



'Soumya, Afif should be scoring tons'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are slated to play New Zealand at home right after the ongoing World Cup but despite some of the national prospects managed to get some runs in the ongoing National Cricket League (NCL), more is expected.

All four first-round NCL matches yielded results with Dhaka Metro and Chattogram Division claiming wins over Sylhet Division and Barishal Division, respectively, on Day 4 yesterday.

Afif struck a 50-ball 63 in the first innings while Soumya Sarkar and Anamul Haque got fifties in the second innings for Khulna Division during their massive 400-run win over hosts Rajshahi on Saturday. Khulna's Mohammad Mithun got runs in both the innings, following up a fifty with a ton in the final innings.

However, national selector Habibul Bashar was still not satisfied with the contributions of some of the national prospects like Afif and Soumya.

"Actually, they need to score big. Scoring a fluent 50-60 runs doesn't help, although the approach is fine. You can score at 100 to 120 strike-rate or even 50 but fifty or 60-run knocks aren't helping. The likes of Soumya and Afif should be scoring tons because if they can't score hundreds

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Maheesh Theekshana and the rest of the Sri Lanka bowlers need to step up and back their batters, who have been in good touch, when they face a struggling Australia in Lucknow today. Meanwhile, Australia will once again hope for Mitchell starc to give them early breakthroughs and hopefully end their losing streak.

PHOTO: AFP

AUSTRALIA-SRI LANKA STATS

▶ Australia hold the upper hand against Sri Lanka in ODIs as they have won 63 matches against the Lankans' 35 in 102 meetings, with four matches seeing no results.

▶ Sri Lanka have not beaten Australia in seven attempts at the World Cup since they claimed the title in 1996.

▶ Captain Kusal Mendis may opt to use off-spinner Dhananjaya de Silva upfront with the new ball as he has claimed Australia opener David Warner four times in ODIs, the most number of times he has dismissed any batter.

▶ Former Sri Lanka batter Kumar Sangakara scored the most runs—1675 in 43 matches— amongst batter from both sides in Sri Lanka-Australia contests. Among active players, David Warner with 779 runs in 22 matches has scored the most.

▶ Former Australia captain Aaron Finch scored 153 against Sri Lanka in the 2019 World Cup which stands as the highest individual score in Australia-Sri Lanka contests in World Cups.

'Need to start winning quick'

Winless Australia, Sri Lanka meet today

AGENCIES

Australia captain Pat Cummins admitted Sunday the five-time champions have "got to start winning and start winning quick" to rescue their faltering World Cup campaign, but his statement also stands true for Sri Lanka, who they face today.

Australia are ninth in the standings after they were beaten in both their matches so far, in Chennai and Lucknow, respectively. They play Sri Lanka in Lucknow on Monday, with the island nation at number seven on the table and also seeking their first win.

In their first two matches, the Aussies suffered a six-wicket loss against hosts India and a 134-run thumping by South Africa, their heaviest defeat at a World Cup.

Several Australian players have played in the country and made a name for themselves in the Indian Premier League, a two-month tournament held during the Indian summer.

But Cummins said playing a T20 game was very different from the one-day international format and that his side has been struggling to read the surfaces in this mega event.

"It's a tricky one, ODI cricket compared to T20s - played over half the game in daylight, half at night," Cummins told reporters ahead of Monday's clash against Sri Lanka.

"Yeah, (we) find these wickets hard to read as well. Sometimes they look terrible and they play beautifully, and the opposite. Sometimes they look flat and they end up

spinning. So it is tough. You've just got to adapt on the fly sometimes."

Despite boasting the batting firepower of David Warner and Steve Smith, they have yet to post a total of 200.

"We're obviously 0-2, so we've got to start winning and start winning quick," Cummins added.

"Every game now becomes almost like

Had the catch been taken, India, chasing just 200 to win, would have been teetering at 20-4.

It got worse against South Africa where five chances went down.

Needing 312 to win, Australia slumped to 70-6 and were reduced to a damage limitation exercise in an effort to shore up their run rate.

On Monday, they tackle fellow winless side Sri Lanka who have had no problems scoring runs -- 326 against South Africa and 344 in the game with Pakistan.

Unfortunately for the 1996 champions, they conceded a World Cup record 428 to the Proteas while Pakistan's pursuit to win by six wickets was the highest successful chase in tournament history.

Sri Lanka's problems are not only limited to their bowlers not being able to complement the batters' efforts as they have seen their regular skipper Dasun Shanaka's World Cup campaign end due to a thigh injury. Sri Lanka, who called up Chamika Karunaratne as Shanaka's replacement, will now be led by in-form Kusal Mendis.

Sri Lanka came out on top 3-2 in a five-match series with Australia on home soil in June last year.

However, Australia eased to a comfortable 87-run win when the sides met at the 2019 World Cup at The Oval.

"The opportunity now is we've got some teams we haven't played for a while that we've had a lot of success against and we can be really confident when we go out there," Cummins said.

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a final. You've got to win just about all of them."

The figures so far make for grim reading for Australia.

None of their batters have made a half-century with Smith top-scoring with 46 against India and Marnus Labuschagne matching that modest mark in the rout by South Africa.

They have also been hamstrung by their fielding performances.

Against India, Virat Kohli was dropped on 12 before he went on to make a match-winning 85.



Rahmanullah Gurbaz set the tone for Afghanistan's historic 69-run World Cup win over defending champions England in Delhi yesterday. Gurbaz looked to be in the mood for something special, reaching his third ODI fifty off just 33 balls. Unfortunately, the right-hander could not reach three figures for the sixth time in the format as he was made run out after a 57-ball 80. Afghanistan managed to capitalise on the whirlwind start, posting 284 all-out in 49.5 overs before bundling out England for 215 in 40.3 overs.

PHOTO: AFP

Liton's outburst in calm and quiet Pune

SPORTS REPORTER from Pune

The Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune will host its first match of the ongoing ICC ODI World Cup on October 19 when the home team India will take on Bangladesh in their fourth fixture of the tournament.

Both teams are at opposite ends in terms of mood as Rohit Sharma's India sit at the top of the table with three straight wins against Australia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, while Shakib Al Hasan's Bangladesh have suffered consecutive drubbings at the hands of defending champions England and then New Zealand after winning their first match against the Afghans.

Shakib and Co touched down in Pune on Saturday after an almost 1000 km journey by air and will get a couple of days off before they start their training on October 17.

The name of the city derives from the Sanskrit word Punyagara, which means 'city of virtue'. While India can clothe themselves with the calm of the city, Bangladesh seem to have not been able to embrace much of what the name of the city stands for. After a disappointing loss on his

birthday, Bangladesh opener Liton Das on Saturday failed to keep his on-field rut hidden as it spilt over off-field on keen media personnel present at the Conrad Hotel during the team's day off.

While a few of the cricketers, including Taskin Ahmed, Towhid Hridoy, and Mahmudullah Riyad greeted the eager media, Liton's behaviour towards the big contingent of media members from Bangladesh rather reflected the 'Tigers' frustrating performance on the field.

"Why are the media here? Why are they taking my photo?" Liton vented at the hotel security staff yesterday.

Following the incident, the hotel security requested the keen journalists to leave the hotel saying that the players were not comfortable with their presence.

Despite the other teams welcoming behaviour towards the media, Bangladesh, on the other hand, have done quite the opposite.

Shakib Al Hasan and Co have barely interacted with the country's

media and Liton's attitude towards them suggests that Bangladesh have gone into their shell following heavy defeats against England and New Zealand owing to dismal performances on the field and knowingly or unknowingly, as so often is the case, they are letting it affect their off-field duties as well.

Skipper Shakib left the field before the New Zealand match ended as he suffered a strain in his left quadriceps while batting in the first innings on Friday.

He completed his full quota of 10 overs and went for a scan, the report of which was due on Saturday. But even

with something as straight forward as that, the team management put out an update leaving out the details of his condition, saying the 36-year-old would be under observation.

As things stand in the tournament so far, India will most likely award its fans in Pune a win to celebrate, and as for Bangladesh, who are already under the cosh, would have to play out of their skin to churn out a result in their favour.



here, how would they do that in Tests?" Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

These two players in particular have been in and out of the national team. While the Duke ball used in the NCL swings around more and provides a tougher challenge to the batters, the selectors believe that big runs in the NCL can prepare one for a better showing in the international circuit.

"The message [to score big runs] is already there and actually they don't have to be given because they are mature enough. When you are not in the team, you need to score," Bashar asserted.

Given how Bangladesh have been struggling for consistency in their batting, it is no surprise that the national team selector demanded more from the batters in the domestic circuit.

"Yes, we would be needing players [for the New Zealand series]. Mominul [Haque] played a good knock, so did Zakir [Hasan]," Bashar said when asked if the national team would be needing players for the Tests against the Kiwis right after the World Cup.

The Tigers are scheduled to hosts New Zealand for two Tests, with the first match starting on November 28 in Sylhet. The second and final Test will be from December 6 in Mirpur.

On the bowling front, however, things looked a bit better in the NCL first round. Bashar, who attended the game in Sylhet where Dhaka Metro won, saw Rezaur Rahman Raja's return to action with a four-fer following his injury.

"Raja actually bowled very well but Khaled [Ahmed] seemed a bit flat. Raja looks fit and one good aspect is that he bowled well with the older ball, which I feel is one of his main strengths. He was bowling fast which was what we wanted to see. Overall the bowling was ok," he said.

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