

Dazed India face red-hot Pakistan

AFP, Kolkata

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's India will be looking to bounce back from their shock opening defeat when they take on a resurgent Pakistan in Saturday's World Twenty20 blockbuster in Kolkata.

Red-hot favourites India were stunned by an unfancied New Zealand on Tuesday when they were shot out for 79 in Nagpur -- their lowest score on home turf in T20 internationals.

But India's limited-overs skipper

has full faith in his side that came into the tournament on the back of 10 wins in 11 T20 matches, including victory in the Asia Cup.

"What's important is how to turn around and how to come back strong and I think this team has done this plenty of times," Dhoni said after the New Zealand loss.

After their stumbles in Nagpur, India's frontline batsmen Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli will have to find their feet against a hostile Pakistan pace attack which includes the in-form Mohammad Amir.

The Pakistani pacesman, on the comeback trail after serving a prison

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN WT20

INDIA	PLAYED	PAKISTAN
4	4	0

INDIA	PLAYED	PAKISTAN
6	7	1

IN ALL T20is
 LAST MEETING
 27 FEB 2016, IN DHAKA:
 INDIA WON BY 5 WICKETS.

Although India registered a commanding victory over Pakistan in last month's Asia Cup, their batsmen were far from comfortable against Amir, with Kohli congratulating him for "an amazing" spell of bowling.

While the pitch in Nagpur turned dramatically, Eden Gardens is seen as offering more bounce and Dhoni could well be tempted to play a fit-again Mohammed Shami on what is the speedster's home ground.

Pakistan had come into the tournament in woeful form and their preparations were not helped by a row over security which led to the match being switched from Dharamsala to Kolkata.

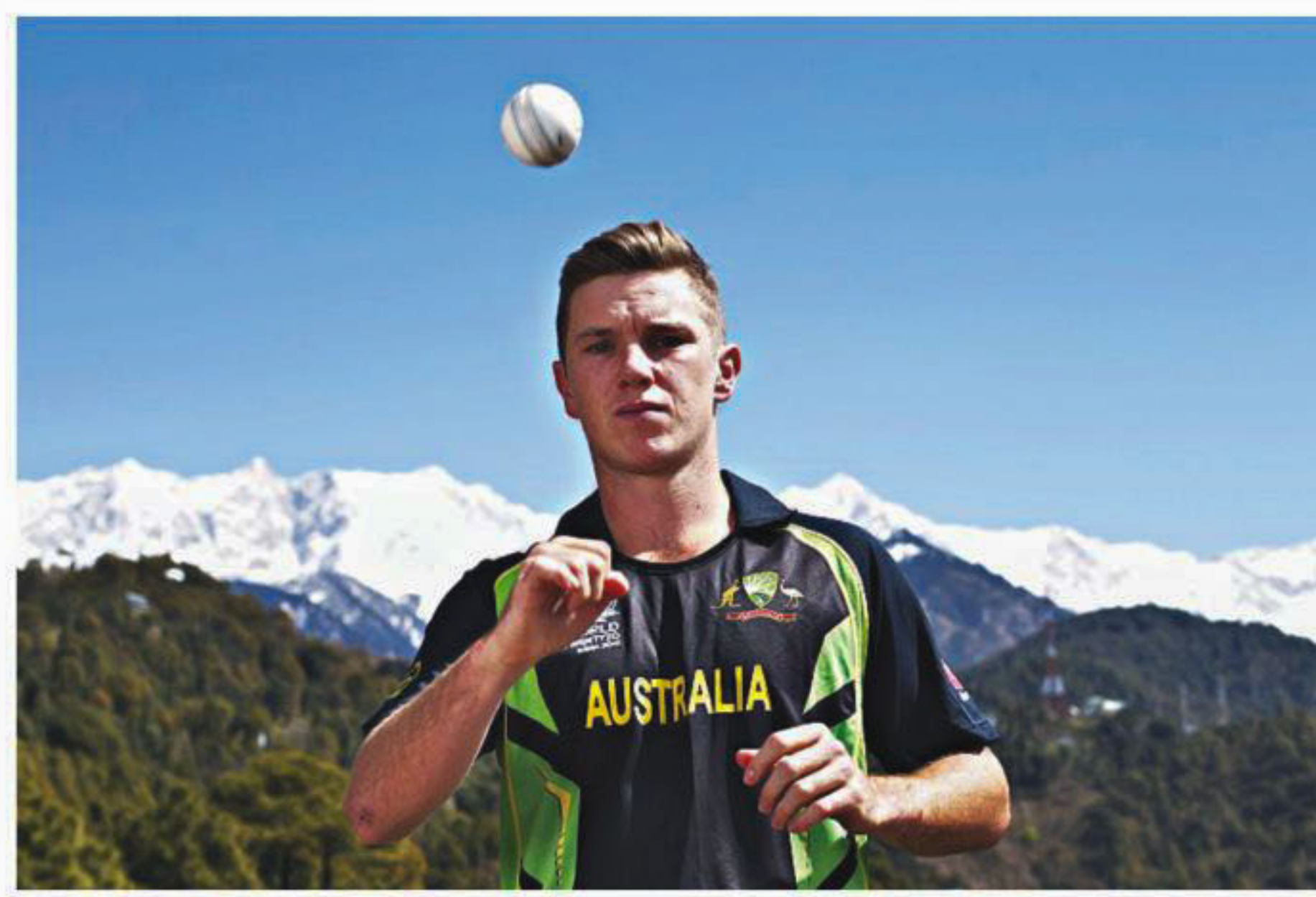
But their trouncing of Bangladesh has banished the gloom, with skipper Shahid Afridi leading from the front by spanking a 19-ball 49 and then bagging two key wickets in the 55-run win.

Afridi said the result was a "morale booster" ahead of the clash between the South Asian titans who are both former World T20 champions.

But he downplayed the significance of India's opening match upset.

"They have been playing good cricket though they lost their last game," said Afridi.

Yesterday, Kohli gifted Amir with one of his bats Friday, a gesture that grabbed attention ahead of the mouth-watering clash between the arch rivals. The Indian batsman took the bowler by surprise as he handed over the prized bat to Amir during a pre-match practice session at the Eden Gardens stadium in Kolkata.



STAR ECONOMICAL BOWLER: Coming on in the seventh over with New Zealand accelerating their run-rate, Australia leg-spinner Adam Zampa slowed down the scoring rate with a tidy over which yielded just three runs.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Future is bright

Malinga out of World T20

AGENCIES, Colombo

Injured Sri Lanka pacesman Lasith Malinga will fly back home from the World Twenty20 in India without having played a single match, the country's cricket board said Friday.

Malinga has aggravated the bone bruise in his left knee that has plagued him since November. He has returned to Sri Lanka, and the selectors are expected to name a replacement over the next 72 hours, following practice games in Colombo on Friday. Malinga's departure is the latest setback for the maverick bowler, having been dropped as skipper after the team's recent disastrous Asia Cup showing in Bangladesh.

Siddikur slips

SPORTS REPORTER

Siddikur Rahman slipped to 44th position on the leaderboard after a disappointing second round in the Hero Indian Open yesterday. The 31-year-old golfer, who started the day at 16th position, scored a one-over-par (73) at the Delhi Golf Club as he carded a bogey while failing to manage a birdie through the 18 holes in the day.

That effort took Siddikur's aggregate score to two-under-par (142), thereby placing him two shots clear of the cut-mark and 11 shots behind the current leader, Terry Pilkadaris of Australia.

Jamal Haider named MSC's hockey coach

SPORTS REPORTER

Jamal Haider has been appointed the head coach of Mohammedan SC ahead for the upcoming hockey season, which is scheduled to get underway through the Club Cup tournament from April 7.

Haider returns to club coaching after three years as his last engagement was with Usha Kriya Chakra in 2013. The former national player was engaged with Bangladesh Army team in the last two years apart from conducting training programmes of National Sports Council.

"I have been confirmed yesterday [Thursday] and I am going to start training tomorrow [Saturday]," Haider said. "Getting the responsibility to guide Mohammedan team is a dream come true as I played for the club for a long time, captained in 1982 and retired with in 1996-97 season."

Rampant Root sets up England's record chase

AFP, Mumbai

Joe Root scored 83 as England sensationally chased down a target of 230 to stun South Africa by two wickets in the World Twenty20 in Mumbai on Friday.

The classy batsman hit six fours and four sixes in his 44-ball knock as England finished on 230-8 with two balls to spare after South Africa made 229-4.

It was England's highest ever total in 20-over cricket and the second highest successful run chase by any team in the history of the shortest format of the game.

Moeen Ali dramatically hit the winning run after England went into the last over needing just one run to clinch victory.

Opener Jason Roy had earlier scored 43 while Jos Buttler made 21.

Quinton de Kock, Hashim Amla and JP Duminy made half centuries as South Africa posted 229-4 after England won the toss and elected to field first.

Left-handed de Kock reached his 50 off just 21 balls thanks to seven fours and three sixes that included a beautiful array of shot-making in the Super 10 Group one game.

England skipper Eoin Morgan experimented with six different bowlers in the first seven overs as de Kock and Amla made easy work of David Willey and Reece Topley, among others, to reach 96-0.

England finally made a break-



England batsman Joe Root played shots all around the ground during a 44-ball 83 as England chased down South Africa's 229 in a thrilling World Twenty20 encounter at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

through in the eighth over when de Kock, on 52, was caught deep by Alex Hales off spinner Moeen Ali, providing them a rare moment of joy.

AB de Villiers came in and made a quick 16 as South Africa reached 100 in only eight overs before he was caught by Morgan off Adil Rashid in the ninth.

The two quick wickets helped to stem the South African tide momentarily and gave England a brief moment of hope, however South Africa's strength in depth shone through.

England were left to rue a simple dropped catch by Topley in the fourth over that would have seen Amla walk as the batsman went on to notch his half-century in the tenth.

He was eventually out leg before wicket by Ali in the 12th over on 58.

Proteas skipper Faf du Plessis came in at number four and made 17 while Duminy expertly took over where de Kock and Amla had left off.

The left-hander, batting at number five, scored 54 not out that included three sixes and three fours.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: 229 for 4 in 20 overs (Amla 58, de Kock 52, Duminy 54 not out; Ali 2-34)

ENGLAND: 230 for 8 in 19.4 overs (Roy 43, Root 83; Abbot 3-41, Rabada 2-50)

Result: England won by 2 wickets. Player-of-the-match: Joe Root.

Barca draw Atletico PSG, City meet in Cashico

AFP, Nyon



Holders Barcelona and their feared attacking trident drew fellow Spaniards and 2014 finalists Atletico Madrid in the Champions League last eight on Friday.

Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar, Barcelona's feared attacking trio, will seek revenge for their 2-1 aggregate quarterfinals exit at the hands of Diego Simeone's formidable charges two seasons ago.

"With Atletico Madrid everything is complicated," said Barcelona representative Javier Bordas, who was in Nyon for the draw. "Their strengths are well known. They are water-tight at the back and can hurt you in attack," he said of the side who have shipped just three goals in the competition so far.

"They are our number one rival in the Spanish league, I don't believe there was a tougher side we could have drawn. We know this is going to be really tough."

In another tantalising pair up new money

DRAW	
Wolfsburg (GER) v Real Madrid (ESP)	
Bayern Munich (GER) v Benfica (POR)	
Barcelona (ESP) v Atletico Madrid (ESP)	
Paris Saint-Germain (FRA) v Manchester City (ENG)	

(Games between April 5 and 13)

outfits Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain face off after Swedish giant Zlatan Ibrahimovic's side toppled Chelsea in the last round. It is a first ever quarter-finals for City.

PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi seemed convinced his side can get to their first semifinal in twenty years.

"There are only good teams left. We have enormous respect for Manchester City, but I believe our players will produce another big European performance. I'm convinced we can keep up the pace that saw us overcome Chelsea and offer our supporters a first semifinal since 1995," he said.

Having overcome Juventus in a dramatic come back in midweek five-time European champions Bayern Munich will have been relieved to have drawn Portugal's Benfica.

Zinedine Zidane's ten-time winners Real Madrid drew Germans Wolfsburg, with the added comfort of playing at home in the second leg against the quarterfinal debutants.



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