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Bangladesh all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz's (R) promotion to the top-order has paid dividends for the Tigers in recent matches. Meanwhile, England's Sam Curran has become a key figure for the Three Lions with the new ball, picking up wickets in the Powerplay.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Liton backed to bounce back

- » Past results suggest that England are overwhelming favourites in their match-up against Bangladesh as they have won 19 of their 24 ODIs against the Tigers, who have clinched five matches.
- » When it comes to World Cup encounters, it's an even two-all tie between England and Bangladesh. The Tigers managed to pull off a memorable victory to knock England out of the tournament in 2015 and got the better of the Three Lions in 2011.
- » Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, with 17 matches each, have played the highest number of ODIs against England. Mahmudullah Riyad sits second with 16.
- » Shakib and Mushfiqur have featured in all four contests against England in World Cups since the first meeting between the two teams in 2007.
- » Jason Roy's 121-ball 153 in the 2019 World Cup is the highest individual score amongst batters from both teams, while Shakib's 119-ball 121 in the same match is the best score by a Bangladesh batter in a World Cup match versus England.
- » Shakib, with 20 wickets in 17 matches, leads the wicket-takers' chart in England-Bangladesh contests. England leggie Adil Rashid is just one wicket behind having played only seven matches.
- » Bangladesh's in-form batter Najmul Hossain Shanto needs 33 runs to reach 1000 ODI runs.
- » Jonny Bairstow will be playing in his 100th ODI today.
- » In the five completed ODIs played in Dharamshala in the past 10 years, four of the matches have been won comfortably by teams batting second.

MAZHAR UDDIN from Dharamshala

Despite having cruised to a six-wicket victory against Afghanistan in their World Cup opener, Bangladesh will have their work cut out against a somewhat wounded England in Dharamshala today.

The opening pair's ability to deliver a decent start is still a concern for the Tigers after Liton Das and Tanzid Hasan both failed against Afghanistan while chasing a paltry target at the same venue.

While young Tanzid may be given the benefit of the doubt for being a newbie on the international circuit, the team management will undoubtedly be hoping for his experienced opening partner to fire soon.

Liton -- who had been a prolific run-getter for Bangladesh last year but only averages 23.40 in 18 games so far in 2023 -- sat out the Tigers' optional training session yesterday; possibly to focus on his mental game ahead of the high-voltage encounter against the defending champions.

That the stylish right-hander has been lacking in confidence was

evident in his batting approach against the Afghans on Saturday. Eventually, he brought his downfall as he charged down the track to seamer Fazalhaq Farooqi, only to get an inside-edge which resulted in getting him bowled after a subdued 18-ball 13.

The Tigers team management, however, are keeping their faith in Liton intact. Bangladesh spin-bowling coach, Rangana Herath, is optimistic about the 28-year-old to bounce back strongly.

"Like Liton Das, everybody can go through a kind of a rough patch. So, the only thing is how you can come back strongly," Herath told the media yesterday.

Given the strength of the bowling unit in comparison to Afghanistan, the English pace unit, led by Mark Wood, Sam Curran, and Chris Woakes, will undoubtedly pose a stronger threat to the Bangladesh frontline batters.

England bat deep and, more often than not, stay in pole position to score big and at a brisk pace, irrespective of opponents. Herath stated the need for "proper partnerships" upfront -- similar to the 131-run stand by Liton (61) and Tanzid (84) against Sri Lanka in team's first and penultimate World Cup warm-up match -- that would lead to a big total against a side who began their title defence with a humbling defeat against New Zealand.

Liton's talent is undeniable, but his lack of consistency is something he would like to improve considerably. With plenty at stake for him and Bangladesh in the apex event, it is now or never for Liton to rise to the occasion with a statement knock and make his presence felt on the grandest stage; like he did against the West Indies in the 2019 edition.



Aussies need mindset shift against spin: Finch

REUTERS, Bengaluru

Australia's batsmen lacked aggression against India's world class spin attack during Sunday's six-wicket defeat by the hosts in their World Cup opener and they must change their mindset to be more effective, former captain Aaron Finch said.

A spin-heavy attack of Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin collectively took six wickets and gave away 104 runs in 30 overs to dismiss five-times champions Australia for 199, before India sealed victory after a nervy start.

Finch, part of the Australian team who won the 50-overs trophy in 2015 and led them to Twenty20 World Cup success in 2021, said they should not have allowed the trio to bowl how they wanted to on a helpful Chennai wicket.

"Part of it comes down to how India bowled spin, but we also need to look at the way Australia batted," Finch, 36, wrote in a column for the ICC website.



"There was a clear plan among the group to be proactive, to try to limit dot balls and rotate strike against what they knew would be a world-class group of spinners.

"There was a bit of a lack of aggression from the Australian batters. They will be disappointed by the intent they showed and the fact that they weren't able to put any pressure back on India.

"It needs a mindset shift, to look to be on the front foot a little more and take some calculated risks."

Finch said the defeat was not "fatal" as Australia prepare to face South Africa on Thursday.

"The mood around Australia is still optimistic. With a nine-game group stage, you can afford a little slip-up here and there and it's not fatal,"

Finch said.

"In the Twenty20 World Cup, we found that losing one game is enough and the margins are so fine.

"Here you can cope with a couple of losses, you just don't want them to be too big for net run rate."



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New Zealand's Mitchell Santner produced an all-round display against the Netherlands in the World Cup at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad yesterday. The left-hander's 17-ball 36, laced with three fours and two maximums, gave the Kiwis a boost in the latter stage of their innings and saw them finish with 322 for seven in 50 overs. Santner then registered the first fiver of this World Cup with the ball in hand to see New Zealand to a comfortable win.

PHOTO: AFP

England hope for a better showing

SPORTS REPORTER from Dharamshala

The poor outfield of the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamshala was the focal point of both Bangladesh and England's pre-match press conferences on Monday ahead of their crucial World Cup clash today.

Bangladesh's spin bowling coach Rangana Herath downplayed the concerns regarding the outfield condition, saying he "was happy with it". However, from England's perspective, it appeared to be a big issue with their skipper Jos Buttler not shying away from labelling it as "poor".

Both teams have an interesting history in World Cups, with two wins for each in the four meet-ups between the two.

On pen and paper, defending champions England are the outright favourites for today's clash. However, England skipper Buttler still stayed guarded.

"We've had some excellent games against Bangladesh, a very good team and we respect every team that we play. And in World Cup matches, you expect really tough opponents and tough fixtures," said Buttler at the pre-match press conference yesterday.

The game against the Tigers will be a crucial one for England, especially after a massive nine-wicket defeat to 2019 runners-up New Zealand in their opener saw their net run-rate take a plunge.

"Both teams have only played one match, so we're very confident as a team. We know we can play better than we did in the last game and we look forward to putting in a good performance tomorrow," Buttler was confident of putting in a better display today.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, are brimming with confidence after beginning their World Cup campaign with a comprehensive six-wicket win over Afghanistan at the same venue two days ago. Meanwhile, England's former World Cup-



winning skipper Eion Morgan called Bangladesh "a tricky side" when he interacted with the media yesterday.

According to Morgan, the relatively less experienced campaigners stepping up for Bangladesh is a good sign.

"Look, historically, when they won games, they looked up to their bigger players. But one of the positives against Afghanistan was that their youngsters stood up. The likes of [Najmul Hossain] Shanto and [Mehedi Hasan] Miraz really took the pressure off," Morgan, who saw his side out of the 2015 World Cup at the hands of the Tigers.

Morgan also hailed Shakib's leadership qualities, mentioning that it could be a big factor for the Tigers against the defending champions today.

"Normally, [in Bangladesh's case] it's left to the more experienced players as it was a tricky chase [against Afghanistan]. It was pretty similar to the game between India and Australia where the two experienced players took the responsibility and won the game. That will help the like of Shakib's performance and his leadership in tomorrow's [today] game if they continue to stand up," he said.

Gill to miss Afghan game

AFP, New Delhi

India batter Shubman Gill has not recovered from dengue fever and will miss his team's second World Cup match against Afghanistan, officials said Monday.

Gill sat out the hosts' six-wicket victory against Australia in Chennai on Sunday and will stay back in the southern Indian city "under the supervision of the medical team".

"Team India batter Shubman Gill will not be travelling with the team to Delhi on 9th October 2023," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a statement.

Rohit Sharma's India, one of the favourites to win the World Cup, will face Afghanistan at New Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium on Wednesday.

The team will then leave for Ahmedabad for the hotly-anticipated fixture against arch-rivals Pakistan on Saturday.