

BANGLADESH VS PAKISTAN
ODI STATS

- In 37 matches since their first meeting in the 1986 Asia Cup, Bangladesh won on five occasions.
- The two teams last met in the 2019 World Cup, which saw the Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led side lose by 94 runs. Both sides have five survivors from that match in their Asia Cup squads: Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiquir Rahim, Liton Das, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Mustafizur Rahman from Bangladesh, and Fakhar Zaman, Imam-ul-Haque, Babar Azam, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi from Pakistan.
- The Tigers' lone victory in 13 Asia Cup matches against Pakistan came when the competition was last contested in the 50-over format in 2018.
- Bangladesh enjoy a recent record advantage, having won four of the past five meetings against Pakistan.
- Bangladesh's 326 for three against Pakistan in the 2014 Asia Cup in Mirpur stood as the Tigers' highest Asia Cup total for over nine years until their Afghanistan fixture on Sunday.
- Among the members from two squads, Shakib Al Hasan leads the chart for most matches played (16), runs scored (553) wickets taken (21).
- Top-ranked Pakistan are yet to lose to seventh-ranked Bangladesh in Pakistan in any format following 11 ODIs, three T20Is, and five Tests.



Bangladesh will have their work cut out when they take on Pakistan in a Super Four contest of the ongoing Asia Cup at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium today. The Tigers received a boost with the inclusion of Liton Das in their ranks after being pegged back as injury ruled out in-form batter Najmul Hossain Shanto from the tournament. For Liton and Co, the threat posed by Pakistan speedster Shaheen Shah Afridi looms large. The left-armers' exploits with the new ball have proved dangerous in the tournament so far, while his death-bowling prowess also remains a serious cause for concern for opponents.



PHOTO:AFP

“It’s a big blow for the team, no doubt. It will be difficult to replace [Najmul Hossain] Shanto right now. We held a lot of faith in his calibre, and he has just recently begun to deliver. Nothing could have gone better for him, or the team, than playing the entire Asia Cup before the World Cup. The team will miss the energy he generates – not only during fielding but also in the dressing room.”

Habibul Bashar, team selector and former captain, said regarding absence of in-form batter Najmul Hossain Shanto for the reminder of the Asia Cup due to hamstring injury.

‘Accuracy and variation’ key in Lahore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pace spearhead Taskin Ahmed, in a video message sent by BCB yesterday, highlighted the fact that they were able to adjust well with the soaring temperatures in the last game against Afghanistan in Lahore.

Ahead of today’s Super 4 game against Pakistan, he felt accuracy and variations would be key for the Bangladesh bowlers at the Gaddafi Stadium.

Bangladesh team have already lost Najmul Hossain Shanto to injury and the pacers’ focus has been on keeping hydrated and recovering.

The pacers already follow the 7-4-2 rule to maintain workload.

“Not only fast bowlers, in these conditions it’s difficult for anyone to play cricket. But since it’s out of our hands, we are looking after our recovery. The physios and trainers are supporting us greatly and we are also trying to take care of ourselves,” Taskin said.

Bangladesh executed their plans really well with the ball in the last game. Afghanistan batters were threatening to cut loose, but Taskin and Shoriful Islam showed great ability to use variations and skills with the older ball to thwart the run chase.

“Actually Lahore’s wicket is very batting-friendly,” Taskin opined.

“That day [against Afghanistan], the wicket and conditions were not in our control. We were able to adjust quickly and all our bowlers bowled brilliantly and in the upcoming matches, we would try to do better. It’s a good thing that we are experiencing different conditions and being able to adjust to them. Our accuracy and variation were very good and that’s why we were able to do well,” the pacer added.



Tigers’ batting in focus against ‘deadly’ bowling

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on Pakistan in their Asia Cup fixture at Lahore’s Gaddafi Stadium today, hoping to start their Super Four stage on the right foot.

Judging by the recent ODI record between the two sides, Bangladesh have an edge over Pakistan, having won four of the five last ODI meetings. The last ODI between the sides was played in the 2019 World Cup which Pakistan won but a lot has changed in recent years with Pakistan becoming a more stable ODI side in recent years.

The main threat of the Pakistan bowling attack is the pace trio of Shaheen Shah, Naseem Shah and Harris Rauf. All three are quick in the air, able to use swing in the air along with deviation off the surface.

What would be Bangladesh’ opening combination to counter that early movement? Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Mohammad Naim gave the team a comfortable and solid start in the Afghanistan game. With Najmul Hossain Shanto ruled out, it remains to be seen whether the team management sticks to the opening combination of the Afghanistan game and slot Liton Das at number three in Shanto’s position.

The team management have already shown that they can tinker with the batting lineup according to situation, sending in Tawhid

Hridoy at three in the last game.

Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, cricket analyst and mentor to many national team stars, feels that the best two options should feature as openers.

“They have a deadly opening combination of bowlers in Shaheen and Naseem and they have a beautiful team environment. It’s going to be a tough ask, no doubt,” Fahim told The Daily Star.

“The best two from Miraz, Naim and Liton should open as they would have the best opportunity to counter the swing.”

“Without Shanto, especially in the build-up, it’s a big setback. Shanto was an in-form batter who handles pace very well. Liton is equipped but he has been a bit out of touch and out of form recently. There would be some uncertainty at the top-order.

“The best two from Miraz, Naim and Liton should open as they would have the best opportunity to counter the swing. If we think about only left-right combinations instead of the best two to batters maybe we can be in trouble specifically for that. It could be Miraz-Liton or Miraz-Naim since the latter combination gave us a

good partnership in the last game.”

Fahim feels that Liton could be an option at number three. “It could be that Liton comes at three in Shanto’s since it would mean that not much have to be changed apart from that position.”

A big responsibility of the top-order in fact would be to counter the pace threat of Pakistan. Not losing wickets at the top would go a long way towards building a big total or chasing one down.

“I’m sure the team are planning how to make a big score. The batters such as Miraz and Naim are carrying confidence. If they do well, it would bolster the middle-order’s possibilities of doing well since it’s a good wicket,” Fahim opined.

“If we can start well, then even if there is some shakiness due to Shanto’s absence, it can be offset. What happened in the first game, when wickets fell and no one held the innings together, it felt like the team were lost. I don’t feel that would happen. Apart from Hridoy, everyone has scored solidly this tournament and in case of a collapse, I expect the latter batters to rebuild. We will see a better character from the team against Pakistan.

“I don’t feel the gap is too big between the two sides since our team has players with impactful performances. If these guys do well, it will be a good game tomorrow,” he concluded.

Heartbreak for Afghanistan as Sri Lanka survive scare

AFP, Lahore

Title holders Sri Lanka outlasted a rampaging Afghanistan by just two runs in a dramatic finish to reach the Asia Cup Super Four stage yesterday.

Needing to overhaul a target of 292 in 37.1 overs to oust Sri Lanka on net run-rate, Afghanistan fell agonisingly short as Mujeeb Ur Rahman holed out with three needed from the first ball of the 38th over.

They could still have qualified by reaching 295 within 37.4 overs but appeared to not be aware of that permutation as number 11 Fazalhaq Farooqi blocked out two deliveries before being dismissed while attempting another defensive shot with six needed to go through.

Mohammad Nabi hit a blistering 32-ball 65 while skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi made a 66-ball 59.

Rashid Khan hit three boundaries off Duniya Wellalage’s 37th over, but off the first ball of the next over Mujeeb was caught on the boundary.

Sri Lanka were earlier guided to 291-8 by Kusal Mendis who scored a brilliant 84-ball 92.

Pakistan and India had already qualified for the Super Four stage from Group A, with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh joining them from Group B.

Afghanistan were struggling in the 20th over on 129-4 but Nabi started to hit out and the situation



changed as they added 96 in the next 10 overs.

Nabi, who put on 80 for the fifth wicket with Shahidi, cracked five sixes and six fours to help Afghanistan get back on track, hitting the fastest ODI half-century for his country off just 24 balls.

Mujeeb had set the previous record against Pakistan in Sri Lanka last month off 26 deliveries.

Nabi holed out off Maheesh Theekshana in the 27th over but Shahidi and Karim Janat (22) kept up the tempo, adding 33 before they both fell in the same over from Wellalage.

Despite the double blow, Afghanistan did not give up as Najibullah Zadran (23) and Rashid (27 not out) kept them in contention.

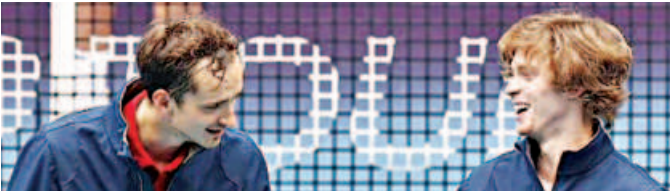
But in a dramatic finish, the Afghan camp did not realise their hopes were not realise their hopes were still alive once Mujeeb was dismissed and Sri Lanka progressed.

Sri Lankan skipper Dasun Shanaka admitted Nabi nearly took away the game. “It’s a tough one,” said Shanaka whose team has now won 12 consecutive ODIs. “The first target was a 37.1 over game and Nabi almost took the game away from us but we got wickets when needed.”

Shahidi said: “It’s very disappointing to lose. We fought well and gave our best I am proud of the team, the way they played, and fought till the last ball.”

Childhood friends set for US Open tussle

REUTERS, New York



Daniil Medvedev expects his US Open quarterfinal with fellow Russian Andrey Rublev on Wednesday to be a real fight but said nothing will come between the childhood friends once the dust has settled.

Medvedev, the 2021 Flushing Meadows champion, reached the last eight with a 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Australian Alex de Minaur and set up a meeting with Rublev who won 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 against Briton Jack Draper on Monday.

The Russian duo have previously met seven times at the elite level, with Medvedev winning five matches including their latest encounter in the Dubai final this year.

“We’re really close friends,” Medvedev said. “We have a great relationship, even if on the court we’re big competitors, so I do think one match, I say a fight, we can talk. Nothing is going to come between us to separate us in real life.

“We’re really close. I mean, we share a lot of interests. It’s great to have someone like this on tour because sometimes it isn’t easy. You travel, travel, travel.

“To have a friend like this is great. But, again, on the court we both want to win.”

Rublev said the friendship had become like a family bond after he was asked to be the godfather to Medvedev’s daughter.

“We built our relationship because of tennis, but now it’s already bigger than tennis. We know each other, I don’t know, since we were maybe six or something,” Rublev said.

U-23s embark on Asian Cup Qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will be looking to secure at least a point against Malaysia in their opening match of the AFC U-23 Asian Cup Qualifiers today at Chonburi Stadium in Thailand today.

The match will get underway at 3:30pm (Bangladesh time).

Bangladesh never qualified for the final round of the competition, having won only one match and drawn another in 15 matches in five editions. This time, coach Zulfiqar Mahmud Mintu wants to take his team to the next stage despite having a depleted squad with seven national team players missing.

“The first match is very very important as we came here to qualify for the next round but I know it will be very tough journey for us,” Mintu said at the official press conference in Chonburi yesterday.

However, the fact that the senior national team only managed to beat Malaysia once in 10 meetings, that too during the 1982 Asian Games says a lot about the daunting task at hand.

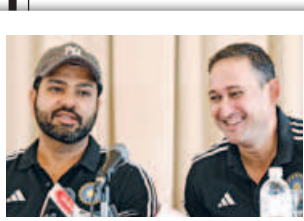
Rahul in as Ashwin misses out on WC

REUTERS

India have recalled a fit-again KL Rahul for their home World Cup later this year but off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is not in the 15-man squad, which did not contain any real surprises.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Rahul has not played competitively since May after suffering a thigh injury but is due to join the team in Sri Lanka for the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup.

Ishan Kishan, who has smashed a fifty in his last four



one-day internationals, leads the race for the wicketkeeper's spot partly because of the left-handed variety he brings.

“It’s a good headache to have, isn’t it?” chief selector Ajit Agarkar told reporters in Pallekkele, Sri Lanka.

Kuldeep Yadav is the lone frontline wrist-spinner in the Rohit Sharma-led squad, which contains spin all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel.

Ashwin, who remains India’s preferred spinner in Test cricket, was not accommodated though.

De Kock has ‘unfinished business’ at WC

AFP, Bloemfontein

Walter said on Tuesday that Quinton de Kock has “unfinished business” after it was announced that the wicketkeeper will retire from one-day international cricket after the World Cup, which starts in India on October 5.

De Kock’s pending retirement was revealed during the announcement of South Africa’s 15-man squad in Bloemfontein, where South Africa start a five-match ODI series against Australia on Thursday.

“Quinny has been a magnificent player for South Africa in 50-over cricket,” said Walter in backing De Kock, 30, to finish his ODI career in style.

A former captain in all three international formats, De Kock retired from Test cricket in 2022. De Kock will remain available for T20 internationals.

South Africa named six fast bowlers in their squad and only two specialist spin bowlers.