

SPORT

Kiwis breeze past India

AFP, Dubai



Trent Boult led an inspired bowling attack as New Zealand thrashed Twenty20 World Cup favourites India by eight wickets on Sunday to leave Virat Kohli's men facing a desperate struggle to reach the semi-finals.

Boult and leg-spinner Ish Sodhi shared five wickets between them to restrict India to 110 for seven after being invited to bat first in the Super 12 clash in Dubai.

Skipper Kane Williamson and Daryl Mitchell, who made 49, put 72 runs for the second wicket as the Kiwis romped home in 14.3 overs and hand India their second straight loss of the tournament.

Jasprit Bumrah denied Mitchell his maiden fifty but the wicket proved a minor blemish for the Kiwis, who bounced back from their opening loss to group toppers Pakistan.

India, who lost their first Super 12 match to Pakistan by 10 wickets, remain in danger of slipping out of the race for the semi-finals.



"I don't think we were brave enough with bat or ball," said Kohli. "We didn't have much to defend but we weren't brave when we walked out to field. When you play for the Indian cricket team you have a lot of expectations - not just from fans, but players as well."

"So there's always going to be more pressure with our games and we've embraced it over the years."

Williamson hailed his team as they collected their first win.

"A fantastic all-round performance from us against a formidable India side," he said. "We were able to build pressure throughout and the way the openers came out really set the platform."

Boult dismissed Ishan Kishan for four and nearly had Rohit Sharma on the next ball but Adam Milne dropped an easy catch at fine leg. But the New Zealand pace bowlers kept coming at the Indian batsmen to restrict them to 110 for seven.

In reply, Martin Guptill started on an attacking note to smash three boundaries before falling to Bumrah who returned figures of 2-19. Mitchell took on the Indian bowlers as he hit left-arm spinner Jadeja for a six and then got another shot over the fence to bring up New Zealand's fifty in the seventh over. He departed with New Zealand needing 15 and Devon Conway joined Williamson to complete the formalities.



Headache over head coach lingers

MAZHAR UDDIN from Dubai

A dismal show from the Bangladesh team consisting of three consecutive defeats in the Super 12 stage of the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup had not only thrown them virtually out of the contention for the semi-final spot but had cast serious doubt over head coach Russell Domingo's future with the side.

A barrage of criticism aimed at the Tigers' preparation for the marquee event had been activated earlier with the shocking six-run defeat to Scotland in the opening game of the qualifier stage.

Although Bangladesh had arrived at the centre stage, with seemingly full guns blazing, on the back of two home series triumphs over Australia and New Zealand, the lack of preparation from the batters' perspective on a slow Mirpur surface was brutally exposed.

While many are pointing fingers at Domingo's long term approach to improve Bangladesh as a solid unit in the shortest format, however, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) high-ups have resorted to blaming the cricketers on the frontlines.

"Look, we don't only want to blame the coaching staff for the poor performance of the team, rather the players should also take some responsibility for their below par show on the field," said a BCB top official requesting anonymity.

"If a batsman kept repeating the same mistakes, by playing a particular shot in a crucial time, and lost his wickets or the best fielders in the team dropped simple

catches of first-division standard, you can't only raise fingers on the coaching staff. I think both the coaching staff and the players need to work together and improve as a unit."

The board's stance only indicates continuity, a sense of going with the flow, since they had, just before the World Cup, extended Domingo's contract for two years under a strong termination clause -- which states six months of salary to be given in case of a broken agreement -- in favour of the South African.

It was also learned that Domingo had informed the board prior to the World Cup that he has an offer in the English County league and was willing to jump ship if his contract was not extended further. History tells us that poor performances from the Bangladesh team in the global events saw the head coach turned into a scapegoat, with Steve Rhodes being the last individual who was sacked following the subpar performance in the ICC 2019 ODI World Cup.

Among various factors, another major reason for retaining Domingo is the lack of interest from the high-profile coaches to work for a full-time basis.

The current situation, coupled with his differences with some of the senior players in the side, has certainly put Domingo under the scanner as many are gravitating towards the opinion of grooming local coaches to assume bigger roles, in an attempt to rid the Tigers of the everlasting headache over the head coach position.



Afghanistan too strong for Namibia

REUTERS

Seamers Naveen-ul-Haq and Hamid Hassan took three wickets apiece to help Afghanistan crush Namibia by 62 runs in the Twenty20 World Cup in Abu Dhabi on Sunday and keep alive their hopes of progressing to the semi-finals. Naveen-ul-Haq did the early damage with the new ball to derail Namibia's chase while Hassan ran through the middle order as their opponents could only muster 98-9 in reply to Afghanistan's 160-5.

Seamer Gulbadin Naib also picked up 2-19 in an inspired medium pace bowling performance from the Asian side. It was the second Super 12 win for the Afghans, who stayed second in Group Two behind Pakistan, who have won all three of their matches.

Naveen-ul-Haq dedicated his player-of-the-match award to former captain Asghar Afghan, who retired from international cricket after Sunday's victory.

"I made my debut under his captaincy, so I want to dedicate it to him," the 22-year-old said at the

presentation ceremony. Earlier, Hazratullah Zazai and Mohammad Shahzad gave Afghanistan a solid start with a 53-run opening stand after captain Mohammad Nabi won the toss and opted to bat. Shahzad was happy to let Zazai take the initiative and farm most of the strike in the powerplay overs and went on the attack after his partner was out after a 27-ball knock of 33. Afghan, who was given a guard of honour by Namibia's players as he walked on to bat in his final appearance for Afghanistan, kept the scoreboard ticking after Shahzad had been dismissed for 45 off 33 balls.

The former captain's final innings was a useful 31 off 23 balls and he combined in a handy stand with current skipper Nabi to help Afghanistan up their scoring rate in the final overs.

An emotional Afghan was given another guard of honour by his team mates as he walked off after getting out caught at short third man while trying a reverse scoop shot off Ruben Trumplermann.

Nabi remained unbeaten on 32 off 17 balls.



Confident England look to book semis spot

AGENCIES



A rampaging England are expected to brush aside Sri Lanka and seal a spot in the semifinals when the two teams meet in a Super 12 match of the T20 World Cup on Monday.

Pre-tournament favourites England have played as per the expectations in their first three games, steamrolling the opponents, including arch-rivals Australia on Saturday night.

The Eoin Morgan-led side, which are heavily driven by data and match-ups, seem to have all bases covered and back-up plans in place even though they have not needed one yet.

Their big margin of victory in all three games meant that the middle-order has not been tested but Morgan is confident they will deliver when the time comes.

He opened the bowling with Adil Rashid on Saturday and not Moeen Ali, considering Aaron Finch's struggles against the leggie. Moeen did not need to bowl at all.

Pacer Chris Woakes was brilliant

with the new ball and Chris Jordan too came to the party with triple strikes. Death overs specialist Tymal Mills was a tad expensive against Australia but he has been able to pick wickets throughout the tournament.

Part-time spinner Liam Livingstone too has done a good job for the team, providing Morgan another valuable bowling resource.

their second loss in three games and they must win against England to keep themselves in the competition.

Charith Asalanka has been in sublime form and from Sri Lanka's point of view, it was good to see opener Pathum Nissanka belting the South African attack. If the batters do better, the bowlers showed on Saturday that they are capable of defending decent totals.

The bowlers did well to keep Sri Lanka in the game for the major part of the innings until they were undone by David Miller's six-hitting prowess in the 20th over.

Barring the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka game, the pitch here has not been great for batting and batter Bhanuka Rajapakse expects the trend to continue.

"Yeah, we knew when we came to Sharjah, we knew that from the past few games Sharjah was not that great to bat except for the game that we played against Bangladesh that was a very true wicket."

"Hats off to Pathum Nissanka for holding on as batting was not up to standard, but the wicket wasn't helping the batsmen," he said referring to Nissanka's 72 against the Proteas.



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SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA

110 for 7 in 20 overs (Jadeja 26
not out, Pandya 23; Boult 3-20,
Sodhi 2-17)

NEW ZEALAND

111 for 2 in 14.3 overs (Mitchell
49, Williamson 33 not out;
Bumrah 2-19)

RESULT

New Zealand won by 8 wickets

Player-of-the-match:

Ish Sodhi

AFGHANISTAN

160 for 5 (Shahzad 45; Trumpl-
mann 2-34, Eaton 2-21)

NAMIBIA

98 for 9 in 20 overs (Wiese 26;
Naveen 3-26, Hamid 3-9)

RESULT

Afg won by 62 runs

Player-of-the-match:

Naveen Ul Haq

TODAY'S MATCHES

ENGLAND VS SRI LANKA

8PM (BST)

