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SPORT



Be careful with Nahid Rana. Don't kill the goose that lays the golden egg because you want immediate success.

West Indies fast bowling great **IAN BISHOP** on Nahid Rana

Lika's long wait ends in tears of joy

SPORTS REPORTER

After four unsuccessful attempts to reach the final, unheralded shuttler Lika Poddar claimed her maiden national title, beating defending champion Urmi Akter 2-1 at the 40th National Badminton Championships at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Overwhelmed by the breakthrough, the 24-year-old broke down in tears while speaking to her mother in Mongla over a video call. Her mother had long dreamed of seeing her daughter shine at the highest level, and yesterday, Lika gave her a reason to celebrate.

Lika edged the opening set 22-20 before Bangladesh Army's Urmi fought back to level the match with a 21-11 win. Lika held her nerve in the decider, winning 21-18 to turn her first-ever final into a national title.



The two finalists had contrasting fortunes in doubles. Urmi bounced back from her singles defeat to win the mixed doubles title with Al Amin Jumar, beating Tamim Hasan and SK Pritha 21-17, 21-14. Lika, meanwhile, lost the women's doubles final with Narayanganj's Smrity Rajbongshi, going down 23-21, 21-17 to Bangladesh Army's Brishty Khatun and SK Pritha.

Despite hailing from Bagerhat, Lika represented Narayanganj, while Khulna resident Urmi had won her first national title representing Pabna.

Lika's breakthrough came after years of struggle. Her fisherman father could offer little financial support for her badminton career, and she now shoulders much of her family's financial responsibility through her earnings from the sport.

"I can't express how I feel because I've won the title in my first-ever final. I had competed four times before but never reached the final," Lika told reporters, expressing confidence that hard work and self-belief would help her shine internationally.

In men's singles, Rajin Ahmed of Sylhet DSA was declared champion after finalist SM Sibgat Ullah withdrew due to injury.

In men's doubles, Bangladesh Ansar's Moazzem Hossain Ohidul and Shuvo Khandaker recovered from losing the first set 22-24 to defeat Al Amin Jumar and SM Sifat Ullah 21-18, 26-24.





Spinners came to life at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, with West Indies' Jomel Warrican claiming his fourth Test five-wicket haul to bundle the Tigers out for 272 in the first session before Taijul Islam helped Bangladesh set up an exciting finish to the second day's play of the first Test. Warrican's figures of five for 53 saw the visitors claim Bangladesh's last seven wickets for just 59 runs, turning things around after the hosts resumed the day in a promising position at 213 for three. After West Indies looked to assert their dominance with the bat, Taijul struck twice in quick succession, while Mehidy Hasan Miraz also chipped in with a wicket, leaving the visitors at 134 for four at stumps, still trailing by 138 runs. PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

Rafi, Maisha lead record rush in pool

SPORTS REPORTER



Eight national records fell on the second day of the Max Group 35th National Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Competition at Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Dhaka yesterday, with Samiul Islam Rafi setting two individual marks and helping establish a third, while Fatiha Mahtab Maisha broke two individual records.

The Bangladesh Navy swimmer clocked 24.98 seconds in the 50m butterfly, bettering his previous record of 25.15, before setting a 100m freestyle mark of 51.80, eclipsing the previous best of 52.42. His double made him the day's standout performer, with his contribution extending to the mixed relay.

Rafi also helped the mixed 4x100m relay team of Mohammad Islam, Mukta Khatun and Fatiha Mahtab Maisha clock 4:20.36, beating Bangladesh Navy's previous record of 4:24.36.

Maisha set two individual records, clocking 1:03.44 in the women's 100m freestyle to break Junayna Ahmed's 1:03.90 mark from 2019, before winning the 200m backstroke in 2:38.40, eclipsing Jui Akter's previous best of 2:40.41. Bangladesh Navy's Jui Akter broke Sonia Akter's women's 1,500m freestyle record of 20:26.06 with a time of 20:08.90, while Irfana Khatun set a women's 200m breaststroke record of 2:45.40, bettering Rumana Akter's 2:49.75.

After setting a record in the 1m springboard on the opening day, Arpa Das added another in the 3m event with 127.42 points, surpassing Nandini Pahan's previous best of 109.3 set last year.

Bangladesh Navy maintained their dominance in the medal table with 20 gold, 12 silver and nine bronze medals, while Bangladesh Army remained second with seven gold, 14 silver and 15 bronze.

Hridoy's red-ball temperament faces a reality check

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

With only 18 first-class matches behind him, Tawhid Hridoy had much to prove when he was called up to replace the injured Mushfiqur Rahim in the first Test against West Indies. Instead, his dismissal at a critical stage of Bangladesh's innings on Thursday exposed the gap between his red-ball promise and his readiness for Test cricket.

Rather than show the patience and game awareness required to fill Mushfiqur's sizeable shoes, Hridoy fell to an ill-judged attacking shot when Bangladesh needed him to build a partnership.

With speculation growing that Mushfiqur could bring the curtain down on his storied career within a year, Bangladesh face an uncomfortable question: who can replace the formidable 39-year-old? Hridoy has emerged as a candidate, but his performance in Mirpur offered little reassurance that he is ready for such responsibility.

His Test debut against Zimbabwe did not go to plan, but an unbeaten 350 against South Africa A in Potchefstroom subsequently brought his red-ball credentials into focus.



"I don't think it was because of the pitch. If you look at the delivery [Tawhid] Hridoy got out to, it was more or less a half-volley, the kind of ball you could hit. Hridoy plays those shots regularly, and he scores runs. I don't think there was anything unusual about it."

Bangladesh opener **SHADMAN ISLAM**, who notched his third Test ton after resuming on 99 yesterday, said.

He had an opportunity to strengthen his credentials in Mirpur. His 42 on day one, before cramps forced him off the field, suggested there was substance to his red-ball credentials. But on the second day, after the hosts had lost centurion Shadman Islam, Hridoy failed to read the situation, with the hosts needing a big first-innings total.

He charged at a pitched-up delivery from Jomel Warrican, only to miss the line of the arm ball completely and see his stumps disturbed. It was just the second delivery he faced that day.

The shot was particularly damaging given the match situation, exposing his vulnerability against spin and a lack of restraint when Bangladesh needed consolidation.

His dismissal preceded a collapse of alarming proportions. Bangladesh slumped from 213 for three to 272 all out, losing seven wickets for 59 runs in the first session on day two, with Litton Das stranded at the other end.

Before the day's play, Hridoy had spoken about building big partnerships. His shot offered little evidence of the patience required to make that happen. A fresh day called for a fresh assessment of the conditions and the team's needs, but his approach suggested otherwise.

Shadman took responsibility for the collapse, saying he should have done more after resuming on 99 overnight and eventually departing for 105. He insisted the wicket had offered no demons early in the morning session.

"It [collapse] wasn't because of the wicket. Maybe the ball Hridoy got out to was a half-volley which was a ball to score off. He usually plays this kind of shots and scores from them. Maybe they bowled well and we made some mistakes," he said when asked about Hridoy and the other batters' approach.

For Hridoy to be undone by left-arm spin, so prevalent in Bangladesh cricket, was troubling in itself. His recurring struggles with cramps are also a concern.

In the scorching heat of Dubai last February, Hridoy battled cramps against India in the Champions Trophy to score an ODI century. Those struggles nevertheless raised questions over his fitness.

In Mirpur, however, cramps were not to blame. His dismissal instead exposed shortcomings in his judgement and footwork, underlining how much work remains before he can credibly fill Mushfiqur's shoes.



Right in the thick of it! Bangladesh head coach Thomas Dooley opted for a hands-on approach during practice at the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday, going airborne to contest a header against full-backs Saad Uddin and Rahmat Mia as Topu Barman, Rakib Hossain, and Minhazul Karim Shadin watched on. With the SAFF Championship kicking off on home soil on November 5, the 65-year-old American is leaving no stone unturned to ensure the team is ready to meet the high expectations. PHOTO: **BFF**

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangladesh vs West Indies
1st Test, Day 3
Live from 9:30 am

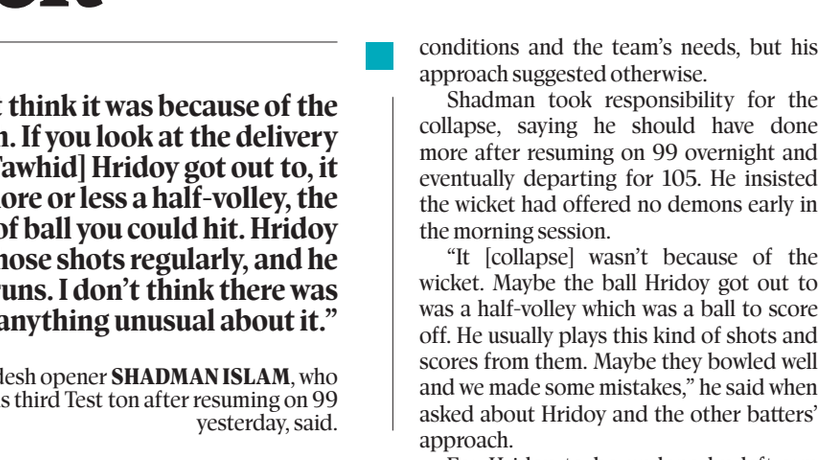
NCL GT20
Mississauga Skyhawks vs Toronto Knights
Live from 6:00 am

Brampton Blazers vs Vancouver Guardians
Live from 8:00 pm

Montreal Warriors vs Toronto Knights (Saturday)

LaLiga
Villareal vs Espanyol
Live from 2:00 am (Saturday)





Bangladesh bounce back for second gold

The trio of Abdur Rahman Alif, Md Sagor Islam and Abdulla Al Mohammad Rafi staged a strong comeback to help Bangladesh clinch their second gold medal at the Asia Cup Archery Stage-2, with the recurve men's team beating Kazakhstan 6-2 in the final in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, yesterday. Bangladesh lost the opening set 50-53 but bounced back to win the next three, scoring 55-54, 55-52 and 52-51 to seal the victory. Meanwhile, newcomer Saima Salah Uddin had to settle for silver in the women's recurve individual event after losing 6-4 to Iran's Mobina Fallah, despite winning the first two sets. Earlier on Wednesday, Bangladesh's compound women's team of Bonna Akter, Sreeporna Biswas and Kulsum Akter Mone clinched the country's first gold at the meet, defeating Kazakhstan 230-220 in the final. PHOTO: **BAF**