

Form teams' clash

SPORTS REPORTER

Familiar foes India and Sri Lanka will face off at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium at Fatullah today in a match where a win for either side would be a big step towards a place in the final of the Asia Cup 2014.

While both teams have played each other frequently in the recent past, this encounter will be after a gap of seven months and promises to bring about a fresh perspective. The Lankans, who have maintained a hundred per cent record in Bangladesh ever since their arrival in January, will be the more confident team going into the game.

So far Fatullah has rewarded batsmen who spend time at the crease and the Sri Lankans will know that well. Lahiru Thirimanne, who recently returned from an injury, scored 102 off 110 balls against Pakistan in the first game and laid the foundation for a high score. He was ably supported by Kumar Sangakkara, who seems to be in imperious touch having scored three centuries on the tour.

India displayed a similar strength in their first game against Bangladesh, chasing 280 with ease. It was a great confidence booster for a side that failed to win any of their



Afghanistan made quite an impressive Asia Cup debut at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium yesterday. Here Samiullah Shenwari (C) celebrates the fall of Pakistan opener Ahmed Shehzad. They had the holders on the ropes before Umar Akmal bailed Pakistan out with a magnificent century.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sheikh Kamal stadium making int'l debut

SPORTS REPORTER

The newly-built Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar will make its international debut when Bangladesh women play an ODI game against their Pakistan counterparts on March 4.

The Pakistani women will arrive in Dhaka on March 2 and travel to the coastal city on the following day to play two ODIs and as many T20Is at the new venue. The second ODI will take place on March 6 while the T20 games will be held on March 8 and 15 at the same venue.

Meanwhile, the Indian women's team will arrive in Cox's Bazar on March 7 to play three T20 -- on March 9, 11 and 13 -- matches against the hosts ahead of the ICC World Twenty20.

Tigers on comeback trail

NAIMUL KARIM

In the absence of Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, Bangladesh needed something special to make an impact in their first game of the Asia Cup, especially after the series whitewash at home against Sri Lanka.

And that came in the form of Mushfiqur Rahim's brilliant century against India. The unfortunate aspect was Mushfiqur's injury towards the end of the game on Wednesday. He hurt his right shoulder and underwent a scan yesterday. The national team's physio's statement that they are 'still assessing his condition' does not provide a clear picture of the extent of the injury.

Make no mistake about it, the wicket at Fatullah is no doubt better suited for the batsmen, but recent matches have shown that runs can only be scored on the wicket if batsmen decide to spend some time on it. Both Mushfiqur and Anamul -- albeit after a few early hiccups in the case of the latter -- did exactly that and were

rewarded with a 133-run partnership.

The captain began his onslaught only after reaching his half-century in 65 balls. The manner in which he unleashed a series of slog-sweeps to take the bowling apart must have helped him regain confidence following the Sri Lanka series. In fact, despite the defeat, the match in a way turned out to be a confidence-booster for the hosts.

"It was an improved performance particularly around our batting. Mushy and (Anamul Haque) Bijoy were brilliant for the team. We had much better processes in all departments of our batting, bowling and fielding. We can just keep working hard for the next game," said coach Shane Jurgensen yesterday.

While Shakib's absence in the batting line up was countered by Mushfiqur's fiery knock, the hosts did miss him while bowling. Mushfiqur had to use eight bowlers against India and one of the key reasons behind that was Shohag Gazi's lack of form. He frequently

bowled short of a length and was punished by Virat Kohli and co. The off-spinner just does not seem the same bowler since the New Zealand series, in which he excelled.

It's not an unusual zone for the Tigers; they have been successful without Shakib in the past. The series against the West Indies, New Zealand and the away tour of Sri Lanka are examples of that. But the main difference back then was that the bowlers answered the call whenever necessary. Rubel Hossain got a hat-trick against New Zealand, Abdur Razzak got a five-wicket haul against the Lankans, while Gazi and Mahmudullah Riyad spun the West Indies out.

While a quick turnaround from the Sri Lanka series will no doubt be difficult, it seems as though the hosts have taken the first step and improved their batting. With the Afghanistan game coming up next the hosts will be keen to complete the turnaround process with a win that has eluded them ever since the start of this year.



Major portions of these two Mega Projects are built with Crown Cement, the Gold Trophy winner in export. Because of consistent quality, Crown Cement is being regularly used in mega projects like Mogbazar-Mouchak Flyover, Comilla Flyover and extension of Khilgaon Flyover. — Crown Cement.

last six games. Virat Kohli's calculated and patient 136, along with Ajinkya Rahane's 73, led the way for them. They will however be hoping for a better performance from their openers Shikhar Dhawan and Rohit Sharma.

On the bowling front they will be hoping Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammad Shami can repeat their positive performances. Jadeja's slow left-armers were difficult to negotiate while Shami's pace outdid Bangladesh's middle order.

Sri Lanka were saved by a late five-wicket haul from Lasith Malinga, whose last five wicket came in the last three overs of the game against Pakistan. However, they will have to put up a much better performance in order to get past the Indian batting line up.

Sri Lanka is not likely to disturb the combination that has brought them so many wins on this tour. India however may ponder bringing in a replacement for pacer Varun Aaron who, apart from bowling two beamers, gave away 74 runs in 7.5 overs against Bangladesh.

Arrest Akmal!

THE DAWN, Lahore

A local sessions court on Thursday issued the arrest warrant for Pakistan cricketer Umar Akmal for violating traffic rules and scuffling with a traffic warden, Dawn News reported.

Also on Thursday, the court ordered that following his arrest, Akmal be produced before it on March 11.

The court had summoned Akmal over the dispute with the traffic warden.

Currently, Akmal is in Bangladesh as part of the team playing in the Asia Cup tournament and scored a century against Afghanistan yesterday.

Earlier on February 1, Umar was arrested after police said he did not stop at a traffic signal in Lahore's Firdous market area and later brawled with a traffic warden. He was detained the same day and released a day later on a bail order issued by a local court against a surety bond of 100,000 rupees.

Umar has denied the charges, claiming he had been assaulted by the traffic warden first.



Champion Sri Lanka batsman Kumar Sangakkara has been scoring heavily in his latest Bangladesh sojourn. The left-hander will be at the centre of Lankan batting when his side meet India in a crucial Asia Cup match at Fatullah today. PHOTO: STAR

Under-19s secure Plate

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh finished their ICC Under-19 World Cup campaign with some solace as they clinched the Plate Championship with a 77-run victory over New Zealand in the final in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

This is the fourth time that the young Tigers clinched the Plate in U-19 World Cup.

Riding on half-centuries from Shadman Islam and Liton Das, Bangladesh scored 223 runs before being all out in 47 overs.

Put in to bat, Shadman and Liton shared 124 runs for the second wicket in 20.4 overs before the latter was caught behind for a 75-

ball 79. Liton's dismissal saw a hiccup in the Bangladesh batting though Shadman was there before he was dismissed only three runs short of a deserved hundred.

Bangladesh lost their last six wickets for 24 runs as only one more batsman, Yasir Ali (15), reached double figures.

Then a four-wicket haul from Mosaddek Hossain helped them restrict New Zealand to 146 for 9.

New Zealand lost early wickets and could not get any partnership going. Mosaddek's four wickets added to their agony as they were brought down to 66 for 5 by the 22nd over, and then 112 for 9 by the 44th. An unbeaten fifty from No. 9 Brett Randell took them close to 150 but it only delayed the inevitable.

Lost, still proud

NAIMUL KARIM

Despite ending up on the losing side in a match which saw Afghanistan battle neck and neck against Pakistan for most parts of the game, their coach Kabir Khan said that he was 'proud' of his team's performance.

Afghan bowlers had reduced Pakistan to 117 for six by the 30th over and had a golden opportunity of bundling them out for a low score. However a century from Umar Akmal, who was dropped on 27, turned the tides against them.

"No matter if they win or lose I am still proud of them because of the way they played with the facilities that they have got back home. And the way they fought against teams with lot of money and plenty of facilities, I am proud of the boys. We restricted a world class team within 250 on a wicket where runs close to 300 was chased down," said Kabir at the post-match press conference.

"I guess the Pakistani officials' blood pressure was high for most parts of the match," he joked.

Kabir, who believed that no side would take Afghanistan lightly after their performance against Pakistan yesterday, stated that their participation in the Asia Cup had the potential to create revolutionary changes back home.

"We have a different cause here. If we even win a single match here it will change the future of Afghan cricket for the next ten years. More and more youngsters will come in and play cricket," he said.

"This is a team that is filled with players from the new generation so every step is a positive for us. We are playing in a tourna-

ment with three world champions and we can take plenty of positives from here," he added.

Afghanistan's next challenge will be against the hosts, Bangladesh. That they rested their strike bowler Hamid Hassan, who has just recovered from an injury, to ensure that he plays the game against the Tigers just shows how serious they are about the game.

"We are playing Bangladesh in T20 World Cup and we need to beat them to go to the next round. So we want to put extra pressure on them from this tournament. Let me remind you, T20 is our favourite format," chuckled Kabir.

Lou didn't report it

AFP, Wellington

Former New Zealand international Lou Vincent confirmed Thursday that he failed to tell authorities when a bookmaker approached him about fixing a match in Bangladesh, but said that was the extent of any wrongdoing.

Vincent said he had pleaded guilty to breaching the International Cricket Council's (ICC) anti-corruption code by not reporting the approach while playing in the scandal-tainted Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) last year.

"I confirm I rejected this approach at the time. There is no allegation or suggestion that anything untoward occurred beyond the approach itself," Vincent said in a statement.

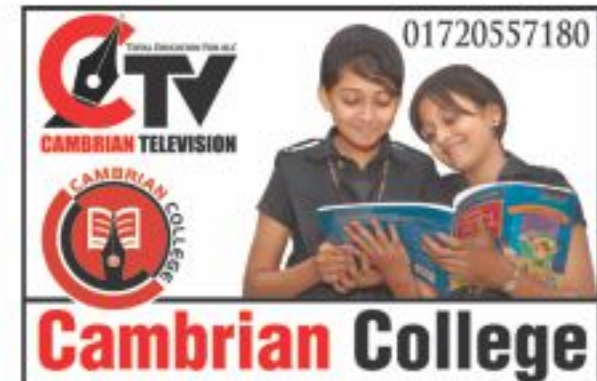
Siddikur keeps going

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman continued the good show as he climbed one position to finish the second round of the SAIL-SBI Open in joint second position yesterday. Having finished the first round in joint-third with a round of five-under-par 67, Siddikur repeated the performance in the second round at the Delhi Golf Club, where he won his second Asian Tour title -- the Hero Indian Open last year.

The 29-year-old traded six birdies for a bogey to end with a cumulative score of 10-under-par 134. Although in joint-second position with Unho Park of Australia and Mithun Perera of Sri Lanka, Siddikur is a fair way off the top spot occupied by Indian Rashid Khan with a cumulative score of 14-under-par 130.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh golfer Shakhawat Sohel was in joint 35th position, while his countryman Jamal Hossain was in joint 46th spot.



PAK-AFGHAN SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN				
Sharjeel c Noor b Hotak	25			
Shehzad b Shinwari	50			
Hafeez b Nabi b Ashraf	10			
Maqsood Stanikzai b Shinwari	13			
Misbah run out	0			
Akmal not out	102			
Afridi b Zadrn	6			
Anwar c Mangal b Ashraf	21			
Gul b Zadrn	15			
Ajmal not out	1			
Extras: (lb-2, nb-1, w-2)	5			
Total: (For 8 wks in 50 overs)	248			
Did not bat: Junaid.				
Fall of wickets: 1-55, 2-78, 3-89, 4-89, 5-108, 6-117, 7-177, 8-217.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shapoor	9	1	42	0
Zadrn	10	0	73	2
Nabi	8	0	46	0
Hotak	8	1	22	1
Ashraf	8	1	29	2
Shinwari	7	0	34	2
AFGHANISTAN				
Shahzad c Akmal b Gul	9			
Noor lbw b Ajmal	44			
Stanikzai c Hafeez b Afridi	40			
Mangal run out	35			
Nabi lbw b Gul	15			
Najibullah b Hafeez	1			
Shenwari b Hafeez	14			
Ashraf run out	4			
Dawlat b Ajmal	0			
Shapoor c Ajmal b Hafeez	1			
Hotak not out	0			
Extras: (b-8, w-5)	13			
Total: (All out in 47.2 overs)	176			
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-65, 3-139, 4-140, 5-151, 6-159, 7-172, 8-172, 9-175.				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Gul	9	0	44	2
Anwar	4	0	23	0
Junaid	6	1	16	0
Afridi	10	0	31	1
Ajmal	9	1	25	2
Hafeez	9.2	0	29	3

Liza draws fifth game

SPORTS REPORTER

National woman's champion WIM Shamima Akter Liza drew her fifth game in the open A group of the 28th Cannes Winter Chess Festival in France on Wednesday.

Liza drew against Christo Dimitrov of France to secure 2.5 points from five matches, said a press release yesterday.