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Will Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq (L) keep on smiling or will it be the turn of his Australian counterpart Michael Clarke after today's quarterfinal at Adelaide Oval?

PHOTOS: AFP

PAKISTAN V AUSTRALIA

Can Misbah & Co snap the Oz run?

AFP, Adelaide

History favours Australia, but Pakistan's astonishing ability to conjure magical wins promises enthralling cricket during their World Cup quarterfinal at the Adelaide Oval on Friday.

Misbahul Haq's men are determined to replicate the success of their predecessors under Imran Khan who won the tournament down under in 1992 -- and their paths bear an uncanny similarity.

Imran's team won just one of their first five matches but bounced back to win the next five, including the final against England by 22 runs at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

This time, Pakistan lost their opening two games against archrivals India and the West Indies before resurrecting their campaign with four straight wins to make the knock-out rounds.

On the way, they triumphed over mighty South Africa at Auckland, bowling AB de Villiers's side for 202 after being dismissed for 222.

As Pakistan prepared to face their biggest challenge in the tournament -- playing Australia on their own turf -- Misbah hoped the momentum gained over the past two weeks will see Pakistan through.

"We are bowling well and the batting too is coming good," he said. "We need to keep the momentum going. Just need to play well on the day."

Pakistan have lost nine of their last 10 one-dayers to Australia on Australian grounds, including the last seven in a row.

But Misbah will be heartened by Pakistan's gutsy display

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'Aussies favourites'

AFP, Adelaide

Pakistan captain Misbahul Haq fired the first salvo ahead of his team's World Cup quarterfinal match in Adelaide on Friday, saying Australia will be favourites -- but that favourites don't always win.

The odds are in favour of four-time champions and co-hosts Australia, but Pakistan's unpredictable nature and four consecutive wins after a poor start to the tournament make them threatening opponents.

"They [Australia] are favourites but there is no hard-and-fast rule that favourites are always going to win the match," said Misbah on Thursday.

"It's which team performs better on the day, takes their chances and have some luck, they can really defeat any team," he added.

"We are positive and hopeful. I think we've got a bowling line-up which can go through any [batting] line-up."

Misbah insisted his side were not daunted by playing Australia, saying teams that wanted to win the World Cup had to expect to face major opposition.

"When you have a goal of winning the World Cup, you have to beat any team on the way," said Misbah, who admitted a Pakistan win on Friday would be regarded as an upset.

"Australia is tough in home conditions," said Misbah of an Australian side who have only lost once to Pakistan in their last ten home matches.

Pakistan's most recent win against Australia in Australia came in Perth in 2005 and they have lost their last seven one-day internationals away to the Aussies.

"Everyone is calling them favourites and if any other team beat them then it's called an upset, so for us if we can do that then it's very good for Pakistan cricket as well," said Misbah, who said his squad were in upbeat mood after a run of wins that included a victory over highly-fancied South Africa.

"I think four straight wins gives you a lot of confidence as a playing unit, the mindset is good and the momentum is with us and this is the best time to play against such a good team because we are also in a good frame of mind," said Misbah.

'This is the final'

AFP, Adelaide

Australia captain Michael Clarke will approach Friday's World Cup quarterfinal against Pakistan like a final, saying he expected a "tough challenge" from Misbahul Haq's men in the make-or-break game.

Pakistan have lost nine of their last 10 one-dayers to Australia on Australian grounds, including all of the last seven, but Clarke refused to take victory for granted.

"I think Pakistan have been under-rated for a long time especially in the shorter form of the game," Clarke told reporters at the Adelaide Oval on Thursday.

"They have got a lot of talent. Their attack is very good and they have got a good mix of youth and experience."

"It will be a tough challenge for us and I believe we have to be at our best to beat them. We'll treat this like a World Cup final."

"If you lose, you will be sitting and watching the rest of the tournament, so we are focused on just making sure we can have success in this game."

Four-time champions Australia beat England in their opening match, had a rained-out no-result against Bangladesh and then lost by one wicket to co-hosts New Zealand after being bowled out for 151.

They then won their three remaining matches to live up to their billing as one of the pre-tournament favourites.

However, Clarke said the results of the league matches were irrelevant and the momentum gained through the tournament will count for little if the team lost a knock-out game.

"When you walk out on the field tomorrow it's a new day. We all start on zero with the bat and zero with the ball as well," he said.

"What happened beforehand is irrelevant. It does not matter how well you have played earlier or what your plans are afterwards."

"It's about being 100 per cent focused and as well prepared as you can be; batting as well as you can, bowling as well as you can, and hopefully our fielding continues to be as good as it has been."

The Export Leader



against the Aussies in World Cup matches, where both sides have won four matches each in eight encounters.

In the last World Cup in 2011, Pakistan beat Australia by four wickets in Colombo, making veteran all-rounder Shane Watson wary of what awaited his team on Friday.

"We know this is a danger game for us because they [Pakistan] can come on and just turn it on like they have throughout the times I've played them in the past," said Watson.

Meanwhile, four-time champions Australia have recovered well from a mixed start to live up to their billing as one of the pre-tournament favourites.

Having thrashed old foes England by 111 runs at the MCG in their opening match, Australia were forced to share points with Bangladesh in a Brisbane wash-out, before a spectacular batting collapse saw them lose to New Zealand in Auckland.

In good batting conditions, Australia were shot out for 151 and only a six-wicket haul from Mitchell Starc helped them stretch New Zealand in the one-wicket win.

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UMESH YADAV

After the exchange India needed to strike hard and strike fast. Tamim Iqbal looked as though he was nearing his groove with his drives and it could have been a dangerous proposition for India. But that's when Umesh Yadav struck with one of his many short of length deliveries. Tamim edged it to the keeper and that's what opened the gates for India. The same over saw Yadav effect a run-out to further dampen Bangladesh's spirits. A superb fielding effort from Ravindra Jadeja saw him stop runs on the leg side. That was followed by Yadav running behind the non-striker's stumps and receiving the ball perfectly to run-out Imrul Kayes. The pacer then took three more wickets, including the crucial one of Mushfiqur Rahim to finish with a career-best haul of 4 for 31.

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WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Bunch of winners, bunch of losers and now "bunch of semi-finalists heading for a World Cup win." The last one does not quite have the same ring to it, but it's what South Africa's sports minister Fikile Mbalula came up with in his press release congratulating the side for their historic, first-ever knockout win at a World Cup.

"This win ends a knockout victory drought that was brought upon us in the semi-final loss to England in 1992. Minister Mbalula thanks captain AB de Villiers for delivering on his promise that they won't choke today and also thanks South Africans for their continued support to the national team," the statement read.

"Going into the semi-finals, the Proteas will need more of our support. Those who labelled them chokers can now call them 'bunch of semi-finalists' who are heading for a World Cup Win."

Mbalula informed the team he would not travel to the World Cup unless they reached the semi-finals. He has yet to confirm his attendance in Auckland on Tuesday but retweeted a question asking if he was traveling, perhaps in the hope of prompting his seniors.

Aleem Dar under pressure

Umpires at ICC World Cup 2015 have been under fire for making few errors and now another blunder was witnessed during the India-Bangladesh quarterfinal yesterday. Indian opener Rohit Sharma benefited from a poor decision by Pakistan's experienced and award-winning umpire Aleem Dar and Bangladesh were robbed of a wicket. Dar was previously involved in another umpiring error in the World Cup game between Australia and England.

Dar, standing at square-leg, indicated the ball had been above Rohit's waist and his colleague Ian Gould called it. However, replays suggested that Rubel Hossain's delivery was not a beamer. At the time, Rohit was on 90 and India 195/3 in 39.3 overs.

The no-ball call resulted in Bangladesh

losing out on a wicket and the right-hander went on to complete his century.

Spin legend Shane Warne, who was doing commentary at the time, was clearly upset with the decision. "That should have been a wicket. The ball was under the waist," said Warne. "He (Aleem Dar) has lost his confidence," Warne added. Even former India batsman VVS Laxman also felt it was not a no-ball. "Bad decision from Gould, was definitely not above the waist. Lucky break for Rohit. This can be the difference in getting an extra 20 runs," he tweeted.

Elliott knows his role

Grant Elliott knows his place in the Black Caps' bowling order.

If skipper Brendon McCullum throws him the ball, there's a chance that things have gone pear-shaped or he is needed to fill in some extra overs.



"You're under the pump all the time when you're bowling so you have to develop the skills to try and curb the runs as much as you can," Elliott said.

"So whenever I'm required to bowl, I guess that's my role to come in and try and get a wicket or stop the flow of runs."

"I've done it for Wellington, I've done it throughout my career." Elliott was considered a bolter when the World Cup squad was named but a string of useful performances in the lead-up matches against Sri Lanka and Pakistan justified his selection. He said contributing with both bat and ball was satisfying.

--COMPILED