writ petition filed as a public interest litigation by Supreme Court lawyers Barrister Sumaiya Binta Tanvir and Barrister Ariza Mehelee Khan seeking necessary directives.

BCB plans to start Women's BPL soon, says Bulbul

Bangladesh Cricket Board president Aminul Islam Bulbul has announced that they are planning to start the Women's Bangladesh Premier League very soon. The announcement was made during the BPL 12 players' auction at the Radisson Blue Water Garden Hotel in Dhaka on Sunday afternoon.

Man Utd win at Palace

Joshua Zirkzee scored his first Premier League goal for nearly a year before Mason Mount grabbed the winner as Manchester United came from behind to beat Crystal Palace 2-1 on Sunday.

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India superstar Virat Kohli set Ranchi alight with his 52nd ODI century, a 120-ball 135 featuring 11 fours and seven sixes, to power India to 349-8, leading to a 17-run win, in the first of three ODIs against South Africa yesterday. His sixth ton against the Proteas -- the most by any player against them -- moved him past Sachin Tendulkar and David Warner, who have five each. Kohli shared a 136-run stand with Rohit Sharma, whose 51-ball 57 marked his 60th ODI fifty. Rohit struck five fours and three sixes, becoming the all-time leading six-hitter in ODIs by overtaking Shahid Afridi's tally of 351. He also tops the six-hitting charts in T20Is with 205 maximums.

PHOTO: AFP

FIH JUNIOR HOCKEY WC

Bangladesh fight back to draw against Korea

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh produced a remarkable comeback in the FIH Hockey Men's Junior (U-21) World Cup on Sunday, fighting back from three goals down to snatch a 3-3 draw against strong South Korea in their second Pool F match at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium in Tamil Nadu, India.

Penalty-corner specialist Amirul Islam was the hero once again, dragging the men in red and green back into the contest with three penalty-corner goals, completing his second consecutive hat-trick after scoring another treble against Australia on the opening day. The feat also lifted Amirul, adjudged player of the match for the second game, to the top of the tournament's goal-scoring chart with six goals, level with New Zealand's Jonty Elmes.

Bangladesh had earmarked South Korea as the team to catch as soon as the groupings were announced in late June, with the realistic target of finishing third in the pool and earning a chance for a higher ranking in the classification matches. Their spirited performance against



Australia on Saturday had further strengthened belief that a first-ever victory at any level of a hockey World Cup was within reach. Korea's 11-1 thrashing against France on the opening day also raised expectations.

However, it was South Korea who struck first. Still recovering from their heavy defeat, the Koreans started aggressively, with Minhyeok Lee converting a penalty corner in the eighth minute. Seunghan Son doubled the lead with another penalty-corner strike five minutes later, before Minhyeok added his second from a penalty stroke as Korea went into halftime leading 3-0.

Bangladesh responded brilliantly after the break. Displaying admirable grit and discipline, they mounted a spirited fightback through the relentless precision of Amirul's drag flicks -- scoring in the 36th, 46th and 56th minutes to complete the comeback and leave the field with heads held high.

The draw keeps Bangladesh in third position in the four-team Pool F on goal difference, with one match left -- a challenging fixture against France on December 2.