

SPORT

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
IPL
Bengaluru vs Chennai
Live from 8:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 1
Bundesliga

Leverkusen vs
Augsburg
Live from 7:30 pm
SONY SPORTS 2
Hoffenheim vs Bayern
Live from 7:30 pm

Shakib does not have any fifties in his last 10 T20Is. His highest score was an unbeaten 38 off 24 deliveries that helped the Tigers post their second 200-plus total during this period in a 77-run win over Ireland in March 2023 in Chattogram.

Shakib has batted in the middle order (from wickets 4-7) in nine of his last 10 T20I innings. However, the one time he batted at number three was in that game against Ireland in which he scored his highest during this period.

He has five unbeaten scores in his last 10 matches in the shortest format, seeing through Bangladesh complete a chase successfully on each occasion.

Shakib's batting average in his last 10 T20Is is 32.20, much higher than his career average of 23.56. His strike rate of almost 130 during

this period is also more than his career strike rate of 122.27.

Shakib is set to play his ninth T20 World Cup, the most by any player alongside India skipper Rohit Sharma who has also featured in all the editions of the tournament.

The star all-rounder already leads the all-time wicket-taker's charts in T20 World Cups, with 47 scalps, and is only three away from reaching 50.

Shakib tallied his personal best of 186 runs (in seven matches) with the bat in the 2014 edition in which he also bagged eight wickets.

SHAKIB IN T20 WORLD CUPS

Year	Matches	Runs	Wickets
2007	5	67	6
2009	2	15	2
2010	2	75	4
2012	2	95	0
2014	7	186	8
2016	7	129	10
2021	6	131	11
2022	5	44	6
Total	36	742	47

'Big stage brings the best out of SHAKIB'

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI

Bangladesh ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is going into the upcoming T20 World Cup as Tigers' key player in what could be his final bow in T20's showpiece event.

Shakib, who holds the record of the longest career in T20Is, evolved with the times and found new avenues to keep making his mark in the T20 format.

In recent years, he has added a new ability to eclipse his past skill sets by enriching his range-hitting. Even at 37, the former T20I captain can make the Tigers' day with the bat while his bowling appears to be as good as ever.

Shakib's batting did not shine in his recent two outings against Zimbabwe. He had played 50-over matches at the Dhaka Premier League to regain some rhythm but struggled to connect the ball with the sweet spot of his bat against Zimbabwe and could not assert his dominance.

His preparation heading to a big event, however, may not have been ideal, felt his mentor Nazmul Abedeen Fahim.

"The buildup is certainly not ideal. If he had started playing matches a little earlier, it would have served his match fitness better. The smarter you are, the quicker you can return. But if he had returned to T20 cricket a little earlier and played the Zimbabwe series from the beginning, it would have been better," Fahim said.

But even while not at his best, his mindset can make up for the lack of game time, said Fahim.

"He didn't look at his best [batting wise in Zimbabwe series]. Had he played the first few games, he would have regained his game. His preparation could have been better but since he is Shakib Al Hasan, with the little time he has and the matches remaining, he would be pretty close to his best," Fahim felt.

Players like England's Moeen Ali

and India's Ravindra Jadeja are key all-rounders for their respective sides, however, none of them are as important to their team's prospects in the World Cup as Shakib is for Bangladesh.

Shakib's struggles with the bat may not have gone away following his return to the T20I setup after 10 months but he can turn the tide very quickly in his favour, believes Fahim.

"I think he is at his best in terms of bowling and since bowlers have a certain degree of control, we can expect him to do well with the ball."

"If he can play positively [in batting] in the remaining games, he might get something in return. He belongs at that level, which also brings out the best from players like him," Fahim said about Shakib turning up to assert his position as Tigers' key player.

Sources in the team have hinted that Shakib may bat at No.3 in this World Cup. Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto did not rule out that

possibility either.

In the last BPL, Shakib had struggled with an eye problem and didn't score many runs in the beginning, but came into his own later on, often batting at number three, where he took advantage of the Powerplay.

"He played at three in the BPL and did well. The teams we are targeting to win against, if he does well against those sides, we will win. His aggressive nature suits T20 cricket," Fahim opined.

Shakib and India's Rohit Sharma are the only players set to take part in all nine editions of the T20 World Cup.

Whether or not this will be Shakib's final T20 World Cup, Fahim felt it did not matter to the player himself.

"I don't think he thinks like us on whether or not this would be his last World Cup. If he did, his preparation maybe would have been different. He is still casual like he always is, which I feel is his natural way."

SHORT CORNER

Abahani-Mohammedan tussle for 2nd place intensifies

Abahani Limited caught up with archrivals Mohammedan in points in the Bangladesh Premier League with a massive 7-1 win over Brothers Union after the Black and Whites surrendered a two-goal lead to play out an exciting 3-3 draw against Rahmatganj MFS on Friday.

Brazil to host 2027 Women's World Cup

Brazil was chosen to host the 2027 Women's World Cup on Friday, beating a joint Belgium-Netherlands-Germany bid at a FIFA congress marked by debate about the war in Gaza. After the success of the 2023 edition in Australia and New Zealand, which earned a record \$570 million in commercial revenue, FIFA chose to continue its push to expand women's football by taking the tournament to South America for the first time.

Barca coach Xavi set to be sacked: reports

Barcelona are poised to sack coach Xavi Hernandez just weeks after he made a U-turn and decided to stay at the club, Spanish media reported Friday. Catalan radio station RAC-1 said president Joan Laporta had decided to sack Xavi, with daily newspaper Sport confirming the news, while AS said Barcelona were already deciding who would replace the coach.

Tuchel confirms Bayern exit

Bayern Munich coach Thomas Tuchel confirmed on Friday he will leave the club at the end of the season, saying he "couldn't agree on terms" to stay on. Bayern and Tuchel agreed to part ways in February after the club lost three matches in a row and fell eight points behind eventual champions Bayer Leverkusen.

Slot confirms Liverpool job

Feyenoord coach Arne Slot confirmed on Friday that he would take the Liverpool job next season after Juergen Klopp leaves the Premier League club at the end of the campaign. "I can confirm that I will become the trainer there next year," Slot told a news conference, according to ESPN.

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mohammedan's Indian opener Jasia Akhtar hogged the limelight on the opening day of the Dhaka Premier Division Women's Cricket League at the BKSP Ground 1 yesterday when she smashed a 69-ball 102 laced with 16 fours and three sixes to power her side to a 254-run win over Jabid Ahsan Cricket Club. Her century propelled Mohammedan to 305 for eight after which Sabekun Nahar picked up a five-wicket haul to bundle out Jabid Ahsan CC for 51.

Leverkusen eye 'immortality'

AGENCIES

Ninety minutes away from completing an unprecedented unbeaten Bundesliga season, Bayer Leverkusen host Augsburg at the BayArena in Saturday's closing act.

Chasing "immortality", Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen can become the first team in Bundesliga history to go through a campaign unbeaten by avoiding defeat against Augsburg.

Not even the greatest Bayern Munich sides have managed an invincible season.

That Alonso's men have done it without losing in any competition -- a European record 50-game streak which includes runs to next week's German Cup and Europa League finals -- shows how incredible they have been.

A win against Augsburg would net Leverkusen 90 points from 34 games -- the equal second-highest tally in German football history.

Records have been sent tumbling month after month during Leverkusen's historic 2023-24 campaign, which is just three games away from finishing with the Bundesliga champions suffering a grand total of zero defeats in every single

competition.

Leverkusen striker Patrik Schick said the match was "like a final", while captain Lukas Hradecky said his team had "immortality" in sight.

Regardless of the result, Leverkusen will hoist the Bundesliga shield on



Saturday and Hradecky said he would "be careful" not to hold it upside down, like Stuttgart captain Fernando Meira did in 2007.

"To stay unbeaten in the Bundesliga -- we'll be the first team and we'll be a part of history," coach Alonso said on Friday. Leverkusen will be presented with the

Bundesliga trophy for the first time in their history after Saturday's match.

Long derided as "Neverkusen" for often finishing second and never winning a top-flight crown, Leverkusen are close to a remarkable treble.

Alonso's men face Atalanta in the Europa League final in Dublin on Wednesday, followed by the German Cup final against second-division Kaiserslautern three days later.

"Tomorrow is our first final," coach Alonso said on Friday. "We can achieve something historic."

"(We are) not thinking about Wednesday (Europa League final) -- we're thinking about tomorrow and about Augsburg," Alonso insisted.

The Spaniard, who is in his first full season as a head coach, said his players "don't have time" to celebrate "too much" on Saturday. "We can celebrate with our fans, but from Monday we need to be fully focused on our final week."

"They're professional and I don't need to tell them. We need to be intelligent."

Alonso said star midfielder Florian Wirtz, who has not started in the league for five games, had overcome a leg injury and "can start" against Augsburg.

"There are no limitations for tomorrow. He feels much better and doesn't have any pain."



Bangladesh batter Mahmudullah Riyad comes down from the team bus after the Tigers landed at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, USA to gear up for their three-match T20I series, starting on May 21, against the USA, co-hosts of the upcoming T20 World Cup. The Tigers will also play two warm-up matches against the USA and India on May 28 and June 1 to complete their build-up to the tournament.

PHOTO: BCB