

Pondering on what ifs

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There's no point in head scratching or pondering on ways to turn back time, it's done. Bangladesh have exited the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 and boarded their flight back home from England yesterday. However, on their way back, there still may be a few things lingering at the back of their minds. Perhaps such thoughts could lead to imaginary scenarios where the 'what ifs' make the difference between what was and what could have been. Just what if...

MUSHY HAD BEEN A LITTLE PATIENT

What are the must-do things while defending a below-par 244, that too against a compact New Zealand side at the biggest stage -- a World Cup game? Well, the message from the pavilion would have been to

while thinking about the result and had not been concentrating on the process that needs to be done in order to get a desired outcome when he tried to grab the ball early in an attempt to have Kane Williamson run-out in the 12th over. Mushfiqur knocked the balls off with his arm before grabbing the ball and the Kiwi skipper -- batting on eight at that time -- who was nowhere near the crease, had eventually made his ground and survived, courtesy of that error. Williamson, who was finally dismissed on 40 in the 32nd over, went on to string together a 105-run third-wicket stand with Ross Taylor in a game that the Tigers lost by just two wickets.

GOD LET THE SUN SHINE!

The persistent drizzle at the Country Ground in Bristol on June 11 might not have had a huge impact on the lifestyle of the city's inhabitants but it did mar Bangladesh's chalked



their way to a maiden World Cup semifinal. However, it all depended on that game against Sri Lanka -- a side that are one place lower in ICC ODI rankings than Bangladesh -- where the Tigers were clearly the favourites. Unfortunately, the Tigers were kept waiting, maybe with hopes of the rain to stop in Bristol, till the official announcement of the match being abandoned was made, forcing the Tigers to remain content with one point from the inexperienced Sri Lankan side.

SABBIR IMPACTED THE RIGHT TEAM

The team management was probably right on money to give Sabbir Rahman the nod ahead of Mosaddek Hossain for the game against Australia on June 20 at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, given Sabbir's reputation and proven ability of playing pace well and better than most in the Tigers' XI. But little did they know that Sabbir's impact in the game would see Australia opener David Warner's bat shine instead of Sabbir himself. Often the destructive Warner does not provide his opposition with any chances but Bangladesh were probably lucky to have been presented with two chances by the left-hander which were both relinquished in the same

game. The first opportunity came as early as the fifth over, when Warner went on his back foot to cut a Mashrafe Bin Mortaza delivery towards backward point only to see a perfectly positioned Sabbir going low to his right with both hands and spilling the ball onto the ground. Warner, on just 10, breathed a sigh of relief. By the time the next opportunity came, Warner had inflicted just the right amount of pain as expected after being handed a life early on, as the 32-year old was then batting on 70 in the 26th over. A slight mix-up between him and Usman Khawaja saw Warner run a quarter way to other end but he soon realised that he had to sprint back. A fumble by the same culprit, Sabbir, at mid-on allowed Warner to reach home safely. And this time Warner would stop only after hitting a 147-ball 166 in a game where the Tigers lost by 48 runs and were left wondering what could have happened had they restricted Australia to 30 or 40 runs less than their mammoth 381 for five.

TAMIM HAD NOT DONE THAT

Tamim Iqbal usually takes these types of catches nine times out of ten during fielding drills at practice sessions. But the one time he would

miss the catch was unfortunately during Bangladesh's must-win game against India on July 2 at Edgbaston in Birmingham. This time it was not a call for catch by a fielding coach after hitting the ball in the air with a willow during practice sessions as it was India opener Rohit Sharma who had mistimed an attempted pull shot off Mustafizur Rahman in the fifth over of a high intensity World Cup tie. Tamim, running to his left from deep square leg, covered almost 15 yards and did all the hard work before applying the finishing touch -- catching the ball. But to everyone's surprise he spilled the ball after touching it with the palm of his hand before watching it ricochet off his chest and fall to the ground. Rohit, who was on nine, moved onto 10 after taking a single and survived. But you don't expect a batsman of

something totally absurd would not do much harm. The Tigers are out of the World Cup but one particular Tiger from the squad still remains in the mega event. Bangladesh's ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is well in contention for the player-of-tournament award after his excellent World Cup campaign. The prestigious award would certainly be at the top of Shakib's personal achievement's shelf and it would not be a surprise to see him add the trophy to his other accolades. Playing in eight matches, Shakib has scored fifty or more in seven of them -- with a score of 41 against Australia being the only anomaly. The all-rounder scored back-to-back hundreds in this World Cup and also smashed five fifties. Shakib, who finished with 606 runs, became only



grab every chance you get. If not literally, grabbing opportunities on the ground become easier when you are wearing a pair of gloves. Creating an opportunity, even a tiny error of judgement from the opposition is induced by a series of small endeavours while in pursuit of your aim. But when the moment comes, you need to wait and make the right call and time it to perfection. Maybe Mushfiqur Rahim -- the man with the gloves behind the stumps for the Tigers -- succumbed to euphoria

out plan or intended route to the semifinal of the World Cup. Going into the World Cup, Bangladesh were expected to beat the likes of Afghanistan, West Indies -- which they did eventually -- and Sri Lanka. And when Bangladesh started their campaign with an unexpected yet well-deserved 21-run victory over South Africa, the Tigers had just made their chances brighter, needing to do the regulation work from then on and a few surprise wins over the powerhouses of cricket to pave



Rohit's calibre to stop there, right? Shrugging off the heart in hand moment, Rohit kept on inflicting misery on Bangladesh, scoring a magnificent 104 off 92 deliveries. The right-hander was adjudged player-of-the-match in their 28-run victory over the Tigers.

THERE WAS A CLONE OF SHAKIB?

While wondering about what could have happened for Bangladesh in the ongoing World Cup, imagining

the third player ever after Sachin Tendulkar and Matthew Hayden to have scored 600 runs in one edition of the World Cup. While Sachin and Hayden did not part-take with the ball, Shakib has also scalped 11 wickets in the mega event to see him ahead of anyone else in the race to be adjudged the player-of-the-tournament. Maybe now the team management will be left pondering on ways to get a clone of Shakib to further bolster the side.

BEST QUOTE



It means so much to have this record when you think of all the legends of Pakistan cricket. To be able to take six wickets at Lord's is a very big moment for me and my family, it's the home of cricket

Shaheen Shah Afridi
Pakistan pacer



South Africa captain Faf du Plessis, who has stated that he will ponder his international future after the World Cup, showed that he had plenty to offer the downtrodden Proteas with a 93-ball century in their final World Cup match against Australia at Old Trafford yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

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South Africa's campaign in the ongoing World Cup is surely one they would like to sooner forget. However, in their last match of the tournament against the top placed Australia at Old Trafford in Manchester yesterday, Proteas skipper Faf du Plessis had a moment to remember. It was when the right-hander took his helmet off and thumped his chests to celebrate a well-deserved 94-ball 100. Although it came in a dead rubber for South Africa, at least the fans and captain himself will have something to remember from their bleak tournament.

Warner holds firm in run chase

AFP, Manchester

David Warner held firm for Australia after they lost early wickets during a stiff run-chase against South Africa on Saturday in a match the holders needed to win to finish top of the World Cup group table.

Australia were 125-4 at the 25-over halfway stage of their innings, needing 201 more runs to reach a target of 326.

Warner, like Steve Smith playing his first match against South Africa since they received 12-month bans for a ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town last year, was 68 not out and Alex Carey five not out.

South Africa -- who cannot qualify for the semifinals -- made 325-6, with skipper Faf du Plessis scoring 100 and Rassie van der

Dussen a career-best 95.

Victory would see Australia, already through to the semi-finals, top the table and ensure a return to Old Trafford for a semifinal clash with fourth-placed New Zealand on Tuesday.

But defeat could leave Australia with a seemingly tougher last-four showdown against resurgent hosts England at Edgbaston on Thursday. They should have lost Warner in the first over of their reply but Kagiso Rabada threw to the wrong end.

Australia captain Aaron Finch, however, made just three before he chipped Imran Tahir to Aiden Markram at short cover, sparking a typically exuberant celebration from the 40-year-old leg-spinner.

Usman Khawaja retired hurt on six with a left hamstring injury.

Smith, should have been run out on two but it was not a costly error with the star batsman lbw for seven to paceman Dwaine Pretorius.

But left-hander Warner went past 550 runs for the tournament, during his sixth fifty of this World Cup.

Marcus Stoinis (22) was superbly run out when Quinton de Kock back-flicked Rabada's throw onto the stumps and the keeper then held an excellent leaping catch to dismiss all-rounder Glenn Maxwell (12) off the fast bowler.

Earlier, Mitchell Starc equalled Australia legend Glenn McGrath's World Cup tournament record of 26 wickets, set at the 2007 event in the Caribbean, with a return of 2-59.

Plessis, who won the toss, and van der Dussen put on 151 for the

third wicket in front of a sun-drenched crowd.

Aiden Markram (33), opening after Hashim Amla was ruled out with a knee injury playing football in a warm-up on Friday, and de Kock (52) set the tone in a first-wicket stand of 79 before they both fell to off-spinner Nathan Lyon.

Du Plessis, who drove fast bowler Pat Cummins for a superb six, completed the first hundred by a South African at this World Cup in 93 balls, with seven fours and two sixes.

But he was out to the next ball he faced, slicing Jason Behrendorff to third man.

Van der Dussen fell short of his maiden ODI hundred when, trying to hit the last ball of the innings for six, he holed out.

It was incredible, says Shaheen

PTI, London

He entered the record books with a six-wicket haul against Bangladesh in the World Cup and young Pakistan speedster Shaheen Afridi said it was "incredible" to achieve the feat at Lord's here.

Afridi became the youngest ever bowler -- at 19 years and 90 days -- to claim a five-wicket haul in the World Cup when his six for 35 helped Pakistan dismiss Bangladesh in a 94-run win in their last outing.

"I'm so happy with performance and taking six wickets is incredible," said Shaheen, who also became the first Pakistan bowler to take six wickets in the World Cup.

"It means so much to have this record

when you think of all the legends of Pakistan cricket. To be able to take six wickets at Lord's is a very big moment for me and my family, it's the home of cricket and a very special place.

"We've played such good cricket in the last four matches and it's disappointing it's now over. This is my first World Cup, and the same for other players too, that is very good news for the future."

Imam Ul-Haq, who scored a run-a-ball 100, was left to rue the missed chances.

"I think the Australia defeat hurts me a lot. I was set and playing well. I should have won that match for Pakistan," he said. "We lost four quick wickets and I think I should have won that game and we would have beaten a big team in the World Cup."