

Kiwis get Mitchell boost before SL clash

AGENCIES

All rounder Daryl Mitchell is set to return to bolster New Zealand for their Twenty20 World Cup clash with Sri Lanka, fast bowler Tim Southee said Friday, with the Black Caps wary of any slip-ups.

Mitchell was a key performer in the Kiwis' previous T20 World Cup campaign. The all-rounder, whose 208 runs helped his team to the final in Dubai last year, missed New Zealand's impressive 89-run victory over hosts and defending champions Australia last weekend after fracturing a finger before the tournament.

The 31-year-old might have returned against Afghanistan on Wednesday but the match was washed out. But Southee said he would almost certainly start at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday with Mark Chapman making way.

"He's come through all the tests he needs to come through... so I think he comes back in for the side tomorrow," he said.

"I think it's probably Mark Chapman that's the unlucky one as he came in for Daryl in the tri-series against Pakistan and Bangladesh. It's unlucky for Mark, who hasn't done anything wrong.

"But I think that Daryl is a valuable member of this side and has done well for us, so now he is fit and ready, he just comes back in."

New Zealand will need a full armoury against a Sri Lanka side desperate to keep their dreams alive in a tight Group 1.



They beat Ireland but then crashed heavily to Australia.

With only one point from the washout, New Zealand will need to be sure to avoid an upset before taking on England and Ireland in their final Group 1 matches.

"We know we have to be on our toes every single game we play, it's the nature of this tournament that you can't really have too many slip ups," Southee added.

"T20 cricket brings the sides closer together and we've seen in this tournament a number of upsets already so every game is vitally important.

"We know Sri Lanka is a dangerous side and they always pose a big threat and spin is a massive part of their game," said Southee, who is wary given the tournament has already witnessed some big upsets.

"There's been plenty happened in the last couple of weeks and then obviously we saw last night Zimbabwe (beating Pakistan)," he said.

"It's great for the tournament and just shows the nature of the format, that anyone can beat anyone."

Sri Lanka head into the game hit by injury, with fast bowler Binura Fernando heading home and replaced in their squad by Asitha Fernando.

Binura, himself an injury replacement, bowled just five balls in his team's loss to Australia before going off the field with a hamstring strain.

Assistant coach Naveed Nawaz said spirits remained high and the team was focused on making the semi-finals.

"Obviously they're (New Zealand) one of the top sides in the world and we rate them pretty highly," he said.

"We know coming to a World Cup and in a group which has Australia, New Zealand, England, Afghanistan, you know that any of the matches you cannot take easily.

"But we're up to it and we'll try to play our best cricket and try to give every chance for us to get qualified into the semi-finals."



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan leads the way as the Tigers, having suffered a thumping loss against South Africa in Sydney, reach Brisbane for their next T20 World Cup Super 12 fixture tomorrow. They will face a spirited Zimbabwe, who are brimming with confidence following their one-run victory over Pakistan.

PHOTO: BCB

Tigers brace for tough task against spirited Zimbabwe

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will hope to bounce back against Zimbabwe in their third Super 12 encounter of the ongoing T20 World Cup as Shakib Al Hasan and his troops reached Brisbane yesterday.

The Tigers succumbed to a record 104-run defeat against South Africa in Sydney on Thursday following a nine-run win over the Netherlands in their opening game. It will be important for Bangladesh to regain confidence after South Africa handed them the biggest defeat, in terms of runs, in T20Is.

Bangladesh's batting remains under the scanner, as it has been over the years. Only four Tigers batters were able to hit double digits against the Proteas while chasing a huge target of 206 runs. Bangladesh were eventually bundled out for just 101 runs in 16.3 overs.

The Tigers' inability to tackle pace and bounce in Australian conditions will once again be tested, this time by the tall Zimbabwean bowlers -- the likes of Blessing Muzarabani, Brad Evans and Richard Ngarava, who showed great promise on their way to a memorable one-run win against Pakistan in their last game on Thursday.

Apart from the quicks, it was Sikandar Raza who rose to the occasion with the ball. Raza scalped three crucial wickets in the middle overs to restrict Pakistan and aided Zimbabwe to successfully defend a

small total of 129 runs.

From Bangladesh's point of view, it won't be an easy task against a spirited Zimbabwe as the African team continue to ooze in confidence with their improved brand of cricket.

Earlier this year, the Tigers lost a three match T20I series 2-1 in Zimbabwe, where Raza played a



pivotal role both with bat and ball and the 36-year-old will once again look to be the key performer in the biggest stage.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, changed their team combination in the second game -- bringing in off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz by replacing Yasir Ali -- but it didn't pay dividends.

The Bangladesh team

management will be hoping their pacers make a strong comeback after an ordinary performance against South Africa, a game which saw Rilee Rossouw smash the first century of the ongoing mega event.

Despite picking up an early wicket, of skipper Temba Bavuma, Bangladesh kept losing their way onwards as Rossouw and opener Quinton de Kock stitched a record 168-run partnership for the second-wicket.

Taskin Ahmed, hero of the first game for Bangladesh, conceded 46 runs from his three overs and removed Bavuma, while Hasan Mahmud came back well in the latter stage of the innings despite being initially expensive.

Bangladesh can, however, take some positives after the way they kept runs in check -- having conceded just 29 runs in the last five overs of the innings -- following the onslaught from Rossouw and De Kock.

It will be interesting to see how Shakib and Company prepare the game plan with less than two days to go before they take on a spirited Zimbabwe side.

Although Bangladesh's record in the shortest format may not give much encouragement, the Tigers can take some positives from their head-to-head record against Zimbabwe, having managed to win 12 out of 19 encounters against the African nation.

Rain leaves Group 1 wide open

REUTERS, Melbourne

The T20 World Cup clash between champions Australia and England was abandoned without a ball bowled due to rain on Friday, leaving both teams' semi-finals hopes hanging in the balance and fans disappointed at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

With the Ireland-Afghanistan match also washed out at the venue earlier on, England emerged from a miserable day at second in Group 1 among a logjam of four teams on three points, which also leaves Group 1 wide open.

New Zealand, with a game in hand, lead the group on run-rate ahead of third-placed Ireland and fourth-placed Australia, but the Black Caps can take back top spot with victory over Sri Lanka in Sydney on Saturday.

With the top two sides advancing to the semis, none of England, Australia or Ireland can afford to lose another match in a tournament in which four out of 14 Super 12 games to date have been lost to rain and others disrupted.

"The outfield has taken a drenching over the



last couple of weeks, as wet as I've ever seen it," said Australia captain Aaron Finch, a Melbourne local.

"Disappointing not to get on but just the amount of rain over the last couple of weeks has been amazing."

England captain Jos Buttler said the surface was unfit to play on and the right call had been made.

"Every bowler who would have bowled if you'd have played, you would have had concerns," he told reporters.

Australia meet Ireland in Brisbane on Monday followed by Afghanistan four days later.

Australia coach Andrew McDonald confirmed wicketkeeper Matthew Wade would have played against England despite testing positive for COVID-19.

Spinner Adam Zampa, who missed Australia's win against Sri Lanka, had fully recovered, he added.

England face a crunch match against New Zealand in Brisbane on Tuesday, a repeat of the 50-over World Cup final in 2019.

England won the dramatic 2019 final at Lord's on a technicality after the match was tied and the teams could not be split after a Super Over.

"It will do well to live up to that one," said Buttler.

"Every game is pretty much a must-win."

It was a cruel day for bottom-placed Afghanistan, who already had a Super 12 match against New Zealand washed out at the MCG on Wednesday.

It was not lost on their coach Jonathan Trott that the roofed Docklands stadium across town might have been considered as an alternative to the MCG as it often hosts T20 games in the domestic Big Bash League.

"So we could have had lots of cricket," said the former England batsman.

"But this is the way it is. It's what makes tournaments unpredictable."



A contingent of Afghan fans saw no action at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday as their side's Super 12 fixture against Ireland was washed out. Both teams received one point each.

PHOTO: AFP

'We were fully ready'

AFP, Melbourne

Ireland skipper Andrew Balbirnie expressed frustration after rain denied his giant-killers a crack at another famous win at the Twenty20 World Cup on Friday.

The Irish were pumped up after stunning England by five runs on Wednesday, but they were forced to share the points at the MCG with winless Afghanistan after rain washed out play without a ball being bowled.

"Very disappointing. We played some really good cricket the other night and were looking forward to this fixture against a team we know really well," said Balbirnie.

Both teams received one point. Afghanistan skipper Mohammad Nabi was equally disappointed with their second washout. "We were fully ready... the plan was to put a score on the board and bring the spinners into the game during the chase," he said.