



Master Sri Lanka batsman Mahela Jayawardene needed more than one bat to score a match-winning hundred against a spirited Afghanistan at the University Oval in Dunedin yesterday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Lankans survive Afghan scare

AFP, Dunedin

Mahela Jayawardene's century rescued Sri Lanka from a batting meltdown as they beat Afghanistan by four wickets in their World Cup match in Dunedin on Sunday.

Set a modest target of 233 to win the Pool A game, 1996 champions Sri Lanka were stunned when openers Lahiru Thirimanne and Tillakaratne Dilshan both fell for golden ducks.

They were in further strife at 51 for four before Jayawardene (100) and skipper Angelo Mathews (44) rectified the innings with a 126-run partnership before Sri Lanka won with 10 balls to spare at University Oval.

Jayawardene's crucial innings was his 19th ODI century and one of his most valuable as Sri Lanka, losing finalists at the last two World Cups, were in trouble before he set about taming the bowling.

This was Sri Lanka's first win in two games this tournament following a 98-run defeat by New Zealand, but the plaudits went to World Cup debutants Afghanistan, who only let themselves down with a slow run-rate in the second half of their innings.

Sent in to bat in spicy, overcast conditions they reached 169 for four before the last 15 overs saw six wickets go down as they were dismissed for 232 with two balls remaining.

It left Sri Lanka with a modest chase but an experienced side made life difficult for themselves as, for only the second time in one-day international history, both openers fell first ball.

Dawlat Zadran had Thirimanne leg before wicket with the first ball of the innings and Dilshan was caught behind off the first ball he faced from Shapoor Zadran in the second over.

The slump did not end there as Hamid Hassan continued the demolition of the Sri Lankan top order.

He bowled Kumar Sangakkara for seven and Dimuth Karunaratne was caught behind for 23 as Sri Lanka reeled at 51 for four against an Afghanistan side beaten in their tournament opener by Bangladesh.

After leaving the field to address problems with his boots, the flamboyant Hassan came back to end Jayawardene's

stand and finished with figures of three for 45.

Sri Lanka were 178 for six, requiring 54 runs in under nine overs, when Thisara Perera eased their nerves with a decisive and quickfire unbeaten 47.

Afghanistan may be regarded as rank outsiders but Dawlat Zadran, Shapoor Zadran and Hassan taught Sri Lanka a lesson on how to utilise the conditions.

With cloudy skies following overnight rain, and with the ground renowned for early swing, Mathews did not think twice about fielding when he won the toss.

However, Lasith Malinga and Suranga Lakmal were too loose to threaten Afghanistan openers Javed Ahmadi and Nawroz Mangal, who eventually engineered



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Immaculate Mahela

AFP, Dunedin

Sri Lankan maestro Mahela Jayawardene said it took all his powers of concentration to produce his match-saving World Cup century against Afghanistan in Dunedin on Sunday.

He was too focussed to even acknowledge his 19th ODI hundred, and fourth in a World Cup, but said afterwards he ranked it with his best Cup efforts.

Jayawardene's mission started with Sri Lanka on the ropes at 18-3 chasing Afghanistan's modest 233-run target in their Pool A game at University Oval.

At 51-4 the situation was even more dire with the former world champions

looking average against an associate side that has only been playing international cricket for six years.

"I was telling myself to make sure I commit to each and every shot," Jayawardene, 37, said.

"I was waiting for every loose ball, every shot, every leave I did there was a lot of commitment.

"I had to make sure my focus was there because we had to keep the scoreboard ticking. That was the only way we could create a bit of pressure on them."

Ball by ball, in partnership with captain Angelo Mathews (44), Jayawardene turned the game around, showing no emotion when he took a single off Shapoor Zadran

for his century.

"I just wanted to finish the game off, not get myself rattled, and keep the focus going, simple as that," Jayawardene explained of his lack of celebration.

But he admitted he "enjoyed that hundred as if it was the World Cup final hundred, a tough situation," recalling his unbeaten 103 in the 2011 Cup final when Sri Lanka came up short against India.

"Mentally, I had to be very strong out there today, so I'm very pleased with the effort. The (lack of) celebration is because I wanted to finish the game off so I was disappointed at the end."

Jayawardene's single off Zadran

was his last scoring shot as two balls later his attempt to flick Afghanistan's chief wicket taker Hamid Hassan over the boundary fell into the hands of Nawroz Mangal at third man.

It was Sri Lanka's first win in the tournament after they suffered a heavy defeat to New Zealand in their first game, and Jayawardene said Afghanistan were the right opponents to get them going again.

"For us to play a tough match like that was probably a good thing in this tournament. There are areas which we need to improve and hopefully we can improve those going forward."

McGrath regrets shooting safari



AFP, Sydney

Former Australian Test cricketer Glenn McGrath says he deeply regrets being involved in a shooting safari, after photos of him posing with a dead elephant and buffalo emerged on social media.

In a statement, McGrath said he participated in a hunting safari in Zimbabwe in 2008 "that was licensed and legal but in hindsight highly inappropriate".

"It was an extremely difficult time in my life and looking back I deeply regret being involved," he said. McGrath lost his first wife, Jane, to breast cancer in 2008.

The photographs, in which a smiling McGrath is seen with a rifle in his hands posing in front of the dead animals, had reportedly been posted on the website of Chipitani Safari Company.

The images sparked outrage on Twitter on Saturday after they were reposted on Facebook by an animal activist group.

Shenwari rues lack of experience

AFP, Dunedin

Afghanistan believe a lack of experience cost them the chance of a major World Cup upset Sunday when Sri Lanka escaped with a four-wicket win in their Pool A clash.

A century by Mahela Jayawardene, who featured in a 126-run stand with Angelo Mathews, rescued Sri Lanka from a disastrous start when they were 51-4 chasing 233 to win.

When the Sri Lankan top order collapsed Afghanistan felt they were in with a chance but they eventually lost by four wickets with 10 balls remaining.

"It was very disappointing because we took four early wickets and Mahela, very experienced player, and Mathews, also very experienced, took the match from us," Afghanistan batsman Samiullah Shenwari said.

Shenwari featured in an 88-run partnership with Asghar Stanikzai for the third wicket in an innings he believed was 30-40 runs short and exposed Afghanistan's rawness at the top international level.

It was the first time in their short 47-match ODI history that the top eight batsmen posted double figures in one match but only Stanikzai (54) reached a half century with Shenwari's 38 the only other score above 30.

"We need some more matches with Asian teams to get more experience. We need some time from the ICC to give us more matches against Test nations so maybe we get more used to it," Shenwari said.

"Today was a good game but in the middle me and Asghar played an 80 partnership but we didn't make the 30-40 runs missing in this match."

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INFO ZONE

SCOTLAND

ENGLAND

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUPS

M W L

Never Played Before

M W L

Never Played Before

IN ALL ODIs

M W L

3 0 2

3 2 0

Last meeting: 9th May 2014 at Marnold Park, Aberdeen. England won by 39 runs(D/L method)

KEY PLAYERS



RICHIE BERRINGTON

26.96

36

863

101*

75.63

7

1

50

Bat Average

Inns

Runs

HS

Strike Rate

50s

100s

Last Inns



JOE ROOT

39.30

47

1651

113

79.33

8

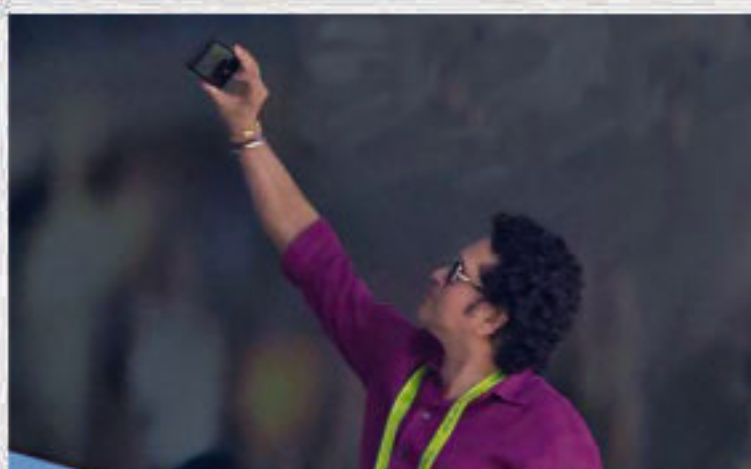
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46

FAN ZONE

f/clemoncleardrink

ফোঁসকা
অমুরত
Freshness



An unidentified (!) Indian fan takes a selfie at the MCG, which was packed full of Indians. Meanwhile some Afghans watch their team bat against Sri Lanka.



Gautam Bhimani: Magnificent fight from Afghanistan but in the end the power and experience of Perera just built on that

Mahela special
Shivani Naikar: Breaking records is more fun than maintaining them. Thank you #TeamIndia