

TIGERS' CLASS OF '23



‘Indian conditions not a worry for Pakistan’

REUTERS, Lahore

Pakistan captain Babar Azam does not think lack of familiarity with Indian conditions would hurt their bid for a second 50-overs World Cup title as they embark on a rare tour of the neighbouring country on Tuesday.

Bilateral cricket remains suspended between the neighbours, thanks to their soured political relations, and the last time Pakistan toured India was for the T20 World Cup in 2016.

Pakistan players do not feature in the Indian Premier League either, which means most of them would have little knowledge of the conditions they are going to face during the showpiece event beginning on Oct. 5.

In his pre-departure press conference, Babar dismissed suggestions it increased the pressure on his team to do well across the border.

“There’s no such pressure,” the 28-year-old told reporters as his team prepared to leave for India via Dubai.

“Every player keeps himself ready to perform in every condition, in every country.

“Most of us have not played in India but the information we have gathered suggest conditions are going to be similar, except in Chennai maybe where spinners get more help.

“Rest of the venues will have good, sporting tracks.

“I played the 2019 World Cup as a player but this time I’m leading the side. It’s a big honour for me and our effort would be to perform well and bring home the World Cup.”

The difficulty in securing visa for India tour means Pakistan would not get much support from the stands either but Babar was not perturbed.



Shanto offers the sole silver lining

SPORTS REPORTER

Amid all the rumours surrounding the announcement of the World Cup squad, the focus on Bangladesh’s performance in their third and series-deciding encounter against New Zealand took a back seat at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The curiosity was more on whether Tamim Iqbal would be selected for the World Cup squad than how Bangladesh team would perform in their last ODI prior to the fast-approaching showpiece event next month.

However, due to yet another poor batting display, the hosts went on to face a seven-wicket thumping and New Zealand cruised to victory and sealed the series 2-0.

It was Bangladesh’s first series defeat against the Black Caps in fifteen years and the Tigers will thus head into the World Cup without little momentum in their sails.

Stand-in skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who marked his ODI captaincy debut with innings highest score of 76, informed that the team are not too worried over their collective batting form after failing to post 200 in the last two matches.

“Our batsmen didn’t score big runs. Most of us got the starts but no big scores. Think it’d have been different if I’d batted till the end. We needed two big partnerships. Hopefully, next time the batters will take responsibility



SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh:

171 all out in 34.3 overs (Shanto 76, Mahmudullah 21; Milne 4-34, Boult 2-33)

New Zealand:

175 for 3 in 34.5 overs (Young 70, Nicholls 50 not out; Shoriful 2-32)

Result:

New Zealand won by 7 wickets

Player-of-the-match: Will Young

Player-of-the-series: Henry Nicholls

and bat long,” said Shanto after match yesterday.

Bangladesh earlier made four changes to their playing eleven from the previous match. Shanto came in for the first time in the series, alongside Mushfiqur Rahim, Shoriful Islam and Zakir Hossain, with the latter making his ODI debut.

Despite having elected to bat, Bangladesh were struggling at 35 for three inside six overs. Young opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who made the cut in the World Cup squad, scored five while Zakir also fell cheaply.

Shanto, on the other end, after having recovered from a hamstring injury, looked solid as he smashed his fifth ODI fifty to remain the only silver lining in the Tigers’ batting unit.

Shanto also reached a special landmark by becoming the highest Bangladeshi run-getter on ODI captaincy debut, surpassing Aminul Islam Bulbul’s 70-run knock against India in 1998.

New Zealand fast bowler Adam Milne, introduced for the first time in the series, was the pick of the bowlers. He scalped four wickets for 34 runs, while Trent Boult and Cole McConechie picked up two each.

As Bangladesh travel to India for the World Cup on the back of three series defeats this year, regular skipper Shakib Al Hasan and head coach Chandika Hathurusingha will surely need to find better tactics for a side who enjoyed a terrific home record till 2022.

Shanaka retained as Sri Lanka skipper for World Cup

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka retained out-of-form skipper Dasun Shanaka on Tuesday in its 15-member squad for next month’s World Cup in India despite pressure from fans and the media to drop him.

The island nation is still smarting from its ignominious defeat by India at the six-nation Asia Cup finals this month in which they were all out for just 50 runs.

The thrashing on home soil prompted scathing social media attacks on the board and its players, and demands for Shanaka’s sacking.

“Perhaps it’s time Sri Lanka moved on from Shanaka before the country ends up being an absolute joke in the World Cup,” the Daily Mirror said in a scathing editorial last week.

But after much internal debate, the board decided to stick with him and the rest of the team, a Sri Lanka Cricket source told AFP.

Bowling all-rounder Wanidu Hasaranga is still recovering from injury and was not included in the squad but could still play in the tournament if his condition improves, the board said.

The board said in a Friday statement that selectors and officials “were in agreement that the national team is in the right direction towards making further progress”.

It said they were “optimistic that the upcoming World Cup will bring glory to the nation”.

SQUAD

Dasun Shanaka (capt), Kusal Mendis, Kusal Perera, Pathum Nissanka, Dimuth Karunaratne, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Dushan Hemantha, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Kasun Rajitha, Matheesha Pathirana, Lahiru Kumara, Dilshan Madushanka.

Fencers suffer heavy defeat

SPORTS REPORTER FROM HANGZHOU

Despite early promise, Bangladesh fencers Fatema Mujib and Roksana Khatun suffered defeats in all five matches in their respective pools in yesterday’s Asian Games individual sabre events in China.

Fatema fought neck-and-neck with Thailand’s Bandhita Srinulnd in her opening match, losing 5-4 in front of loud spectators in the gallery of a well-decorated Hangzhou Dianzi University Gymnasium. Her following four bouts, however, -- against opponents from Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong -- all turned out to be one-sided affairs, resulting to elimination.

Roksana, meanwhile, performed similarly and a 5-4 defeat against Saudi Arabia’s Alhsna Alhammad in her second match was her best display of the day, as she could offer little resistance against Uzbek, Korean, Singaporean and Saudi Arabian counterparts.

Both Fatema and Roksana’s Asian debuts were distinctly different from their successful show in the 2019 South Asian Games, when the country’s fairly new discipline brought 11 medals, including gold and silver by Fatema and Roksana, respectively.

It was evident that both Fatema and

Roksana started with an attacking approach, forcing opponents on the backfoot, but their technically superior opponents managed to pick the points cleverly.

“I think what I performed at this level today was good as the opponents were better than me,” said Fatema after the match at the mixed zone of the gymnasium.



“Actually, I could not understand the technical instructions of the referee. Perhaps I was not able to make the referee understand and that’s why he did not give me points,” claimed Fatema, who was given four yellow cards and one red card, leading to her losing three points in five matches.

Coach Abu Jahed Chowdhury pointed at the inexperience factor

behind the outcomes.

“We lack international experience. So far, I came to know that each of foreign participants took part in 10 to 20 tournaments prior to competing in the Asian Games, whereas Fatema played only two international tournaments since 2019.”

“Our players are training at home but they don’t have an idea about the outside environment, new rules and footwork, technical positions and how to attack the opponents. These are the areas where we lack.

“If the fencers can go abroad to compete more, then they will have an opportunity to rectify the small mistakes and improve their performances,” added the former national fencer.

Boxer Selim in pre-quarters

Boxer Selim Hossain beat Sri Lankan opponent Rukmal Prasanna 3-2 at the Hangzhou Gymnasium yesterday to move into the pre-quarterfinals of the 51-57kg category, scheduled for September 30.

Selim was ahead of Prasanna following the first two rounds but he lagged behind in the third and final round by three minutes. Selim was eventually declared the winner by three out of five judges.

The ‘Flying Dutchwoman’ retires

AFP, The Hague

Two-time world sprint champion Dafne Schippers, known as the “Flying Dutchwoman”, announced her retirement at the age of 31 on Tuesday, saying she was hanging up her spikes “without regret”.

Schippers won 200m gold at the world championships in Beijing in 2015 and London in 2017. She narrowly missed out on 200m Olympic gold in Rio.

“The race stops here,” Schippers wrote on Instagram. “Today, I have decided to take my life off track to pursue and embrace whatever comes next.”

Schippers had been blighted by injury in her later career and her last competitive medal came when she won silver in the 60m at the 2019 European indoor championships.

Her time of 21.63sec in Beijing remains a European record and makes her the sixth fastest performer in history.

“As an athlete, you always know this day will come, that at one point, your career will be a moment in time, a collection of memories and hopefully medals,” Schippers said.

Starc, Maxwell ‘on track’ for return

AFP, Rajkot

Australia pace bowler Mitchell Starc said on Tuesday he and all-rounder Glenn Maxwell remain close to match fitness ahead of the World Cup.

Starc and Maxwell, both returning from injuries, took part in the team’s training ahead of the third one-day international against India in Rajkot on Wednesday.

“It’s on track,” said Starc on his recovery, on the eve of the final match of the series already won by India.

Starc suffered a shoulder injury in this year’s Ashes, followed by a groin injury.

“The goal is to play tomorrow but that will depend how today goes,” he said. “The priority being the World Cup, and not compromising on that.”

Starc, a left-arm quick, said they have three matches before their World Cup opener against India on October 8 in Chennai.

“It’s been somewhat of a different lead-up with the South African tour, the three-match series here and the two warm-up games,” he said.

Maxwell had a good hit in the nets as he recovers from an ankle injury, and Starc said the batting all-rounder will be an X-factor for Australia in the World Cup.

“He is on track as well, but I am not sure (about) his particular timeline, but no doubt he will be looking to make an impact as soon as he gets his chance,” said Starc.