

India captain Virat Kohli (L) celebrates the crucial wicket of Mohammad Nabi who fell after scoring 52 as Afghanistan collapsed to 213 all out to hand India a thrilling 11-run win in the ICC World Cup match in Southampton yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS



The win showed character of our team: Kohli

AGENCIES, Southampton

"This win is right up there. We thought 250 was par and 270 would have been an outstanding effort. A team like Afghanistan doesn't let you play how you want to play," India captain Virat Kohli said after winning the world cup match in Southampton yesterday.

"At the halfway mark we had some doubts in our mind but everyone had belief in the changing room."

"All in all it was an outstanding bowling performance. It showed the character of our team."

Frustrated Afghanistan skipper Gulbadin Naib added: "We bowled really well. We did well in batting, but credit to Bumrah for how he bowled in the last two or three overs."

"If you chase 250 then middle order batsmen should go longer and take responsibility."

"We have lost four games very badly, but the last two games we have played really well. This is tough cricket against high-ranking teams, and you have to fight your best."

The Export Leader

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IND-AFG SCOREBOARD

INDIA	R/B	4s/6s
Rahul c Zazai b Nabi	30/53	2/0
Sharma b Mujeeb	1/10	0/0
Kohli c Rahmat b Nabi	67/63	5/0
Shankar lbw b Rahmat	29/41	2/0
Dhoni st Ikram b Rashid	28/52	3/0
Jadhav c sub (Zadran)		
b Gulbadin	52/68	3/1
Pandya c Ikram b Aftab	7/9	0/0
Shami b Gulbadin	1/2	0/0
Yadav not out	1/1	0/0
Bumrah not out	1/1	0/0
Extras: (w-7)	7	
Total: (For 8 wkts in 50 overs)	224	
Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-64, 3-122, 4-135, 5-192, 6-217, 7-222, 8-223.		

AFGHANISTAN

AFGHANISTAN	R/B	4s/6s
Zazai b Shami	10/24	1/0
Naib c Shankar b Pandya	27/42	2/0
Rahmat c Chahal b Bumrah	36/63	3/0
Shahidi c & b Bumrah	21/45	2/0
Asghar b Chahal	8/19	0/0
Nabi c Pandya b Shami	52/55	4/1
Najibullah c Chahal		
b Pandya	21/23	2/0
Rashid st Dhoni b Chahal	14/16	1/0
Alikhil not out	7/10	0/0
Aftab b Shami	0/1	0/0
Mujeeb b Shami	0/1	0/0
Extras: (b 4, lb 4, w 9)	17	
Total: (All out in 49.5 overs)	213	
Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-64, 3-106, 4-106, 5-130, 6-166, 7-190, 8-213, 9-213, 10-213.		

Result: India won by 11 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Jasprit Bumrah.

'Should be careful against Afghans'

SAKEB SUBHAN from Southampton

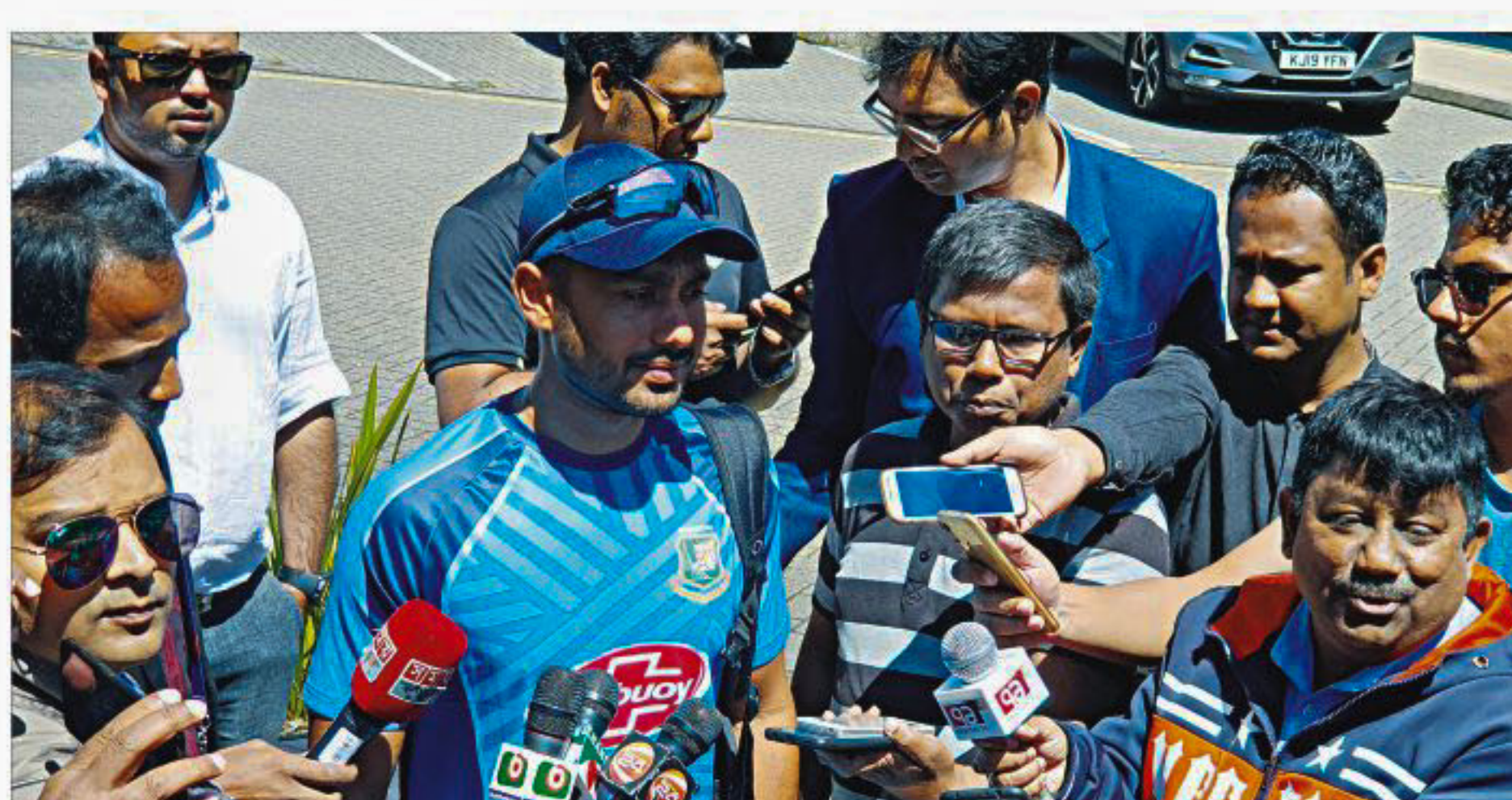
Just a few miles from the Bangladesh team hotel in Southampton, the World Cup's lowest-ranked team was giving the overwhelming favourites a hard time at the Rose Bowl. With the 2019 World Cup so far being anything but straightforward for the Tigers, that Afghanistan -- the one opponent they are overwhelming favourites against -- is finding form two days before playing Bangladesh seems to fit the narrative well.

When Mohammad Mithun was talking to reporters in front of the team hotel before boarding the bus to go to Hampshire's Rose Bowl for optional practice at 1:00pm yesterday, India were 86 for two after 20 overs -- a far cry from where they would have expected to be at that stage against Afghanistan.

"I think we have to be more careful, because to a certain extent, you will accept a loss against Australia, because they are above us as a team," Mithun said when asked whether, after playing against the big teams in their five completed matches so far, a match against Afghanistan offered a chance to relax or if Bangladesh needed to be on their guard.

"But if we lose to Afghanistan..." Mithun laughed nervously. "Everyone is expecting that we will win. Every match is the same in that we play to win. But I think we should be more careful in this game."

One of the warning signs ahead of tomorrow's game at the same venue is that the pitch against India -- who were



Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Mithun spoke to journalists yesterday, ahead of their World Cup match against Afghanistan in Southampton tomorrow. PHOTO: SAKEB SUBHAN

held to a surprisingly low score of 224 for eight -- was that the wicket offered a fair bit of spin. Afghanistan's two best spinners -- leg-spinner Rashid Khan and off-spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman -- have enjoyed quite a bit of success against Bangladesh. In five matches, Rashid has picked up 10 wickets against Bangladesh at an average of 17 and, as importantly, an economy rate of 3.38 runs per over. Mujeeb, meanwhile has picked up three wickets from two matches against the Tigers, but his economy rate has been even more impressive as he conceded just 3.13 runs per over.

Against India, perhaps the strongest players of spin in the world, both players starred yesterday. Rashid picked up one wicket for 38 runs from 10 overs, while Mujeeb was miserly with figures of one for

26 from his 10.

Another off-spinner who has enjoyed success against Bangladesh, Mohammad Nabi, excelled yesterday with figures of two for 33 from 10 overs, including the prize wicket of Virat Kohli.

Mithun however was confident, despite Bangladesh having to now prepare for spin after facing trials of pace in matches against South Africa, New Zealand, England, West Indies and Australia.

"Bangladesh always play spin well, although they have some world-class spinners. Actually, when you are in a good batting rhythm, then I don't think there is much problem with adjusting between pace and spin. Batting is all about confidence; if someone is in a good state mentally, he can adjust to anything."

Watching stumps flying is the best feeling: Bumrah

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Indian pacer Jasprit Bumrah shared his fast bowling journey through a video message on Saturday. The video was posted on the Twitter handle of the apex body of the cricket, International Cricket Council (ICC).

"I love bowling and could bowl, bowl, and bowl. When you see the stumps flying, that's the best feeling," ICC posted a video on Twitter in which Bumrah can be heard saying.

"Since I used to play in the back yard, yorker is the only delivery I used to bowl quite a lot as bowlers used to get a lot of wickets on the yorkers so I thought that is the only way to get wickets," he added.

The 25-year-old speed prodigy is a key player for India. Bumrah's unconventional high-arm action and ability to bowl with variations make him a rare bowler among the cricketing fraternity. Ranked at number one in the ICC bowlers rankings.

"The most challenging bowler is Bumrah, who bowls good yorkers at a good pace," West Indian all-rounder Andre Russell said.

Bumrah with his ability of bowling toe-breaking yorkers made himself famous worldwide. He is also known for his good speed and tight length. He had taken 5 wickets so far in the four matches of the tournament.

"Bumrah is very deceptive with swing, yorker and good pace. He got the x-factor as well. I think he is unique from all fast bowlers," Windies opener Chris Gayle said. Bumrah stated that you have to believe in your abilities if you believe in yourself, nobody else gonna believe in you.

"If you don't believe, nobody else would believe so we have a lot of belief in our team and in our abilities," Bumrah said. Talking about his childhood and family he said that his mother has done a lot of hard work as his father died early. He added that you do not need to go anywhere to find the inspiration, it is in your home itself.

'Big players perform in big games'

THE EXPERT OPINION

FROM MAHELA JAYAWARDENE



It's not about the six pack, it's about the skill and Lasith Malinga showed that in spades in Sri Lanka's win over England.

He has done it so many times for Sri Lanka over the years but it was great to see him at his best. He was on a mission with the new ball, taking two crucial early wickets which Sri Lanka needed to defend a total like 232.

Then when Joe Root looked like he was playing one of those innings where he just takes the game away from you, Dimuth Karunaratne turned to Mali and threw him the ball. He told him that he needed him and Mali delivered.

Big players perform in big games and that is what he did, removing Root and then Jos Buttler who could have won the game for England as well.

I was really impressed with Dimuth's

captaincy, trusting his players, bringing on the off-spinner Dhananajaya de Silva at an important time and getting rewarded for that.

I hope this game will give Sri Lanka a lot of confidence in this ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. They have beaten one of the best teams in the world, and they need to believe in themselves.

At times it feels like they have played with a little bit of fear and have not been able to really express themselves. This win should change that.

Even after they had batted, I felt that it was a competitive total because the wicket was fairly slow.

It was great to see Angelo Mathews scoring some runs. He still isn't quite in top form and you could tell that he really needed a score.

At times I wanted him to be more aggressive, but with wickets falling around him, he produced a great innings and was the rock of that batting line-up.

A word also for Avishka Fernando. His performance should give Sri Lankan fans a lot of hope for the future.

It's a great win for Sri Lanka, but also for the World Cup and it opens things up a little.

The top four so far have a lot of matches against each other coming up, so they will inevitably drop some points. You look at New Zealand, Australia and England who all have to play each other which does make it interesting.

That leaves Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the West Indies with a chance to close the gap if they can pick up a few more wins.

I've always been convinced that Sri Lanka step up their game at World Cups. They have the ability and they have the skill. This game should give them the confidence.

Sources: ICC



Afghanistan captain Gulbadin Naib played a crucial role for his side with both bat and ball against India yesterday. The 28-year-old picked up the wickets of half centurion Kedar Jadhav and Mohammad Shami to end with figures of two for 51 from his nine overs. The Afghan skipper also played a patient 42-ball 27 to open the innings in chase of a modest 225-run target as his all-round contributions kept Afghanistan in the hunt for their maiden win of the flagship event.



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