

WHAT THEY SAID

“I feel we’ve got enough match-winners to our side that we can put enough pressure on the opposition.”

Aaron Finch, Australia captain

“All of us are ambassadors in their own way. It’s important for us to lead by example, especially the kids. We want our next generation to play the sport. We all encourage them to come forward and take up the sport. That’s what we want. We want to make it as global as we can.”

Rohit Sharma, India captain

“Shaheen and Fakhar (Zaman) have come back. We have six days for the first match, so we will utilise these warm-up matches. Shaheen is fully fit and dedicated to give his 100 per cent. So, we are looking forward to seeing him play.”

Babar Azam, Pakistan captain

“Many of us have travelled and played in Australia and know the conditions, but no-one is going to know the conditions or be as accustomed to them as the Australian team. They are also reigning champions, so you have to pick them out probably as favourites for the tournaments.”

Jos Butler, England captain

“You come here in tournament sport on any day, anything can happen, especially looking across all these teams with match winners throughout.”

Kane Williamson, New Zealand captain

“To be honest, I think the guys are in good spirits.”

Temba Bavuma, South Africa captain

“After a very good Asia Cup, we are very confident. The environment is really good.”

Dasun Shanaka, Sri Lanka captain

“I guess we’ll try and stall the underdog tag for a little bit longer, but yeah, when the real stuff starts, you need to bring the high-level skill that the guys play at the World Cup if we can do that.”

Gerhard Erasmus, Namibia captain

“It’s always an honour to lead your country and it’s even more special to lead in a World Cup.

CP Rizwan, UAE captain

“The situation in the country has been the same for many years. But the sport is there to bring happiness to people.”

Mohammad Nabi, Afghanistan captain

“Yeah, looking forward to it, but more importantly, just the group we’ve got, yeah, really enjoying what we’ve got going, and hopefully, yeah, that leads into the second round for us.”

Scott Edwards, Netherlands captain

“I think the guys here after last year’s World Cup, we’re really looking forward to this one, and hopefully we can build on some of the performances we had last year.”

Richie Berrington, Scotland captain

“I think we have the toughest way to the World Cup, and the guys understand that.”

Nicholas Pooran, West Indies captain

“I think the performances against Bangladesh at home, some good performances against India, as well, and then obviously beating Australia here in Australia has given us some great momentum going into the tournament.”

Craig Ervine, Zimbabwe captain

“After last year’s disappointment, we kind of had a little bit of a rejig. We’ve tried to go out and play a certain way that excites people, and we haven’t really got the results we’ve craved, but we’ve run some pretty good teams close.”

Andrew Balbirnie, Ireland captain



Captains of all the 16 participating teams pose for a group photo during an event of Captains’ Day, organised by the International Cricket Council (ICC), in Melbourne yesterday on the eve of the T20 World Cup. The marquee event will get underway today with the Round 1 match between reigning Asia Cup champions Sri Lanka and Namibia in Geelong.

PHOTO: AFP

Shakib downplays expectations

SPORTS REPORTER

Although there have been many times over the years when the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and cricketers have not seen eye-to-eye, it seems they are aligned in the same direction when it comes to playing down expectations before starting their T20 World Cup campaign.

There have been persistent questions about Bangladesh’s performances, especially in the shortest format of the game. Their last T20 World Cup campaign even saw Bangladesh lose to Scotland in the qualifying stage before the Tigers went on to lose all their Super 12 matches.

But despite getting a year to change things, the BCB remained clueless about chalking out the areas they needed to work on. The board instead was busy chopping and changing, from the coaching staff to the team, or dropping senior players like former captain Mahmudullah Riyad from the World Cup squad.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan had tempered expectations a month ahead of the mega-event, saying the board was planning drastic changes and focusing on the next World Cup.

“Our main focus is the next World Cup, not this one. You can’t change everything overnight. We are planning long term and trying to prepare a squad for the next World Cup. Even if the upcoming World Cup does not go well for us, I won’t be disappointed. We



“I think we have a very exciting team. Most of them are new, so it will be a great experience for them. All of us are playing a T20I in Australia for the first time, including myself. So that’s new.”

Bangladesh captain **Shakib Al Hasan**

are hoping to form a squad in the next six to eight months,” Hassan told media last month.

Interestingly, Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan echoed those sentiments during the ‘Captain’s Media Day’ at the Regent Theatre in Melbourne yesterday, which involved all 16 captains.

Shakib very matter-of-factly raised a very alarming issue, quipping about how he had not played a T20I in Australia during his 15-year international career and that the Tigers had never toured down under to play a T20I series.

“I think we have a very exciting team. Most of them are new, so it will be a great experience for them. All of us are playing a T20I in Australia for the first time, including myself. So that’s new,” Shakib said.

His remark stunned even the host running the media session, prompting Shakib to reply: “Yes. And I’ve been playing for 15 years.”

His comments may also reflect the confidence levels of the team ahead of the mega event while also serving to again temper expectations.

The Tigers arrived in Brisbane today after completing a tri-nation series in New Zealand featuring the hosts and Pakistan, which served as their final preparations ahead of the T20 World Cup. The Tigers lost all four matches on that tour.

Shakib also expressed satisfaction over the team’s preparations for the World Cup.

“I think we prepared really well. We were in Christchurch, where we played four games against two very good sides. So, we know the things we need to do to perform well here in Australia. And I think we are prepared enough to do well,” he said.

The Tigers are scheduled to play two warm-up matches against Afghanistan on October 17 and South Africa on October 19 before beginning their World Cup campaign with a Super 12 fixture against the runners-up from Group A on October 24 in Hobart.



T20 WORLD CUP FACTS

**This year’s tournament includes 16 teams, 45 matches and seven grounds—Perth Stadium, Adelaide Oval, Kardinia Park, The Gabba, SCG, Bellerive Oval and MCG.

**There are two rounds. The Round 1 run from October 16 to October 21 and the Super 12s run from October 22 to November 6.

**Round 1 features eight teams, where each team will play the other in their group once, before the top two from each group progress to the Super 12s. Group A: Namibia, Netherlands, Sri Lanka, UAE. Group B: Ireland, Scotland, West Indies, Zimbabwe.

**The eight teams who automatically qualified for the Super 12s earned their direct qualification at last November’s tournament in the UAE, and will be joined by the four qualifiers from Round 1.

**In this stage, each team will play the others in their group once, and the top two teams from each group will progress to the semi-finals.

**The semi-finals will be played on November 9 and 10, in Sydney and Adelaide respectively. The final will be played at the MCG on Sunday November 13.

THIS EDITION WILL SEE SOME NEW RULES:

A. After a batter is out caught, the new batter will take strike, regardless of whether the batters crossed prior to the catch being taken.

B. Any unfair and deliberate movement while the bowler is running in to bowl could now result in the umpire awarding five penalty runs to the batting side, in addition to a call of dead ball.

C. Previously looked down as unfair play, running out a non-striker for leaving the crease before delivery will now be considered as a regular run-out.

Liverpool cannot compete with spending of City, says Klopp

REUTERS

Liverpool cannot compete with Manchester City’s financial power, manager Juergen Klopp said on Friday, adding that their Premier League rivals and some other clubs “can do what they want”.

Second-placed City visit Liverpool in the weekend’s most anticipated Premier League clash on Sunday as they are 13 points clear of Klopp’s side, who have a game in hand.

Asked how Liverpool could keep up with Pep Guardiola’s team, who won the Premier League for the fourth time in five seasons in May, Klopp replied that nobody could.

“You will not like the answer, and you all have the answer already. Nobody can compete with City in that,” he said.

“You have the best team in the world and you put in the best striker on the market. No matter what it costs, you just do it.

“I know City will not like it, nobody will like it, you’ve asked the question but you know the answer. What does Liverpool do? We cannot act like them. It is not possible.”

Barcelona ‘spectacular’ in La Liga, warns Ancelotti

AGENCIES

Barcelona’s woeful European form has cast a shadow over their domestic resurgence, which will face the ultimate test on Sunday when they visit Real Madrid in a much anticipated El Clasico in LaLiga.

A revamped Barca, spearheaded by new signing Robert Lewandowski, have won seven consecutive LaLiga matches and share the lead at the top of standings on 22 points with Spanish and European champions Real.

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti warned his team that Barcelona have been “spectacular” in La Liga, despite their struggles in the Champions League.

Barcelona are on the verge of Champions League elimination after a 3-3 draw at home against Inter Milan on Wednesday, but come into Sunday’s Clasico at the Santiago Bernabeu as leaders, unbeaten in the top flight.

Xavi’s side have conceded just one goal all season in La Liga and lead Real Madrid on goal difference, both sides tied on 22 points at the top of the table.

“We’re looking at a team that’s won all their games in La Liga after drawing their first one, they have very good form in the

league,” Ancelotti told a press conference on Saturday.

“Since the start of the competition they have done every well. They’ve had trouble in the Champions League, which usually happens in that competition, but in La Liga they have been spectacular.”

The coach remembered last season’s 4-0 defeat by Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu, where in the absence of striker Karim Benzema, he operated with Luka Modric as a false nine.

“It’s true that last year I tried to invent something and I paid the price for it,” said Ancelotti.

“The game last year will not affect us, because this is another season, another Clasico. We’re looking forward to playing this game, which the whole world will watch.”

Ancelotti confirmed that goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois is back training after suffering sciatica but will not feature in the Clasico, while Antonio Rudiger can play, wearing a protective mask.

The German defender suffered a bad facial injury against Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League, where he scored a last minute goal but clashed heads with the opposition goalkeeper.



India lift their 7th Asia Cup



An all-round India crushed Sri Lanka by eight wickets to clinch their seventh Women’s Asia Cup title at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. In a one-sided final, India restricted Sri Lanka to 65-9 in 20 overs and then achieved the target in 8.3 overs with eight wickets in hand.

PHOTO: AFP