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- Pakistan have 60 wins against New Zealand's 51 in 115 ODIs. One contest ended in a tie while three matches produced no results.
- Pakistan won five of the eight ODIs played against New Zealand this year and have a 4-1 record in their last five meetings. All eight matches were played in Pakistan.
- Pakistan boast a 7-2 advantage against the Blackcaps in World Cup encounters.
- Both teams have never faced off against each other at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru but have played at the venue before. New Zealand lost all of their three matches, while Pakistan had two losses and a win at the venue.
- New Zealand will look to put a halt to their skid after losing three matches on the trot. On the other hand, Pakistan were able to keep their semifinal hopes alive after ending a four-match losing streak with a win against Bangladesh.
- Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman averages 59.60, having amassed 833 runs in 16 matches against New Zealand. His impressive record includes a hatrick of centuries, including an unbeaten 180, against the Blackcaps earlier this year.

KIWIS LOOK to 'do the job' against Babar and Co

AGENCIES

An early elimination final for Pakistan as a defeat to New Zealand today would all but end their semifinal hopes, while the Black Caps need to snap a three-match losing streak to get their campaign back on track at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.

New Zealand would have entered this match at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru as a clear favourite just one week ago, but some injury concerns in the Kiwi camp and a form turnaround from Pakistan means it's difficult to determine who will emerge as the winner.

With question marks surrounding the fitness of key quicks Lockie Ferguson and Matt Henry, New Zealand have called on the services of proven pacer Kyle Jamieson and the tall right-armar may be considered for this match should the Black Caps attempt to include him as a replacement player.

Skipper Kane Williamson will be monitored as he continues to recover from his thumb concern, while Pakistan look more settled now with the return of opener Fakhar Zaman to their line-up.

Fakhar torched Bangladesh with a stylish half-century last start and can often be relied upon to get Pakistan off to a fast start alongside the reliable Abdullah Shafique.

It will be interesting to see whether Pakistan include another specialist bowler against New Zealand, or continue to call on Iftikhar Ahmed to perform with the ball as he has done reasonably well over the last few games.

Pakistan will be hoping their quicks -- led by freshly crowned No.1 ranked ODI bowler Shaheen Afridi -- can put a massive dent in New Zealand's top order and this battle will go a long way in determining

before their last game against South Africa which they lost by 190 runs.

"A number of guys have got to get through fitness tests and pass them and we probably won't know till tonight and tomorrow morning how they pull up. We back everyone within our squad to have success and do a job for the team," said Mitchell.

India have already wrapped up one of the semifinal places and South Africa are virtually assured of also making the last four.

That has left Australia and New Zealand both on eight points but under pressure from Pakistan and Afghanistan in the race for the final two spots.

"Look, for us, every game in this tournament is vitally important," said Mitchell, who has 346 runs in six innings. "They're all worth two points. And for us, again, it's just showing up and playing the Black Caps style of cricket." Mitchell also described Pakistan as a strong team, having played eight ODIs against them this year.

Meanwhile, Pakistan also have one injury problem as all-rounder Shadab Khan, who suffered a concussion against South Africa and did not play against Bangladesh, remains a doubt for today's game as well. Pakistan informed that Shadab "came through a preliminary test okay" yesterday but they are "yet to make a decision on him".

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who comes out on top in Bengaluru.

New Zealand's in-form batter Daryl Mitchell on Friday backed injury-plagued New Zealand "to do a job" against Pakistan.

New Zealand have been hit by setbacks throughout the tournament and after winning their first four games have since lost three in succession.

The Kiwis were left with just 11 fit players

Mahmud questions Mirpur strategy in WC planning

SPORTS REPORTER from New Delhi

How helpful would it be to host a New Zealand side, missing most of their regular players, on low and slow Mirpur surfaces just ahead of the World Cup? This is the question many cricket experts pondered when the Tigers prepared for the mega event with a three-match ODI series at home against the Kiwis last September.

Thankfully, this time the Tigers were spared the false sense of achievement they had gotten ahead of their disastrous 2021 T20 World Cup campaign with 'historic' wins over New Zealand and Australia prior to that tournament. They were whitewashed by the Kiwis in the three-match ODI series this time around.

Still, Bangladesh team director Khaled Mahmud Sujon said that the decision to play New Zealand in Mirpur just before this World Cup was not right.

"Despite being the vice chairman of the cricket operations committee, I am not involved in making such decisions [about ways to prepare for World Cup]. But I was not in favour of playing in



Mirpur against New Zealand ahead of the World Cup. We may have lost the series but why would we play on a spinning track and look to win the series? We needed to play in Chattogram or Sylhet which is similar to the Indian conditions," Mahmud, who is with the team in India, questioned the planning process that was followed coming into the World Cup.

"Despite not having the best of their squads, New Zealand still managed to win the series. Considering that we had a World Cup to prepare for, we should have played in such conditions [that is similar to those in India]," Mahmud added when he spoke to the media outside the team hotel in Delhi yesterday.

The former Bangladesh captain also rued the last-minute changes to the squad before the World Cup. He also mentioned that veteran Mahmudullah Riyad, who is now the highest run-getter for the Tigers this edition with 274 runs in five innings at an average of 68.50, was lucky to be able to get into the final squad.

"We made a lot of changes and experimented with a lot of players. I think it was too close to do such things before the World Cup. Mahmudullah Riyad was very lucky to be able to perform after a big gap and maybe he was able to overcome due to his experience. I feel we should have been more serious about [forming] the squad well ahead of the World Cup," he said.

Mahmud also expressed his dissatisfaction over his role as the team director and said that he would have not come with the team if he knew he would have such a limited role in this World Cup.

"If you ask me whether I am enjoying my role or not, I would say no, definitely not enjoying it as it's not my role just to tour with the team where I will only stay as a guardian and look after the disciplinary issues. That is not my only job. Yes, it's part of my job but I used to look after the cricket-related issues too in the past," Mahmud said.

'Like we're back in Covid times'

AFP, Bengaluru

Pakistan team director Mickey Arthur on Friday described the tight security facing his team at the World Cup in India as "stifling", leaving players feeling as if they are "back in Covid times".

Arthur's comments came a day ahead of the team's crucial match against New Zealand which Pakistan must win to keep their hopes alive of reaching the semifinals.

Several Pakistan players have already suffered fever and flu at various stages of the tournament which fast bowler Hasan Ali attributed to "room sickness."

Players are not allowed to venture out of their hotel without heavy security, forcing them to spend most of their time in hotel rooms.

"As a Pakistan team, we play a hell of a lot of cricket so being on the road is nothing new for these guys," said Arthur.

"What has been tough is the fact that we've been under a massive amount of security. So, I've been sort of taken aback.

"I found it difficult. It's almost like we've been back in the Covid times, where you were almost

secluded to your floor and your team room.

"So much so that their breakfast is in a separate room to everybody else. That's been the tough aspect."

Pakistan are playing a tournament in India for the first time since 2016.

Arthur said that outside of playing and training, the team have not had many outings since their arrival in the last week of September.

"The boys are used to being on the road but when they're on the road, they've still been able to get out and go and have meals, for example, at different places, and get out on their own accord.

"We haven't been able to do that this time. And that's been tough. That has been quite stifling."

Meanwhile, Arthur admitted Pakistan have not played up to their potential in India.

Arthur admitted South Africa's 190-run defeat of New Zealand on Wednesday has handed them a lifeline. But they still need to win their next two games -- against New Zealand today and England exactly a week later -- and also hope for other results to go their way.



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Afghanistan wicketkeeper Ikrām Alikhil celebrates after whipping the bails off to run out Netherlands batter Colin Ackermann in their World Cup encounter in Lucknow yesterday. Alikhil was in the thick of things as he effected three of the four run-outs that restricted the Dutch to 179. After Azmatullah Omarzai's brilliant direct hit from the deep sent Max O'Dowd packing, Alikhil managed to effect three more run outs and took three catches to cap off an eventful afternoon.

PHOTO: AFP