Star SPORT
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DHAKA SATURDAY JUNE 29, 2019, *ASHAR 15, 1426 BS*
ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP
ENGLAND CALLING
ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP ENGLAND & WALES 2019
S3

Pakistan's three left-arm quicks -- Shaheen Shah Afridi, Wahab Riaz and Mohammad Amir -- wreaked havoc against New Zealand in their last match, and they would look to do the same against lightweights Afghanistan (R) when the two sides meet today. Afghanistan, though, having failed to pick up a point yet and with only pride at stake, will look to play some fearless cricket and pour cold water on their neighbours' plans. PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan look to continue uphill march

ICC

Pakistan, with their new found confidence stemming from back-to-back wins, will look to put on another clinical performance against Afghanistan to keep themselves in contention for a spot in their semifinals.

No other team can quite demonstrate the game's unpredictable nature like Pakistan can. Their recent surge in form, with back-to-back wins against South Africa and New Zealand, has brought about interesting prospects in the final leg of the league stage at the ICC World Cup 2019. They have bounced back strongly from their initial setbacks, much like they did in 1992, and now find themselves in a position identical to the one during their victorious campaign 27 years ago.

While Mohammad Amir has been a consistent performer with the ball, Babar Azam's match-winning innings at Edgbaston comes as a huge positive for the Sarfaraz Ahmed-led side. A win against Afghanistan on Saturday will keep them well and truly in the semifinal race, as the competition stiffens.

Afghanistan, much like West Indies, have shown flashes of brilliance for brief moments in almost each of their matches, but are yet to put on a complete match performance, which keeps them deprived of their first win in this tournament. While the bowlers put on a strong performance in their last two games against India and Bangladesh, lack of partnerships with the bat cost them on both occasions.

The Gulbadin Naib-led side will look to seek confidence from their warm-up fixture against Pakistan, where they had emerged victorious by three wickets.

Haris Sohail, the aggressive left-hander, has probably been the source of much needed inspiration for Pakistan with his game changing contributions in the last two games. Haris Sohail, who scored 89 and 68 in his last two outings, will eye another match-winning contribution on Saturday.

The 18-year old Mujeeb Ur Rahman has been posing a lot of problems for the top-order batsmen in the last few matches. Mujeeb, whose spell of 2/33 almost got Afghanistan over the line in the Asia Cup fixture against Pakistan last year, will look to produce his best to power his side their first win of the tournament.

It will be a dry and sunny day with some gentle south-easterly winds. Dryness might bring the spinners into play on a hot at humid day at Headingley. Both teams will look to bat first as batting is expected to get difficult as the day progresses.

INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

AFGHANISTAN **PAKISTAN**

The two sides have never met in World Cup.

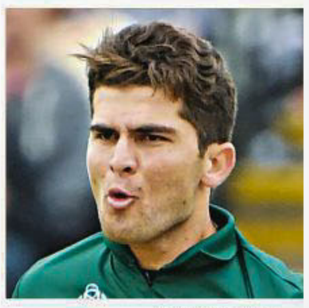
HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

AFGHANISTAN		PAKISTAN
0	WON	3
3	LOSS	0
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

LAST MEETING

September 21 2018 at Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi
Pakistan won by 3 wickets (with 3 balls remaining).

KEY PLAYERS



AFGHANISTAN		PAKISTAN
RASHID KHAN		SHAHEEN AFRIDI
21.09/17.29	BAT/BOWL AVE	21.00/25.50
102.54/25.2	BAT/BOWL STRIKE RATE	65.62/26.9
4	50S	0
0	100S	0
60*	HS	19*
4.10	ECON	5.67
7/18	BBM	4/38
886/129	RUNS/WICKETS	42/30
0/52, 2	LAST MATCH	3/28

Babar eyes summit

AFP, *Birmingham*

The first lesson Babar Azam learned from his coach was to play the first and last ball of a match, and he showed he had not forgotten that advice during his brilliant hundred against New Zealand.

Babar's 10th one-day international century at Edgbaston on Wednesday -- his eighth in a winning cause -- has led to comparisons with Indian maestro Virat Kohli.

Pakistan's batting coach Grant Flower certainly believes Babar has the X-factor.

"He is very special," said Flower, after Babar's unbeaten hundred helped Pakistan chase down a 238-run target for their third win at the World Cup.

"I believe he is going to be one of the best that Pakistan have ever produced. He's really hungry, is fit and still very young at 24."

Kohli currently has a far better record than his Pakistani counterpart, with 41 ODI centuries, and an impressive average of nearly 60 compared with Babar's mark of almost 53.

But Babar's stupendous start to his international career suggests he has the ability to match the Indian superstar.

Babar reached the milestones of 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 ODI runs faster than Kohli.

The world's top-ranked Twenty20 batsman scored five hundreds in his first 25 ODIs, compared to Kohli's two.

On Wednesday, Babar became the second-fastest to reach 3,000 ODI runs, in 68 innings, behind South Africa's Hashim Amla, who reached the mark in 57.

Babar said the link with Kohli was flattering.

"I watch his batting videos," said Babar. "He is very consistent and his mindset is very good. He gives 100 percent every time he walks out to bat.

"My aim is to be the best in the world and perform in each of Pakistan's wins."

Babar has started his career with a bang. He has the talent to take him right to the pinnacle of the game.

BEST QUOTE

I think we have a bright future. We have some quality players around. (Shimron) Hetmyer and Oshane (Thomas), the younger guys, once they get some good guidance, they'll do well for West Indies. I'll always be a fan of West Indies cricket for sure.

Kemar Roach
West Indies pacer

HAPPY MOMENT

Following a disappointing performance against Pakistan, South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada struck for his side with the very first ball of a World Cup match against Sri Lanka yesterday. The 24-year-old bowled a brilliant length delivery which surprised Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, who could only manage to balloon a simple catch to Faf du Plessis at second slip. There were a lot of expectations on Rabada ahead of the tournament, however, the seamer has not been able to live up to the billing. The first ball wicket did really pump him up though. It was a perfect start to the innings for the Proteas, who had a disappointing run in the ongoing tournament so far and are already out of the race for a place in the semifinals.

Brathwaite fined

AFP, *London*

West Indies all-rounder Carlos Brathwaite has been fined 15% of his match fee for showing dissent in his side's World Cup defeat against India.

The offence during the match at Old Trafford on Thursday constituted a level-one breach of the International Cricket Council's code of conduct.

One demerit point has been added to Brathwaite's disciplinary record. He now has two demerit points.

The incident occurred when Brathwaite protested against the umpire's decision to call a wide off his bowling.

Brathwaite admitted the offence and accepted the sanction so there was no need for a formal hearing.

Level-one breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 percent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points