



What to WATCH

T SPORTS & GTV  
ICC Men's T20 World Cup  
Australia vs Sri Lanka  
Live from 08:00 pm

T SPORTS  
La Liga  
Levante vs Atletico Madrid  
Live from 1:30 am (Friday)

# Uncertain Aussie batters face wily Lankan spinners

AGENCIES



Former champions Sri Lanka will look to exploit Australia's top-order woes when they clash in a group 1 Super 12 match of the ICC T20 World Cup on Thursday.

Sri Lanka, who had won the title in 2014, topped group A with three successive wins before outwitting Bangladesh by five wickets in their first Super 12 match.

On the other hand, the Aussies, who are yet to win the T20 World Cup, scampered home in the last over against South Africa after being reduced to 38 for 3 while chasing a modest 118 in their opening match.

Skipper Aaron Finch made a duck, while David Warner, who is going through a tough time, too was out cheaply once again and Mitchell Marsh also found the going tough.

Warner, however, laughed off concerns about his form on his 35th birthday on Wednesday but said he had reverted to practising on synthetic wickets and polished concrete to sharpen his batting.

Warner scored 14 in the opening win over South Africa after managing scores of 1 and 0 in practice matches against India and New Zealand.

"I actually think people talking about my form is quite funny," he told reporters. "I laugh at the matter because at the end of the



day I've played hardly any cricket."

Meanwhile, the tricky and slow UAE wickets not supporting the power-hitters in the T20 World Cup, Australia batter Steve Smith is willing to change his batting order in the "scrappy" tournament to suit the requirement of his side.

Almost all teams have struggled to go past 150-run mark so far in the ongoing World Cup as the pitches are not conducive for stroke-making.

Smith, who usually bats at number three, said he is aware of the different requirement and won't mind if he needs to drop down a bit, if situation demands.

However, the presence of quality spinners in the Lankan ranks could prove to be a tricky proposition for the struggling Australian batters.

The availability of Maheesh Theekshana, who missed the win over Bangladesh owing to an injury, could boost the team's morale as he has the wares to trouble the Aussie batters, who are not so comfortable against slow stuff.

Leg-spinning all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga could be more than a handful for the opposition batting unit and how he goes could well determine how the encounter pans out.

On the other hand, flamboyant opener Kusal Perera can be dangerous but would be tested by Hazlewood & Co.

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## Shanto scores unbeaten ton

SPORTS REPORTER

Rajshahi Division skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto struck an unbeaten ton against Dhaka Metro while Sylhet Division registered a four-wicket victory against Khulna Division on the final day of the second round of the ongoing 23rd National Cricket League (NCL) yesterday.

Shanto, who scored a fifty in the first innings, resumed the day on eight. The national team Test cricketer carried on his good form with the bat as he scored an unbeaten 199-ball 103, laced with eight fours and a maximum, in Cox's Bazar.

Shanto also starred in a 124-run third-wicket stand with Junaid Siddique, who scored a steady 125-ball 50, featuring three boundaries, before being castled by pacer Abu Hider.

However, Shanto's century and Siddique's fifty did not amount to much as the game between Rajshahi and Dhaka Metro expectedly ended in a draw.

Meanwhile, at the Sylhet Academy Ground, Sylhet began their final day requiring only 91 runs to win with seven wickets in hand against Khulna. Sylhet lost three wickets on the day but were able to chase down the target with ease.

Sylhet skipper Zakir Hasan played a knock of 37 runs while



wicketkeeper-batter Jaker Ali's patient 137-ball 41 helped them emerge victorious.

However, the other game in Sylhet between Dhaka and Rangpur, did not see a winner. Dhaka, who resumed the day at 38 for no loss, declared the innings at 203 for nine, setting a 277-run target for Rangpur.

Rangpur scored 75 runs losing three wickets in 30 overs as the match ended in draw.



(L) Margarita Mamun, the goodwill ambassador of the Bangabandhu 5th Central South Asian Artistic Gymnastics event and a gold medallist at the 2016 Rio Olympics, delivers her speech as participating teams stand in line (R) during the opening ceremony at the Shahid Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The six-nation competition, starting today, will feature gymnasts from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. Sixty-seven gymnasts will vie for medals in 22 events in three categories – men's senior, men's junior and women.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Giroud strike sends Milan top of Serie A

French striker Olivier Giroud's early strike earned AC Milan a narrow 1-0 win over Torino on Tuesday to send Stefano Pioli's side top of the Serie A standings. In an otherwise uneventful first half, Giroud, starting in place of another veteran Milan forward -- Zlatan Ibrahimovic -- tapped home his fourth Serie A goal of the season for what proved to be the winner in the 14th minute. Before the match, coach Pioli had warned his side that they needed to start winning ugly if they were to make the next step and win the Scudetto this season. And win ugly they did as, after Giroud's goal from Rade Krunic's flick, they did not create another meaningful chance. That mattered little, however, as Milan have now won nine of the first 10 Serie A matches of a season for the first time since the 1954-55 campaign.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Clinical' Pakistan: An unstoppable force of intimidation

STAR SPORT DESK

Pakistan's skilful all-round display against New Zealand on Tuesday, their 14th consecutive win at UAE, was no coincidence for the cricketing fraternity who are aware of what Pakistan historically brings to the game.

Kiwi skipper Kane Williamson had described Pakistan's latest performance as being 'clinical' -- a performance which was preceded by a devastating sandstorm that blew hot-favourites India away in the sides' first match of the Super 12 stage of the Men's ICC T20 World Cup.

"They played in the right spirit, I believe, and a great spirit," Williamson said post-match. "They're a

very competitive, proud cricketing nation, and they showed that tonight." Even though the majority of critics were reluctant to count Pakistan as favourites leading into the tournament, at the same time very few could have placed a heavy bet against them.

With New Zealand having hampered Pakistan's preparation -- by backing off from the series in Pakistan prior to world cup -- and considering Pakistan's tough initial fixtures -- against India and New Zealand -- to kick-start their world cup campaign were among many reasons why Pakistan was neither in or out as a serious contender for the tournament they had won in the 2009 edition.

So far in the marquee tournament, a menacing fast-bowling display of their three frontline pacers

-- the likes of Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf and Hasan Ali -- have continued Pakistan's defining legacy in the game. And combining the performances of their openers -- Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan -- against India, that broke the men in green's world cup jinx against their archrivals since 1992, has re-installed their reputation as a deadly force to be reckoned with.

And further considering their composed batting display at the death against the Kiwis from their middle-order batters -- the likes of Asif Ali and experienced Shoaib Malik -- any side now up against Pakistan in the upcoming games, starting from Afghanistan on Friday, will suffer from serious intimidation, no doubt.



### TODAY'S MATCHES

Australia Vs Sri Lanka  
8pm (BST)

## BD U-23s lose to Kuwait

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Under-23 team's bid to qualify for the finals of the AFC U-23 Asian Cup qualifiers got off to a disappointing start as the Men in Red and Green suffered a 1-0 defeat to Kuwait in Group D encounter at the JAR Stadium in Tashkent yesterday.

Youssef Alrasheedi separated both sides in 19th minute from a counter-attack in which goalkeeper Pappu Hossain failed to intervene a long ball as Alrasheedi managed to calmly send the ball over the onrushing goalkeeper to take Kuwait on top of the four-team group after hosts Uzbekistan played out a 2-2 draw against Saudi Arabia.

Before departing for Uzbekistan, head coach Maruful Haque had hoped to make up for the difference in individual skills of the opponents by executing a collective effort but yesterday, his charges were far from implementing his desired game plan and instead, were busy throughout the match to prevent Kuwaiti onslaughts.

Except for some brief moments on either side of the interval, the game was largely played in and around Bangladesh's area with Maruful having deployed five midfielders ahead of the four-man backline.

Eventually the margin of defeat was narrowed, courtesy of Pappu who rescued Bangladesh by spoiling several close-range attempts from Kuwait, including denying Rashidi's spot-kick attempt two minutes before conceding the decisive goal.

Bangladesh will play their second match against Uzbekistan on Saturday.