No color change

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SPORT



"He has many more years ahead to get opportunities. It's not as if he can just walk straight into the team right now because our openers have been scoring consistently and also won us the World Cup.

India captain **SHREYAS IYER** on Vaibhav Sooryanvanshi

Musical chairs, same old batting blunders

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's display in yesterday's crucial fixture against Afghanistan, with a place in the final on the line, once again exposed the batters' failure to take accountability. Shot selection and mentality pointed to persistent problems adapting to conditions, a weakness that often surfaces at multi-nation events.

Bangladesh have enjoyed a strong run of ODI series wins at home, beating West Indies, Pakistan, New Zealand and Australia in succession. But they have faltered against Zimbabwe in the UAE tri-series, while their batting against Afghanistan harked back to last October's 3-0 ODI series defeat in Abu Dhabi, which was marked by forgettable batting displays.

The Tigers reshuffled their batting order, dropping Soumya Sarkar from the opening slot and bringing in Saif Hassan, who had batted at four in the previous game. Tanzid Hasan Tamim failed to get off to a flying start, nicking one behind the stumps to depart for one and expose the top order's fragility.

Soumya came in at number three and perished for a first-ball duck, driving on the up against extra bounce and chopping the ball back on to his stumps. Najmul Hossain Shanto, who had been struggling, then nicked Azmatullah Omarzai through to the wicketkeeper. Skipper Tawhid Hridoy followed with an extraordinary dismissal, chipping an Omarzai delivery back to the bowler while attempting to flick it towards the leg side.

Parvez Hossain Emon was an unlikely choice at number four, despite having featured in that role in T20Is. ODI cricket is vastly different, but he showed good awareness in picking gaps and nudging the innings along with Saif. Yet neither is an established middle-order batter, underlining the dearth of options in that department.

Despite starring in a 93-run stand and facing 82 deliveries, Saif played a shot that matched neither the situation nor the delivery. He jumped down the wicket, only to top-edge Mohammad Nabi in the 32nd over and depart for 41. Mehidy Hasan Miraz, the last recognised batter at № 7, also fell to poor decision-making, attempting to pull a bouncer unsuited to the match situation. Mosaddek Hossain and Nurul Hasan Sohan have already circled in and out of the playing XI, while the batters' failure to adapt to the challenges of the middle overs surfaced again.

Emon remained effective during his 96-ball 70 before Bangladesh were bundled out for 160. His innings, however, will do little to resolve the lack of clarity over the Tigers' approach to building a 50-over innings.

Batters keep ignoring the cues and perishing before completing the job. The constant chopping and changing has begun to feel like a game of musical chairs, without fostering the accountability the team need.



Bangladesh batter Tanzid Tamim looks stunned after being dismissed by Afghanistan pacer Yamin Ahmadzai during their UAE ODI Tri-Series clash at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday. Needing to win by at least 41 runs in order to qualify for the final of a tournament also involving Zimbabwe, the Tigers suffered a familiar top-order collapse, slumping to 28 for four in just seven overs before eventually being bowled out for 160 runs in 41.2 overs. Afghanistan chased down the target in 35.3 overs losing only three wickets, sealing a seven-wicket victory and a place in Friday's final against Zimbabwe. PHOTO: **ACB**

U19 WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Sylhet to host opening match, Chattogram semis and final

SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet will host the opening match and Chattogram the semifinals and final of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2027, which will be co-hosted by Bangladesh and Nepal from January 21 to February 6.

The third edition of the tournament, featuring 16 teams, will comprise 41 matches across four venues: Sylhet International Cricket Stadium, Bir Shrestha Shahid Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Cricket Stadium in Chattogram, TU International Cricket Stadium and Upper Mulpani International Cricket Ground in Kathmandu.

The opening day will feature four matches, including Bangladesh against the UAE. Co-hosts Nepal will begin their campaign against Ireland the following day, while defending champions India will face the West Indies in their opening fixture.

The group stage will run until January 26, with the qualifying teams advancing to the Super Six stage. The top two teams from each Super Six group will qualify for the semifinals, scheduled for February 4 in Chattogram.

The final will take place in Chattogram on February 6, with February 7 designated as the reserve day.

Why handball's brightest are giving up

RAMIN TALUKDER

In 2023, Mst Marfi, Runa Laila and Tania combined for 39 of Bangladesh's 46 goals as the under-17 women stunned India. Three years later, none has made it into the senior national setup.

A former Viqarunnisa Noon School and College student, one of the best in her class and a standout handball player, has already walked away. With no clear prospect of building a career in the sport beyond age-group level, she chose a safer path. She declined to be named.

Girls at English-medium schools such as Sunnydale and Scholastica often try handball for fun but leave when prospects look bleak. Those who stay frequently come from disadvantaged families, where financial hardship, social pressure and early marriage can make a sporting career difficult to sustain.

"If handball became an established profession, families could believe their daughters would be able to make a living from it."

DALIA AKTER
Assistant coach, Bangladesh women's handball team



PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

Assistant coach Dalia Akter, who was part of the 2023 team, points to a lack of international exposure.

"How many international tournaments have we played since the 2022 Islamic Solidarity Games? Zero. Not a single one," she told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh hosted a junior event in 2023 but have not played abroad since and missed this year's Asian Youth Games. The senior side's last major outing was in Konya, Turkey, in late 2021 or early 2022, following appearances in 2019, 2018 and 2016.

"You cannot expect consistency by playing once or twice every few years. Progress takes several steps," Dalia said.

She cited Nepal's participation in the Asian Games and the Maldives' progress as examples of what sustained opportunities can offer. Without regular competition, she said, players lose interest and their performances suffer.

India's Bhawana Sharma, who will face Bangladesh in today's IHF Nations Trophy final, illustrated the difference a clearer pathway can make. She and her teammates live and train at an academy under coach Sachin Chaudhury and are preparing for the World Championship. India still struggle with regular salaries and adequate indoor facilities, but sporting achievements can open doors to jobs through sports quotas.

In Bangladesh, that prospect remains uncertain. Misty Khatun, a degree student from Jamalpur and a national-team player, said players receive no regular salaries, only payments when they compete. Camps cover food and accommodation, but once players return to their districts, there are few facilities to sustain their training. Families question the value of continuing, and some players are married off at 18 or 20, making a return difficult.

"We fail to perform as expected. We are the ones who fail," Misty said, before pointing to Himachal Pradesh, where year-round academy training supplies most of India's national team.

Federation secretary Salahuddin Ahmed said players receive Tk 500 a day during camps, alongside food and accommodation. Sixteen have been included in the government's sports allowance scheme, with support for others being considered. Service teams also employ eight or nine national players.

Dalia said 93 players, many from Dhaka, attended open trials but struggled against professionals from Ansar, police, Border Guard Bangladesh and the Village Defence Party. She called for school-level development beyond the capital, noting that only one of the 16 national players came from Dhaka.

"If handball became an established profession, families could believe their daughters would be able to make a living from it," she said.

For that former Viqarunnisa student, there is still no clear way to pursue education and handball together. Until the national jersey offers a viable livelihood, Bangladesh will keep losing talented girls, some back to their books and others to early marriage.

PSG end Barca's winning streak

Hansi Flick's Barcelona had travelled to France on a run of 11 consecutive wins this season, but saw that streak halted as defending champions PSG handed them a 4-2 defeat in a thrilling Champions League contest at the Parc des Princes yesterday. Desire Doue gave PSG a half-time lead before Xavi Espart equalised early in the second half. Lucas Hernandez, who kept Lamine Yamal quiet for much of the game after coming in for the absent Nuno Mendes at left-back, put PSG ahead once again. Yamal brought Barca back into the game in the 79th minute, but Vitinha and Fabian Ruiz scored late on to seal a Champions League thriller. Despite the win, PSG suffered injury setbacks involving wingers Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembele, as well as skipper Marquinhos. Dembele and Marquinhos could be sidelined for several weeks, while Kvaratskhelia remains in doubt for the rest of the season with a torn ACL. Barca's Dani Olmo also suffered a thigh injury and is set to miss next week's El Clasico against Real Madrid. PHOTO: **REUTERS**



SHORT CORNER

Electronic timing promised for summer athletics

A total of 565 athletes from 57 organisations will compete in the Arafat Rahman Koko 18th National Summer Athletics Championship at the National Stadium in Dhaka from October 23 to 25, with organisers promising electronic timing for track events. The three-day competition will feature 40 events, including 22 men's and 18 women's disciplines. Of the participants, 431 are men and 134 women.

Debutant Rakib's five-for helps Khulna edge Chattogram

Debutant left-arm spinner Rakib Howlader claimed a five-wicket haul as Khulna Division edged Chattogram Division by 10 runs in the third round of the National Cricket League (NCL) 2026-27 in Sylhet on Wednesday to move to the top of the points table. Sylhet and Rajshahi Divisions also registered victories in their respective matches.

Dramatic collapse costs Bangladesh U-19s

Bangladesh U-19 team suffered their first defeat in the four-match YODI series after losing to Afghanistan by 43 runs at the Al Amerat Cricket Ground in Oman on Wednesday. Chasing a target of 238, Bangladesh were cruising at 157 for two in the 27th over, with Abdullah Al Muhi (61) and Kawser Ahmed (64) both scoring half-centuries. However, a dramatic collapse saw them lose their last eight wickets for just 37 runs before being bowled out for 194 in 38.2 overs.

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WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS
Pakistan ODI Tri-Series
England vs Sri Lanka
Live from 2:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 1

1st T20I
New Zealand vs India
Live from 1:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5
Europa League
Live from 10:45 pm
Juventus vs Rennes
OFI vs Leverkusen
Live from 1:00 am (Friday)
Bournemouth vs Milan