



Bangladesh Under-19s captain Akbar Ali and his Indian counterpart Priyam Garg pose with the coveted trophy during a photo session ahead of today's final of the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup at JB Marks Oval in Potchefstroom, South Africa yesterday.

PHOTO: ICC

U-19s' final shot at redemption

SPORTS REPORTER

On the cusp of history, first-time finalists Bangladesh will attempt to dethrone defending champions India when the young Tigers face their neighbours in the final of the ICC Under-19 World Cup at the Senwes Park in Potchefstroom today.

Both teams enter the final unbeaten. While India -- who topped Group A -- won

all five of their matches so far, Bangladesh survived a scare in their final group-stage game against Pakistan and rain ensured a point that also helped them top Group C.

For the Akbar Ali-led side, who have already etched their names into history books by becoming the first Bangladeshi team ever to earn a place in the final of an ICC event, it may be a final opportunity for redemption against India.

This batch of the cricketers has never been able to win a tournament final

against their Indian counterparts. After the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) formed the squad in September, 2018 with the aim of preparing the lot for the 2020 Under-19 World Cup, Bangladesh faced India in a tri-nation final in England in August 2019 that ended in a six-wicket defeat.

They faced the Priyam Garg-led side again in the 2019 Asia Cup final, losing by just five runs this time. Even in the 2018 Asia Cup semifinal, Bangladesh were just two runs shy of clinching a victory against India.

However, rain in Potchefstroom might play the role of spoilsport in the Tigers' quest for redemption. There is a reserve day, February 10, but with rain forecast for both days, the two sides might have to settle for being joint-champions.

Neither side, especially the Bangladesh team that have been preparing for the big occasion for over a year, would want to share the spoils.

Bangladesh skipper Akbar also did not want to have their focus derailed by thinking of playing in a World Cup final.

"We might invite unwanted pressure if we think that we are playing a World Cup final or that we must win the World Cup. So, we are trying to play the normal cricket that we have been playing throughout the tournament and trying to play the final as just another normal game," said Akbar yesterday.

While taking nothing away from the

HIGHLIGHTS

This is the first time ever that a Bangladeshi side will be playing in an ICC event final.

Since the ICC Under-19 World Cup 2018, Bangladesh Under-19s faced their Indian counterparts seven times. The young Tigers lost four of the encounters, winning just one while two were abandoned.

Bangladesh Under-19s are yet to win a tournament final against India.

Both Bangladesh and India go into today's final unbeaten.

India have bowled their opponents out in every World Cup game till now.

Indian side, Akbar had faith that his troops could get past the final hurdle.

"India are a fantastic side. They are very good in both the batting and bowling departments. They are unbeaten in the tournament, but we are too. If we can execute the plans we sketched for them, then hopefully the result will be on our side," concluded Akbar.

Discarded Fizz comes to life

SPORTS REPORTER



Mustafizur Rahman, who was dropped from the national squad for the Rawalpindi Test, showed signs of a return to form with a four-wicket haul that helped Central Zone take a four-run lead in the first innings of their Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) clash at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

However, Mustafizur's Central Zone, who bundled out the BCB-run North Zone for 166, failed to capitalise on their decent start and lost half their batsmen for 187 before the day's play ended prematurely due to bad light.

It was the first time ever that the ace left-arm pacer was dropped from the national squad for poor performances, especially in the longer format.

Mustafizur toured India with the Tigers in November last year but did not feature in any of the two Tests played. The 24-year-old also remained wicketless in the opening round of the BCL before being snubbed by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) when they announced a 14-member squad for the first Test against Pakistan.

And although it was not a jaw-dropping performance from the left-armer, it was still a decent day for Mustafizur and he started off emphatically by rattling national teammate Mushfiqur Rahim's stumps. Mustafizur, who scalped a solitary wicket on the first day, took two more at the death yesterday and finished with figures of four for 68 in 23 overs.

North Zone had Ariful Haque to thank as the all-rounder played a team high of 78-ball 50.

After the exchange, Central Zone stuttered at the beginning. However, after losing three wickets for 50, Central recovered through an 89-run fourth wicket stand between Abdul Mazid (69 off 107) and Taibur Rahman (47 off 91). But both Mazid and Taibur fell before the umpires called stumps.

Meanwhile in Cox's Bazar, East Zone managed 270 for five at the close in reply to South Zone's mammoth 482. Pinak Ghosh (80 off 151) and Mohammad Ashraful (71 off 123) gave East Zone a solid start by stringing together a 146-run opening stand but they lost two quick wickets just before stumps.



MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN 4 for 68

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH ZONE: First innings 482 all out in 101.3 overs (Anamul 129, Nurul 155, Mahedi 112; Hasan 2-72, Rejaur 3-96, Saqlain 3-126)

EAST ZONE: First innings 270-5 in 78 overs (Pinak 80, Ashraful 71, Yasir 44, Imrul 28; Razzak 2-102, Mahedi 2-98)

CENTRAL ZONE: First innings 170 and Second innings 187-5 in 51.3 overs (Mazid 69, Taibur 47, Hom 28 not out; Taskin 2-46)

NORTH ZONE: First innings 166 all out in 63.4 overs (Junaid 47, Naeem 22, Ariful 50; Mustafizur 4-68, Arafat 2-10)

Taylor, Jamieson combine to seal series for New Zealand

AFP, Auckland

New Zealand wrapped up the one-day series against India with veteran Ross Taylor and debutant Kyle Jamieson combining to set up a 22-run win in game two in Auckland yesterday.

Taylor, who was also New Zealand's hero with a century in the four-wicket victory in game one, set up the second success with 73 not out and an unbeaten 76-run partnership with the novice Jamieson.

Jamieson went to the middle with New Zealand 197 for eight and almost nine overs remaining following a spectacular collapse in which they lost seven wickets for 55 runs.

He said Taylor, in his 231st ODI, had a "pretty simple" message to try to bat out the overs.

"It was about trying to stay there and stick with Ross and get to a score that we could defend in the end."

Captain Tom Latham called their partnership "vital" and said he knew once India lost early wickets that 273 was a satisfactory total.

India were dismissed for 251 with nine balls remaining in their innings, but captain Virat Kohli was not too despondent having already beaten New Zealand 5-0 in the Twenty20 series.

"One-day cricket in this calendar year is not as relevant if you look at the T20s and the Tests, but having said that, to show that kind of fight and see who are the guys who can play under pressure is a big revelation for us,"



A DREAM DEBUT: Lanky fast bowler Kyle Jamieson is ecstatic after a peach of a delivery beat India opener Prithvi Shaw in his first over during the second ODI at Auckland yesterday. Jamieson finished with impressive figures of 2-42, along with his priceless batting effort to win the man-of-the-match award on his debut match.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Kohli said.

The 274-run target set for India was not a daunting prospect on Eden Park with its short boundaries and when Prithvi Shaw smacked the first two deliveries of the innings to the boundary it seemed the tourists would wrap the match up quickly.

But after Mayank Agarwal was dismissed in the third over India struggled to regain momentum.

New Zealand pace bowler Tim Southee -- who was unwell and only played because his team had no other bowlers to call on -- made history when he dismissed India's talisman Virat Kohli for 15.

It was a record ninth time he has dismissed Kohli across all formats and moved him past England pair James Anderson and Graeme Swann who have claimed the Indian captain's scalp eight times.

With Kohli's early dismissal India looked to Shreyas Iyer to lead them home.

The right-hander played his part until he reached 52, his second ODI half-century, when he lost his composure and tried to cut a Bennett delivery that was heading towards middle stump and succeeded only in nicking the ball through to the wicketkeeper.

Sixers clinch BBL title

AFP, Sydney

The Sydney Sixers clinched their second Twenty20 Big Bash League title yesterday after the Melbourne Stars fell short in the run-chase during a rain-affected match at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The home team was sent into bat in a game reduced to 12 overs a side and made 116 for five, with the Stars managing just 97 for six in reply.

"It's fantastic, it was an entertaining game of cricket," said Sixers captain Moises Henriques after the 19-run win at the Sydney Cricket Ground secured their second title and first since the inaugural season in 2011-12.

"The wicket played pretty well after so much rain. Well done to the ground staff and congratulations to the Stars on a great season."

It was remarkable the match went ahead with Sydney drenched by torrential rain for two straight days.

Unlike most other Twenty20 events around the world, no finals reserve day is built into the BBL structure which would have meant the Sixers claiming victory as the host team if no play was possible.

Steyn returns for England T20s

ICC



South Africa have opted to extend the rest for Faf du Plessis, with Quinton de Kock, who has been leading the side in the ODIs, named captain for the T20Is against

England as well.

The three-match T20I series, which starts on Wednesday, 12 February, also sees the return of fast bowler Dale Steyn, after a long injury-enforced spell on the sidelines. Steyn, 36, last played for South Africa in any format back in March 2019. His World Cup was ended before it even began by a recurring shoulder injury, the latest in a series of setbacks.

The veteran took the call to retire from Tests to extend his limited-overs career, and made clear his desire to play in this year's ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup. Strong performances in the Mzansi Super League, where he took 15 wickets at 15.13, and in the Big Bash League, where he claimed five wickets in four matches for Melbourne Stars, allayed concerns of both fitness and form, and he finds himself back in the set-up.

In a World Cup year, Cricket South Africa selectors have opted to hand maiden call-ups for batsman Pite van Biljon and seamer Sisanda Magala. Van Biljon, 33, has a strike-rate of 133.16 from 66 T20 matches, including six fifties, and comes on the back of good first-class form this year.

The series begins in East London before travelling to Durban and Centurion for the second and third matches on 14 and

16 February.

SQUAD

Quinton de Kock (captain), Reeza Hendricks, Temba Bavuma, Rassie van der Dussen, David Miller, Pite van Biljon, Dwaine Pretorius, Andile Phehlukwayo, Jon-Jon Smuts, Beuran Hendricks, Tabraiz Shamsi, Lungi Ngidi, Sisanda Magala, Bjorn Fortuin, Dale Steyn, Heinrich Klaasen.

