

Star SPORT

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BATTLE FOR ASIAN SUPREMACY

ASIA CUP 2022



‘Always difficult when you lose four wickets in seven overs’

SPORTS REPORTER FROM SHARJAH

Batting failures once again proved to be Bangladesh's downfall as they ended up losing their first Asia Cup 2022 match against Afghanistan by seven wickets at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Bangladesh posted a meagre 127 for seven before putting up a fight with some tight bowling.

However, an unbeaten 33-ball 69-run partnership between Najibullah Zadran and Ibrahim Zadran for the fourth wicket sealed an easy win for the Afghans.

Bangladesh struggled from the start after skipper Shakib Al Hasan elected to bat, as they were left reeling on 53 for five inside eleven overs.

Mosaddek Hossain remained unbeaten on 48 off 31 balls and Mahmudullah Riyad added 25 off 27 balls.

According to Shakib, who was featuring in his 100th T20I yesterday, the Tigers were 10-15 runs short. He also credited the bowlers for showing a fighting spirit.

“It's always difficult when you lose four wickets inside



Mujeeb Ur Rahman ripped through the fragile top order of Bangladesh to give Afghanistan the momentum at the start of the game in Sharjah yesterday. Meanwhile, after the Bangladesh bowlers tried to compensate for the batters' failure with some tight bowling, it was the two Zadrans -- Najibullah Zadran and Ibrahim Zadran -- who combined for an unbeaten 69-run stand off just 33 balls that eventually shattered the Tigers' hopes.

PHOTO: AFP/TWITTER

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: 127 for 7 in 20 overs
(Mosaddek 48 not out, Mahmudullah 25; Mujeeb 3-16, Rashid 3-22)

AFGHANISTAN: 131 for 3 in 18.3 overs
(Najibullah 43 not out, Ibrahim 42 not out, Hazratullah 23; Shakib 1-13, Mosaddek 1-12, Saifuddin 1-27)

Result: Afghanistan won by 7 wickets

Player-of-the-match: Mujeeb Ur Rahman

“My strength is bowling with the new ball; in Dubai I didn't get the chance. I always prefer to bowl in the powerplay. My whole plan was to bowl wicket to wicket and it worked for me.

Mujeeb Ur Rahman

“The wicket was coming a bit low. I looked to hit it straight, and just play my natural game.

Najibullah Zadran

Fellowship of the fans

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Sharjah*

Bangladesh fans, draped in the red and green of Bangladesh, wanted their side to win and Afghan fans, some clad in the traditional Afghan Perahan turban wanted the same for their side, but a few spectators were cheering on both teams, completing the festive atmosphere despite sweltering heat as Bangladesh took the field for their first game in the 2022 Asia Cup.

And while the two teams were certainly not taking each other lightly, there was a certain camaraderie between the fans of the two sides.

Supporters on either side lined the streets adjacent to the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in Dubai and a few of the Afghans cheered in front of TV cameras. But upon realising that the media present featured Bangladesh-based outlets, a few said: “Good luck to Afghanistan, we can win. Good luck to Bangladesh too.”

Most were rooting for Shakib Al Hasan to come up trumps, with a few naming Mustafizur Rahman or Mushfiquur Rahim as potential match-winners. One remarked that BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon appeared to be consistently fighting with senior players. Even away from home, such sentiments grab a huge part of the Bangladeshi fans' attention in UAE, just as those back at home.



But as the game drew nearer, loud cheers of 'Bangladesh, Bangladesh' rung around as Tigers fans got warmed up.

Inside the stadium, there was an air of electricity players gathered for their warm-up routines.

The dimensions of the Sharjah Cricket Stadium are surprising for those who have been watching matches held in the famous stadium on TV. After all, the 60-65 metre dimension of the Sharjah ground looks much bigger on TV.

Interestingly, the press box area is out in the open, meaning a right-handed batter playing from the opposite end could potentially break a laptop or camera lens with a hit over mid-off. Shop owners nearby the stadiums say that a few

Kookaburra balls have shattered glass over the years.

Shakib and Rashid Khan are the biggest stars for the sides and greeted each other while making their way back to the dressing room after toss.

Prior to that, Shakib had won the toss and opted to bat, but Afghanistan skipper Mohammed Nabi was not too certain it was a belter of a wicket.

“The pitch is fresh; the soil is fresh. Maybe the pitch is a little bit low today. Hopefully we can restrict them to a low total,” he added.

Unfortunately for the Tigers' faithful, Nabi's words rang true, with Bangladesh scoring 127 for 7 in 20 overs.

India look to play ‘positive cricket’ against Hong Kong

AFP, Dubai

India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja insisted that the tournament favourites would not take anything for granted when they face minnows Hong Kong in the Asia Cup today.

Rohit Sharma's men can book a spot in the Super Four stage with victory after a tense opening win over arch-rivals Pakistan.

The Hong Kong team is largely made up of expats, led by Pakistan-born captain Nizakat Khan.

Hong Kong, with a population of 7.5 million, will face powerhouse India, a cricket-mad country of 1.4 billion people, in a T20 international for the first time.

“Definitely we are going to play with a positive mindset and we are not going to take them lightly because in T20 on a given day anything could happen,” Jadeja told reporters.

“So will look to play positive cricket and give our best.”

India justified their favourites tag in the six-nation tournament, which acts as a tune-up to the T20 World Cup in October-November, after they edged out Pakistan in Dubai and need just one more win to make the next stage from Group A.

Jadeja, hitting 35 with the bat, played a key role in India's victory as they chased down a target of 148 with two balls to spare.

His 52-run fifth-wicket partnership with Hardik Pandya, who made an unbeaten 33, proved crucial.

“If a team has so many options then they are bound to play freely and the opposition will feel the pressure,” said Jadeja.

“And we have the kind of batting line-up that can tackle any situation.”



INFO

INDIA

M W L NR
2 2 0 0

M W L NR
N/A

Last meeting in Asia Cup: Dubai, September 18, 2018. India won by 26 runs.

ZONE

HONG KONG

M W L NR
2 0 2 0

M W L NR
N/A

HEAD TO HEAD IN ASIA CUP

HEAD TO HEAD IN T20IS



Opening struggle continues

SPORTS REPORTER

There was a lot of speculation surrounding Bangladesh's opening combination ahead of the Tigers' Asia Cup campaign.

In a bid to turn their T20 fortunes and as part of their new approach towards the shortest format, the team management had said that they would be promoting someone from the middle order to partner Anamul Haque Bijoy at the top.

However, Bangladesh went with a regular opener in Mohammad Naim in their Asia Cup opener against Afghanistan in Sharjah yesterday.

Just the way Bangladesh opted to stay with their regular approach, the Tigers' fate in the format did not see any changes. In no time, Bangladesh were reduced to four for 28 in just 6.2 overs with the openers amounting to a seven-run stand as Afghan spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman ripped through the Tigers' top order.



India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja trains with the squad ahead of their final Asia Cup group stage match against Hong Kong in Dubai today.

PHOTO: TWITTER



Hardik Pandya

BOWLING

MATCHES: 68
WICKETS: 53
AVERAGE: 26.69
ECONOMY: 8.23
BEST BOWLING: 4/33

BATTING

MATCHES: 68
RUNS: 867
AVERAGE: 24.08
HS: 51
SR: 145.46
50S: 1

KEY PLAYERS



Ehsan Khan

BOWLING

MATCHES: 31
WICKETS: 39
AVERAGE: 17.56
ECONOMY: 6.06
BEST BOWLING: 4/24

BATTING

MATCHES: 31
RUNS: 197
AVERAGE: 7.90
HS: 42*
SR: 113.87
50S: 0