

'Old is gold' the mantra for England

AFP, London

James Anderson returns on his Old Trafford home ground to lead an ageing England attack in a must-win fourth Ashes Test.

It is the only change for Ben Stokes's men, 2-1 down with two to play.

England have dropped Ollie Robinson, who suffered a back spasm as the hosts won the third Test by three wickets at Headingley.

Anderson is reinstated just a fortnight short of his 41st birthday for the match starting Wednesday.

Anderson's 688 wickets are the most by any paceman in Test history. Only spinners Muttiah Muralitharan and Shane Warne are ahead of the Lancashire swing bowler.

But Anderson managed just three wickets as England fell 2-0 behind. He is now, however, set to be the cornerstone of the oldest pace attack in an Ashes match since the Australia line-up of 1928.

That was the last time either side deployed four seamers aged 33 or above, with Stuart Broad (37), Chris Woakes (34) and express quick Mark Wood (33) joining Anderson in England's seam-bowling quartet.

England's seasoned campaigners also include all-rounder Moeen Ali.

"I was always told that old was gold," the 36-year-old Moeen said Monday. "But it's not just old, it's Jimmy, it's Broady, Woakesy, Woody - they're really good bowlers."

"Myself...you never know what you're going to get, but with those guys, you definitely know how good they are."



Pacer Marufa Akter, who visibly operates with a pumped-up action and fearsome determination, is all smiles as she gracefully kicks a football in training at the Sher-e-Bangladesh National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The Bangladesh starlet from Nilphamari scalped four crucial wickets on Sunday to script her team's maiden ODI victory against India, and the hosts would also bank on her in today's second and penultimate fixture of the series, potentially a series-decider. It is no wonder that former Australia cricketer Mel Jones had remarked that Marufa puts 'the bang in Bangladesh' during the T20 World Cup this year.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Only a few weeks ago, Moeen was retired from Test cricket but an injury to frontline spinner Jack Leach led to his recall.

With Ollie Pope sidelined by a dislocated shoulder, Moeen finds himself in the key position of number three, with star batter Joe Root preferring number four. Emerging talent Harry Brook made a decisive 75 at number five at Headingley.

Moeen only managed five at first-wicket down in the second innings at Headingley but England are keeping him there after resisting calls for either captain Stokes, or wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow, who has struggled with both bat and gloves this series, to move up the order.

"If I'm playing well and I get in I have made Test hundreds before and it's not like I can't do it," said Moeen, who added: "But things happen for a reason...I'm a big one on faith and destiny."

Australia have yet to name their XI as Pat Cummins bids to lead the world Test champions to their first Ashes series win in England since 2001.

Opener David Warner and middle order mainstays, Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith, have just one hundred and one fifty between them in 18 innings.

At Headingley, Mitchell Marsh marked his first Test since 2019 with a fine hundred after replacing the injured, but now fit, Cameron Green.

Australia must decide if both all-rounders can play in the team. Josh Hazlewood is set to return after fellow pacer Scott Boland went wicketless at Headingley.

England have won 13 of their last 16 Tests at Old Trafford, losing just once.

But that defeat was against Australia four years ago.

The 2019 series serves as a warning to England. The euphoria of a victory at Headingley was followed by a loss at Old Trafford as Hazlewood took six wickets in the match.

"I'm hugely excited, I've got fond memories of the last time here in 2019 so it's good to be back," Hazlewood said.

COMPOSED HRIDOY swings bat freely

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The kind of bat speed Tawhid Hridoy generates has already been a telling factor since his introduction to international cricket. At the highest level, however, technique and mentality are opposite sides of the same coin.

Hridoy showed he can stand up to such situations while having that clarity of mind in the first T20I against Afghanistan on Friday. The targeting of specific bowlers was the plan and Hridoy executed.

The way he picked off Azmatullah Omarzai over backward square-leg for a six in the second T20I is the kind of display now changing how the Tigers can approach the shortest format.

Replying to a question about that particular shot, the 22-year-old gave the idea of freeness.

"It's normal. When the ball arrived, my body automatically went for it," he told The Daily Star in an interview yesterday.

"Yes maybe no one here has played it before but they have started and slowly they will play these kinds of shots more," he was confident the mindset is changing. That kind of confidence is also now rubbing off, transforming Bangladesh with each shot he plays.

Yet, younger players are often found wanting at the big stage. Hridoy wants to go a different way and play such scenarios more frequently.

"In T20s, the matches fluctuate a lot and it's important to execute.

I feel that any batter able to chase in such a game would get a big confidence boost. These kinds of scenarios don't arrive frequently. I would want every batter to bat in such situations because then they will get the confidence," he affirmed.



While Fazalhaq Farooqi has been the pick of the bowlers in the recently concluded series, Hridoy kept his calm to read the scenario, knowing that the whole attack was quality.

"It doesn't matter to me whether it's spin or pace. Rashid Khan, Mujeeb [Ur Rehman] and [Mohammad] Nabi are very good bowlers. In T20s it's important to target one or two bowlers from the opposition. We also planned for the match in that way.

"Our plan, not only speaking of Farooqi or Omarzai, was that it was a better option to go for their pacers rather than their spinners. It's about the calculative risks you

take according to various match scenarios. If the situation had demanded that we would have to take on Rashid Khan, then we would have tried to take him on too," he underlined.

Even during his brief international career, he has falsely been tagged as a leg-side oriented player. "Many are saying that I am hitting through one zone only but it's not like that. I'm playing through cover as well. I have hit through mid-off as well in the first T20I. It depends on the situation. Would I not hit it if it's in the leg-side zone?" he argued.

The clarity of mind means his calculations have come off through early hard thinking. Then the bat swings freely and decisively and it is the absence of fear of repercussions that helps him think clearly. Was he fearful he could get out to Farooqi while playing his favourite shot, the pull?

"In any walk of life, whether in your profession or mine, when you are fearful, the outcome wouldn't be good. It's best to not keep fear within yourself. What will happen? Maybe I will play badly or the team will lose or maybe I will be dropped. What more can happen?"

"So personally, I think that way and feel that this isn't a game of fear. You have to keep your mind fresh and be courageous or else you won't be able to survive," he concludes, knowing that only a similar mindset will change Bangladesh's fortunes in the shortest format.

Bangladesh A confirm semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Courtesy of Mahmudul Hasan Joy's century, Bangladesh A confirmed their ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup semifinal spot by securing a 21-run victory against Afghanistan A in their final group game at the P Sara Oval yesterday.

Bangladesh posted 308 for seven after electing to bat before restricting the Afghans to 287 for eight. Having finished second in Group A, Bangladesh set up a semifinal clash with the champions from Group B that will be decided following the game between Pakistan A and India A today.

Bangladesh were in a spot of bother, reeling at 34 for three inside six overs. Opener Tanzid Hasan departed after scoring nine while Naim Sheikh once again failed to make an impact and was dismissed on 19 off 18 balls.

Skipper Saif Hassan also departed quickly before Joy, along with Zakir, steadied the ship for Bangladesh. The pair added 117 runs for the fourth wicket before Zakir was dismissed after scoring 62 off 72 balls, striking six fours and two sixes.

Joy, however, stuck around and got his second List A hundred. His 114-ball 100, laced with 12 boundaries and two maximums, came to an end in the 47th over.

Soumya Sarkar added 48 off 42 balls while Mahedi Hasan played a 19-ball 36-run cameo, including six fours and a maximum, as Bangladesh added 52 runs in the last five overs of the innings.

For Afghanistan, opener Riaz Hassan top scored with 78 and Bahir Shah remained not out on 53 as the target proved too big for them.

Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib picked up three wickets while left arm spinner Rakibul Hasan and Soumya Sarkar bagged two wickets each for Bangladesh.



Pakistan middle-order batter Saud Shakeel hit his maiden Test double hundred as the visitors stretched their lead to a dominant 149 against Sri Lanka on day three of the rain-hit opening Test in Galle on Tuesday. The 27-year-old left-hander remained unbeaten on 208 as Sri Lanka bowled out the tourists for 461. PHOTO: AFP

VAR explanations to lend clarity at WWC

AFP, Sydney

Match officials explaining VAR decisions live to stadiums and television audiences for Women's World Cup games will make the process "more transparent", FIFA's referee chief Pierluigi Collina said on Tuesday.

The concept will be used at a major tournament for the first time when the World Cup starts on Thursday, having been trialled at the men's Club World Cup in Morocco this year and the men's U20 World Cup in Argentina last month.

Collina, chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, told reporters that there had been positive feedback from the trials. "We are very confident this new tool will be very positive."

Fans have long called for more transparency over VAR (video assistant referee) decisions.

Match officials at the World Cup in New Zealand and Australia will consult a screen on the side of the pitch before relaying their decision, the reason for it, the players involved and a brief description of the incident through the PA system via a microphone on their shirt. Collina admitted referees requiring to explain in English, which is not the mother tongue for many, to add extra pressure.



Lionel Messi takes part in his first training session for his new club side, Inter Miami, yesterday after the Argentine playmaker ventured into an unfamiliar territory in the USA following an unprecedented spell of success in Europe and a long-desired World Cup triumph. Messi, however, will be accompanied by a familiar face, a trusty companion at the base of the midfield, in Sergio Busquets (R) who often had the best seat in the house when Messi scored golez during their Barcelona days.

PHOTO: REUTERS

