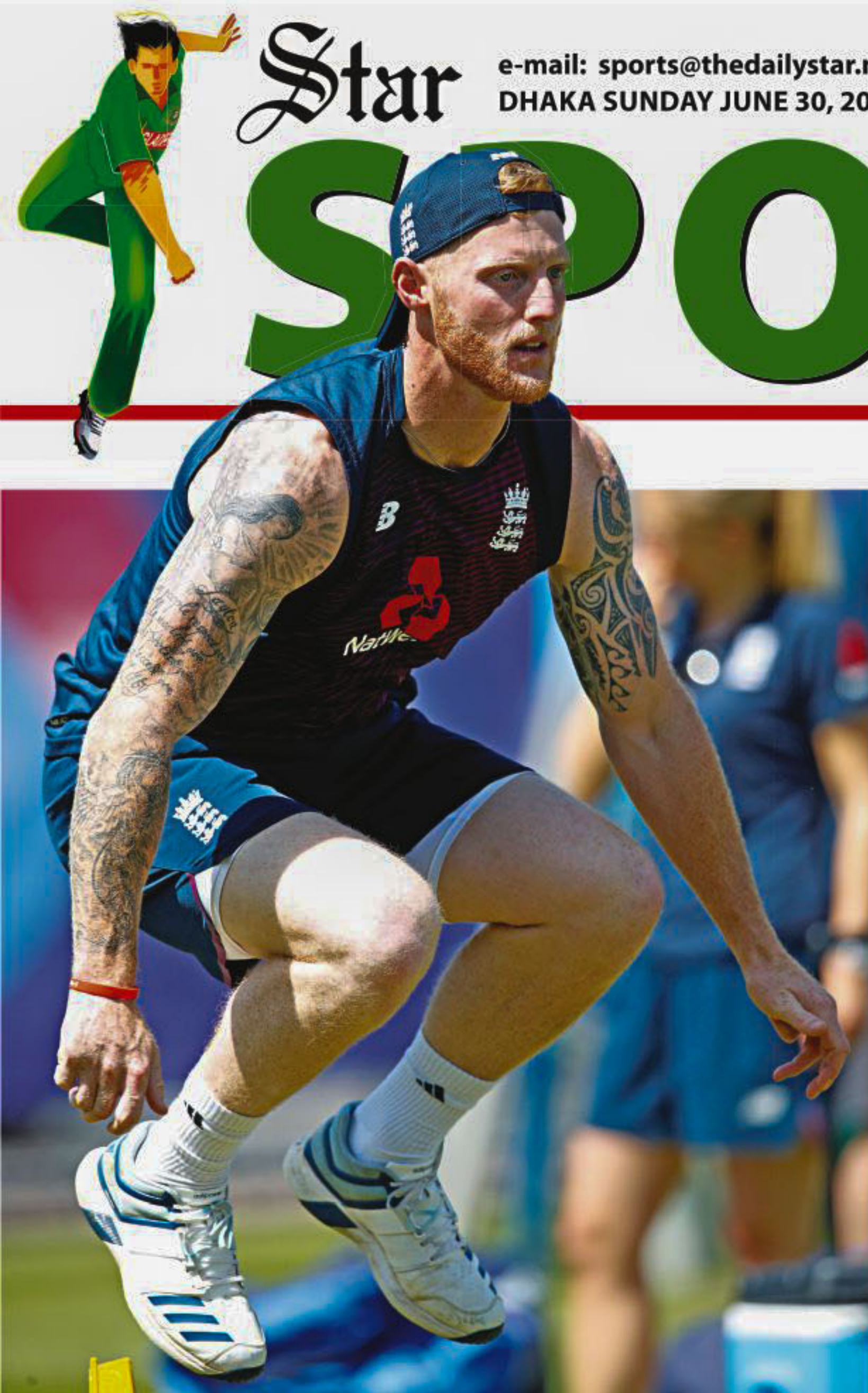


SPORT



After two valiant efforts in two losing causes, England all-rounder Ben Stokes (L) will be hoping that he finally gets the reward he merits against India today. On the other hand, MS Dhoni has found himself under fire after slow knocks and failure to rotate the strike in recent games, but India will certainly count on their once-revered finisher if it comes down to the line against England today.

PHOTO: REUTERS

FACTS

When England and India face off in a crucial World Cup encounter at Edgbaston in Birmingham today, it will be the 100th ODI meeting between the sides.

MS Dhoni has scored 1504 runs -- the most by any batsmen in either sides' current World Cup squads -- in the 47 matches he played against England.

India opener Rohit Sharma's unbeaten 137, which came against England in 2018 in Nottingham, remains the highest individual score by any player in the two sides' current World squads.

For England, it is Joe Root who has scored the most runs among the players in their current squad to have played against India so far. He has scored 684 runs in the 17 matches he featuring in against India.

Chris Woakes scalped 15 wickets -- the most by any current English bowler -- in the 11 matches he played against India.

England face India with World Cup hanging in the balance

AFP, Birmingham

How has it come to this? It's a question many England fans will be asking now their side's World Cup hopes are in the balance.

An England side widely tipped to end their World Cup drought by triumphing on home soil find themselves facing the very real prospect of a first-round exit heading into their match against unbeaten India at Edgbaston on Sunday.

England, despite coming into the World Cup as the top-ranked side in one-day internationals, have lost three pool matches, including their last two, against Sri Lanka and reigning champions Australia.

Another defeat by Virat Kohli's India would leave them on the brink of a first-round exit ahead of their concluding match in the 10-team round-robin phase against New Zealand.

To make matters worse for the home side, England opener Jonny Bairstow has found himself involved in a public row with former captain Michael Vaughan, who labelled his fellow Yorkshire cricketer's claim that people are waiting for the hosts to fail at the World Cup "negative" and "pathetic".

England's ODI revival from the depths of their first-round exit at the 2015 World Cup was built on aggressive top-order batting that saw them compile huge totals.

But they have been unable to adjust their game on the more bowler-friendly surfaces at this World Cup, where

lower totals and a more old-fashioned approach of not losing early wickets and then accelerating has been the policy of successful sides such as Australia.

Now they are set to face India's spinners on an Edgbaston pitch that generally provides more turn than any other World Cup venue.

England's two most recent defeats have coincided with the absence through a hamstring injury of Jason Roy, with replacement James Vince struggling to fill the gap left by the Surrey opener.



Vince is only in the squad because England ditched regular back-up batsman Alex Hales for a second positive test for recreational drug use -- a decision taken on the grounds of maintaining team "culture" that they could live to regret.

"We know we can perform better as a group and Jason is a fantastic player to have available. It would be a boost to have him play" England's Jos Buttler said at Edgbaston on Friday.

England's dilemma was summed up by Ben Stokes after his 89 failed to prevent a 64-run defeat by Australia at Lord's on Tuesday.

"We just need to adjust to situations and then conditions, but we are not for one minute going to take a backward step," he said.

Former England captain Mike Atherton, writing in The Times, said: "It requires thought and intelligence to adapt, without sacrificing the intent that is fundamental to their approach -- a tricky balance."

Buttler said the side were capable of handling the stresses of tournament play, saying "pressure is a privilege".

Adding to England's problems are injury fears over fast bowler Jofra Archer (side) and leg-spinner Adil Rashid (shoulder), while Sunday's match may well feel like an away game given India fans could constitute the majority of the Edgbaston crowd.

Two-times champions India, by contrast, will guarantee a place in the semi-finals if they win, although there are concerns they are too reliant on Kohli for runs.

"At the top of the order, Rohit Sharma has not fired the last couple of times, and that means KL Rahul needs to do more," said former India opener Krishnamachari Srikkanth.

"Everyone knows he is capable of doing it, he has done it before and will need to correct his course." So too will England.



England opener Jason Roy trained well yesterday and looks set to return from injury against India today and bolster his side in their must-win game.

PHOTO: AFP

MR EFFICIENT



Shaheen Shah Afridi continued his brilliant run with the ball for Pakistan in the ongoing ICC Cricket World Cup as the left-arm seamer was vital in restricting Afghanistan to a small total. He ended up with four wickets while conceding 47 runs from his ten overs. The 19-year-old removed Afghanistan skipper Gulbadin Naib, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Najibullah Zadran and Rashid Khan as Pakistan kept their hopes for a place in the semifinals alive. The teenager also bowled brilliantly in the previous game against New Zealand, where he picked up three wickets for just 28 runs from his ten overs.

INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

INDIA		ENGLAND
3	WON	3
3	LOSS	3
1	TIE	1
0	NR	0

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

INDIA		ENGLAND
53	WON	41
41	LOSS	53
2	TIE	2
3	NR	3

LAST MEETING

July 17 2018 at Headingley in Leeds. England won by 8 wickets (with 33 balls remaining).

KEY PLAYERS



INDIA		ENGLAND
VIRAT KOHLI	BAT AVE	39.84
59.67	BAT STRIKE RATE	91.28
93.10	50s	46
53	100s	13
41	HS	148
183	RUNS	7251
11159	LAST MATCH	4
72		



Jofra Archer (L) has justified the hype that surrounded his selection in England's squad, taking 16 wickets in his seven outings. But India can also boast significant firepower, with the world's top ODI bowler, Jasprit Bumrah, leading a potent attack.

PHOTO: REUTERS/AFP

Not feeling pressure, says Morgan

ICC

Eoin Morgan insists England won't buckle under pressure against India, even though defeat would leave their World Cup dreams in serious danger.

Defeat to India -- unbeaten in the 2019 World Cup and now the top-ranked ODI side in the world -- would further damage England's prospects and could take their fate out of their own hands ahead of the final round of games.

But Morgan is adamant they have regained their focus ahead of Sunday's game at Edgbaston and their final match with New Zealand.

"We are handling it well," he said. "We are in a lucky position, playing in

a home World Cup for your country is a privileged position to be in.

"It presents a huge opportunity and if we win two games we are in the semi-finals and then if we win that then we are in the final. There is still a lot on the line and we are really looking forward to it.

"It is not worth thinking about losing. Mathematically there is still a chance if we lose but we want to win two and tomorrow is a huge priority."

The advantage that hosting the World Cup brings is likely to go out of the window against India, with Morgan expecting a fervent support for the two-time winners. But the left-hander hopes local knowledge will

tell, although England have struggled to adapt to surfaces so far. But Morgan is confident they can get the job done.

"The last time we played India we beat them in a series. This team has had success against them. We lost away in a tight series but we won here. We believe because we have won before," he added.

"Where we have let ourselves down is adapting to conditions. It has been a bigger challenge in the World Cup than previous series we have played.

"We want to play on the best possible wicket. We always do. We bat deep and strong and we tend to play in high-scoring games so it is an area we are more comfortable playing in."

Morgan optimistic on Roy

AFP, Leeds

England opener Jason Roy is set to return from a torn hamstring in Sunday's crucial match against India, said captain Eoin Morgan who is optimistic quick Jofra Archer will continue to play through a side strain.

Roy smashed 153 against Bangladesh but has since sat out with the injury, while replacement James Vince managed 40 in three innings.

"Jason is preparing to play tomorrow," Morgan told reporters at Edgbaston on Saturday.

"Provided he gets through to today's practice and tomorrow morning unscathed, we think that he might be fit to play."

Roy has been crucial to England's rise to the top of ODI rankings and Morgan said he would risk playing the 28-year-old unless it meant long-term injury.

"Depending on the significance of the risk. If it was going to rule him out long term, absolutely not. If it was going to rule him out for a couple of weeks, yes," he said.

Archer did not bowl on Friday but rolled his arms on Saturday.

"We're going to see how he comes through today. It's the same thing he's been playing with the last three games. So we'll see how he comes through today," Morgan said.