

SPORT

OMAN THRASH PNG in opening match

AFP, Muscat

Skipper Maqsood returned bowling figures of 4-20 to set up a 10-wicket win for hosts Oman in the Twenty20 World Cup opener against debutants Papua New Guinea on Sunday. Maqsood's four wickets, including three in one over, kept PNG to 129 for nine in the first round match at the Al Amerat ground outside Muscat. Openers Aqib Ilyas (50 from 43 balls) and Jatinder Singh (73 from 42) then clattered the PNG bowlers around the ground without being parted to steer Oman home with 6.2 overs to spare,



handing Papua New Guinea a tough lesson in their first ever World Cup outing. Maqsood remained the hero with his left-arm spin as he struck thrice in one over to rattle PNG who had lost both their openers for nought. PNG captain Assad Vala, who made 56 off 43 balls, and Charles Amini, who smashed 37, hit back with an attacking third-wicket partnership of 81. But Mohammad Nadeem ran out the left-handed Amini with a direct throw at the non-striker's end to break the stand and that opened the door for Maqsood. New-ball bowlers Bilal Khan and Kaleemullah, who goes by just one name, took two wickets each.



Sri Lanka's new generation starts mission today

Ireland and Netherlands lock horn in the day's first match. The Netherlands, led by Pieter Seelaar, started the warm-up matches with a hefty 31-run defeat at the hands of Scotland. However, they made a comeback by beating Oman in their second practice match on October 14. Ireland, on the other hand, will be going in to the game after back-to-back wins in the warm-ups. They began with a crushing eight-wicket win over PNG after which they beat Bangladesh.



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SCORES IN BRIEF
PNG
129 for nine in 20 overs (Assad 56, Amini 37, extras 7; Bilal 2-16, Kaleemullah 2-19, Maqsood 4-20)
OMAN
131 for no loss in 13.4 overs (Aqib 50 not out, Jatinder 73 not out, extras 8)
RESULT
Oman won by 10 wickets.
Man-of-the-match: Zeeshan Maqsood.

AGENCIES

Sri Lanka will enter unfamiliar territory today when they take on Namibia in their opening first round match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Abu Dhabi. It has undoubtedly been a transitional period for Sri Lanka over the past few years. Since the 2015 Cricket World Cup they've seen the likes of Kumar Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene, Tillakaratne Dilshan, Rangana Herath, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekara and Thisara Perera retire. Given all seven features in the 2015 World Cup winning side of 2014, that's a list of departures any nation would struggle to adjust to. This month, they have the chance to show the world that the transitional phase is coming to an end and that they are ready to conquer cricket again. Sri Lankan legend Aravinda de Silva admits there have been "issues with discipline" but the country which won the T20 World Cup seven years ago is on the way back, he says. Also unable to shrug off corruption scandals, Sri Lanka fell outside the top eight when qualifying was decided for the upcoming World Cup, condemning them to the preliminaries against outsiders such as the Netherlands, Ireland and Namibia.

But as part of an overhaul, de Silva, vice-captain of the side that won the 50-over World Cup in 1996, was brought in to head Sri Lanka's cricket committee. Another legend, Mahela Jayawardene, a member of the side that triumphed at the T20 World Cup in 2014, has been drafted in to mentor the team competing in the United Arab Emirates and Oman -- to give "confidence and support". On the field, all-rounder Dasun Shanaka is the latest to take on the captain's role to bring order. "I think people have to understand it's a very young side," de Silva told AFP ahead of Sri Lanka's opening World Cup fixture. Shanaka "has done well up to now", he added. "So, I guess we need to back these guys." "If you look at the Sri Lanka team, they've got talent, but maybe some of the positions, the way they approach the game in the batting lineup, could be changed to be that much more efficient and effective. Those kinds of thinking comes through experience and also understanding the game very well." Meanwhile, Namibia have never previously qualified for a World Cup in this format and are ranked 19th. Namibia have quietly built a strong side ahead of the tournament but Sri Lanka at their best would probably be too much.

TODAY'S MATCHES
Ireland Vs Netherlands
4pm (BST)
Sri Lanka Vs Namibia
8pm (BST)

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Tigers find their 12th man in Muscat

SPORTS REPORTER FROM MUSCAT
The first game of the opening day of the ICC T20 World Cup between hosts Oman and Papua New Guinea was still in progress as Bangladeshi fans flooded into the Al Amerat Cricket Stadium to support the Tigers in their evening game against Scotland, scheduled to begin at 6:00pm. The stadium, located 15 kilometres south-east of the city centre, was engulfed in red and green as 80 per cent of the seats were occupied by Bangladeshi fans. The number could have climbed even more, with numerous Bangladesh supporters still waiting outside the premises with flags and placards as they created a festive mood across the venue. And why wouldn't they? Nearly eight lakh Bangladeshi expats in Oman had been eagerly anticipating for the day when they could witness the Tigers play in front of their eyes for the first time. Ahead of the start of the game, vehicles started to gather in the parking lot outside the stadium and groups were planning how to best cheer for the Tigers from the stands. "We are very excited. This is a day we

have been awaiting for a long time. To witness Bangladesh play here in Oman is a special occasion. We don't get to see the Bangladesh cricket team. I can assure you that our team will have the crowd as the 12th man during every game in Muscat," Rashed Alom, who works as a salesman in Muscat, told The Daily Star. While the life of such expats has never been easy, the T20 World Cup has given them a way to celebrate their love for Bangladesh through cricket. "We don't get much time off work usually. And if you talk about cricket, I never imagined seeing my favourite player Shakib Al Hasan play in front of my eyes, that too in Muscat," said a beaming Salauddin Ahmed, who works at a construction site. "I came to see Shakib during the training session the day before the game but the security didn't allow me to enter the premises. Tickets were hard to get online but I still managed to get one at the last moment. Finally, I will be able to see Shakib in front of me and I hope Bangladesh will go on to win all the matches in Oman."

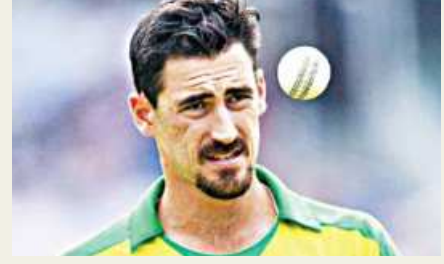


T20 WORLD CUP BLAST



'We are backing Gayle to do well'

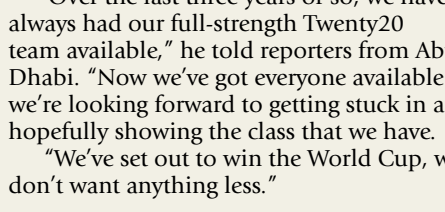
Chris Gayle has joined the West Indies for their title defence in the Twenty20 World Cup and skipper Kieron Pollard backs the big-hitter to come good in the United Arab Emirates. The self-styled "Universe Boss" left the Indian Premier League in the UAE due to "bubble fatigue" after months of franchise and international cricket during the coronavirus pandemic. "Living in bubbles is difficult. If a guy enjoys himself in any situation can't take it, it shows how difficult it can be for some of us," said Pollard. "We are backing him to do well." The 42-year-old Gayle will be among the oldest players in the competition when West Indies begin their campaign against England on October 23 in the Super 12 stage.



'We've set out to win the World Cup'

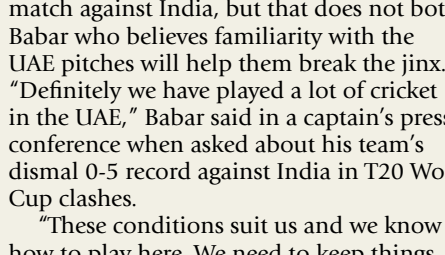
Paceman Mitchell Starc has warned Australia's rivals not to read too much into the team's recent poor form, saying the squad now assembled in the United Arab Emirates was preparing only to win the Twenty20 World Cup.

Australia have lost 16 of their last 24 Twenty20 internationals going back to the start of 2020, but Starc said there was good reason for those disappointing results. "Over the last three years or so, we haven't always had our full-strength Twenty20 team available," he told reporters from Abu Dhabi. "Now we've got everyone available we're looking forward to getting stuck in and hopefully showing the class that we have. "We've set out to win the World Cup, we don't want anything less."



'These conditions suit us'

Pakistan have won their last 10 Twenty20 internationals in the United Arab Emirates and captain Babar Azam claims that will give his men the edge over India in their World Cup opener. The arch-rivals will meet in Dubai on October 24 in what will be the biggest clash of the tournament that starts Sunday in Oman and the UAE. Pakistan have never won a World Cup match against India, but that does not bother Babar who believes familiarity with the UAE pitches will help them break the jinx. "Definitely we have played a lot of cricket in the UAE," Babar said in a captain's press conference when asked about his team's dismal 0-5 record against India in T20 World Cup clashes. "These conditions suit us and we know how to play here. We need to keep things simple in all the departments."



'Our mindset is to always play daringly'

Afghanistan captain Mohammad Nabi said his team will shrug off political and travel turmoil to thrive at the T20 World Cup by remaining true to their philosophy of "daring cricket". Since the return of the Taliban in the country, Afghanistan briefly faced the possibility of being banned from the tournament if the women's game was discontinued. "The team is brilliant, they have been preparing for the last one and a half months," said Nabi. "There was a little bit of a struggle on visas, so they didn't arrive in the UAE early. They were practising in Qatar." Nabi vowed his team will not change their aggressive style. "This is our mindset to always play daringly," said Nabi.



Kohli hails mentor Dhoni

Virat Kohli on Saturday hailed M.S. Dhoni as an "inspiration" who had a "huge impact" on his cricketing journey as the India captain goes in search of the Twenty20 World Cup title. Dhoni, who on Friday led Chennai Super Kings to their fourth IPL crown, captained India to the T20 world title in 2007. But a World Cup win still awaits Kohli who will step down as the national T20 skipper after the 2021 tournament which gets underway on Sunday. The star batsman, who took over the leadership role across all formats from Dhoni in 2017, said the former captain's presence in the dressing room as team mentor will inspire an already confident unit. "He has always been a mentor for all of us when we were starting our careers through till the time we played with the team and now has an opportunity to continue to do that same work again," Kohli told reporters.