

SPORT



'Cooked' Guptill leads NZ to victory over Scotland

AFP, Dubai

Martin Guptill hit 93 and became only the second man to pass 3,000 Twenty20 International runs as New Zealand defeated Scotland by 16 runs at the World Cup on Wednesday. New Zealand made 172-5 before Scotland battled to a respectable 156-5 off their 20 overs.

The Kiwis' second win in three matches in the Super 12 stage kept them on course for the semi-finals.

Put into bat, 35-year-old opener Guptill put on 105 for the fourth wicket with Glenn Phillips.

Guptill made his runs off 56 balls with six fours and seven sixes.

His first six off Alasdair Evans in the sixth over allowed him to pass 3,000 runs in the format, second only to India captain Virat

Kohli. "I was pretty cooked. We've got a day off so I won't be doing much tomorrow," said Guptill after batting almost the entire innings in blistering heat. "We didn't have a great start, losing three wickets in the powerplay. Glenn and I had to assess the situation and get a partnership together. We created a bit of momentum."

Phillips made a steady 33 off 37 balls before he was dismissed by Brad Wheal.

The Scottish bowler also accounted for a weary Guptill off the next ball of the 19th over as the opener attempted to carry him over long on.

Guptill now has 3,069 runs in T20 Internationals while Kohli leads the way on 3,225.

Despite taking two wickets in two balls, Wheal conceded 40 runs off his four overs.

New Zealand hit 35 from the first four overs, 24 of those off Wheal.

But Saqya Sharif then sent back Daryl Mitchell for 13 and, four balls later, claimed the key wicket of skipper Kane Williamson for nought.

At the midway point, the Black Caps were 70-3 before Guptill completed his 18th T20 half century off 35 balls with another six, his 150th in the format.



Australia hoping not to rely on rivals England

AFP, Dubai

Say it quietly 'Down Under', but Australia may need a favour from old enemy England if they are to reach the T20 World Cup semi-finals.

With England effectively assured of their semi-final place with four wins out of four in Group 1 of the tournament, Australia and South Africa are left to scramble over the last spot.

At the moment, the Proteas have six points from four games while Australia are on four points from three matches.

However, after an eight-wicket mauling by England in their last match after being dismissed for 125, Aaron Finch's team took a hit on their run-rate which will be the tiebreaker should they finish level on points with South Africa.

On Thursday, Australia will look to even up their points and runs when they face a hapless Bangladesh side who have lost all four matches.

Despite their precarious position, the Australians, who still have the West Indies to face, insist they are not looking

to England to help them out when Eoin Morgan's men take on South Africa in their group game on Saturday.

"No, we're purely thinking about the two games we have to win. Sometimes that's really good because you know you have to win those games," said left-arm spinner Ashton Agar on Wednesday.

"We go into every game thinking that you have to win. It's something that helps you move on from the England game."

"I think that's really important, to move forward, to put that one behind us because England played incredibly well, and obviously they beat us pretty convincingly."

Australia, who have never won the T20 World Cup, have so far defeated South Africa by five wickets and Sri Lanka by seven wickets, continuing the overall trend of teams fielding first coming out on top in the humid conditions of the Gulf.

"We've practiced bowling with wet balls. I think that's something you have to prepare for coming to this part of the world," said Agar, who took one wicket and made 20 runs in the game with England, his only appearance so far.

'We're looking to have good pitches back home'

SPORTS REPORTER FROM DUBAI

The ploy of gathering winning momentum by exploiting home conditions ahead of the T20 World Cup was exposed brutally by sporting tracks at the event, leaving Bangladesh still searching for a first win in the Super 12 stage ahead of their fifth and final game against Australia in Dubai today.

Initially, the team management and players seemed assured of the tonic that winning series against Australia and New Zealand before the mega event would provide. But following a disastrous campaign, at least one of the members of the Bangladesh team management agreed that the Tigers needed a level playing field for batters and the bowlers.

Sri Lanka spin legend Rangana Herath, currently the Tigers' spin coach, realises that Bangladesh need sporting pitches in upcoming home series, starting in the Pakistan series after the T20 World Cup.

"It all depends where we are going to play. I am sure we need to expect good pitches, which give chances to batters and bowlers. We are looking to have good pitches back home," Herath said ahead of the game against Australia yesterday.

While Bangladesh's hopes of reaching the semifinals were

extinguished, Herath was eyeing a positive finish against an Australian side the Tigers defeated 4-1 prior to the World Cup. However, it will be a different ball game against the Aussies on the sporting tracks of the UAE, where spinners will not get the support they received on tailor-made Mirpur pitches.

"As professionals, we need to come back strongly. We have another game to go. We need to maintain that winning mindset and

build winning confidence. We have to think about Bangladesh cricket's way forward. We have another chance to win against Australia tomorrow (Thursday). The guys will analyse what they have done, and what they have to do. I am sure they will come back strongly," he said.

The 43-year-old, who was part of Sri Lanka's golden generation which won the 2014 ICC T20 World Cup in Bangladesh, opined that the players needed to challenge themselves.

"Playing for your country is a matter of pride and responsibility. We should all understand the responsibilities and roles whether you play for Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. You have to identify that role and then improve day by day. A cricketer has to realise that if they want to be a good or great cricketer. You need to be more professional, work harder and challenge yourself. In that way you can improve individually and as a team," said Herath.

There were questions regarding not keeping leg-spinner Aminul Islam as a backup following Shakib Al Hasan's departure due to injury as leggies have had a huge impact in the mega event and Herath, perhaps having realised that, informed that Aminul would be included for the Tigers' next assignments at home and away.

Mills ruled out of T20 World Cup

REUTERS

England paceman Tymal Mills has been ruled out of the Twenty20 World Cup due to a right thigh strain, with reserve Reece Topley set to replace him in the squad, the country's cricket board (ECB) said in a statement on Wednesday.

Mills sustained the injury while bowling in England's 26-run Super 12 stage victory over Sri Lanka on Monday in Sharjah, with a scan on Tuesday revealing the full nature of the problem.

The 29-year-old has picked up seven wickets from four games in the tournament and England are likely to miss his skills and experience in the final overs of matches.

England are top of Group I with four wins from as many matches and take on South Africa on Saturday.

The injury further tests their pace bowling depth with the 2016 runners up already without the services of star fast bowler Jofra Archer.

Mills, who had not been a part of England's national set-up in four years before the tournament, was called up for the showpiece event after impressing at the domestic level.

His replacement, Topley, has played 13 ODIs and six T20Is to date, taking 25 international wickets in total.

One last opportunity to get it right

SPORTS REPORTER FROM DUBAI

A lack of confidence, low morale and a losing state of mind could once again have a negative impact on a demoralised Bangladesh team who are desperately searching for their first win in the Super 12 stage of the ICC T20 World Cup in their fifth and final group game against Australia in Dubai today.

The Bangladesh team needs to overcome all the negativity surrounding the team, stemming from the four consecutive defeats in the Super 12 stage. In their previous game, Bangladesh surrendered helplessly against South Africa after the Tigers were bundled out for just 84 runs -- their sixth-lowest total in T20Is.

Despite the fact that the Abu Dhabi pitch provided plenty of assistance to seamers, the Tigers think-tank surprisingly opted for only two seamers in the playing eleven, drafting in left-arm spinner Nasum Rahaman and dropping Mustafizur Rahman.

The decision proved to be incorrect as pacer Taskin Ahmed utilised the moisture and movement on the surface and managed to trouble the South African batters.

Bangladesh did manage to dismiss four South African batters but with a small total to defend and a lack of

