

Do-or-die for Bangladesh A

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh A face a must-win contest against their Afghan counterparts in Colombo today, with a spot in the semifinals of the ACC Emerging Asia Cup 2023 on the line.

Courtesy of possessing the highest run-rate, +1.731, in Group A, a victory would guarantee a place in the last-four for the Saif Hassan-led side -- who bounced back to shrug Oman A off after beginning the campaign on the wrong foot against the hosts, Sri Lanka A.

A loss, however, could likely see them crash out of the competition unless Oman A manage to stun Sri Lanka A in the other fixture today. In that case, run-rate would decide who accompany table-toppers Afghanistan A in the next round.

For Bangladesh A so far, opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim impressed with back-to-back fifties. Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib starred in the second match with a four-for while off-spinner Sheikh Mahedi was economical. Bangladesh would have to be wary of the threat from Riaz Hassan, whose 82-run knock helped his side narrowly beat the home side.

Pakistan fight back in Galle

AFP, Galle

An unbeaten century stand between Saud Shakeel and Agha Salman rescued Pakistan from a precarious 101-5 on the second day of the rain-hit opening Test on Monday.

In response to Sri Lanka's 312, Pakistan reached 221-5 when rain stopped play with the tourists still 91 runs behind.

Sri Lanka's left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya took three wickets, including skipper Babar Azam.

Sri Lanka batsman Dhananjaya de Silva had earlier made 122 to hand the hosts a respectable total.

Pakistan faltered in their reply before Shakeel, on 69, and Salman, on 61, put on 120 runs to steady the innings and thwart the Sri Lankan spinners.

The left- and right-hand batting combination of Shakeel and Salman mixed the right dose of caution and aggression, with 12 boundaries and a six between them.

The pair showed maturity in tackling the spinners by using their feet to get to the pitch of the ball, with Pakistan scoring at nearly five runs an over.

Sri Lanka had come out roaring when pace bowler Kasun Rajitha got Imam-ul-Haq out for one and Jayasuriya sent back Abdullah Shafique for 19. Shan Masood smashed 39 off 30 balls but fell lbw to Ramesh Mendis. Azam fell when he got an inside edge onto his pads and the ball looped to wicketkeeper Sadeera Samarawickrama.



Argentine superstar Lionel Messi is presented before an expectant crowd by Major League Soccer side Inter Miami's owners -- David Beckham, Jose R. Mas and Jorge Mas -- at DRV PNK Stadium in Fort Lauderdale in Florida on Sunday. "We are going to have a good time and great things are going to happen. Thank you very much, thank you all for this day," the 2022 FIFA World Cup winner said at the programme.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers looking to carry key tenets from T20I success

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's woes in the T20I format are well-known but under Shakib Al Hasan, the team have revitalised their performances in the recent few series, culminating in their latest series win against Afghanistan.

The team's tactical flexibility has been one of the key tenets of the Shakib era and the focus shifts back to ODI cricket with the Asia Cup around the corner before the marquee event, the World Cup.

Death bowling has improved alongside effort with the new ball. The likes of Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam, Ebadot Hossain, and Mustafizur Rahman have shared and swapped roles, giving the idea that adaptability to various scenario-specific roles have been established as an important factor.

With the bat, Tawhid Hridoy and others have answered the team's demands. Shamim Hossain appears to be more confident in his abilities while skipper Shakib has been able to set a tone for the rest. Moreover, with focus on fitness, the sharpness on the field has also reached new heights.

The Asia Cup is the next hurdle and the Tigers would begin camp on July 29th to prepare for the event. Shakib believed the confidence from the T20Is can be taken to the ODI format since the movement from one format to the other had been the norm in the recent past. Players such as Hridoy had been able to make their case in domestic tournaments such as the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) before making the jump to the ODI side following

their appearance in the England T20I series.

"Most of the players who have played are in ODIs or vice versa and it is possible to carry that confidence since we will be facing this opponent in



Asia Cup and World Cup's first game. It will be a big confidence boost for them," Shakib said after his team's series win on Sunday.

Shakib had also outlined the importance of flexibility, citing, "if everyone can bat everywhere, they won't find it difficult to adapt when facing a tough situation. The same goes for the bowlers."

Transition of ideas from one format to another is a difficult proposition. Given the ODI unit's success in the recent past, they had the tag of a settled unit. However, two series defeats against England and Afghanistan have also posed questions regarding the modus operandi for the Asia Cup and World Cup.

The settled team concept may just see variations and Asia Cup could be the litmus test. Since the captaincy question still remains at large, it would be Chandika Hathurusingha's challenge to keep the ODI outfit evolving.

Mushfiqur Rahim's placement at number six has already paid dividends. The theme of flexibility gained new grounds, one that could also seep into the ODI side, when Afif Hossain came in to open the innings against Afghanistan in the second T20I.

"Some players in the national team have established positions. It's difficult to come in to the side in such positions. The players should get mentally ready to show their ability wherever opportunities come," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told the media yesterday regarding Afif's batting position.

He added that fitness would also be a major factor and "the conditioning camp will help with fitness related issues."

"The Asia Cup is very important and we're hoping we will have everyone fit and can select the best team," Minhajul remarked.

Checking out players in different positions while prioritising key tenets of recent success would highlight the positivity of Bangladesh's plans going forward.

Anderson recalled for fourth Test

AFP, Manchester

England have recalled 40-year-old James Anderson for the fourth Ashes Test against Australia, which begins at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

Ollie Robinson makes way in the only change from the side that won the third Test to reduce Australia's series lead to 2-1 with two to play.

Moeen Ali will bat at number three, as he did in the second innings at Headingley, allowing Harry Brook to remain at number five.

Anderson, who has the third highest number of Test wickets of all-time, was dropped for the third Test after taking just three wickets for 226 runs in the first two matches of the series.

England need to win both remaining Tests to win the Ashes for the first time since 2015.

U-19s win series against SA

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-19 team clinched the series against South Africa U-19s 3-2 with a three-wicket win in the series-deciding fifth one-dayer at Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

Pacer Rizan Hossain bagged early wickets removing both South Africa openers before Rafiuzzaman Rafi, the architect of the victory in the fourth one-dayer, bagged two wickets.



David Teeger held the innings together with a 89-ball 63 while contributions from skipper Juan James (32) and Liam Alder (20 off 8) took South Africa U-19s to 210 all out. Bangladesh skipper Mahfuzur Rabbay was the pick of the bowlers with three wickets for 43 runs.

In reply, opener Adil Bin Siddik notched a 70-ball 58 while stringing together a 87-run stand for the third wicket with Ariful Islam, who scored 68 off 76. Left-arm spinner Liam Alder bagged four wickets while Juan scalped three as South Africa made the young Tigers sweat. In the end, Mahfuzur and Rafi held on taking Bangladesh to victory with three wickets and 2.5 overs to spare.



FC Barcelona's newly signed German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan poses for pictures with his newborn son and his wife Sara Arfaoui during his official presentation at the Joan Gamper training ground in Sant Joan Despi on Monday. Gundogan said he expects to take the role of a mentor for the team's young squad.

PHOTO: AFP



Members of the Bangladesh women's football team receive a cheque of Tk 5 lac for winning the 2022 SAFF Women's Championship from Shykh Seraj and Afzal Hossain, the high-ups of the Impress-Mattra Consortium, during a programme at a hotel in the capital on Monday. The programme was organised to announce the media rights for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, which kicks off in Australia and New Zealand on Thursday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Alcaraz attempts to keep lid on great expectations

AFP, London

Carlos Alcaraz is determined to quash any suggestions that his epic Wimbledon final win over Novak Djokovic represents the dawn of a new era despite all indications that tennis has witnessed a generational shift.

On Sunday, the 20-year-old became the tournament's youngest champion since Boris Becker in 1986.

His rollercoaster 1-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 victory prevented 36-year-old Djokovic from becoming its oldest champion.

It also thwarted Djokovic's dream of equalling Roger Federer's best of eight titles at the All England Club and matching Margaret Court's record of 24 Grand Slam titles.

Alcaraz though is remaining cautious. "I don't feel that I have confirmed something that we all expected," said the world number one.

"I try to avoid what people say, what people expect because in the end it's a pressure that I put on myself."

When he claimed a maiden Slam at

the US Open last year, Alcaraz became the youngest champion of a men's major since his storied compatriot Rafael Nadal at the 2005 French Open.

He was also the youngest man to ascend to the world number one ranking. Alcaraz is now just the fifth man in



the modern era to win multiple titles at the majors before turning 21 after Mats Wilander, Bjorn Borg, Becker and Rafael Nadal.

Alcaraz is now the only other player with more than one major in that time span.

Djokovic believes the young Spaniard

has successfully harnessed elements from his game as well as those of Federer and Nadal.

"I think he's got basically the best of all three worlds," said Djokovic who hadn't lost on Centre Court since 2013 until Sunday.

"People have been talking in the past 12 months or so about his game consisting of certain elements from Roger, Rafa, and myself. I would agree with that."

Alcaraz said he had "grown up" since that horror show in Paris last month.

"It's great for the new generation to see me beating him and make them think they are capable of doing it as well," said Alcaraz.

With Federer already retired and 37-year-old Nadal sitting out the rest of the year, maybe never to return, all eyes will be on Alcaraz whose coach Juan Carlos Ferrero once predicted could win 30 Grand Slams.

"Who's going to match this kid for the next few years?" 1987 Wimbledon champion Pat Cash told the BBC.

"It's hard to see anybody."