



New Zealand players celebrate the dismissal of England opener Jonny Bairstow during the first semifinal of the T20 World Cup at the Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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SELECTORS NOT TOO KEEN ON REJIG

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief selector Minhajul Abedin said yesterday that they would not be forced into making alterations to a team that had performed well just two months ago.

"We have to take many things into consideration before making changes to the side for the upcoming home series. Yes, our performance at the T20 World Cup was very poor but we cannot be fully disheartened with the current side because of that. This same side played well just two months ago," Minhajul said after a meeting with Habibur Bashar and Abdur Razzak, the other members of the selection panel.

"We have not finalised anything. We just discussed the possibility of forming the playing eleven considering the strength of our opponents. We may make a few changes but we are not going for any change in line with the

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media trial. We are going to play on our home soil, so we have to decide the squad accordingly," he added.

The BCB is likely to announce the team for Pakistan T20Is within the next two days and

the training camp is likely to start from November 14 after head coach Russell Domingo returns from break.

The Tigers will play three T20Is against Pakistan starting with the first on November 19 before playing two Tests that will be part of the ICC World Test Championship.

There has been a lot of talk about non-performing players like Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar and it is not unlikely that some new blood may be injected in the side in place of them.

The selectors believe there are some players who got enough opportunity but failed to capitalise on it. And when it's T20 cricket, they have enough scope for experimenting with the new players.

The problem, however, lies with past experience as many had come with a lot of potential but ultimately failed to deliver for the national side. And also the fact that inconsistency has become a norm for many talented players.

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SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND VS NEW ZEALAND

ENGLAND: 166 for 4 in 20 overs (Buttler 29, Malan 41, Ali 51 not out, Livingstone 17; Southey 1-24, Milne 1-31, Sodhi 1-32, Neesham 1-18)

"We will try to continue with the kind of consistency that we have shown in the tournament so far and hope to play good cricket in the semi-finals."

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TODAY'S MATCH

Pakistan Vs Australia 8pm (BST)

Finch eyes 'crucial' battle with Afridi

AFP, Dubai

Australia skipper Aaron Finch on Wednesday said dealing with Pakistan pace ace Shaheen Shah Afridi will be key to success in the Twenty20 World Cup semi-final.

The Aussies have depended on blazing starts by swashbuckling opener David Warner and Finch to get past opponents in the Super 12 stage.

But Shaheen stands in Australia's way with his ability to pick early wickets rattling opposition teams as Pakistan moved into the semi-finals unbeaten with five wins.

"Shaheen has been in really good form for Pakistan. Yeah, so that's going to be a crucial battle no doubt," Finch told reporters ahead of the knockout tie in Dubai on Thursday.

Australia will look to master Shaheen in the key stage of the opening six overs when the powerplay is in operation with only two fielders allowed outside the inner circle.

"I think what we've seen over the course of the tournament is how important the powerplay is for batting and bowling," added the Australian captain.

"I think the stats around the middle overs and the death overs are pretty similar throughout, but the powerplay definitely holds the key."

Shaheen has claimed six wickets in five games after he set the tournament ablaze with his opening spell of 2-19 following his wickets of Indian openers Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul.

The tall left-arm quick has troubled Australia in four meetings with eight wickets and a best of 3-37.



He dismissed both Finch and Glenn Maxwell in his first outing against the Aussies in July 2018 in a tri-series in Harare.

But facing him would be an in-form Warner who has scored 187 runs including two half-centuries and has been key to Australia's entry into the final four.

Finch, who has had knocks of 37, 44 and 40, praised Pakistan's powerplay blitz with bat and ball but refused to get into the debate of favourites and underdogs for this knockout game.

"Pakistan have played brilliant cricket. I think the way that they've gone in the powerplay with the bat and ball has been really crucial to their success," said Finch.

Toss and dew have played a big part across the three venues in the United Arab Emirates but Dubai in particular favouring teams chasing a target.

Ten out 11 matches have been won by the team batting second, but Finch played down the importance of the toss in the knockout game.

"I think when it comes to finals it doesn't make too much of a difference to be honest," said Finch.

"I believe getting runs on the board, especially in a final, can be really beneficial. We've talked about it. We're confident that we can win if we happen to bat first or second."

Hayden's 'unusual' reunion with Langer

AFP, Dubai

Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer, who formed one of Test cricket's most enduring and destructive opening partnerships, will briefly become rivals on Thursday when Pakistan tackle Australia for a place in the Twenty20 World Cup final.

Both now aged 50, their competitive natures have found new outlets -- Hayden as batting consultant with Pakistan and Langer as Australia's head coach.

"It's a very unusual feeling," admitted Hayden on Wednesday.

"I was a warrior for Australian cricket over two decades, so that does give me the benefit of having wonderful insights not only into these players but also into the culture of cricket in Australia."

Hayden and Langer were the bedrock of the Australian side for the best part of a decade.

They opened together for the first time at The Oval in 2001 and strode out side-by-side for the final time at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 2007.

In between, they collected 5,655 runs together when opening, a record that included six double-century partnerships. Their average was a shade under 52.

Both men ended their careers with over 100 Tests each and bags of runs -- Hayden smashed 8,625 while Langer hit 7,696.



➤ AUSTRALIA

ROAD TO SEMIFINAL

Beat South Africa by 5 wickets, beat Sri Lanka by 7 wickets, lost to England by 8 wickets, beat Bangladesh by 8 wickets, beat West Indies by 8 wickets

TOP SCORER:

David Warner -- 187 runs

TOP WICKET-TAKER

Adam Zampa -- 11 wickets

➤ PAKISTAN

ROAD TO SEMIFINAL

Beat India by 10 wickets, beat New Zealand by 5 wickets, beat Afghanistan by 5 wickets, beat Namibia by 45 runs, beat Scotland by 72 runs

TOP SCORER

Babar Azam -- 264 runs

TOP WICKET-TAKER

Haris Rauf -- 8 wickets

T20S HEAD-TO-HEAD

Australia wins: 9
Pakistan wins: 13 (includes one win on super over after tie)
No result: 1

➤ LAST T20 INTERNATIONAL MEETING

Australia routed Pakistan by 10 wickets with 49 balls to spare to clinch the series 2-0 in Perth on November 8, 2019.



Australia look to halt Pakistan juggernaut

AFP, Dubai

Australia are looking to their top-order batting led by the explosive David Warner as well as Adam Zampa's bag of leg-spin tricks to get past a red-hot Pakistan in Thursday's second semi-final of the Twenty20 World Cup.

The Aussies made their first semi-final of the tournament since 2012 with four wins and a better run-rate than South Africa.

But they are up against an unbeaten Pakistan who stormed into the final four with five wins in the Super 12 stage including their first ever in the tournament against rivals India.

Australia have won five 50-over World Cup crowns, including three in a row, but still await a T20 world title in six attempts.

The left-handed Warner has led the charge with 89 not out in Australia's win over West Indies and a quickfire 65 against Sri Lanka, an innings that silenced his critics.

He now has 187 runs for the tournament.

"I was never worried one bit about Dave's form. He's one of the all-time great batsmen of our era," said captain Aaron Finch of his opening partner who came into the World Cup on the back of being dropped from his

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IPL team.

All-rounder Glenn Maxwell said the Australian batsmen will not hold back and go for the runs to unsettle the Pakistan attack led by left-arm quick Shaheen Shah Afridi.

"I've seen teams go the other way and try and hold wickets back to make sure they get to go at the back end," said Maxwell.

"But for us it's probably that playing with freedom at the start and really trying to make the most of the powerplay and put the opposition on the back foot."

Zampa is the tournament's joint second-highest wicket-taker with 11 victims but the 29-year-old has gone about his business under the radar.

"I don't think that anyone has underrated him," insisted Finch of Zampa who claimed a tournament-best return of 5-19 against Bangladesh in Dubai.

"He's someone who loves the competitiveness, loves the fight."

Inside the Pakistan camp is Matthew Hayden, the former Australia opener who is the team's batting coach.

Hayden sees the partnership between skipper Babar Azam, the leading run maker at the World Cup ahead of the semi-finals with 264, and Mohammad Rizwan as key.

On facing Australia, Babar said: "You can't take any team lightly in T20 cricket. You have to play good cricket on that day."

Pakistan have got a finisher in Asif Ali who hit four sixes off Afghanistan bowler Karim Janat to get his team the required 25 runs in the penultimate over of their Super 12 clash.

Veteran batsmen Shoaib Malik, who hit an 18-ball 54 in his side's last pool win over Scotland, and Mohammad Hafeez add experience to the batting order.