

Win brings relief but exposes conservative mindset

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh's 11-run victory over Pakistan in the series-deciding third ODI on Sunday brought much-needed relief, helping them climb to ninth in the ODI rankings, but even in victory, the team's conservative batting approach raised concerns.

Sent to bat, Bangladesh appeared well on course for a big total. However, poor execution towards the latter stages meant they finished with 290 for five, once again falling short of 300 -- a familiar pattern in ODIs for the Tigers in recent years.

Opensers Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Saif Hassan gave an ideal start with a 105-run stand. Tanzid went onto score a run-a-ball 107 -- his maiden ODI century and at the time of his dismissal, Bangladesh were well placed at 194 for three in the 37th over and looked well placed to cross the 300-run mark comfortably.

However, after his departure, Bangladesh added only 96 runs from the remaining 82 deliveries.

More concerning, they managed just 39 runs in the final five overs despite having seven wickets in hand and two set batters -- Litton Das and Tawhid Hridoy -- at the crease. During that period, they struck only two boundaries.

Litton scored a sluggish 41 off 51 balls with one four and a six, while Hridoy remained unbeaten on 48 from 44 deliveries with four boundaries, further exposing Bangladesh's lack of firepower in the death overs.

Aiif Hossain, recalled to the side



after 15 months, also had the opportunity to accelerate late in the innings but managed only five runs from eight balls after arriving in the 47th over.

A similar situation had unfolded during Bangladesh's home ODI series against the West Indies in last October. In the third ODI, a blistering 176-run opening stand between Saif Hassan and Soumya Sarkar had set the platform for a big total, yet, Bangladesh ended up with 296 for eight,

failing to capitalise in the latter stages.

These failures are indicative of a conservative approach, which could be sensed from what captain Mehdi Hasan Miraz had said at the toss of the third ODI against Pakistan.

"I think 260 is a very good score in these conditions because we have a very good bowling attack," said the skipper.

This assessment might have been justified on the typical slow and low

surfaces at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, but the wickets for the Pakistan series were noticeably different, offering genuine pace and bounce which allowed batters to play their shots freely.

In that context, Miraz's target of 260 reflected a conservative and outdated mindset.

ODI cricket has evolved with the influence of T20 cricket, as totals exceeding 350 or even 400 are no longer rare.

Since the 2023 ICC World Cup in India, teams have scored 300 or more 69 times in ODIs, including three scores above 400 and 19 above 350.

In contrast, Bangladesh have crossed the 300-run mark only once during this period in 25 matches -- posting 321 for five against the West Indies in Basseterre in 2024 in a losing cause.

These statistics underline Bangladesh's continued struggle to adapt to the evolving demands of modern 50-over cricket.

The hosts nearly paid the price for their cautious approach in the third ODI against Pakistan.

Even after reducing Pakistan to 82 for five, the match went down to the last over owing to a fighting century from Salman Agha and a late surge from captain Shaheen Shah Afridi, which nearly snatched the match away from the hosts.

Rishad Hossain held his nerves in the final over defending just 14 runs to seal the win but the match once again highlighted that Bangladesh's ODI mindset is in need of a rethink.



Venues for NZ's white-ball tour of BD revealed

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Monday announced the itinerary of the three-match ODI and three-match T20I series against New Zealand at home. The Blackcaps are set to arrive in Dhaka on April 13. Bangladesh lost their last ODI series against New Zealand at home prior to the 2023 ODI World Cup. The three-match series ended 2-0 in favour of the visitors after the first ODI yielded no result.

NEW ZEALAND'S WHITE BALL TOUR OF BANGLADESH

Match	Date	Time	Venue
1st ODI	Apr-17	2:00 PM	Dhaka
2nd ODI	Apr-20	2:00 PM	Dhaka
3rd ODI	Apr-23	2:00 PM	Ctg
1st T20I	Apr-27	6:00 PM	Ctg
2nd T20I	Apr-29	6:00 PM	Ctg
3rd T20I	May-02	2:00 PM	Dhaka

SHORT CORNER

PCB complains over Bangladesh's late DRS call

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) put up a verbal complaint to match referee Neeyamur Rashid over Bangladesh reviewing a leg-before decision in the penultimate ball of the Pakistan innings in the third and final ODI in Mirpur on Sunday, which the hosts won by 11 runs. "There was a verbal complaint regarding the review since the replay was shown on the big screen," a source informed The Daily Star.

Chelsea fined £10.75m and hit with suspended one-year transfer ban

Chelsea were fined £10.75 million and received a suspended one-year transfer ban in relation to historical breaches of Premier League rules, it was announced on Monday. The sanctions relate to information shared with the league by the consortium led by American businessman Todd Boehly following their takeover of Chelsea from Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich in 2022.

Rajshahi, Sylhet to host Bangladesh-Sri Lanka women's series

Rajshahi and Sylhet will host the upcoming white-ball series between the Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, scheduled to begin on April 20 with a three-match WODI series. The visitors will arrive in Dhaka on April 17 before travelling to Rajshahi the same day. The touring side will be accompanied by former Bangladesh men's head coach Jamie Siddons, who was recently appointed as Sri Lanka women's head coach.

** Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

86 DAYS TO GO



Hand, magic, glory

The 1986 FIFA World Cup, held in Mexico, was defined by Diego Maradona. With five goals -- including the famous 'Hand of God' goal and the 'Goal of the Century', both scored in the quarterfinal against England -- he played the biggest role in guiding Argentina to their second title. He also provided five assists. Altogether, Maradona contributed to 10 of Argentina's 14 goals in the tournament.

** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Immortality washed away in the rain of Bern'

'Anything can happen' as City chase Real

STAR SPORTS DESK

Pep Guardiola said he does not need to convince his Manchester City players that a comeback against Real Madrid is possible, insisting that "many things can happen" in football as his side prepare to overturn a 3-0 deficit in the UEFA Champions League for a place in the quarters of the competition.

City face a daunting task at home against the record 15-time European champions, who have eliminated them from the past two editions of the competition.

"After 10 years you have to convince some of my players about their belief? They know me quite well," Guardiola told reporters on Monday. "Every single game we try. This will be no exception. They have to."

"Of course most of them are new to experiencing such situations. We are not the same group we had for many years but, at the same time, it is an incredible experience and an incredible opportunity to try it," he said.

"It's a football game, many things can happen. You have to focus and



first try to win the game, then we will see what happens during the match. I don't have a specific plan. Just try it."

Guardiola cancelled Monday's training session and gave his players a day off ahead of the decisive clash, with the squad set to train on Tuesday.

Asked if the break would help mentally, the Spaniard said confidence and performance go hand in hand.

"The way you play, if you play well mentally you will be strong. I'm not

too concerned about the chances we will create. At home we are always able to do that. It's more about how well we defend," he said.

"The task is massive. To score more than three goals against Real Madrid is not easy. The first-leg result is not perfect but this is football, everything can happen."

Elsewhere, Liam Rosenior faces a similarly daunting challenge as his Chelsea side attempt a dramatic comeback against defending champions PSG. The teams meet at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday for the second leg of their last-16 tie after PSG stormed to a 5-2 victory in Paris last week.

Meanwhile, Sporting Lisbon welcome Bodo/Glimt to the Estadio Jose Alvalade needing a comeback after a 3-0 first-leg defeat in Norway.

Bodo/Glimt's impressive debut Champions League campaign has already featured notable results, including a draw at Borussia Dortmund and victories over Manchester City and Atlético Madrid, before eliminating Inter Milan in the playoff round.

Asian Games hockey qualifiers set to be shifted to Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) all but decided shifting the venue for the Men's Asian Games Qualifiers from Oman to Thailand after cancelling the event in Muscat amid escalating geopolitical tensions involving Iran, Israel and the United States, a top official of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) said.

The nine-nation qualifiers, including Bangladesh, were originally scheduled to be held in Muscat from March 28 to April 5, with the top four teams earning qualification for September's Asian Games.

"We received a letter from the Asian Hockey Federation last Thursday stating that the Men's Asian Games Qualifiers venue in Oman has been cancelled and that the new venue will be announced soon," BHF general secretary Riazul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Hasan added that Thailand is being considered as a potential new venue and an official announcement is expected within a couple of days. A coach of the team, however, said that the shift to Thailand is all but certain.

Bangladesh have been placed in Pool B alongside Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei and

Uzbekistan, while Pool A comprises Oman, Hong Kong, Thailand, Kazakhstan and Indonesia.

"The tournament is likely to be deferred by about a week as the AHF must inform the Olympic Council of Asia about the number of participating teams in the Asian Games by May," Hasan said.

It has been learnt that the tournament will now start on April 2 instead of March 28.

The BHF will, meanwhile, continue its training camp until the completion of the qualifiers. However, players will be given a five-day break during the Eid period from March 19 to 23 before rejoining camp on March 24.

Bangladesh had initially planned to play two warm-up matches against Thailand and Kazakhstan in Oman before the qualifiers, but due to the imminent change of schedule, the federation is looking to rearrange practice matches, once the fixtures and arrival of the teams are officially confirmed.

Oman has also postponed the Women's Junior AHF Cup, which was scheduled to begin in Muscat from April 6. Bangladesh's junior women's team, originally set to participate in that event, will instead compete in the Women's Asian Games Qualifiers, scheduled to start on April 20 in Indonesia.



Italy's Jannik Sinner poses with the championship trophy after defeating Daniil Medvedev in the final of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Sunday. The world number two surged home to beat the Russian 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) to capture his first Indian Wells ATP Masters 1000 crown. Sinner didn't face a break point in the one-hour 55-minute contest, winning 43 of the 47 points on which he put his first serve in play.