



SPORT



INFO ZONE

HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

AFGHANISTAN	WEST INDIES
THE TWO SIDES HAVE NEVER MET IN WORLD CUP.	

HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

AFGHANISTAN	WEST INDIES
3	1
1	WON
0	LOSS
1	TIE
1	NR

LAST MEETING

March 25 2018 at Harare Sports Club.
Afghanistan won by 7 wickets (with 56 balls remaining).

KEY PLAYERS



AFGHANISTAN MOHAMMAD NABI 27.80/31.86 86.22/44.7	BAT/BOWL AVE BAT/BOWL STRIKE RATE	WEST INDIES CHRIS GAYLE 38.04/35.53 87.24/44.5
14	50S	53
1	100S	25
116	HS	215
4.27	ECON	4.78
4/30	BBM	5/46
2697/127	RUNS/WICKETS	10386/166
16, 2/23	LAST MATCH	35

Dejected Afghanistan aim to break their duck

Icc

Afghanistan, who have been winless at the 2019 World Cup so far, despite displaying flashes of brilliance, will look to end their campaign on a high as they face West Indies in their last match today.

It was a heart-break against Pakistan, much like it was against India, as the Gulbadin Naib-led side let the game drift away from their grasp at critical junctures. While the spinners have lived up to their reputation with consistent performances throughout the tournament, the fast bowlers and the batting unit have failed to contribute significantly to the team's cause.

Afghanistan will, however, be quietly confident as they take the field against West Indies - an opponent they have beaten thrice in four completed matches, including the 7-wicket triumph in the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier final last year.

West Indies, much like Afghanistan have failed to produce an all-round performance, barring their opening match victory against Pakistan - their only success in this World Cup so far. While Sheldon Cottrell has been a star performer with the ball, the batsmen, despite some good individual performances have failed to put up a significant total due to the lack of partnerships.

Skipper Jason Holder will look to inspire his team to play with full intensity in their final game of the 2019 World Cup.

18-year-old Mujeeb Ur Rahman has been Afghanistan's strike bowler with the new ball throughout the World Cup. Mujeeb, who had starred with the ball in the World Cup Qualifier final last year with figures of 4/43, will once again be Gulbadin's key weapon on Thursday.

On the other hand, Shai Hope, West Indies' wicket-keeper batsman who came into the World Cup as the fourth ranked batsman in the ODI Batting Rankings, has managed to score only 197 runs in seven innings so far. Hope will look to shoulder the responsibility of holding the innings together, as his solid technique makes him a key batsman against a strong Afghanistan spin attack.

Early brightness will soon fade away as cloud thickens from the north. It would be a warmer day but could be breezy at times with moderate westerly winds. Batting might get difficult in the second innings, much like it did in the two previous games played at Headingley and hence toss could play a vital role.



Universe Boss Chris Gayle has failed to make any sort of impact at the World Cup so far, but he will be hoping to rectify that when he meets Afghanistan today. The 39-year-old will be especially hoping to make it an occasion to remember as it will be his last World Cup match.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

Kohli meets superfan

AGENCIES, Birmingham

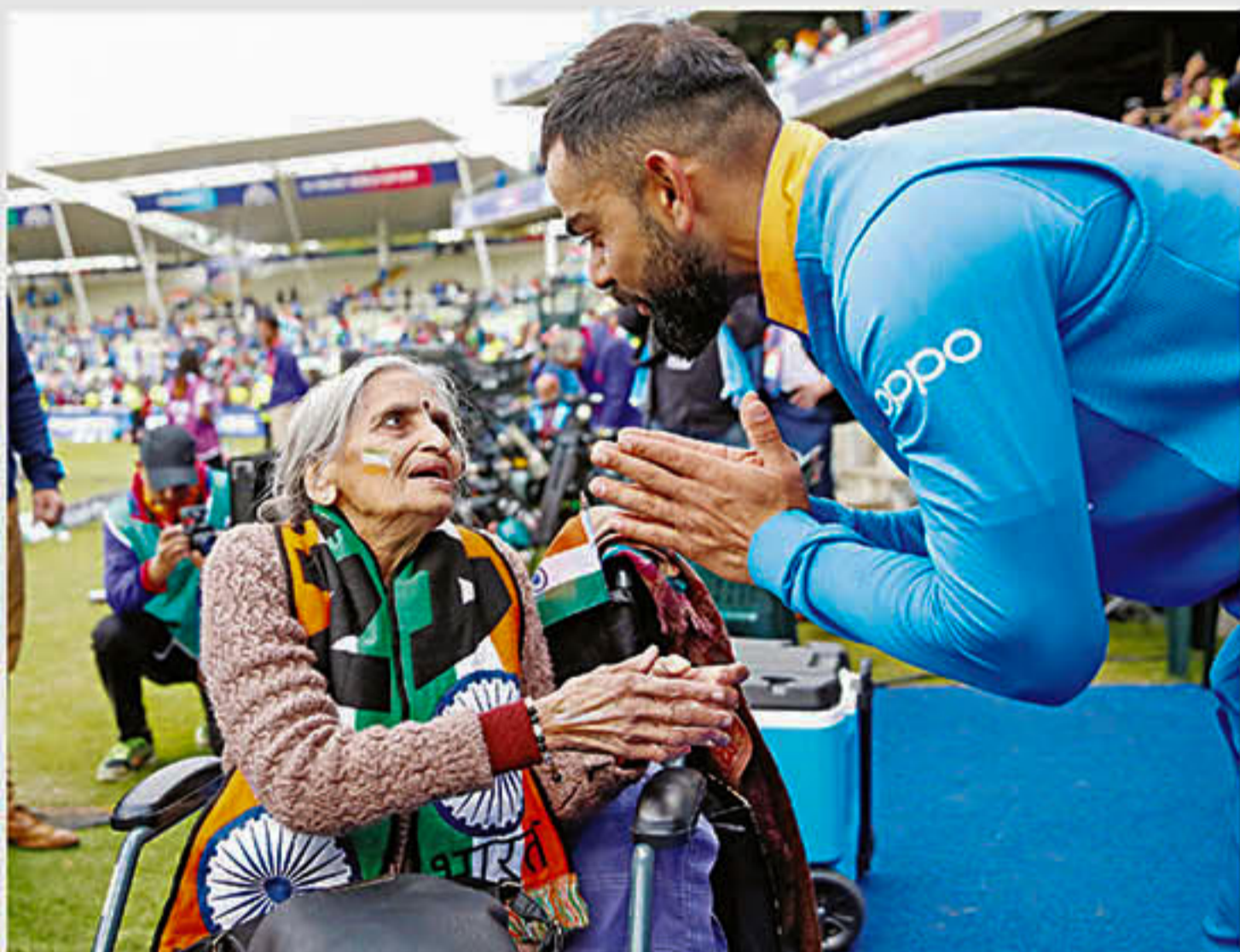
India booked their place in the semi-finals of the ICC World Cup 2019 with a 28-run win over Bangladesh at Edgbaston on Tuesday. After India's win, captain Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma greeted a 87-year-old fan named Charulata Patel.

During the match, Patel was seen enthusiastically celebrating all the boundaries and the wickets in the stands.

Rohit and Kohli were seen seeking blessings from the 87-year-old after India joined title-holders Australia in the knock-outs.

The official Twitter handle of the ICC also tweeted a video and called the 87-year-old a 'special fan'.

"How amazing is this?! India's top-order superstars @ImVkohli and @ImRo45



each shared a special moment with one of the India fans at Edgbaston," Cricket World Cup tweeted.

Kohli also tweeted his photos with Patel after the match, writing alongside them: "Also would like to thank all our

fans for all the love & support & especially Charulata Patel ji. She's 87 and probably one of the most passionate & dedicated fans I've ever seen. Age is just a number, passion takes you leaps & bounds. With her blessings, on to the next one."

Charulata said that it was a dream come true for her and she blessed both Rohit and Kohli.

"Kohli told me that I will have to come a couple of time more in the tournament. I told him the tickets are not easily available to which he said not to worry and that he will arrange them for me. I had never thought I will get to meet these cricketers today but it was my dream," she said in an interview with Times Now on Wednesday, a day after she had met her heroes.

There's a need for speed, says Naib

AGENCIES, Leeds

Afghanistan captain Gulbadin Naib admits his team would benefit from the emergence of a top-class pace bowler to supplement their quality spin attack.

Naib's side, who have lost all eight of their matches, will play their last game at this year's World Cup when they face the West Indies in Leeds on Thursday.

Although Afghanistan spinners Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman are potential match-winners, Naib knows the team needs a sharper pace attack to trouble the world's best teams.

"If you look over the last two or three years, we're depending on spinners, especially when Mujeeb joined the team," Naib said. "We have two spinners. So if you work on the fast bowlers in the last two or three years, maybe we have good pacers now in this tournament."

"This is a problem. We didn't find the fast bowlers' department. We all worked on the spinners, so that's why we have

world-class spinners."

Naib has not given up hope that his country's talent scouts can unearth the kind of quality pace bowler he needs.

"If you find two, three, good fast bowlers, maybe it will be good for us here in the World Cup," he said.

"Hopefully in the future we can find a good fast bowler. And I'm hoping I'll be working on it."

The skipper has also told the batsmen to take responsibility.

He said: "We played the last four or five games quite well. I'm happy with the performance of the team."

"But we lacked something late on, for the last game we played against Pakistan and especially against Bangladesh because we played really well."

"As I say each time, we have to play 50 overs, especially in the batting. It all depends on our batting strength. If we don't bat well, it's difficult for our bowlers to defend a small total."

Windies drawing on English experience for strong finish

Icc

The West Indies might be out of the running for a place in the World Cup semi-finals but assistant coach Roddy Estwick has backed them to finish on a high.

The side from the Caribbean close out their campaign against Afghanistan at Headingley, having failed to pick up a win since their opening success against Pakistan.

But Estwick drew parallels with the Test series in England two years ago when the West Indies upset England in Leeds, Shai Hope hitting a brilliant century to level the series after a big defeat at Edgbaston.

He explained: "Walking in here I remember our backs were against the wall against England (in 2017). We had lost badly at Birmingham."

"Everybody was saying going into the final day that we were going to lose to England badly as well. We chased 322 down. So hopefully with backs against the wall again we can come up with that kind of performance and we can finish on a high."

"Obviously we're not happy losing games, one who has really come to the fore has been Nicholas Pooran, talked up by Chris Gayle as the future of West Indies cricket earlier in the tournament."

Pooran's century almost got the Windies over the line last time out at Durham against Sri Lanka, that ton his first as a professional.

But for Estwick, it has not come as a surprise to see Pooran emerge, insisting the 23-year-old, who will be back at Headingley later this summer with Yorkshire, has always had the potential.

He added: "I've always believed in Nicholas. I went to Dubai with him and I saw him play the best white-ball innings I've ever seen anybody play. He got 148 in a youth World Cup game against Australia out of 208."

"So I'm not surprised by his talent. What's surprised me is it's taken as long as this to really come through. And I hope that he can build on this now and he can really cement his place for a very long time."

The Windies have had to cope with a number of injuries over the course of the tournament, losing Andre Russell midway through, while star bowler Kumar Roach missed the Sri Lanka game through illness. He is expected to be fit for the clash with Afghanistan, where the Caribbean side will look to perform better in the crucial moments of the game.

Estwick added: "Looking back over the eight games that we played, I personally thought we should have won four of those. We were very, very close."

"We just didn't play the big moments well. And hopefully we can learn from that and we can move forward and we can plan for the next one."



5000 notes flown to Tigers

Fans of the Tigers have been thronging to stadiums across the United Kingdom in overwhelming numbers but there are still millions at homes who have not been able to make their voices heard. Considering that there were so many fans who could not convey their messages to their beloved Tigers, Rabeth Khan, a passionate cricket fan and a seasoned advertising practitioner, took initiative a unique activity to get the fans in touch with the team. Under the campaign, #tillthelastball, 5,000 handwritten notes were collected from the Tigers fans to provide inspiration to the team ahead of their match against India. The notes, weighing in at 20Kg, travelled more than 8,000 miles to Birmingham by DHL and reached the Hyatt Regency, where the Tigers were staying before their match against India. Former national cricketer Shahidul Alam Ratan, who is currently coaching in England, supported Rabeth's initiative and ensured that all the notes reached the team. Bangladesh Cricket Board officials Khaled Mahmud Sujon and Akram Khan were ecstatic to see the passion of the fans and opined that the notes would definitely inspire the team in their coming matches. Tamim Iqbal, Mahmudullah Riyad and Mossadek Hossain were also present and went through the notes with great excitement once they arrived.



England opener Jonny Bairstow has been in terrific form and the right-hander smashed his second consecutive hundred in the World Cup against New Zealand. The 29-year-old, who scored his maiden World Cup hundred against India in the previous game, continued his brilliant form. He was dismissed on 106 off 99 balls which featured 15 fours and a six. Courtesy of the brilliant start from Bairstow England posted a challenging total of 305 for 8 in 50 overs.