



India romped to a 10-wicket victory with 263 balls remaining against co-hosts Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup final in Colombo yesterday. This is the highest-margin victory in terms of wickets and balls remaining in the Asia Cup final.

Sri Lanka were bundled out for 50 in just 15.2 overs – their second-lowest total in ODIs behind 43 all out against South Africa in 2012.

It is also the second-shortest innings for a full-member nation.

In terms of balls played, this was the shortest Sri Lanka lasted in a full-length ODI. They played 92 deliveries.

India finished the chase in 6.1 overs, making it the third-shortest full-length ODI ever. The game lasted all of 129 legal deliveries.

It is also the lowest total in ODIs against India.

It took India's Mohammad Siraj only 16 deliveries to complete a fiver, the joint-quickest with Chaminda Vaas and USA's Ali Khan, since 2002, which is when the definitive ball-by-ball records were started to be recorded.

Siraj got four wickets in the fourth over yesterday, making him only the fourth bowler, since 2002, to have done so in ODIs.

Siraj's six for 21 is the second-best bowling figure in the Asia Cup final behind Ajantha Mendis' six for 13 against India in 2008 in Karachi.

'It's like a dream'

SPORTS REPORTER

India kept their best reserved, or, Sri Lanka their worst, for Sunday's one-sided final of the Asia Cup, a tournament played as a prelude to the World Cup in India next month.

With the game lasting a total of 129 deliveries, the third-shortest in terms of balls bowled in ODIs, the Rohit Sharma-led side not only portrayed their ruthlessness but also sent a warning to nine other nations who would be travelling to their home for the World Cup in less than a month's time.

The destroyer in chief yesterday was Mohammad Siraj, only the fourth bowler to take four wickets in an over in ODIs.

After breaking the backbone of the Lankan batting lineup with the wickets of Pathum Nissanka, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Charith Asalanka, and Dhananjanaya de Silva in the



fourth over to have the co-hosts reeling at 12 for five in Colombo, Siraj went on to finish with career-best figures of six for 21 in seven overs, including a maiden.

"It's like a dream," Siraj said during the innings break.

"I got four early wickets last time I played Sri Lanka (earlier this year) but unfortunately I could not register a five-wicket haul.

"I realised you get whatever is in your destiny. I just tried to bowl my line and length, and wickets kept coming.

"The ball did not swing much in the early matches here but today it swung a lot. My effort was to draw the batters forward and make them play the ball," Siraj added.

Siraj also credited his pace-bowling partners Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya, who accounted for one and three wickets, respectively.

"I was missing the edges earlier but found them today. The wicket was seaming earlier, but there was swing today. When there's good bonding between fast bowlers, it's helpful for the team," Siraj said.

Sri Lanka coach Chris Silverwood bemoaned his team's "below-par" performance with the bat, probably hinting at making some adjustments when they announce the 15 for the World Cup. Sri Lanka played the tournament without four of their regular starters.

"The way we got dismissed is very disappointing. I think there's a lot of reflection to be done in the dressing room. I think we need to sleep on this and make some decisions tomorrow, best to assess this in the morning and discuss with the other coaching staff as well," he said.

'Unsung heroes' rewarded

AFP, Colombo

All too often ignored in favour of the big name sport stars, cricketing groundstaff who kept the rain-hit Asia Cup running were promised a \$50,000 shared bonus by organisers on Sunday.

Mohammed Siraj, who lead India's rout of Sri Lanka, also vowed to donate his \$5,000 man of the match prize winnings to those who looked after the pitches.

The nearly three-week-long event was only saved by an army of around 100 Sri Lankan groundstaff wearing



orange tops, who sprinted out with the covers each time rain halted play kin the tournament.

Jay Shah, president of the ACC and BCCI, said the ACC and SLC were "proud to announce a well deserved prize money of \$50,000 for the dedicated curators and groundsman."

Kiwis to train today

SPORTS REPORTER

The New Zealand team arrived in Bangladesh yesterday to play a three-match ODI series, slated to begin on September 21, and the visitors will have their first practice session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's first practice session for the series will be held on Monday. The Tigers returned from the Asia Cup on Saturday.



Bangladesh will be without skipper Shakib Al Hasan, with Liton Das set to lead the side in the series against the Kiwis.

With the ODI series being played just days before the World Cup, beginning on October 5 in India, it should provide the team management an opportunity to assess the side and finalise the team combinations before the mega event. Stand-in skipper Liton himself would love to get some runs under his belt

before the World Cup.

Eyes will be on the two veteran returnees to the side -- former ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal and Mahmudullah Riyad. Both stalwarts will be back in the fold after a long gap.

Tamim was expected to feature from the beginning of the New Zealand series after recovering from a back injury while Riyad, who last played in the home series against England in March, will have a final opportunity to make his case for the lower-middle-order after Afif Hossain and Shamim Hossain failed to flourish in the role during the Asia Cup.

New Zealand, led by right-arm quick Lockie Ferguson, do not have the batters who will be featuring in the upcoming World Cup but their pace attack also includes an experienced Trent Boult.

With the Tigers hoping to sort out their combinations, especially in terms of finding backup openers and a suitable lower middle-order batter, the duo of Boult and Ferguson should provide enough challenges ahead of the World Cup.



Bangladesh batter Mahmudullah Riyad trained at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday to ramp up preparations for the ODI home series against New Zealand starting on September 21. The 37-year-old was named in the 15-member squad for the first time since March and will be looking to make his point for a place in the Tigers' World Cup squad.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Brook makes it into England World Cup squad

REUTERS

England named batter Harry Brook at the expense of Jason Roy on Sunday in the squad for their 50-over World Cup title defence.

Brook, who was left out of England's provisional World Cup squad, made the cut despite a string of failures in the recent series against New Zealand.

But he was impressive in the Indian Premier League and the Hundred so skipper Jos Buttler has kept faith with the 24-year-old.

David Malan, who plundered 277 runs in three ODIs against New Zealand to be named player of the series, also made the squad, with Roy sidelined due to a back injury.

"We have selected a squad we are confident can go to India and win the World Cup," England men's national selector Luke Wright said in a statement.

"We are blessed with an incredibly strong group of white-ball players which was underlined by the performances in the series win against a very good New Zealand team.

"The strength of the group has meant that we have had to make some tough decisions on world-class players, with Jason Roy missing out and Harry Brook coming into the squad."

England Test captain Ben Stokes also returns having reversed his decision to retire from ODIs.

Joty and Co expect 'best result'

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's cricket team embarked on their Asian Games journey on Sunday night, having undergone a camp in Sylhet where fitness, apart from skills, was high on the agenda. The team left for China's Hangzhou and will play from the quarterfinal stage as one of the top-ranked ICC T20I outfits.

Captain Nigar Sultana Joty said that she and the rest of the team were satisfied with the work they had done in the camp.

"It's important for the team how we prepare. I would say that we have worked extremely hard in the last one month and we will see the result of our hard work going forward. The new faces are not really new at the moment. They played the India series and gained lot of experience. They are here because they are capable. We are in good shape and our goal would be to do well as a team," Joty told the media in Mirpur yesterday. The Tigresses have won silver medals in the

past two Asian Games and for Joty, the feeling of winning a gold medal would be a different experience compared to winning a trophy. Joty, who would be appearing in the Asian Games for the first time, was hopeful of getting the desired result.

"I feel that there is a big difference between winning a trophy and winning a medal. We won the gold medal in the 2019 South Asian Games and I felt that the enjoyment factor was different compared to winning a trophy. I would say that everyone's wish is to get the best result for Bangladesh. Bringing gold would be a big achievement and there are expectations," she said.

The Bangladesh team would play their first game on September 22 against quarterfinal opponents, who would be determined following draw after the initial group stage matches. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are the other sides to have been seeded directly to the quarterfinal stage.



N Korean athletes travel to Asian Games

AFP, Seoul

North Korean athletes have travelled to China for the Asian Games, state media said, signalling an end to the country's more than three-year isolation from global multisport competitions.

The country closed its already-tight borders in early 2020 following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and skipped the Tokyo Olympics, which were pushed back to 2021 because of the coronavirus.

It was then banned from the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, for failing to take part in Tokyo.

But Pyongyang said late Saturday it had sent athletes to the Asian Games, to be held in the city of Hangzhou later this month.

"A DPRK team left here on Sept. 14 to take part in the 19th Asian Games to be held in China," the Korean Central News Agency reported, using the country's official name.

North Koreans are also listed on the Games' website as competing in sports including athletics, gymnastics, basketball, football, boxing and weightlifting.

They were similarly down to compete at a weightlifting tournament in Cuba in June, but failed to show.

Japan tie excites Sabina, Titu

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team captain Sabina Khatun is excited about the prospect of playing against former World champions and Asian Games winners Japan in debut Asian Games appearance IN in Hangzhou, China next week.

The women in red and green would kick off their campaign against the 2011 World Cup winners on Friday, a day before the official inauguration of Asia's biggest sporting extravaganza.

"Personally, I'm very excited about the Japan match because they are one of the top teams in the world and I also supported them during the World Cup. Besides, it will be a huge experience for us," Sabina told reporters during a press conference at the BFF House yesterday, hours before flying out to China.

"Playing against Japan and Vietnam will be new experience which could help us to progress further. It will make the players more passionate to perform better," Sabina added.

Bangladesh will play their second match on September 25 against Vietnam – another World Cup participant – before wrapping up the group campaign against familiar foes Nepal three days later.

Although Nepal (101) are 41 places above Bangladesh in FIFA ranking, the

victory over the Himalayan nation in last year's SAFF Women's Championship and the two draws against them at home this year will give Bangladesh some confidence.

Coach Saiful Bari Titu, who represented the country in the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing as a player, said that beating Nepal will be their main target while



the matches against Japan and Vietnam would be learning experience.

"It will be the first time Bangladesh football team will play against a world champion. It would be a unique experience and a test for us to know our level. But our main target would be to win against Nepal and it would be more than a realistic target," said Titu, who has been given charge of the women's team for the Asian Games following the resignation of long-term coach Golam Rabbani Choton earlier this year.