



What to WATCH

T SPORTS AND GTV  
ICC Cricket World Cup  
England vs New Zealand  
Live from 2:30 pm  
SONY SPORTS 1

UEFA Europa League  
Marseille vs Brighton  
Live from 10:45 pm  
Liverpool vs St.Gilloise  
Live from 1:00 am (Friday)



Defending World Cup champions England will get going against last edition's finalists New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's biggest cricket stadium, in Ahmedabad today. England skipper Jos Buttler trains at the venue alongside his spinners Adil Rashid and Moeen Ali. Meanwhile, with Tim Southee missing, the Blackcaps will rely heavily on Trent Boult to give them a solid start with the new ball. PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

- It's all even in ODIs between England and New Zealand as the two sides have 44 wins each in 95 meetings. While four matches have produced no results, three contests ended in a tie, including the 2019 World Cup final which England won on the basis of boundary count.
- The two sides are tied five-all in World Cup meetings.
- England have dominated proceedings in their last five encounters against New Zealand. Three results have gone their way, while New Zealand clinched one. The other was a tie in the 2019 World Cup final.
- Former New Zealand batter Ross Taylor has accumulated the most number of runs, 1424, in England-New Zealand contests. Among active players, Kane Williamson and Joe Root sit third and fourth with 983 and 971 runs, respectively.
- While New Zealand's Martin Guptill's unbeaten 189 stands as the highest score in England-New Zealand contests, Jonny Bairstow's 106 in the 2019 World Cup against the Blackcaps is the highest individual score amongst the two sides in World Cups.

## Pressure inspires Shakib 'to do better'

SPORTS REPORTER

International Cricket Council held the Captains' Day event yesterday at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad — where the World Cup kicks off with holders England squaring off against New Zealand today.

Eoin Morgan, the former England who lifted the last ODI World Cup, and India's Ravi Shastri hosted the event.

When Shastri pitched the question to Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan on whether it puts extra pressure since he is both captain and a key player, Shakib stated that he thrived under pressure.

"No, not really [extra pressure]. I think it always inspires me to do better. Personally, I never looked at any stats as long as I'm contributing for my team. Team comes first, that's the motto throughout my career and that's how I want to go about it," said Shakib.

Shakib felt that preparations had been good enough to match the expectations back home.

"Yeah, I thought we prepared well. If we talk about the last four years since the 2019 World Cup, we are probably the third or fourth team in the qualifiers point system. So, we have done really well as a group.

"Now it's time for us to put on a good show in this World Cup and I think our team is ready and also the country is expecting a little more than what we did previously," Shakib concluded.



## Injury worries for 2019 finalists ahead of opener

AFP, Ahmedabad

Defending champions England and New Zealand, the two finalists of a blockbuster 2019 World Cup, are having to deal with injury issues as they prepare to take the field in the 2023 World Cup opener at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad today.

England star Ben Stokes could miss the game against New Zealand due to a hip injury with captain Jos Buttler admitting Wednesday "it's not the time to take risks".

"He (Stokes) has got a slight niggle in his hip. Fingers crossed that it'll be good news for us," Buttler told reporters.

He added: "It's not the time to take big risks at the start of the tournament. It's going to be a long tournament."

Harry Brook could be included in the team for his seventh ODI since his 50-over debut in January if Stokes misses out.

While England will be waiting on Stokes, the Kiwis will definitely be without two of their key starters.

New Zealand's stand-in skipper Tom Latham confirmed that pacer Tim Southee is set to miss

today's game and potentially some of the following matches due to an injured thumb while it was already declared earlier that the Kiwis' regular skipper Kane Williamson would miss the game due to a knee injury.

Williamson played the team's first warm-up purely as a batsman and then fielded as well in the second warm-up, but Southee is still waiting to get into action.

"No Kane and no Tim as well," Latham told reporters ahead of the opener.

"He (Southee) is unavailable for selection. He is recovering nicely, it has been nearly two weeks post-surgery, so fingers crossed he keeps recovering.

"It's a bit of a day-by-day process. But fingers crossed he'll be available sooner rather than later as well."

The Kiwis are still hunting for their first World Cup title after making eight semifinal appearances in 12 editions and both finals in the last two editions.

They come into the tournament as a strong candidate to go all the way but most pundits are still handing the favourites tag to either India or England.



## Kings trio to miss Maldives ties

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national team's key players Topu Barman, Anisur Rahman Zico and Sheikh Morsalin have been omitted from the two upcoming World Cup prequalifying matches against Maldives.

Bangladesh will play away in Male on Oct 12 and host the Maldivians in Dhaka five days later.

At a press conference yesterday, BFF president Kazi Salahuddin hinted that the three players may not be considered due to their suspension by the club over disciplinary breach.

Later, their omission was confirmed by the BFF's press release adding 12 others to the squad.

It has been learnt that head coach Javier Cabrera did not want them in the camp.

## 2030 WC across 3 continents

REUTERS

Morocco, Spain and Portugal have been named hosts of the 2030 soccer World Cup, while Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay will host the opening matches to mark the tournament's centenary, world soccer body FIFA said on Wednesday.

The joint bid from Morocco, Portugal and Spain was the sole candidate to host the tournament. The inaugural World Cup in 1930 was held in Uruguay and won by the hosts.

It marks the first time the World Cup will be staged across three continents and six countries.

"The FIFA Council unanimously agreed that the sole candidacy will be the combined bid of Morocco, Portugal, and Spain, which will host the event in 2030 and qualify automatically from the existing slot allocation," FIFA said in a statement.

## Cricketers hold nerve to edge Malaysia

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

"Don't disappoint us. We skipped our exam to watch your game," one of seven Bangladeshi students cried out from the gallery of the Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng cricket ground in Hangzhou yesterday when Bangladesh top-order batters were returning to the dressing room one after another in their quarterfinals fixture against Malaysia.

Bangladesh were three down inside three overs after electing to bat first but they eventually sealed a two-run victory in what turned out to be a nail-biter.

Chasing a 117-run target, Malaysia almost snatched a memorable win as they needed four off the final over with set batter Virandeep Singh at the crease and with wickets in hand.

However, a brilliant last over from Afif Hossain resulted in only two runs, also led to the wicket of Virandeep, who struck 52 off 39 balls, as the Saif Hassan-led side survived a major scare.

Earlier, Saif and Afif consolidated innings with a crucial 39-run stand for the fourth-wicket. After Afif departed for a quickfire

14-ball 23, Saif went on to play a captain's knock (50 not out) and had able company in Shahadat Hossain (21) and Jaker Ali (14) as Bangladesh posted 116 for five after 20 overs.

"I think we managed to hold our nerve and that's why we won the match," said Saif, who credited Afif for his all-round show.

### A bleak day for kabaddi

Bangladesh kabaddi team's bid to regain Asian Games medal after 17 years was all but dashed following a 31-18 defeat to Chinese Taipei, who confirmed the semifinals with three successive wins from Pool A which also included one against a superior India.

After two defeats in three matches, Bangladesh, who had beaten Chinese Taipei 42-28 in March in Dhaka, are almost out of the semifinal race.

"We were confident to beat Chinese Taipei in the way we beat Japan and we were on the course till the first half," said captain Tuhin Tarafder, referring to the point where the scoreboard read 10-8 in Chinese Taipei's favour in the first half.

Tuhin and Co managed to tie the score, 11-11, in the second half but could not carry the momentum.



Continuing his dream start to life at Real Madrid, Jude Bellingham assisted the first and then scored the second with a scintillating solo run in their 3-2 win over Napoli in their Champions League Group C clash in Naples on Tuesday. Meanwhile, at Old Trafford, Manchester United lost by an identical margin to Galatasaray as Wilfried Zaha got revenge on the club that did not give him a proper chance, capitalising on hesitant defending from Diogo Dalot before finding the net. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM