



IMPROVING RAPIDLY AND AIMING HIGH

Afghanistan formed their first official team in 1995, 20 years after the West Indies were crowned champions in the first-ever cricket World Cup in England. Since then, the fearless Afghans' transformation into a force to be reckoned with in international cricket despite the turmoil in their homeland is one of the most unique and inspiring stories in sport. Having made great strides, especially in the shortest format of the game, Afghanistan are set to play their fifth T20 World Cup. Their journey will begin on October 25 in Sharjah against the champions of Group B from the tournament's first round. That could be Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Oman or Scotland. The fact that they will commence their journey from the Super 12 stage of the tournament, where the top eight teams gained direct access, is enough to prove that Afghanistan are not traveling to the UAE to just make up the numbers. They do have areas to improve upon and there is turmoil inside the team and its management. But with a number of players — such as Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi — who have established their names around the globe in franchise cricket, Afghanistan can stun any team on their day, especially as the pitches in the World Cup are expected to be conducive to spin.

AFGHANISTAN

MATCHES: 14 | WON: 5 | LOST: 9 | TIED: 0 | NO RESULT: 0

STRENGTHS

Judging by the spin-heavy squad, it is quite clear the Afghans will bank on their spinners to turn any game around. Star leg-spinner Rashid Khan will spearhead the attack, with fellow leggie Qais Ahmed and off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman the other front-line spinners. To top it off, spin-bowling all-rounders Mohammad Nabi and Sharafuddin Ashraf can make opponents' lives even harder.

WEAKNESSES

The thing that can negatively impact their game is the visible lack of cohesion in the team and management. Just minutes after the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) announced the World Cup squad, star player Rashid Khan stepped down from his role as captain, saying the board 'has not obtained my consent for the team announced'. Afghanistan also faced similar turbulence in the leadership role before the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup, which resulted in them losing all nine games in England.



SQUAD

Rashid Khan, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Hazratullah Zazai, Usman Ghani, Asghar Afghan, Mohammad Nabi (c), Najibullah Zadran, Hashmatullah Shahidi, Mohammad Shahzad, Mujeeb ur Rahman, Karim Janat, Gulbadin Naib, Naveen ul Haq, Hamid Hassan, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Dawlat Zadran, Shapoor Zadran, Qais Ahmed

RESERVES

Afsar Zazai, Farid Ahmed Malik

SURPRISE INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

Unlike other teams, Afghanistan's squad featured a number of surprise inclusions. Seniors Hamid Hassan, Shapoor Zadran, Dawlat Zadran -- all three in mid-30s and having not played a match since 2019 -- were recalled to the national side. Also returning to the team is wicketkeeper-batsman Shahzad, who made a comeback after serving a one-year ban for breaching ACB's code of conduct.

THE CHAMPIONS SLAYER

In their 14 T20Is against the full members of this edition's Super 12, Afghanistan have won three. Interestingly, all those wins came against defending champions West Indies.



FORM GUIDE

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STATISTICS

Afghanistan T20 World Cup Appearances: 4
Best Result: **Super 10s** (2016)

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