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SPORT



Bangladesh's Under-15 national football team finished as runners-up in the E-tier competition of the inaugural FIFA U-15 World Cup & Festival 2026 after suffering a 4-1 defeat to the Central African Republic in the final in Azerbaijan yesterday.

***Read full story on The Daily Star website*

Nayeem steps out of shadows

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh off-spinner Nayeem Hasan had to wait patiently for his opportunity in the ongoing opening Test against West Indies. When it finally came, however, he made it count, taking four wickets on the third day in Mirpur yesterday to help the hosts secure a 27-run first-innings lead.

Picked as the third specialist spinner, Nayeem was sparingly used on Thursday as the visitors batted for 48 overs. Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Taijul Islam bowled 19 and 15 overs respectively, while Nayeem was introduced only in the 25th over and sent down three overs.

He had to wait another 21 overs the next day. Nayeem soon created two close chances, one of which went begging when Mominul Haque dropped West Indies captain Roston Chase at short leg.

The 26-year-old finally broke through in the last over before lunch, trapping Justin Greaves leg-before to end a 51-run sixth-wicket stand. He then claimed the final three wickets in quick succession as West Indies were bowled out for 245 after lunch.

It was a timely reminder of what Nayeem can offer despite often finding himself behind Miraz and Taijul -- and, before them, Shakib Al Hasan -- in Bangladesh's spin hierarchy.

His limited role was evident in the one-off Test against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi earlier this month, when he returned to the starting line-up after a gap of nearly 16 months. Although Afghanistan batted for 89.1 and 142 overs, Nayeem bowled only 10 and 14 overs respectively, without taking a wicket. Miraz and Taijul, meanwhile, bowled 54 and 69 overs, sharing five wickets in the drawn match.

Speaking after the day's play yesterday, Nayeem credited captain Najmul Hossain Shanto's encouragement for helping him stay confident despite his restricted role. "He told me that even if I bowled poorly, I would continue bowling throughout the day," Nayeem said.

He also recalled Miraz's playful encouragement during the lunch break, when the senior all-rounder urged him to share the wickets.



"'You take two wickets and I'll take two ... we won't let Taijul bhai get any,' Miraz bhai was saying. Later, he said, 'You've already taken three wickets!'"

Nayeem's four-for also brought up his 50th Test wicket, making him the quickest Bangladeshi spinner to reach the milestone by balls bowled (2,856). He achieved the feat in his 16th Test, eight years after making an impressive debut with a five-wicket haul against West Indies in Chattogram.

Despite the milestone, Nayeem was quick to defend the captain's reliance on Miraz and Taijul, saying he understood that "the captain decides what he thinks is best for the team".

As for the time taken to reach 50 wickets, Nayeem said it was "not really in my hands". For a bowler so often left waiting, however, the performance offered a glimpse of his value when given a sustained opportunity.



Bangladesh batter Tawhid Hridoy goes for a big heave off the second delivery he faced on Day 3 of the first Test against West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Hridoy paid the price, departing for a two-ball duck as the Tigers slumped to 79 for six, leading by just 106 runs, at the close of play.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Belief all that's left for Tigers

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Instead of stamping their authority on the game, Bangladesh's batters were left in despair at the end of Day 3 of the first Test against West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The dark clouds over Mirpur, which interrupted play several times and contributed to a reduced number of overs on each of the three days, brought back memories of other matches in recent years when batting collapses repeatedly saw Bangladesh surrender control.

With the Tigers reeling at 79 for six, leading by just 106 runs, the inevitable question at the post-day press conference was what had been going through the batters' minds.

A perplexed Nayeem Hasan, asked to explain Tawhid Hridoy's shot selection, said: "Actually, I don't know what was going on in his mind. It's better if I don't talk about it. At that time I was getting ready, so didn't see what the dressing room reaction was."

After an abysmal dismissal in the first innings on Day 2, Hridoy once again appeared to lose sight of the situation. Having just arrived at the crease, he launched into a wild heave against Roston Chase, offering a simple catch to mid-on off just the second delivery he faced. The previous day, he had been bowled on the second delivery he faced trying to do the same.

Batting collapses have long been part of Bangladesh cricket across formats, but in Tests, the team often seems to bring them upon itself. The decision to prepare a spin-friendly pitch may have backfired this time, but it was difficult to escape the feeling that the batters were doing little to help themselves.

When Mominul Haque, who had suffered a blow to the head while fielding, did not come out to bat following Tanzid Tamim's dismissal, concerns grew over the possibility of Bangladesh needing a concussion substitute. With Mushfiqur Rahim's services unavailable, the team had also turned to Hridoy in a crucial batting position, only to see him throw his wicket away with a shot that was so inexplicable that it can't even be termed a brain fade.

Before that, Tanzid had fallen at gully after attempting to flick a Shamar Joseph delivery and closing the face of his bat too early. Shadman Islam, who had scored a century in the first innings and looked settled again in the second, left a gap between bat and pad, playing for the turn against Chase and being bowled. Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto suffered a similar fate, missing Chase's straighter delivery after playing for the turn.

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Litton Das, meanwhile, fell prey to Jomel Warrican, who did what Bangladesh's spinners had struggled to do -- flight the ball and extract turn from just in front of the batter. Litton, who did not play for the turn, was trapped leg-before.

It was left to Jaker, who came in as Mominul's concussion substitute, and specialist spinner Nayeem to offer some resistance. Their 26-run stand was hard-earned and proved valuable in the context of the match, taking Bangladesh's lead beyond 100.

Asked whether the poor shot selections stemmed from panic, Nayeem insisted there had been no such feeling in the dressing room.

"Everyone had belief that someone would carry the innings. Litton bhai had done it before, so there was that belief," he said.

But that belief has taken another hit. Litton is already back in the pavilion, while Jaker, who is playing his first Test in more than a year, was not even earmarked for the playing XI at the start of the match.

Bangladesh's batting plans now look increasingly convoluted, leaving the remaining batters and the spin attack with a monumental task if the Tigers are to keep their hopes of remaining in contention for the World Test Championship final alive.

"Believe that me and Jaker bhai can make our innings longer," Nayeem said in his parting assessment.

For now, belief and a miracle are all the Tigers have left to hold on to.



15-minute hattrick, 15 more to go

Cristiano Ronaldo scored a 15-minute hattrick in Al Nassr's 5-3 Saudi Pro League win over Al Kholood on Friday, taking his career goal tally to 985. With the score tied at 2-2, Ronaldo struck in the 66th, 72nd and 81st minutes to seal the victory, leaving himself just 15 goals short of the unprecedented 1,000-goal milestone. At this rate, it appears to be a matter of when, rather than if, the five-time Ballon d'Or winner reaches the landmark. This was Ronaldo's seventh hattrick for Al Nassr since joining the club in 2023, and his staggering 67th career hattrick for club and country (44 for Real Madrid, 10 for Portugal, three for Manchester United and three for Juventus), putting him five clear of second-placed Lionel Messi in this category.

PHOTO: X

Irfana breaks 12-year-old record

SPORTS REPORTER

Irfana Khatun stole the spotlight on the third day of the Max Group 35th National Swimming, Diving and Water Polo Championship at Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Dhaka yesterday, breaking a 12-year-old record in the women's 50m breaststroke.

The Bangladesh Army swimmer clocked 34.57 seconds to better the previous mark of 34.85, set by SA Games double gold-medallist Mahfuza Khatun Shila in 2012. The victory completed Irfana's sweep of all three women's breaststroke events, each with a record-breaking performance over the three days.

Her teammate Mukti Khatun took silver in 34.85 seconds, while Bangladesh Navy's Mukta Khatun finished third in 37.00.

Irfana also helped Bangladesh Navy's 4x200m freestyle relay team, alongside Mukti, Summa Khatun and Jui Akhter, set a new mark of 9:47.99, erasing the previous record of 9:50.01 set by the Navy team last year.

Bangladesh Navy maintained their lead in the medal table with 28 gold, 18 silver and 13 bronze medals. Bangladesh Army remained second with 12 gold, 18 silver and 22 bronze, while BKSP stood third with two silver and six bronze.





Crisis clash at the Bridge

STAR SPORTS DESK

Michael Carrick may have survived the sack this week, but his Manchester United side face another daunting test on Saturday when they travel to Stamford Bridge to take on an under-performing Chelsea in a crunch Premier League encounter.

Sitting just one point above the relegation zone amid their worst league start in 40 years, United are winless in eight matches in all competitions (D3 L5) since beating Sabah in the Champions League in September.

Carrick miraculously survived the sack following Sunday's 3-0 home humiliation to Bournemouth, but a defeat here could risk making him the third manager fired by powerbroker Jim Ratcliffe since 2024.

Behind the scenes, the camp is fractured: captain Bruno Fernandes was dropped last weekend for criticising tactics, while Lisandro Martinez was fined for blasting the club's transfer policy.

Despite sitting 11 places and six points ahead of United, morale under Xabi Alonso is similarly bleak in West London. Chelsea recently suffered consecutive defeats -- a shock 2-0 home loss to Tottenham, followed by a penalty-shootout EFL Cup fourth-round exit at Liverpool.

Scoring seven combined goals against Bournemouth and Everton post-international break proved a false dawn. Chelsea have slipped from the top four with a porous defence, conceding 15 Premier League goals (only Crystal Palace's 19 and Ipswich's 16 are worse) and averaging two goals shipped per home game.

With both managers desperate to avoid a third straight defeat across all competitions, history slightly favours the visitors. Chelsea have won just two of the last 17 Premier League meetings (D8 L7), though both of those victories -- 4-3 in 2023-24 and 1-0 in 2024-25 – came at Stamford Bridge.

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS

Bangladesh vs West Indies
1st Test, Day 4
Live from 9:30 am

Pakistan ODI Tri-Series
Final
Pakistan vs Sri Lanka
Live from 5:00 pm

LaLiga
Real Betis vs Malaga
Live from 11:30 pm

Barcelona vs Deportivo
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1

Premier League

Chelsea vs Man Utd
Live from 6:30 pm

Man City vs Brighton
Live from 9:00 pm

Tottenham vs Crystal Palace
Live from 11:30 pm

Aston Villa vs Fulham
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)