



SPORT



It was not quite men against boys as players from India teamed up with some kids during an ICC event and enjoyed themselves yesterday, but that may be the case when the unbeaten tournament favourites take on a demoralised Afghanistan side, led by Gulbadin Naib (R), today.

PHOTO: BCCI/ AFP

FACTS

Ross Taylor has scored 636 runs -- the most by player on New Zealand's current squad -- in the 17 matches he played against West Indies.

Martin Guptill smashed a career best 237 not out against West Indies back in 2015 in Wellington. This remains the highest individual score by any batsmen of the two sides.

Chris Gayle has amassed 939 runs in the 29 matches he played against the Kiwis. This is the highest total by any player on the two sides' current World Cup squads.

New Zealand's Trent Boult has taken 17 wickets -- the most by any player in their current team -- in the seven games he played against West Indies

Afghanistan face daunting task

AGENCIES, Southampton

India's progress at the World Cup has been an ascending march so far. They have put on complete performances in each of their three completed games. While the top-order has consistently given good starts, the bowlers, aided by some good fielding, have backed it up with disciplined performance. The team management, however, will be worried over their key players getting injured.

Afghanistan have been unable to recreate the magic they did in the ICC Men's World Cup Qualifiers and Asia Cup last year, having faced five defeats in as many completed games so far. Inconsistent bowling and dropped chances in the field cost them dearly against England. Their batsmen, having batted for the full 50-overs at Old Trafford, will have to do so again, in order to pose any challenge to a strong Indian side.

Afghanistan captain Gulbadin Naib believes they need regular exposure against top teams before they can compete at the World Cup.

"When we play associate teams like Scotland, we're



doing well. But we need to improve our game, so we should play strong teams like India, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan," Naib said at Hampshire Bowl on Friday. "We should play a lot of series with the top five ranked teams. If we play with them, we'd improve.

"Of course we'd be losing or struggling initially, but one day Afghanistan will be different. It will be good for us if we play them. It would be a great experience for us." Nabi also took heart from their improved batting performance against Morgan's men.

"If you look at our performance against England, who are a good side and one of the favourites to win the World

FACTS

Ravindra Jadeja has scalped seven wickets -- the most by any bowler among the two sides' current squads -- in the two matches he played against Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi scored 70 runs in the two matches he played against India. This is the highest by any player on the two sides' current squad.

Cup, we did well. I think we batted well in the match. We were focusing on batting 50 overs and put a better total and we played 50 overs."

Nabi also admitted that India, unbeaten in the tournament so far, would be a tough test for his team.

INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

NEW ZEALAND		WEST INDIES
4	WIN	3
3	LOSS	4
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

NEW ZEALAND		WEST INDIES
27	WIN	30
30	LOSS	27
0	TIE	0
7	NR	7

LAST MEETING

December 26 2017 at Hagley Oval in Christchurch
New Zealand won by 66 runs (D/L method).

KEY PLAYERS



NEW ZEALAND		WEST INDIES
TRENT BOULT		SHAI HOPE
9.60/25.27	Bat/Bowl Ave	50.68/-
75.78/29.9	Bat/Bowl Strike Rate	75.65
0	50s	12
0	100s	6
21*	HS	170
5.06	Econ	-
7/34	BBM	-
144/151	Runs/Wickets	2433/-
1/63	Last Match	96, 1c/0s

Windies face Kiwis in must-win game

ICC

Having failed to replicate their success from the first game against Pakistan, West Indies need to win each of their remaining four matches to stay in contention for the semi-finals race.

They have failed to combine as a team and produce match-winning results in their last few matches. Despite registering a par score of 321 for eight, Bangladesh chased down the total with 8.3 overs to spare as the bowlers failed to find their right lengths. Their senior players, Chris Gayle and Andre Russell haven't produced any performance of note, putting the lesser experienced middle order under further pressure.

As the race to the semi-finals stiffens, Jason Holder's men will need to put up a disciplined effort to rise against their dipping form and script a turnaround.

New Zealand, on the other hand, have been steadily moving to a position of strength at the World Cup, winning each of their four completed games so far. While results against Afghanistan and Sri Lanka were a product of flair, their big players rising to the occasion saw them over the line against South Africa. Each of their three all-rounders, Jimmy Neesham, Colin de Grandhomme and Mitchell Santner have performed on either fronts, contributing to a formidable balance.

In a West Indies batting order which is struggling to stitch match-winning partnerships, Shai Hope has been the glue designated to hold the innings together. The wicket-keeper batsman, who missed his century by four runs against Bangladesh, will hope to repeat his performance from the warm-ups, wherein



After a disappointing innings against South Africa, Ross Taylor will hope to bounce back today.

PHOTO: AFP

he scored 101 against the Black Caps. New Zealand's Martin Guptill looked well set for a big score against South Africa, before being dismissed hit-wicket for 35. Guptill, who will have fond memories from the previous edition of the flagship event, where he scored an unbeaten World Cup record 237 in the quarterfinals against West Indies, will eye another big score.

MR EFFICIENT



When the oil is lit, LIFE IS A DELIGHT

Angelo Matthews has been the only Sri Lankan batsman against England to put up a fight after his side kept losing wickets at regular interval during their World Cup encounter yesterday. The right hander batsman remained unbeaten on 85 off 115 balls which featured five fours and a six helped Sri Lanka to post a respectable total of 232 for 9 in fifty overs. The former Sri Lankan captain however had a poor outing in the World Cup before this game and the experienced cricketer delivered just when it mattered the most as Sri Lanka are desperately looking for a turn around after the dismal start to their World Cup campaign.

INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

AFGHANISTAN		INDIA
The two teams have never played each other in World Cup.		

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

AFGHANISTAN		INDIA
0	WIN	1
1	LOSS	0
1	TIE	1
0	NR	0

LAST MEETING

September 25 2018 at Dubai International Cricket Stadium
Match tied.

KEY PLAYERS



AFGHANISTAN		INDIA
MOHAMMAD NABI		JASPRIT BUMRAH
27.96/32.35	Bat/Bowl Ave	3.60/22.56
86.53/45.1	Bat/Bowl Strike Rate	42.85/29.7
13	50s	0
1	100s	0
116	HS	10*
4.30	Econ	4.55
4/30	BBM	5/27
2629/122	Runs/Wickets	18/90
0/70, 9	Last Match	0/52