



SCORES IN BRIEF

New Zealand vs Ireland
New Zealand: 185-6 in 20 overs (Williamson 61, Allen 32; Little 3-32, Delany 2-30)
Ireland: 150-9 in 20 overs (Stirling 37, Balbirnie 30; Ferguson 3-22, Santner 2-26)
Result: NZ won by 35 runs
Player-of-the-match: Kane Williamson

Australia vs Afghanistan
Australia: 168-8 in 20 overs (Maxwell 54 not out, Marsh 45; Naveen 3-21, Ferooqi 2-29)
Afghanistan: 164-7 in 20 overs (Rashid 48 not out, Gulbadin 39; Zampa (2-22)
Result: Australia won by four runs
Player-of-the-match: Glenn Maxwell



Skipper Shakib Al Hasan was trying out his football skills during Bangladesh's practice session on Friday ahead of their final and must-win T20 World Cup Super 12 fixture against Pakistan tomorrow. [Bottom] Meanwhile, in-form pacer Taskin Ahmed talks with the media present in Adelaide. PHOTO: BCB

Form deficiencies bug Tigers ahead of Pakistan tie

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Skipper Shakib Al Hasan had already said during the ongoing World Cup that his side would approach the two games in Adelaide against Asian rivals India and Pakistan in relaxed mood, hoping to cause an upset or two.

Yet, when things got tight against India, the batters jumbled up individual plans and the concept of playing as a unit went out of the window quickly.

Consequently, wickets fell quickly. In a very important game, contributions are needed from more than just one player.

Bangladesh have had their most successful outing in a T20 World Cup this campaign, winning two matches in the Super 12 stage.

They have a chance to end on a high note in the final group fixture against Pakistan although qualification is a slim prospect. The team is in a rebuilding phase and performances can fluctuate, but before a crucial game it is also a chance to stake a claim for most of the batters in the middle and lower-middle order. But their form has continued to be an issue ahead of a the high-stake game.

Shakib's form has been below his own standards. Having come to the World Cup after averaging over 50 in the preceding tri-nation series in New Zealand, Shakib has scored just 44 runs in four innings at the World Cup. He has averaged 11 and his runs have come at a strike-rate of just over 97.

While Liton Das and Shakib both carried form to the World Cup, the former has looked solid during his knocks while Shakib often looked awkward, like he was trying to force the issue.



A number three berth remains on the cards for Shakib after he played there in the India game and Bangladesh will remain hopeful the skipper can find his touch. Having faced just 45 deliveries in the four games, Shakib will need to settle into a groove.

Except games against the Netherlands and Zimbabwe, Afif Hossain too has struggled with just 71 runs in four games. His strike-rate of over 120 suggests that a little more application can go a long way to him making the kind of impact the team management expect of him.

Yasir Ali managed just five runs in his three World Cup outings and as is usually the case, lower-order batters often see their batting order change for the greater good. His lack of

runs have not come at a good time though. As the finishers, Mosaddek Hossain and Nurul Hasan have managed strike-rates under 120 in the tournament.

With Pakistan bolstering a very attack-minded bowling line-up with equal intensity with the new ball and the old ball, Bangladesh's team management continue to ponder the form and need of an extra batter.

Having picked Shoriful Islam, who went for 57 in four overs against India in the last game, they may now opt to go back to an extra batter due in batters' form deficiencies. The bowling has largely remained sharp over the course of this tournament but for the final match of the group, form can play a part in the team combination.

England have destiny in own hands

AGENCIES

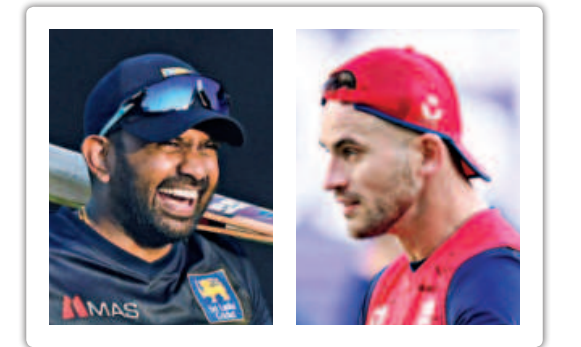
A peaking England find themselves in a tussle with Australia for a place in the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup but skipper Jos Buttler will have the advantage of having a clear mind as the English would need nothing but a win against Sri Lanka in their final group match in Sydney on Saturday to go through.

New Zealand became the first team to reach the semi-finals following a win over Ireland in Adelaide on Friday but the defending champions Australia will need the Lankans to beat England in today's game.

2010 champions, England are on five points, and have a far superior net run-rate meaning they would need just a win to deny arch-rivals Australia a place in the top four.

"I guess we're pretty confident with whatever we need to do, we've got the skills and firepower to do it," England opener Alex Hales told a news conference on Friday.

"It all comes naturally to us, especially with the layout of our squad, playing an extra batter, the middle order is so strong.



"It's a very confident batting unit so we'll be able to adapt to whatever tomorrow needs."

Shocked by Ireland in a rain-hit Super 12 contest, England looked to be in their element during the 20-run victory against New Zealand with Buttler leading by example with the bat.

England have their destiny in their hands and Hales said he was confident of England making the last four.

"It's a pretty tight competition, and to get through is difficult," he said.

"It would be a good achievement if we can get through, in a pretty tough group in my opinion."

Openers have struggled in the tournament so far but both Hales and Buttler smashed half-centuries against New Zealand.

Their deep batting and surfeit of all-rounders make England favourites against Sri Lanka, who needed Afghanistan to beat Australia yesterday to have any hopes of progressing in the tournament.

Even though Sri Lanka are out of the equation for the semi-finals, Sri Lanka batter Bhanuka Rajapaksa said the Asia Cup champions, guided by former England coach Chris Silverwood, were simply looking to end their campaign on a winning note.

"Unfortunately not all the results have come our way, but tomorrow's game is quite important to end on a high note," the 31-year-old said.

"We just want to play good cricket and justify our presence in Australia. That's about it."

Hales, recalled to the England set-up after a three-and-a-half-year exile following two failed recreational drug tests, is wary of a "tricky" Sri Lanka "with some handy operators".

"So we are going to have to play our best cricket to win, but as I said, we are pretty confident, the mood is good in the camp and we feel like we can deal with anything they throw at us," he said.

U-19s rattle Pak batters

SPORTS REPORTER

Bowlers led the way for Bangladesh Under-19 team in the first day of the only four-day of their Pakistan tour as the young Tigers bundled out the hosts for 224 runs in their first innings at the Multan Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Pakistan, after electing to bat, struggled up front and were struggling on 50 for four at one stage. Pacer Rohan Doullah Borson remained the pick of the bowlers with three dismissals, while fellow quick Maruf Mridha and spinner Jishan Alam each scalped a brace for the visitors.

Middle-order batter Mohammad Zulkifal top-scored for the hosts with 43 runs off 45 balls, striking eight fours, while Ali Asfand struck seven boundaries for his 85-ball 41.

Bangladesh U-19s are scheduled to play three one-dayers and two T20 matches. All matches of the tour will take place at the same venue.

Kiwis reach semis while Aussies win and wait

REUTERS

New Zealand became the first team to reach the Twenty20 World Cup semi-finals with a victory over Ireland on Friday but Australia face a wait to see if they will be staying in the tournament despite a nervy win over Afghanistan.

A Kane Williamson half-century and a spin-bowling assault fired the Black Caps to a 35-run victory at the Adelaide Oval which sealed one of the top two spots in Group 1 and a place in the last four.

Glenn Maxwell scored an unbeaten half-century and spinner Adam Zampa took a crucial 2-22 as defending champions Australia later joined New Zealand on seven points after a win by just four runs over the Afghans at the same venue.

It was not, however, enough to raise their net run rate above that of England, who now need only to beat Sri Lanka in their final Super 12 match in Sydney on Saturday to take the other semi-final berth from the group.

"Afghanistan played really well but luckily we managed to hold them back," said Maxwell. "We've put ourselves in this situation but hopefully the Sri Lankans

can do the job for us."

At one stage in Afghanistan's response to Australia's 168-8, it looked like the home side might not even get the win they needed to keep their tournament alive.

Three wickets in Zampa's fourth over – the first a runout from a Maxwell direct hit – broke a 59-run stand between Gulbadin Naib (39) and Ibrahim Zadran (26) and took the Afghans from a comfortable 99-2 to 99-5.

Rashid Khan revived the innings with four sixes in a battling 48 to keep his team in the chase but he came up just short in the final over and Afghanistan finished on 164-7 to remain winless in the tournament.

Earlier, New Zealand's batters posted an imposing 185 for six after Ireland elected to field before the Black Caps' bowlers restricted the Irish to 150 for nine.

Ireland bow out of the World Cup but head home with pride after a solid tournament capped by a sparkling hat-trick from paceman Josh Little.

Left-armed Little had captain Williamson caught for 61, then trapped both James Neesham and Mitchell Santner lbw for no score in the 19th over to bring up Ireland's second hat-trick in T20 internationals.



Josh Little on Friday became the second Ireland player, after Curtis Campher, to bag a hat-trick in T20Is with wickets of New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson, James Neesham and Mitchell Santner in their T20 World Cup Super 12 fixture in Adelaide yesterday. PHOTO: AFP