



India face New Zealand in 'virtual quarter-final'

AGENCIES

India captain Virat Kohli will be facing the most defining test of his captaincy career as he expects his men to be the proverbial "phoenix rising from the ashes" when they take on a street-smart New Zealand in a 'do-or-die' ICC T20 World Cup Super-12 game today.

Having endured a nightmare last Sunday against Pakistan, a match that they would like to forget in a hurry, India have a lot of course correction to do against the Kiwis, more so in getting the roles assigned for the players right.

New Zealand are also smarting from their defeat by Pakistan and need a win against Kohli's "Men in Blue" to revive their campaign.

With Pakistan already on six points having played all their tough games (India, New Zealand and Afghanistan) in the first week of Super 12s, they are expected to steamroll Namibia and Scotland en route their expected top place finish in group 2.

This leaves both India and New Zealand in a virtual shoot-out position as whoever wins has a chance to finish on maximum eight points and grab the second place in the group. It won't be easy for India against a quality New Zealand, which will come hard at India. Tim Southee and Trent Boult, especially have been a nemesis for the Indians in big games.

Trent Boult has seen how Shaheen Afridi swung the ball to wreck India's top order at the Twenty20 World Cup and the New Zealand pace spearhead is plotting something similar in Sunday's crucial contest against Virat Kohli's men.

"The way Shaheen bowled the other

night was, for a left-arter, I thought it was amazing," Boult told reporters on Saturday. "There's quality batsmen in that Indian lineup and early wickets are definitely the focus for us as a bowling group. Hopefully, from my point of view, it swings around a little bit and I can mirror what Shaheen did the other night."

Kane Williamson's team will draw inspiration from their edge over India in global tournaments in recent years, having prevailed in the semi-finals of the 2019 ODI World Cup and the final of the inaugural World Test Championship in June this year.

However, their soft underbelly is batting where Kane Williamson is still not hundred per cent and Martin Gupthill also had a foot injury. It's effective without being flamboyant, although, Devon Conway is a flashy batter.

And herein lies India's chance but for that, their bowlers need to implement the game plans perfectly, something they couldn't against Pakistan.

India have shown in recent times, at least, in Test arena that they can come back from brink with unforgettable performances but Kohli in his last assignment as T20

captain would like to change the script that always seemed to go awry at global events. More so, because another failure at a mega event could well mean that there will be aspersions cast on his abilities as a white ball skipper and the 50-over leadership will also come under the scanner. Kohli is a man, who loves it the tough way. He loves a good scrap and a situation where he envisages that the entire world (even if they are not) is out there to get him, conspiring against him and wants to see him fail.



Can Tigers hurdle the mental block?

NABID YEASIN

Bangladesh suffered a shock defeat against associate members Scotland which led to the Tigers qualifying from their first-round group of lightweights as runners-up and then saw Sri Lanka snatch victory from the Tigers' grasp in their opening Super 12 game of the T20 World Cup. But the three-run defeat to the West Indies on Friday was still the hardest pill to digest.

What happened at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium on Friday will haunt Bangladesh fans for a long time. The agonising defeat to the defending champions was brutal because it not only prolonged the Tigers' wait for a first win in the Super 12 stage, but also because it exposed everything that has been wrong with Bangladesh's cricketing approach, at least in the T20 format, for a while now.

"What Bangladesh need is to show some courage now to get back to winning ways," former Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza said live on Facebook after Bangladesh plummeted to the bottom of their group with three losses from as many games.

Mashrafe is probably right. The Tigers need to be courageous, probably as courageous as Pakistan's Asif Ali was just hours later in Dubai, showing belief and confidence that he could take his team to a resounding win inside just an over. He targeted that penultimate over from Afghanistan's Karim Janat and struck him for four sixes, achieving the 24 needed off 12 with six balls to spare.

In fact, a retrospective look at the Afghanistan-Pakistan clash could show the Tigers what they have been missing throughout this tournament. Afghanistan had battled back from 76 for six after 12.5 overs to post a challenging 147 for six against a side

that has been flying high since opening with a thumping win over arch-rivals India.

The Afghans did not give up even when Babar Azam's 50 helped Pakistan to a position from where the chase seemed like a formality.

Instead, they picked the brains of their senior players and decided that Rashid Khan, their most lethal weapon in crunch situations, would bowl out his final over.

are that the T20 format demands the can-do attitude till the final delivery of the game and an appropriate plan targeted towards what needs to be achieved.

Bangladesh do not have a power-hitter like Asif who can change the complexion of a game inside a single over. What the Tigers can do however is plan a chase in phases.

It seemed like their plan was working against the Windies until Mushfiqur Rahim, who had just ended his lean patch and was in good touch, decided to play a scoop shot when Bangladesh needed only 53 off 40 deliveries with seven wickets in hand.

Had Mushfiqur decided to not give in to his unyielding penchant for unconventional shots, perhaps Mahmudullah would not have been burdened with the need for smashing a boundary in the final delivery of the game.

Before that, even after reducing West Indies to 70 for five after 14 overs, Bangladesh conceded 72 in the last six overs despite Shoriful Islam conceding just eight runs and scalping two wickets in two of those final overs.

It was as if the missed chances -- two dropped catches of Roston Chase and the missed stumping of Nicholas Pooran, the eventual player-of-the-match for his quick-fire 40 -- took away the can-do attitude from the Tigers, who found no way to regain momentum. That was the case during the defeats to Scotland and Sri Lanka as well.

Bangladesh are almost out of the tournament. With just two games left, all Mahmudullah's men can aspire to do is to portray a champion-like attitude, like Asif Ali and the Afghan side, in their final games against Australia and South Africa before heading back to the country.

The lessons from this enthralling encounter are that the T20 format demands the can-do attitude till the final delivery of the game and an appropriate plan targeted towards what needs to be achieved.

Rashid did the trick, scalping the most important wicket of Babar in the 17th over, and as Naveen-ul-Haq removed Shoaib Malik while giving away just two runs in the next over, Afghanistan roared back into the game before Asif staged his carnage and shattered their hopes.

The lessons from this enthralling encounter

Afghanistan eye a comeback against spirited Namibia

AGENCIES

Afghanistan would look to shrug off the defeat against Pakistan and return to winning ways when they take on debutants Namibia, who will be eager to continue their dream run in the T20 World Cup, today.

Afghanistan are armed with a world-class spin attack comprising the likes of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and skipper Mohammad Nabi. The formidable spin attack's prowess has been on full display in their first two matches. While they completely bamboozled Scotland in their tournament opener victory, they pushed an in-form Pakistan side to the brink on Friday night.

Backing their spinners are the Afghan batters, who are playing a

fearless brand of cricket reminiscent of the big-hitting West Indies side.

Namibia have been the dark horse in their maiden main draw appearance at the T20 World Cup. The Gerhard

12 game.

While their bowlers did a good job to restrict Scotland to 109, their batters had to dig deep to chase the target. But if Namibia wish to keep rubbing shoulders with the top teams, they need to lift their level.

Afghan captain Nabi however has asserted that the team's morale is high going into their third fixture despite the five-wicket loss to Pakistan.

"We have only played two games and we won one (against Scotland) and today was a close game, at the end Pakistan won the game.

"There are a lot of positive things in this game, we will take the positive things and there are three more games. Inshallah we will do well, the team morale is high," he said.

Erasmus-led side lost to Sri Lanka but defeated Netherlands and Ireland to qualify before scripting a memorable win over Scotland in their first Super

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"There's a good reason why we are playing on the field and not some bunch of spineless people on social media that have no courage to actually speak to any individual in person. Attacking someone over their religion is the most, I would say, pathetic thing that a human being can do. I don't even want to waste one minute of my life to give any attention to those people, and neither does Shami (Mohammed Shami), neither does anyone else in the team."

VIRAT KOHLI
INDIA CAPTAIN



Shakib and Sohan in doubt for South Africa clash

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

With two games remaining in the Super 12 stage, Bangladesh team face a few injury concerns. Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who was seen struggling with a hamstring injury throughout the game against West Indies on Friday, could be in doubt for the next game against South Africa on November 2.

According to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Debashish Chowdhury, who is accompanying the team in the UAE, Shakib's progress will be observed in the next two days.

"There are some issues with Shakib's hamstring as he struggled during the game against West Indies. We still have a couple of days' time before the next game on November 2, so we are not willing to rush on it," Debashish told The Daily Star yesterday.

On the other hand, wicketkeeper-batter Nurul Hasan Sohan suffered a blow in the

abdominal area while facing the bowling of Taskin Ahmed at the nets ahead of the game against England on October 26.

"Sohan is prescribed for a complete three days of rest and we will assess his condition on November 1. After the assessment, if we feel that he is able to play the next game, we will decide accordingly but until then, we can't say anything further," Debashish added.

Sohan played the game against England despite his injury concern but the wicket-keeper batsman was rested against West Indies after reports showed that he had suffered a fracture.

"Actually Sohan thought that he'd be able to manage the injury but after playing the game, the pain increased. Players take such calculative risks in sports. So the thing is, he tried to play for the country but since his pain increased after playing, we decided to rest him for the West Indies game," Debashish concluded.

