

## Tigers scare Pakistan

CRICINFO, St Lucia

Pakistan survived a Mohammad Ashraful scare to begin the defence of their world title at St Lucia with a 21-run win over Bangladesh.

Kamran Akmal (73) and Salman Butt (73) had laid the foundation with a 142-run stand that should've put the game beyond Bangladesh.

But Ashraful, with Shakib Al Hasan for company, took a real pop at an imposing 173-run target, before Mohammad Sami swung a slow-burning game

decisively Pakistan's way.

Bangladesh had been poor for vast chunks of the game, first with the ball, and then in starting the chase. But Ashraful's forceful 91-run stand with Shakib brought them close enough to get Pakistan jittery with five overs to go.

Sami, on his T20 debut, ensured it wasn't to be with a fine two-wicket over to effectively end the game.

Mohammad Aamer had throttled Bangladesh's start and Ashraful, who struck 65 off 49 balls, arrived with trouble brewing. Having typically tried all manner of unnecessary improvisation initially, the right-hander settled down to playing normal strokes. It's

asked often why he doesn't play those more, and let this be another time. He quickly deposited Abdul Razzaq for a wonderful six over midwicket, but really cranked up the heat when he took on Pakistan's captain next.

The first ball of Shahid Afridi's spell, the 11th over, was driven exquisitely over extra cover but it was in his next over that he really shook Pakistan up. Again he lofted Afridi, but with such grace and timing that the ball fairly sailed over long-off. A couple of balls later, he went squarer and soon after brought up his fifty.

Shakib (47 off 31 balls) showed the world once

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## Twist & Turns

**Akmal takes to the left- arm:**

Kamran Akmal takes to Bangladesh's strength of left-arm spin immediately, sweeping Abdul Razzaq twice for four in the game's second over. Both were bad deliveries down the leg side.

**Ashraful lets off Pakistan:** Akmal was yet to settle when, on 13, he attempts a pull off Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, only to miscue it high up in the air. But a back-peddling Ashraful dropped it at mid-on.

**Aamer stars in typical style:** Young Pakistan left-arm spinner Mohammad Aamer bowled a fantastic first over and end it with the wicket of Imrul Kayes, yet another occasion on which he has taken a wicket in the opening over. He also fell Tamim Iqbal on the ground with another beautiful yorker.

**Ashraful lays into Afridi:** Having tried hard to improvise, Ashraful finally goes orthodox lofting Afridi effortlessly on the off side for two fours and a maximum in two overs. It was an innings to behold from the pocket dynamo after a long time.

**Shakib gets into the act:** With the rate creeping up, Shakib slog-sweeps Hafeez for two massive sixes to leave his side needing 58 off the last six overs, with eight wickets in hand.

**Sami strikes:** Having begun with an expensive opening spell in his debut T20, Sami comes back in a crucial 16th over to dismiss Shakib and Mahmudullah and effectively seal the game.

## Captains' quotes

SPORTS DESK

Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi admitted that he was a bit worried when Mohammad Ashraful and Shakib Al Hasan were going great guns in chase of an improbable target of 173.

"They played very well, it was very mature cricket but I knew I had a few overs from pacers such as [Mohammad] Sami and [Mohammad] Aamer so I was totally confident," said Afridi.

Shakib on the other hand said Bangladesh had paid the price for poor early overs in both innings.

"We didn't start well with the ball and we didn't start well with the bat. In the shorter version of game it's very hard to come back if you don't start well," said the Bangladesh captain after their 21-run defeat.

"Fifty runs in five overs, that was chaseable. If either of us had stayed in until the 20th over, it could have been a different game," said Shakib while referring to his dismissal at that stage.

Bangladesh will play their final Group A match against Australia on May 5.



After a long layoff Mohammad Ashraful's bat talked in Bangladesh's opening World Twenty20 match against Pakistan at the Beausejour Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Saturday. Here the little right-hander hits a four during his polished knock of 65.

PHOTO: AFP

## What to WATCH

### BTV, Star Cricket & SuperSport2

ICC World Twenty20  
Sri Lanka v Zimbabwe  
Live from 7:30pm  
England v West Indies  
Live from 11:30pm

### ESPN

English Premier League  
Wigan v Hull City  
Live from 7:25pm  
Blackburn v Arsenal  
Live from 9:55pm

## DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League  
Abahani v Ctg Mohammedan  
Time: 4:00pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

## Clubs fined for bookable offence

SPORTS REPORTER

Except for Abahani Ltd, Mohammedan SC and Brothers Union, the ten remaining teams of Bangladesh League have been automatically fined for the bookable offences their players committed during the professional football league matches.

According to by-laws, each side will be fined Tk 10,000 if four or above players are booked in a game and the third edition of the professional football league saw 18 such games out of 120 till yesterday.

Muktijoddha Sangsad were on top of the list with four followed by three to newcomers Beanibazar SC. Sheikh Russel KC, Feni Soccer Club and Farashganj SC were fined twice while Chittagong Abahani, Rahmatganj MFS, Chittagong Mohammedan, Arambagh and Shuktara Jubo Sangsad once.

## Raina powers India into S 8s

AFP, Gros Islet

Suresh Raina became only the third man to make a Twenty20 international century as India beat South Africa by 14 runs at the Beausejour Stadium here on Sunday.

Victory, which saw India into the second round Super Eights after their seven-wicket win over Afghanistan on Saturday, was built on Raina's 101 out of a total of 186 for five.

Only West Indies' Chris Gayle and New Zealand's Brendon McCullum had previously made centuries at this level. Raina had an escape on five when he was caught off a Morne Morkel no-ball.

It was an expensive error by the fast bowler, with left-hander Raina striking five sixes and nine fours in a blistering assault as he reached his century off 59 balls.

Together with Yuvraj Singh (37) he shared a stand of 88 in 10 overs after the pair came together with India 32 for two in the sixth over after they'd lost the toss.

South Africa captain Graeme Smith had promised his side would be flexible when it came to their openers but few

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## Easy win for India

### Afghanistan impress on debut

AFP, Gros Islet

India beat Afghanistan by seven wickets in the teams' World Twenty20 opener here on Saturday but the outsiders were far from disgraced on their tournament debut.

Set 116 for victory, India finished on 116 for three with more than five overs to spare.

Earlier, Afghanistan's 115 for eight featured an impressive fifty from opener Noor Ali, well supported in a fourth-wicket stand of 68 by the hard-hitting Ashgar Stanikzai, whose 30 featured three sixes.

Ashish Nehra led the Indian attack with three wickets for 19 runs, his pace and bounce proving too much for several batsmen.

Murali Vijay, making his Twenty20 debut in place of injured India opening batsman Virender Sehwag, made 48 before holing out when his team were in sight of victory.

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss and elected to field.

The former champions did not have long to wait for wickets, Karim Sadiq caught down the legside by wicketkeeper Dhoni off left-arm quick Nehra for a four ball nought as he tried to pull a short ball.

But Ali gave Afghan fans something to cheer by leg-glancing the first four of the innings, off Praveen Kumar in the third over and he stylishly square drove the same bowler for another boundary.

However, Mohammad Shahzad fell in similar fashion to Sadiq and Afghanistan captain

Nowroz Mangal fell cheaply to Ravindra Jadeja.

Stanikzai though gave Ali good support and smote some impressive boundaries, including a six over midwicket off Harbhajan Singh.

The duo's stand was ended when Ali, whose fifty came off 47 balls with four fours, gave the returning Nehra a third wicket when he too failed with a pull, Dhoni once more taking the catch.

Then 97 for four became 97 for five when Stanikzai, whose runs came from just 33 balls, holed out to midwicket off Kumar. Next ball Mohammad Nabi skied Kumar to Dhoni.

But Afghanistan got past the hundred mark -- a fair achievement in itself and all the more impressive given that less than two years ago they were playing alongside Germany and Vanuatu in Division Five of the World Cricket League.

However, their score was put in perspective when Dawlat Ahmadzai's no-ball first delivery of the Indian innings was a no-ball led to a free hit which Vijay struck for four.

However, Ahmadzai did have Gautam Gambhir caught at point for four and Samiullah Shenwari had Suresh Raina lbw for 18.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN: 115 for 8 in 20 overs (Noor Ali 50, Ashgar 30; Nehra 3-19, Kumar 2-14)  
INDIA: 116 for 3 in 14.5 overs (Vijay 48, Raina 18, Yuvraj 23, Dhoni 15)

Result: India won by seven wickets.

Man-of-the-match: Ashish Nehra.

## Academies make draw

SPORTS REPORTS

The second four-day match of the GP-BCB Academy Cup between GP-BCB Academy team and South Africa Academy team ended in a draw at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra on Saturday.

Chasing a victory target of 361 in the second innings, the GP-BCB Academy team reached 231 for 8 before stumps were drawn as the two teams settled for a draw. Earlier, they scored 260 runs in the first innings.

The South Africa side scored 222 in the first innings and 398 in the second innings to post a challenging total.

GP-BCB Academy spinner Shaker Ahmed was adjudged man of the match for his

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## Abahani aim for AFC President's Cup spot

Football

SPORTS REPORTER

Having set their sights on the professional Bangladesh League football title for the third successive time, Abahani now target to win the AFC President's Cup qualifiers on home soil as the Group A qualifiers involving four clubs get underway on May 12 at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The Dhanmondi-based outfit, who are close to winning their hattrick domestic league titles following the slip of their better rivals Mohammedan Sporting Club, have remained unbeaten for 30 league matches including 11 in the previous edition and coach Amalesh Sen believes his boys will be able to translate their current performance into the qualifiers to fulfil Abahani's dream of playing the finals for the first time.

Abahani, for whom this will be the third appearance in the continent's third-tier club competition, had exited from the previous qualifiers also held in Dhaka by virtue of goal difference against group champions Turkmenistan's FC Asgabad. In their first appearance the Sky Blues returned home empty handed finishing third behind Nepal Police and this time they, having taken the inspiration of the ongoing league's performance, are looking forward to qualifying for the four-team final round.

"From different quarters, I have been regularly receiving phone calls and their only demand is to take Abahani to the finals of the

AFC President's Cup and I am also carrying those messages to the players and ask them to keep their spirit of what they have been putting in the ongoing league and I believe it will not be tough task for the players if they maintain their performance in the upcoming qualifiers," said Sen yesterday.

Abahani have already sent their players' list to the AFC tournament committee keeping only two foreign recruits -- Ghanaian striker Awudu Ibrahim and defender Samad Yousuf. Abahani will miss another Ghanaian striker Sheriff Deen Mohammad as only two foreigners are permitted to play.

Nevertheless, hosts Abahani's keen contest will be against Kyrgyzstan's Dordoi Bishkek, who emerged champions twice in 2007 and 2006 and lost in every other final of five editions.

The long-serving Abahani coach said they are trying to collect the footages of other competitors and will decide the formation after their Bangladesh League match against Brothers Union on May 7.

Whether their three vital league matches, to be held after the AFC President's Cup, on way to their hattrick league title triumphs, will make Abahani light in the qualifiers, manager Satyajit Das Rupu said they are giving equal importance to both competitions.

"We are taking three matches of the qualifiers as the Bangladesh League matches and there is no chance to take the competition lightly because we are seriously committed to see us in the AFC President's Cup finals," said the former Bangladesh international.

Coach Sen, however, was a bit worried over

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NOT A BAD START: Players of Afghanistan celebrate an Indian wicket at the Beausejour Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Saturday. Despite a predictable defeat, the Afghans impressed everybody in their first-ever Twenty20 World Cup match.

PHOTO: AFP