



SCORES IN BRIEF

New Zealand vs Australia

New Zealand: 200 3 in 20 overs (Conway 92 not out, Allen 42, Neesham 26; Hazlewood 2-41, Zampa 1-39)

Australia: 111 all out in 17.1 overs (Maxwell 28, Cummins 21; Southee 3-6, Santner 3-31)

Result: New Zealand won by 89 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Devon Conway.

Afghanistan vs England

Afghanistan: 112 all out in 20 overs (Ibrahim 32, Usman 30; Curran 5-10, Stokes 2-19, Wood 2-23)

England: 113-5 in 18.1 overs (Livingstone 29, Hales 19; Nabi 1-16, Rashid 1-17)

Result: England won by five wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Sam Curran.

Resurgent Sri Lanka take on raging Ireland

SPORTS REPORTER

Former champions Sri Lanka managed to hold their own, navigating through unfamiliar territory to the Super 12, as they entered the main stage following a grueling group stage saga and can now turn their focus to the top sides.

The Lankans can take a sigh of relief to have reached the Super 12 after suffering a shocking defeat to associate nation Namibia in the tournament opener.

The reigning Asian Champions will hope not to stumble, especially when they take on an in-form at the Bellerive Oval today.

Ireland made it to the Super 12 as runners-up from Group B, made possible when Curtis Campher and George Dockrell pulled off the Houdini act and combined for a 119-run stand against Scotland to keep qualification hopes alive before they outplayed and dumped two-time champions West Indies out of the World Cup on the final day of the group stage.

A rejuvenated Ireland will look to be the protagonist of yet another upset in this year's World Cup.



PHOTO: BCB

Sold-out MCG awaits India-Pakistan blockbuster

AGENCIES

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan are set to renew cricket's most adrenalin-fuelled rivalry in Sunday's T20 World Cup match in Melbourne but the threat of rain looms over the blockbuster fixture.

With bilateral cricket remaining suspended between the neighbours, thanks to their soured political relations, emotions run high every time they clash in multi team events in a neutral venue.

The cricket boards of both nations are at loggerheads over next year's Asia Cup after BCCI secretary and Asian Cricket Council chief Jay Shah suggested the tournament be shifted out of Pakistan to a neutral venue. The Pakistan Cricket Board in return threatened to pull out of next year's 50 over World Cup in India.

The Melbourne Cricket Ground is set to become a cauldron of emotions but the tournament's most anticipated clash could prove a damp squib with rain forecast this weekend and India skipper Rohit Sharma said his team will be ready.

"The things that are in our control we'll try and control... We need to come here thinking that it's a 40-over game. We'll be ready for that. If the situation demands that it's a shorter game, we'll be ready for that as well," Rohit said.

Rohit also mentioned they are relishing the "challenge" of facing arch-rivals Pakistan.

"I don't want to use the word 'pressure' because pressure is constant, I would like to take this as a challenge," Rohit told reporters on the eve of the blockbuster clash.



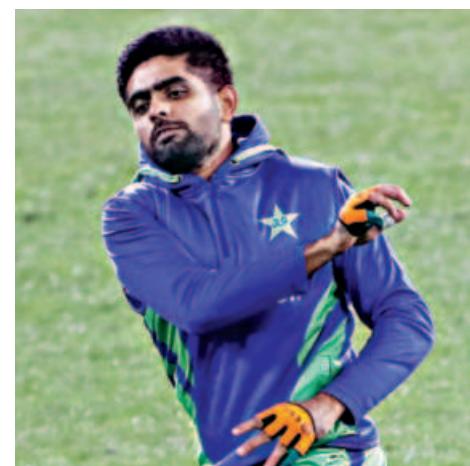
"This Pakistani team is a very challenging team."

Players from both sides have sought to downplay the hype around the match even though tickets sold out within five minutes of going on sale earlier this year.

India will be particularly under pressure to avoid a repeat of the last year's World Cup when a 10-wicket thumping by Pakistan in their opener set the tone for their early exit from the tournament.

The strike rate of their top order and death bowling remains a concern for the inaugural champions who are without injured pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah.

The onus is on their explosive middle order, led by the swashbuckling Suryakumar Yadav,



to come good against Pakistan's formidable pace attack bolstered by Shaheen Afridi's return from a knee injury.

Pakistan's much-maligned middle order showed signs of form in the recent tri series in New Zealand but a lot would depend on what kind of start they get from Mohammad Rizwan, currently the top-ranked T20 batter, and skipper Babar Azam at the top of the order.

"It's a high-pressure game but we'll try to keep it simple and keep faith in our abilities and the practice that we've done," said Babar.

India have usually dominated Pakistan in World Cups but have lost two of their three previous matches including last year's T20 World Cup group game in the United Arab Emirates.

Australia can still win World Cup: Finch

REUTERS, Sydney

Captain Aaron Finch admitted Australia's fate at the Twenty20 World Cup had probably been taken out of their own hands by Saturday's heavy loss to New Zealand in the Super 12 opener, but remained convinced his team could retain the trophy.

Finch's remarkable luck at the coin toss had earlier continued, now with six wins out of his last seven tosses and having also won six out of seven at last year's World Cup, but bowling first did not prove the charm it did last year in the UAE.

The 89-run victory at Sydney Cricket Ground hammered Australia's net run rate, which will be used to separate teams tied on points in the standings, and left the hosts almost certainly needing four Group 2 wins to reach the semi-finals.

"It hurts our chances, no doubt," Finch told reporters. "We can't dwell on that. We can't change it. All we can do is concentrate on the next game and prepare really well for that against Sri Lanka and



see how we go.

"We've taken the fate out of our own hands, I think to a point. We need to be ultra positive, ultra aggressive, and I'm sure that we'll all do that."

Finch paid credit to New Zealand's early onslaught with the bat and bemoaned his own side's inability to put together partnerships in the middle order but still felt they had the right personnel in the squad.

"We still feel as though we've got the right structure of team and we've got the right players to win the World Cup," he added.

"Obviously it's taken a big hit today with the net run rate. When that happens, you need to play well. We need to get better quickly."

"Whether you go with an extra spinner or an extra quick or something like that, that's the only real decision to be made. We're still confident in the 15 we've got, no doubt."

Australia face the Sri Lankans in Perth on Tuesday with Super 12 matches to follow against England, Ireland and Afghanistan.



Sam Curran's breathtaking five-wicket haul and some spectacular fielding led England to a five-wicket win over Afghanistan in their opening T20 World Cup match in Perth. Curran, who returned figures of 5-10, became the first England bowler to take five wickets in T20Is.

Rain hampers Tigers' preparation again

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team reached Hobart from Brisbane yesterday ahead of their ICC T20 World Cup tournament opener against the Netherlands on Monday.

However, the rain continued to follow the Tigers from Brisbane to Hobart, which forced the scheduled training session to be cancelled at the Kingston Twin Oval ground yesterday.

Shakib Al Hasan and his troops are set to begin their World Cup campaign at Hobart's Bellerive Oval stadium, where the Tigers will not get an opportunity to practice ahead of the match against the Dutch.

"We were unable to train on the last day in Brisbane due to rain. However, we did practice for a couple of days before that and according to the players, it went well for them. The coach and the players were satisfied over the training in Brisbane over the past few days," Jalal Yunus, the chairman of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's cricket operations committee, told the media yesterday.

Last week, Bangladesh lost to Afghanistan in their first World Cup warm-up game by 62 runs, while the second warm-up fixture against South Africa was washed out due to rain. Once again, bad weather hampered the Tigers' crucial preparation ahead of their first Super 12 encounter.

"It would have been good for us in the Super 12 games if we could've played the warm-up match against South Africa, which was washed out due to rain. Obviously, it's a loss for us as there is no alternative to playing matches. The bad news is, there is rain in the forecast in Hobart as well and it is certainly going to hamper the training session," Yunus added.

Liverpool revival cut short by shock Forest loss

AFP, Nottingham

Liverpool's mini-revival came to a crashing halt with a 1-0 defeat at Nottingham Forest, who secured just their second Premier League win for 23 years thanks to Taiwo Awoniyi's goal.

Awoniyi spent six years as a Liverpool player without ever making an appearance as he was farmed out on a series of loan spells, but came back to haunt his former club and move his current employers off the bottom of the table.

"To score against Liverpool is a day I will never forget," said Awoniyi.

"I will always be grateful to Liverpool for scouting me from Nigeria and scoring against them is amazing."

Liverpool were without the firepower of the injured Darwin Nunez, Diogo Jota and Luis Diaz and it showed as they lacked the spark needed to unlock a deep lying Forest defence.

"The performance I can kind of explain, the result not to be honest," said Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp.

WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS & STAR

SPORTS 2

T20 World Cup

Ireland vs Sri Lanka

Live from 10:00 pm

India vs Pakistan

Live from 02:00 pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

EPL

Southampton vs Arsenal

Live from 07:00 pm

Tottenham vs Newcastle

Live from 09:30 pm