



'Depends on the era of players'

NAIMUL KARIM

A streaky performance from Pakistan's batsmen and a cautious knock from Virat Kohli ensured that India defeated Pakistan for the third consecutive time yesterday.

The two teams don't get to meet that often these days – this was their third face-off in three years – but whenever they do, India somehow seems to find a way to come out on top.

Since 2010, the teams have played each other 14 times with India winning on ten occasions. The trend wasn't the same in the past and it was something that skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni spoke on during the post-match press conference yesterday.

"You have to see the era of players, what kind of players are playing. If you compare the team of the 90s to our team, I am not saying our team was bad. But if you see the Pakistan team they had those all-rounders and bowlers who could bowl quick and at the same time they had the talent of bowling reverse-swing and that put pressure on our batsmen," said Dhoni.

"I always felt Pakistan had a very strong side backed by talented players, who were maybe not very orthodox by the books. There were few batsmen who could read the game very well and bowlers who could exploit the conditions.

"If you see lately how the Indian team has started performing, it's almost the same. Still the war is the same, it's often about the Indian

batsmen and the Pakistani fast bowlers or the spinners. It's just that our bowling has also improved. It's difficult to compare but I feel the era of players matter," he further said.

With regards to yesterday's match, Dhoni praised the way Virat Kohli and Yuvraj Singh braved the Mohammad Amir-storm and took India close to victory.

"The conditions were tough and there was pressure with three wickets down. A lot of time people talk about the openers, but you have to consider down the order as well," said Dhoni.

"The match was always within our grasp. But it's not like we were thinking 'okay, we have scored 84 and we will win easily'. We knew the conditions and saw the way the ball moved.

"In cricket you don't win a game depending on half the game. You only celebrate once you get the number of runs that you need or when you have bowled out the opposition," he added.

Meanwhile, both Pakistan coach Waqar Younis and captain Shahid Afridi blamed Pakistan's batting for the defeat.

"We fought well with the ball, but the runs weren't enough. We were 30 to 40 runs short. The way we bowled, I thought the match would have been better if we had enough runs on the board," said Younis, at the post-match press conference.

Afridi echoed Younis' sentiments during the post-match presentation.

"I think our batsmen have played enough cricket to know how to judge a wicket. We should have judged the wicket better," he said.

Pakistan speedster Mohammad Amir was on absolute fire as he reduced India to eight for three with a fiery spell at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur last night. Even though his efforts didn't prove to be enough for his side, it was a spell which would surely live with the fans for long.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'It was amazing to have played such a spell'

SAKEB SUBHAN

Mohammad Amir has had a chequered return to international cricket. He is recovering from a sordid past that was his own making, and his return following the five-year ban faced initial resistance from his one-day captain Azhar Ali and Mohammad Hafeez. In the New Zealand T20s his advance to the bowling crease was greeted by a 'ch-ching' cash register sound emanating from the DJ station.

With time however, the feeling emerged that Amir had done his time and was made an example of, and he was accepted back into the international fold. Welcoming words from India batsman Virat Kohli before the Asia Cup, and earlier by Amir's T20 skipper Shahid Afridi, not only paved the way for his acceptance, but also hinted at a special talent which if it went to waste would be a cricketing tragedy.

"It was his own fault; one shouldn't cry about that," was how Waqar Younis, the

Pakistan coach, responded to a question yesterday about whether it was tragic that Amir was in the wilderness for the past five years. Coming from the coach it carried a lot of weight and was indicative of how the team felt about the young pacer. "But he is definitely world-class. He is coming back stronger and stronger, he is getting better and better; he is going to be an asset for Pakistan in the next few years. The way he swung the ball, the pace,

played internationals in New Zealand before this, the Asia Cup, and particularly the match against arch-rivals India, was to be his true return to the big time.

By taking three wickets in his first two overs, bowling a full length at a pace that was enough to beat the quickest of reflexes, he made his team's paltry 83 look much bigger, and for a moment, unreachable. And although India won the battle of the sub-continental rivals, praise for Amir's spell was the common denominator on both sides of the camp following the one-sided match.

Kohli was the man who resisted Amir, and during the presentation ceremony heaped praise on the speedster. "I would like to congratulate Mohammad Amir for the way he bowled, I actually congratulated him while he was bowling. It was amazing to play such a spell."

The capacity crowd, expecting a cake-walk after Pakistan's innings, was electrified by Amir's energy because as Kohli's words shows, it is a privilege to see a fast bowler in his prime regardless of where one's allegiance lies.

the length, it was outstanding."

The manner in which Amir steamed in and made short shrift of the vaunted Indian top order made it seem that he knew how foolish he had been, and that now the task was to make up for lost time. While he



Drop the other earpiece: Dhoni

SPORTS REPORTER

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni indicated that he wasn't happy with the umpiring during his side's Asia Cup victory against Pakistan in Mirpur yesterday.

While he didn't refer to any particular decision, there was a point in the fifth over of Pakistan's batting innings when a prolonged appeal for a caught-behind against Khurram Manzoor was turned down.

"You know you don't want me to get banned before the T20 World Cup. You have all seen the umpiring, so it's your call," said Dhoni when asked about the quality of the umpiring after the match.

"One thing that certainly should be done, you know all the umpires now have a walkie-talkie and an earpiece in their ear. So effectively it in a way means that they are umpiring with only one ear and the other ear is stuck with an earpiece and they can't hear.

"It's a very difficult job, so definitely they should consider this thing.

At least should have both ears to listen with; a lot of things may happen on the field," he added.

In a reply to another question, Dhoni said that the kind of wickets laid down in the Asia Cup would not help them prepare for the ICC World Twenty20, in terms of 'hitting'. He however, said that it was good practice for the players when it comes to reading the pitch and respecting the conditions.

IMPACT MAN



FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

It is not often that this space will feature a member of the losing side, but as far as impact goes, there was no one more impactful than Mohammad Amir. He turned, even if briefly, what seemed to be a one-sided encounter after his side were bowled out for 83 into a real contest. Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane were trapped in front for ducks as Amir mixed fiery pace with late movement, while Suresh Raina could only spon on a catch to mid on. AT 8 for 3, the fiery Amir made the world's strongest batting line-up look like sitting ducks.

IND-PAK SCOREBOARD

PAKISTAN	R/B	4/6
Hafeez c Dhoni b Nehra	4/4	1/0
Sharjeel c Rahane b Bumrah	7/5	1/0
Manzoor run out	10/18	1/0
Malik c Dhoni b Pandya	4/12	1/0
Akmal lbw b Yuvraj Singh	3/4	0/0
Sarfraz b Jadeja	25/24	3/0
Afridi run out	2/2	0/0
Riaz lbw b Jadeja	4/12	0/0
Sami c Raina b Pandya	8/16	1/0
Amir b Pandya	1/8	0/0
Irfan not out	0/0	0/0
Extras: (lb-4, w-11)	15	
Total: (All out in 17.4 overs)	83	
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-22, 3-32, 4-35, 5-35, 6-42, 7-52, 8-70, 9-83, 10-83.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Nehra	3	0	20	1
Bumrah	3	2	8	1
Pandya	3.3	0	8	3
Yuvraj	2	0	11	1
Jadeja	3	0	11	2
Ashwin	3	0	21	0

INDIA	R/B	4/6
Sharma lbw b Amir	0/2	0/0
Rahane lbw b Amir	0/1	0/0
Kohli lbw b Sami	49/51	7/0
Raina c Riaz b Amir	1/4	0/0
Yuvraj not out	14/32	2/0
Pandya c Hafeez b Sami	0/2	0/0
Dhoni not out	7/3	1/0
Extras: (lb-1, lb-3, w-8, nb-2)	14	
Total: (For 5 wickets in 15.3 overs)	85	
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-2, 3-8, 4-76, 5-76.		

Can beat any team at our best: Sabbir

SPORTS REPORTER



Both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will focus on their own strengths rather than think about the opposition's when they meet today in the crucial Asia Cup T20 encounter at Mirpur this evening. In-form Bangladesh batsman Sabbir Rahman and Sri Lanka skipper Lasith Malinga voiced the sentiments while talking to reporters yesterday, saying they want to play their own game.

"In T20 cricket there is no small or big team. If we can play our best cricket we will be able to beat any team. We need to focus on our own game and play the best cricket," said Sabbir, adding that they were also not placing any special emphasis on Malinga, who has the ability to play the role of game-changer with the ball.

"We don't have any special plans against Malinga; rather we will focus ball to ball. It's not important who the bowler is but how we face a particular ball," he continued.

He however said that their main focus would be to improve their batting performance. "In T20 cricket both batting and bowling must give their hundred per cent. Our bowling has been doing a good job, now the

batsmen need to step up. We need to score 170 to 190 so that the bowlers get the advantage."

Praising Bangladesh's bowling, Malinga said: "Bangladesh have a good bowling attack. We all know that but it depends on the match whether they are at their best. We are also prepared for the match tomorrow. We know exactly what to do to face their pace attack. We are not looking much at the names; we are just looking to play one ball at a time."

"Mustafizur [Rahman] is a good asset for Bangladesh cricket and for international cricket. He is doing really well," he continued.

But the pacer said that they were looking at their strengths. "We are not looking at the opposition tomorrow. All players are concentrating on what they can do during the match, how they can be at their best for the match. We are not thinking about the opposition much."

Malinga was also not too concerned with his team's batting despite the fact that they could only score 129 runs against UAE. "I think that day's wicket might have been a 127 wicket. That's why the batsmen put in a hard effort and got a match-winning score. Tomorrow it will be a different wicket and you will see a different approach. We will see what the batsmen can do tomorrow."



INFO ZONE

BANGLADESH			SRI LANKA		
M	W	L	M	W	L
12	1	11	12	11	1

IN ALL T20IS

M	W	L	M	W	L
4	0	4	4	4	0

Last Meeting: Chittagong, 14 February, 2014, Bangladesh lost by three wickets

KEY PLAYERS



Mustafizur Rahman
9
12
16.83
5.71
2/13
0
0

Lasith Malinga
62
78
20.28
7.26
5/31
1
1

