



Akbar ton resurrects Emerging side

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a batting slump on Tuesday, Bangladesh Emerging cricket team made a strong recovery, thanks to former U-19 World Cup winning captain Akbar Ali's maiden first-class ton against Sri Lanka Emerging side on day two of the second four-day game in Dambulla yesterday.

Put into bat, the Emerging side were in a disarray at 54 for five before Akbar's lower middle-order resistance resurrected the visitors.

Akbar, who was unbeaten on 62 overnight, produced a 96-run partnership with number seven, Rakibul Hasan, who struck 36 off 119 deliveries, before following up with an 85-run stand with number eight, Hasan Murad.

Murad departed for a 135-ball 27 and Bangladesh innings folded for 251, with Akbar the final wicket to fall, following his 202-ball 129.

"This will be a first-class ton since it's the Emerging side. I talked to the match referee who also said that since it's an unofficial Test, it's a first-class game," selector Abdur Razzak, who is with the side in Sri Lanka, informed The Daily Star.

Akbar has not produced a ton in domestic first-class competitions yet but the rear-guard effort impressed Razzak.

"We saw an astonishing ton. I can't really express in words given the slump we had. From there on, our last four batters played 450 to 490 deliveries. Akbar was outstanding.

Sri Lanka's 23-year-old right-arm pacer Chamika Gunasekara, who bagged all six wickets on the opening day, bagged three more wickets yesterday to finish with nine for 58 in 19.5 overs.

The hosts reached 81 for three before bad light stopped play yesterday afternoon.

Saudi 'ready' for 2034 World Cup

AFP, Doha

Saudi Arabia is prepared to host the 2034 World Cup in summer or winter, its football chief told AFP, after the oil giant became the sole bidder for the tournament.

"Of course, we are ready for all possibilities," Saudi Arabian Football Federation president Yasser al-Misheal said late on Tuesday at the Asian Football Confederation awards in Doha.

Saudi Arabia's apparently successful bid, just 27 days after announcing it, comes less than a year after neighbouring Qatar held the first winter World Cup, a decision that forced a pause to league competitions in Europe.

Summers in the desert kingdom can touch 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit), temperatures that would be considered dangerous for football and likely too hot for fans to be outside.

"Today there are many new technologies that help you with cooling or adding air conditioners in stadiums, in addition to the fact that there are many cities in the kingdom that enjoy a very wonderful atmosphere in the summer," Misheal said.

What to WATCH

T SPORTS AND GTV

ICC cricket World Cup

India vs Sri Lanka

Live from 2:30 pm

- India and Sri Lanka have faced each other 167 times in ODIs. India hold the upper hand with 98 wins against the Lankans' 57, with 11 matches producing no results and one encounter ending in a tie.
- It's an even 4-4 record between the two teams when it comes to World Cup encounters, with one match seeing no results.
- India have faced Sri Lanka on three occasions at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai and have a 2-1 record against the Lankans, including a six-wicket win in the 2011 World Cup final.
- India have won 11 of their 20 matches at the venue and lost nine. On eight of those wins, the Men in Blue have come out on top while chasing.
- Sri Lanka's top run-getter in the tournament so far, Sadeera Samarawickrama with 331 runs in six matches, is 54 runs away from completing 1000 ODI runs.
- India skipper Rohit Sharma is his side's leading run scorer in the tournament with 398 runs in six matches and boasts two double centuries in ODIs against the Lankans.

Lankans 'ready' for high-flying India

AGENCIES

India can lock in their spot in the knockout stages with victory over a Sri Lanka outfit needing to upset the hosts to keep their own hopes of progress alive at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.

India are flying high as the only undefeated side after six comprehensive triumphs and are sitting pretty in top spot on the standings and on the brink of locking in their place in the knockout stage.

A seventh consecutive victory will ensure India are part of the top four at the end of the tournament and allow them to fine-tune their line-up while also eyeing a first-place finish.

Sri Lanka were tipped to be one of the surprise packets of the tournament after powering into the final of the recent Asia Cup on home soil, though the crushing loss to India in that decider will surely remain in the back of their minds.

That defeat to India in the Asia Cup final will add to the team's "motivation" today, coach Chris Silverwood said Wednesday.

The 1996 champions were bundled out for only 50 when batting first in that match as Mohammed Siraj took 6/21, while India raced to the target in only 6.1 overs and with all 10 wickets in hand.

"I'd rather hope that the defeat in the

Asia Cup would give more motivation to the boys to come out and obviously fight tomorrow, show plenty of spirit and get stuck in to the Indian side," Silverwood told reporters.

The Sri Lankans come into the contest with just two wins in six matches and a previous loss to Afghanistan.

beat them at the Wankhede Stadium to lift the trophy.

"The boys are very aware of the history, to be honest. Obviously, players do talk about past history of their team as well and the results that they've had," said Silverwood.

"But let's be honest, it's a great stadium. And when you stand out in the middle, you get goosebumps. There's plenty of things out there to motivate them to go perform in front of what will be a packed house."

Sri Lanka showed glimpses of their brand of cricket in their eight-wicket win over defending champions England last week before they stumbled to defeat against Afghanistan.

The Afghans bowled out Sri Lanka for 241, a total they achieved with seven wickets and 28 balls to spare.

Sri Lanka's hopes of reaching the semifinals are hanging by a thread and a victory on Thursday is crucial to their hopes.

"All of us were very disappointed the other night after that result. That's not to take anything away from Afghanistan," Silverwood said.

"We had a very good chat in the dressing room afterwards, addressed some of the issues that we felt we had and then we've come here and we're trying to put that right in practice now. So, we'll be ready for tomorrow [today]."



India have lived up to their billing of tournament favourites with six wins in as many games and their latest thrashing of defending champions England.

"They're a very good side, we know that. We've seen them play some superb cricket this tournament so far. But I think it's a good opportunity for our boys to show what they're made of as well," Silverwood added.

Sri Lanka also return to the scene of the 2011 final when M.S. Dhoni's India

WORLD CUP TIDBITS

Proteas make a plethora of records

A high-flying South Africa made several records with unstoppable Quinton de Kock being at the center of most during a World Cup game against New Zealand in Pune yesterday.

De Kock became the first batter at this tournament to score 500 runs and also went equal with Kumar Sangakkara at second for the highest number of centuries in one edition of the World Cup.

Having started the day needing just 69 more runs to pass 500 for the tournament, De Kock went on to smash his fourth ton of the World Cup, a 114-ball 116. Powered by a ton from De Kock and another 118-ball 133 from Rassie van der Dussen, South Africa amassed 357 for four.

Only India's Rohit Sharma, who hit five centuries in the 2019 World

Cup, has hit more tons in a single edition. Sri Lanka's Sangakkara also hit four centuries in 2015.

De Kock makes it rain sixes

De Kock also made another record yesterday. The left-handed opener hit three maximums and 10 boundaries during his knock against the Kiwis, and with it, he surpassed Australia's Adam Gilchrist (19 sixes) to become the wicketkeeper-batter to have hit most sixes (22 sixes) in World Cups.

De Kock soars to the top

De Kock also surpassed the likes of Sangakkara and Gilchrist to score the most runs by a wicketkeeper in a single edition of the World Cup.

De Kock has now scored 545 runs in seven games at a staggering average of 77.85.

Only Sangakkara and Gilchrist are the two other wicketkeepers who have had a better outing with the willow in a World Cup. Sangakkara ended as the second-highest run-getter in the 2015 World Cup when the left-handed batter scored 541 runs in seven matches at an average of 108.20. Gilchrist had scored a total of 453 runs in the 2007 World Cup.

Proteas on top of the six-pile

It was the fifth time that South Africa surpassed the 300-run mark as a team in the tournament. The only two times they failed to score more than 300 were during a shock 38-run defeat to the Netherlands and when they edged Pakistan by a wicket during a 270-run chase.

Hitting the 300-mark almost constantly meant South Africa dealt mostly in sixes. And it is reflected by the fact that the Proteas now hold the record for most sixes hit by a team in a single edition of the World Cup.

South Africa have hit a total of 82 sixes so far in this tournament. They surpassed England's 76 sixes in the 2019 edition.



South Africa batter Rassie van der Dussen raises his bat after reaching a century against New Zealand in their World Cup fixture at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune yesterday. Van der Dussen scored 133 off 118 deliveries, his innings featuring nine fours and five sixes, as the Proteas amassed 357 for four in 50 overs. Quinton de Kock also hit a century, scoring 114 off 116 deliveries.

PHOTO: AFP