



What to expect of the opener

MAZHAR UDDIN

The upcoming 2019 World Cup in the UK will be the 12th staging of the ICC Cricket World Cup, with ten teams set to face each other in a round-robin league system for the first time since the

South Africa at the Kennington Oval in London on May 30.

The modern era fifty-over format began in the 1992 World Cup jointly hosted by Australia and New Zealand. The tournament, then named the Benson & Hedges World Cup 1992, was

World Cup so far remained one-sided contests, apart from one or two close encounters.

1992 WORLD CUP

Among the two opening matches of the 1992 World Cup, hosts Australia faced a comprehensive 37-run defeat

Khan's Pakistan went on to become the Champions of the 1992 World Cup, beating England in the final by 22 runs.

1996 WORLD CUP

India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka hosted the 1996 World Cup, which was officially called Wills World Cup 1996. England once again took part in the opening game of the tournament but faced an 11-run defeat to New Zealand after opener Nathan Astle struck a century. Arjuna Ranatunga's Sri Lanka became champions, beating Australia by seven wickets in the final.

1999 WORLD CUP

The World Cup in 1999 returned to England and the hosts once again featured in the opening game of the tournament. The English side clinched a comfortable eight wicket win over Sri Lanka, with skipper Alec Stewart top-scoring with 88 runs. The 1999 ICC World Cup was also significant for Bangladesh as it was the maiden World Cup appearance for the Tigers. Aminul Islam's side made it memorable by beating Scotland and giants Pakistan on their maiden World Cup appearance. It was Australia who clinched the title by beating Pakistan by eight wickets in the final.

2003 WORLD CUP

The 2003 World Cup was co-hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya. The opening game between South Africa and West Indies was arguably the most exciting World Cup opener till date. Chasing a target of 279 posted by the West Indies, South Africa required nine runs off the last over but eventually lost the game by just two runs. Needing six runs to win off the last ball, Nicky Boje struck a boundary to Vasbert Drakes and their campaign began the World Cup campaign with agony. Australia retained their World Cup title, beating India in the final by a huge margin of 125 runs.

2007 WORLD CUP

The 2007 World Cup was hosted by West Indies. It was yet another one-sided World Cup opener as the hosts registered a comprehensive 54-run win over Pakistan. It was also one of Bangladesh's best World Cup campaigns as Habibul Bashar's side beat India by five wickets in their opening game. Bangladesh went on to reach the Super Eight stage, where they registered a famous 67-run win over South Africa. It was Australia who once again lifted the trophy, clinching a hat-trick of World Cup titles -- the first-ever.

2011 WORLD CUP

The 2011 ICC World Cup was significant for Bangladesh as they hosted the flagship event for the time as co-hosts alongside India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh, for the first time, took part in the opening game of the World Cup. However, Shakib Al Hasan's side faced an 87-run defeat to India at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Mahendra Singh Dhoni's India went on to win the World Cup, beating Sri Lanka in the final by six wickets.

2015 WORLD CUP

After the 1992 World Cup, Australia and New Zealand again jointly hosted the 2015 ICC World Cup. Both the hosts won their respective opening matches of the World Cup the same day, beating Sri Lanka and England by 98 and 111 runs respectively. Australia once again clinched the title, this time under skipper Steve Smith. They comfortably defeated co-hosts New Zealand in the final by seven wickets and clinched their fifth World Cup title. It was also the first time that Bangladesh, under Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, reached the quarterfinal of the World Cup.



1992 World Cup.

Host England, who have been part of the World Cup opener the most of number times, will once again take part in the opening game of the ICC World Cup 2019. The hosts will face

the first to feature coloured jerseys, a white cricket ball and black sightscreens while a few matches were played under lights.

However, it can be mentioned that almost all the opening matches of the

against co-hosts New Zealand, who rode on skipper Martin Crowe's unbeaten century. In the other match of the day, England clinch a nine-wicket victory over India, with Robin Smith top-scoring with 91 runs. Imran

A chance to lead their way to history

SAMAMA RAHMAN

World Cup-winning teams may have their names written in the annals of history, but World Cup-winning captains have a special place in those books. Clive Lloyd will forever be remembered for leading the West Indies to back-to-back World Cup in the first two editions of the tournament and Kapil Dev will be equally remembered for leading an unfancied India to unprecedented glory four years later.

Each of those names -- the others being Allan Border, Imran Khan, Arjuna Ranatunga, Steve Waugh, Ricky Ponting, Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Michael Clarke -- are all remembered as among the best talents that their countries have ever produced.

Cricket is perhaps the only team sport where such esteem is attached to the captain, who has to pick, choose and employ bowlers, set fields and play a large part in deciding the strategy and playing elevens of a team.

The 2019 World Cup presents an opportunity for another to cement their place among the greatest names in cricket, and there are many deserving candidates. India's Virat Kohli, Bangladesh's Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, New Zealand's Kane Williamson are perhaps the most befitting of such 'icon status', but there are seven others who will be desperate to lift the cup and write their names in the pages of history, regardless of the strength of their team.

At the only World Cup where Test-playing nations have missed out, nobody is around just to make up the numbers.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza has already made a solid case as Bangladesh's best-ever captain. Not only have the Tigers seen their meteoric rise in ODI cricket under his leadership, the Narail Express has become so popular that he will represent his country in an altogether different sense in the United Kingdom: as a member of parliament.

His humble nature, quirks and mannerisms and even the way he has overcome injuries throughout his career have made him one of the most beloved personalities in Bangladesh sport, and he has continued that by leading a side not through performances -- although there have been many -- but through his approach. The 35-year-old, playing in his last World Cup, has been the source of all inspiration for his teammates, young and old. And that attitude has

reflected on his teammates and the positivity with which they approach each game.

At the other end of the spectrum is Kane Williamson. His approach to the game has always been stoic, almost robotic. He knows what to do and exactly when to do it and his team's approach is a far-cry from the all-guns-blazing mentality that had been instilled and perfected four years ago by Brendon McCullum. Williamson's teams are not lacking in firepower, far from it, but their demeanour on the field is always a portrait of calm. He has been captain for over three years now and has got to grips with the job, something that he seems to be able to do regardless of circumstance.

Then there is Virat Kohli. One of the finest players in the world and almost always ranked as the best in ODI cricket, the Indian still finds himself under fire for his captaincy. There are murmurs that he does not put the team before himself, whispers that his 'egotistical nature' are detrimental to team spirit and all but confirmed rumours that coach Anil Kumble was let go after a row with Kohli. His horrid stint as captain of the Royal Challengers Bangalore in this season's Indian Premier League has only added fuel to the fire.

Although there are many, perhaps valid, question about Kohli's tactical nous -- there are bound to be when you following up Dhoni -- the 30-year-old can, and has, led from the front like nobody else. He is the world's best when it comes to chasing down targets and, as he said at the captain's media day ahead of the World Cup, his marriage has turned him into "a more responsible person" who has "started understanding things much better and started putting things into perspective a lot more". Whether that perspective can help him on the pitch will be the main factor standing between India and the World Cup.

However, Kohli is not the only captain that is under so much pressure. There is another, often maligned in his country for his roots: Eoin Morgan. The Ireland-born England captain has been a key component alongside coach Trevor Bayliss in revolutionising the way cricket is played by the national side; from a meek, defensive approach to an attacking brand with such ruthlessness that they are talking about hitting the 500-run mark in 50-over cricket.

That does not mean Morgan's entire

plan revolves around going out and trying to blast teams out of the ground, something many feel McCullum was guilty of -- especially after the 2015 World Cup final. Morgan has an amazing grasp of the tactics of the game, and that will certainly come into play at some point as the team chase their maiden World Cup glory.

Another captain who leads from the front is Faf du Plessis. The South African took over from AB de Villiers and although those are big shoes to fill, his close friendship with Mr 360 saw him inherit a wealth of that experience. Du Plessis' calm demeanour under pressure, consistency, and wealth of experience will be key to the South African cause and perhaps, under his captaincy, they can finally shed the 'chokers' tag.

The team that are quite opposite of 'chokers' will also feature a new captain. Aaron Finch will be leading Australia at the World Cup, a short while after successfully, in tandem with coach Justin Langer, leading the team out of the dredges of 'sandpaper-gate'. He has not had much time to prove his abilities as skipper, but a 3-2 series win against India in India -- that too without Steve Smith and David Warner -- has certainly shown that he has been doing things right. He will hope to continue with the softer, toned-down approach when the pressure mounts, but also hope that results go in favour of the perennial favourites.

Even among the unfancied teams, there are tenured, winning captains in the form of Sarfraz Ahmed and Jason Holder.

Sarfraz played only two of Pakistan's six matches at the last World Cup but his performances solidified his place in the team. He scored 49 off 49 and took 6 catches as wicketkeeper to equal the ODI record for most dismissals with six before hitting an unbeaten 101 against Ireland. In February 2017, he assumed captaincy of the ODI side and he would prove his credentials months later, leading Pakistan to glory in the ICC Champions Trophy.

On the other hand, Holder was the one who stuck by his nation's side when at a time when franchise cricket had pulled out almost all of its international stars. He found himself thrust into captaincy a year after his international debut and the 27-year-old remained steadfast despite being the youngest captain in West Indies' history. He also

led his side to the quarterfinals of the 2015 World Cup, an achievement rarely anyone had expected.

There are also two among the unknowns.

Asghar Afghan was replaced at the last moment by the Afghanistan Cricket Board and Gulbadin Naib was installed as captain, a decision that drew nationwide furore and even led

for me, he's still my captain right now."

Finally, there are Sri Lanka and their captain Dimuth Karunaratne. It was a shock decision when he was appointed since he had not played an ODI since 2015. However, selectors were impressed by him leading The Islanders to a Test series win against South Africa. His qualities in the ODI game may not translate as well, but his ability



to players expressing their displeasure publicly. Rashid Khan expressed his disappointment on Twitter while Mohammad Nabi also aired his grievances. Even Naib admitted: "Asghar Afghan is still my captain. We played our last few games against Ireland and Scotland, and he helped me a lot. He guided me. He's not just another player

to handle himself under pressure will surely prove a valuable commodity.

These are the 10 that will be expected to lead from the front, with 10 others behind each of them. However, only one will have the chance to not only cement their names as a bonafide legend of their country, but also write their name in the pages of history.