



GO GET 'EM: Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has somewhat rediscovered his form with the bat recently, but the left-hander will face a huge challenge against India in the final tomorrow. Here, he receives instructions from coach Chadika Hathurusingha on how to navigate those waters. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tamim relishes India challenge

NAIMUL KARIM



It may not be extra special for him, but a contest between Tamim Iqbal and India has always held a special place in the hearts of fans.

As a youngster, he stormed onto the international scene by dancing down the track and hitting Zaheer Khan for a massive six in the 2007 World Cup -- a moment that a few in the Indian cricket community still talk about judging by the questions posed by certain Indian journalists. It was an innings that created one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history as India exited the group stage and Bangladesh made it through to the next stage. For many, that was one of the moments that ushered in a braver Bangladesh cricket team.

And he did not stop there. His record suggests that he enjoys playing against the Indians.

He has six half-centuries against them in 16 ODIs and also averages above 50 against India in Test cricket. The left-hander, who averages 20 in T20s, however, has a lot to prove in this format and many believe that the Asia Cup final could be the perfect setting for that objective.

"When you play against a side that is so compact and strong in every unit, you automatically want to perform well. It's a different feeling," Tamim explained while speaking to reporters at Mirpur yesterday.

The left-hander, who cut short his paternity leave and made a sudden return to the team due to Mustafizur Rahman's injury, did not make the best of starts against Pakistan. He admitted that he was a 'bit nervous' playing that match considering that he had just joined and hadn't been playing cricket for nearly two weeks.

Prior to that though, he excelled in the Pakistan Super League in February and was one of the game-changers of his team there.

"When your form is good, you are confident and your mentality is good as well. I have done well in the past but day after tomorrow (Sunday) will be a new day. I have to start from zero. The first few balls will be important for me," said Tamim.

"Because I will be opening the innings, it will be my duty to give my team a good start. It has been a difficult tournament for the openers; early wickets have fallen, so we are going to try hard.

"We will try to enjoy our batting and play our shots. If we can bat first and put on a decent total, anything can happen, because our bowlers have been brilliant," he added.

The ODI series victory against India in 2015 will inspire the team ahead of the final according to Tamim.

"Good memories help for sure. What we believe is that no matter how strong a team is, if we work and focus on our own skills, we can beat any team and that is what we proved last year in the ODIs. If we can minimise our mistakes, it will be a good final," he said.

According to the left-hander, it takes just two overs to change the momentum in a T20 game.

"If you score 15 runs in each of the overs, or take two wickets in each over, the game changes. The team that gets those two overs right, will win the match. So anybody can hold the key," reckoned Tamim.

Consolation win for Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER

An overdue half-century from Tillakaratne Dilshan was overshadowed by a quickfire 48 from Umar Akmal as Pakistan drew some consolation by beating Sri Lanka by six wickets in the last league game of the Asia Cup T20 match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. Both teams were out of contention for the March 6 final, but this win will give Pakistan a boost ahead of their World Twenty20 campaign.

Akmal hit a six and two fours in the 15th over bowled by Milinda Siriwardana to bring the equation down to an imminently achievable 32 off the last five overs. A two-run over from Dushmantha Chameera raised possibilities of a close finish, but Akmal immediately relieved the pressure by hitting a beautiful lofted cover drive off the first ball of the next over from Nuwan Kulasekara. That over yielded eight runs and was followed by a 12-run over from Chameera, which included four byes and another Akmal boundary. With seven needed from eight balls, Akmal hit a huge straight six to all but settle the issue. He was out next



ball to a brilliant catch at long off by Thisara Perera, but Shoaib Malik hit the winning runs, albeit off a dropped catch, with four balls remaining.

Mohammad Hafeez and Sharjeel Khan put on 23 untroubled runs in 3.3 overs before Hafeez was caught and bowled by Shehan Jayasuriya. Sharjeel however carried on, reserving special punishment for Dushmantha Chameera who he hit for four boundaries -- three in front of square on the leg side and one behind point -- in the sixth over. His dismissal for a 24-ball 31, caught at long on off Dilshan,

slowed Pakistan only momentarily.

Umar Akmal and Sarfaraz Ahmed moved the score from 58 for two to 94 in just 5.4 overs when Milinda Siriwardana trapped the latter in front, leaving Pakistan to score 57 runs from 43 balls. That was when Umar Akmal started opening his shoulders.

Earlier, Dilshan and Dinesh Chandimal made full use of a good batting wicket by putting on a 110-run first-wicket stand in just 14.1 overs.

Dilshan was fortunate to get two reprieves when he was on eight and again on 64, both catches dropped by Mohammad Irfan. Dilshan remained unbeaten on a 56-ball 75 with 10 fours and a six.

When Chandimal was dismissed in the 15th over for a 49-ball 58 Sri Lanka looked set for a total in excess of 170, but the batsmen coming in could not keep up the tempo. Jayasuriya was caught at long on in the following over bowled by Shoaib Malik, and the gargantuan Irfan came back to clean-bowl Chamara Kapugedera and Dasun Shanaka in the 18th over. In the 19th over, Dilshan hit perhaps the strangest shot of the tournament off Mohammad Amir, a reverse scoop to a length delivery that went to the third man fence for four.

IMPACT MAN



THE AKMAL ATTACK

Having saved Pakistan's blushes against the UAE, Umar Akmal performed an encore yesterday by hitting a 37-ball 48, studded with four fours and two sixes. The match was in the balance when he came in at 58 for two in the eighth over chasing 151, but he immediately went about setting the course right. The match turned when he plundered Milinda Siriwardana for two fours and a six in a 19-run 15th over. He then hit a gigantic six when only seven were needed, but was deprived of a perfect finish when he was caught at long off trying to repeat the shot.

Pak fan kills himself after losing bet

IANIS, Islamabad

A 50-year-old Pakistani man committed suicide after he bet a month's salary of Rs 30,000 on the Asia Cup T20 match between Pakistan and Bangladesh which the former lost.

Muhammad Shafiq was found hanging from a fan in his office, Dawn online reported on Friday.

Both matches end in draws

SPORTS REPORTER



Both the matches of the fourth round of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), the premier four-day domestic competition of the country, ended as draws at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

While the matches were officially deemed draws yesterday, it was a result that seemed inevitable from day three, with all four teams hitting the ball very well on the batting-friendly wickets of the coastal city.

There were a couple of centuries scored on the final day. Central Zone's Shamsur Rahman scored a 148-ball 125 in an innings which witnessed eleven fours and two sixes.

There was however, no chance of a result in that game and his hundred was the only highlight. Central ended the day on 199 for 4. They had earlier posted 588 in the first innings. In reply, East Zone were bundled out yesterday for 442 in 151.2 overs. With both teams having posted huge scores, there was only one result this match was headed towards.

The day's other game saw former national opener Shahriar Nafees post an unbeaten 101. He drove 14 fours and smacked a six during the innings.

He took his side to 182 for 2 by the end of the day. Their target however was 346 and they never seemed as though they would get to that.

Earlier, North Zone had declared at 390 for 7. After conceding a 45-run lead in the first innings of the match, the Northerners did well to come back in the game. However, they just took too many deliveries and as a result, despite setting the Southerners a target, they didn't get the result which they desired.

After the fourth round, Central Zone remain on top with 44 points while North Zone are second with 35. East Zone and South Zone are placed third and fourth with 28 and 25 points respectively.

With the teams are closely stacked there still seems to be plenty that the competition can offer.

SCORES IN BRIEF	
Central Zone: 588 and 199 for 4 (Shamsur 125; Rahatul 1-70) v East Zone: 442 all out in 151.2 overs (Mominul 89, Saifuddin 77; Sharifullah 3-62) Result: Match Drawn	North Zone: 296 and 390 for 7 dec (Nazmul 126, Jahurul 74, Ariful 71; Razzak 3-176) v South Zone: 341 and 182 for 2 (Shahriar 101, Anamul 43; Naeem 1-12) Result: Match Drawn

SL-PAK SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA		R/B	4/6		
Chandimal c Sharjeel b Riaz	58/49	7/1			
Dilshan not out	75/56	10/1			
Jayasuriya c Sharjeel b Malik	4/6	0/0			
Kapugedera b Irfan	2/3	0/0			
Shanaka b Irfan	0/2	0/0			
Siriwardana not out	4/4	0/0			
Extras: (lb-6, w-1)	7				
Total: (For 4 wickets in 20 overs)	150				
Fall of wickets: 1-110, 2-117, 3-125, 4-125.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Amir	4	0	31	0	
Irfan	4	0	18	2	
Afridi	4	0	24	0	
Nawaz	3	0	38	0	
Riaz	4	0	30	1	
Malik	1	0	3	1	
PAKISTAN		R/B	4/6		
Sharjeel c Kapugedera b Dilshan	31/24	5/1			
Hafeez c & b Jayasuriya	14/11	3/0			
Sarfaraz b Siriwardana	38/27	6/0			
Akmal c Perera b Kulasekara	48/37	4/2			
Malik not out	13/17	0/0			
Iftikhar not out	0/0	0/0			
Extras: (lb-4, lb-1, w-2)	7				
Total: (For 4 wickets in 19.2 overs)	151				
Fall of wickets: 1-23, 2-58, 3-94, 4-150.					
Bowler		O	M	R	W
Kulasekara	4	0	20	1	
Perera	2.2	0	25	0	
Jayasuriya	1	0	13	1	
Shanaka	1	0	6	0	
Chameera	4	0	32	0	
Herath	4	0	28	0	
Dilshan	1	0	2	1	
Siriwardana	2	0	20	1	
Result: Pakistan won by 6 wickets.					
Player-of-the-match: Umar Akmal.					



While most would be uneasy playing a powerhouse like India, Bangladesh batsman Tamim Iqbal, with his formidable record against the Asian giants, will be licking his lips at the prospect of facing one of his favoured opponents. PHOTO: STAR

PCB chief condemns performance

REUTERS, Lahore

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shahryar Khan slammed the team's performance at the Asia Cup T20 but said it was too late to make sweeping changes ahead of the World Twenty20 this month.

"It wasn't just disappointing but it was a painful experience to watch Pakistan play like that," Shahryar said. "The performance was very poor, other than a few individuals' performances, but I can assure that whoever is responsible has to answer."

India assure security for Dharamsala tie

PTI, New Delhi



Amidst uncertainty hanging over the India-Pakistan World Twenty20 cricket match scheduled in Dharamsala, Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said central paramilitary forces will be provided to ensure security to the March 19 event.

"If the [Himachal Pradesh] Chief Minister asks for security forces, we will provide," he told reporters here. A cloud hangs over the marquee match between India and Pakistan in Dharamsala on March 19 with Himachal Pradesh's ex-servicemen protesting against the game in the wake of January 2 Pathankot terror attacks.

Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh on Tuesday had written a letter to the Union Home Minister stating that his government could not provide security for the match.

The Chief Minister had also said war veterans of the state did not want the Indo-Pak match to be held in Dharamsala.

"They are not opposing the holding of matches. They are against the Pakistan team playing in Himachal Pradesh," Singh had said.

BCCI secretary and BJP MP Anurag Thakur said he was hopeful of the match happening in the hill station following his meeting with the Chief Minister. Pakistan Cricket Board chief Shaharyar Khan had also written to BCCI seeking assurance of foolproof security to Pakistani players.

12 off 1 ball? No problem!

AGENCIES, Auckland

While we have seen a last-ball six being hit from several batsmen across the world, in a rare incident, a batting team scored 12 runs off the last ball.

The incident took place in New Zealand's domestic tournament as Auckland needed 12 runs to win off one ball against Northern Districts.

Graeme Aldridge, the bowler, bowled a waist high full-toss which got an edge off Andre Adams' willow and rushed past the keeper for a boundary. Apart from the boundary, the batting team was also given 2 extra runs for the no-ball as per the rule of the league. With six needed off the last ball, the batsman hammered a length ball over long-off for a six which were the winning runs.