

USA

USA will be featuring in a T20 World Cup for the first time and also have 12 players in the 30-plus age group.

Corey Anderson, who played the final of the 2015 ODI World Cup for New Zealand, will represent the USA. They also have former Canada captain Nitish Roenick Kumar, who had represented Canada at the 2010 Under-19 World Cup Qualifiers.

CANADA

Like their neighbours, Canada will be making their first ever appearance in a T20 World Cup.

Their squad is packed with experience, with 12 players aged 30 or more. No other team comprise more players in that age category. Discounting the reserves, their 15-member squad contains five players aged 35 or more.

USA promise 'fearless cricket' in World Cup debut

AFP, Dallas

The USA will make their debut in the T20 World Cup against Canada on Saturday and vice-captain Aaron Jones said they were determined to play a 'fearless' brand of cricket.

Both teams are making their first appearances in the expanded 20-team competition but there is particular pressure on the USA, as tournament co-hosts, with the West Indies, to deliver a strong showing on home soil.

The explosive, short format of the game, is seen by cricket's leaders as being the perfect version to capture the imagination of mainstream American sports fans and Jones, who was born in New York and later moved to Barbados before coming back to the USA, says the team doesn't want to be afraid of going on the attack.

"Fearless cricket, positive cricket, smart cricket. I think that's what we're really and truly trying to do," Jones told a press conference.

"We don't want to regret anything. We want to leave everything out there in the park. And then, obviously, if we come out on top, it's great. If we don't come out on top, that's how cricket goes sometimes. But we don't want to regret anything," he added.

The two North American teams have been drawn into a tough group however with India and Pakistan the clear favourites to be the two teams who qualify for the Super Eight stage.

However the results turn out, it is a landmark moment for the USA team to be in an elite competition after decades of being stuck in minor tournaments.

"We've been speaking over the last couple of years about playing in World Cups, about getting test status, about taking USA cricket to higher heights," said Jones.

SAMMY

at the helm to renew West Indies hopes

AGENCIES

West Indies begin their T20 World Cup mission under Darren Sammy with a Group C fixture against a relatively feeble Papua New Guinea at the Providence Stadium in Guyana on Sunday.

The Windies are now looking for redemption under the guidance of Sammy, a coach who knows what it takes to win the T20 World Cup after he captained them to the title in 2012 and 2016.

The co-hosts will look to bury the heartbreak of failing to qualify for last year's 50-over World Cup. The glory years of West Indian cricket are long gone as the team that won the first two editions of the 50-over World Cup did not even make the cut for

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

On their path to ensuring a second appearance, PNG went unbeaten, topping the East Asia-Pacific Qualifier last year by winning six consecutive matches on home soil.

They have 10 survivors, including captain Assad Vala, from the 2021 campaign in which they lost all three matches.

opponents."

West Indies have never lacked firepower in the batting department and will be able to rely on the experience of Nicholas Pooran, Andre Russell and Shimron Hetmyer, among others.

In the opposite corner, Papua New Guinea come into the contest with an impeccable record of 14 wins in their last 18 games. They are led by the enterprising Assad Vala and are set to appear for the second time at the major event.

PNG maintained an unbeaten record in the qualifiers, winning six consecutive matches. With plenty of all-rounders in the squad, PNG have a versatile unit that can test the bigger teams in the group.

WEST INDIES

West Indies have been the first team to win two T20 World Cups, and their current head coach Darren Sammy is Saint Lucia's first international cricketer and remains the only player in history to have led the team in two victorious campaigns.

No team have defended the T20 World Cup crown yet but West Indies and Pakistan, as holders, advanced the farthest -- till the semifinals in 2014 and 2010, respectively.

last year's tournament in India - the first time ever that they had missed the event.

Sammy was appointed as West Indies' limited-overs coach in May last year after the resignation of Phil Simmons following their first-round exit at the 2022 T20 World Cup.

While the 40-year-old will be desperate to get West Indies back on top of the world, he hopes his bowlers can step up and make the most of home advantage.

"Bowlers have been under the pump," the former all-rounder told Reuters in a telephone interview from his T20 World Cup trophy tour in Saint Lucia.

"It's not just the young bowlers, every single international bowler has been under pressure.

"Look at the IPL (Indian Premier League) right now. Teams are scoring 200 and it's not a safe total. It tells you that the batters are really dominating T20 cricket now.

"The difference will be some X-factor bowlers. Whether that's pace, whether that's mystery spin you'd need that in your armoury in order to defend totals or restrict



SHORT CORNER



Ronaldo left in tears as Al-Hilal beat Al-Nassr to win Saudi Cup

Cristiano Ronaldo was in floods of tears after his Al Nassr side lost the King's Cup final 5-4 on penalties to Al Hilal late on Friday, extending his Saudi Arabian trophy drought. Ronaldo, 39, then slowly walked off the pitch and sat in the dug-out with tears streaming down his face. Ronaldo failed to score in 120 minutes of the game which remained 1-1 after the end of extra-time but the forward converted his penalty in the shootout.

Shakib's talent and two sides of Bangladesh cricket's coin

Bangladesh's ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is a veteran of eight T20 World Cups, stepping onto his ninth world event in the shortest format. The mercurial Bangladesh star was only 22 when he played his first T20 World Cup. Now at 37, Shakib is the lone member of the current side that played in the first T20 World Cup in 2007.

Dinesh Karthik draws curtains on long playing career

Dinesh Karthik announced his retirement from all cricket on social media, bringing an end to a professional career that began in the early 2000s. "I officially announce my retirement and put my playing days behind me as I square up for the new challenges that lie ahead," Karthik said in a statement.



BCB reappoints Nawaz as Under-19 head coach

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has reappointed Mohammed Naveed Nawaz as the head coach of the new under-19 team and he will also be working as a batting consultant for junior age-group teams, the board said in a press release on Saturday. He has been handed a two-year contract, which will be effective from June 1.

Australia skipper Marsh fit for World Cup opener

Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh has been declared fit for their opening match at the T20 World Cup, but he will not be bowling, coach Andrew McDonald said. The all-rounder headed home from the Indian Premier League in April with a hamstring injury and only made his return this week in two practice matches in Trinidad.

**Read full stories on The Daily Star's website.

'It's tough to play your best friend'

REUTERS, PARIS

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka temporarily put her friendship with Spaniard Paula Badosa on the back burner to secure a hard-fought 7-5, 6-1 third-round victory at the French Open on Saturday and keep alive her hopes of a maiden Roland Garros title.

The pair have enjoyed a strong bond since 2021 but there was no quarter given in a see-sawing first set as they swapped early breaks before Badosa attacked Sabalenka's powerful serve in the sixth game, edging ahead with a return that hit the net cord.

"It's tough to play your best friend. She's an incredible player coming back after injury and I'm pretty sure she's going to be back on top very soon," said Sabalenka, who improved her head-to-head record with Badosa to 5-2.

"On court we're opponents, I'm trying not to watch on the other side, just trying to focus on myself and just bring my best game, but anyway they're tough matches against her."

Sabalenka, who is bidding to become the first player since Serena Williams in 2015 to claim the Australian Open and Roland Garros titles in the same season, next faces American 14th seed Madison Keys or 22nd seed Emma Navarro.



Salahuddin's masterclass to inspire coaches' evolution

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Ariful Alam Khaled came to Dhaka from Chattogram's Sandwip, an island located in the north-east of the Bay of Bengal, to attend a coaching workshop in Mirpur on Friday. Cricket has seeped into Bangladesh's consciousness so greatly that the sport managed to wash ashore to Sandwip.

Ariful had set his sight on a coaching class he aims to deliver something better to his students at Sandwip Cricket Academy. Thus he didn't hesitate to travel by speedboat to Kumira, Sitakunda before boarding a bus to Dhaka.

As many as 12 students, each with a background different from Ariful, attended Prime Bank and Comilla Victorians' coach Mohammad Salahuddin's first workshop on Friday - titled Master the game with Mohammad Salahuddin - organised by PhysioCare Wellness Centre.

It reflected the passion for cricket in the country, for in Sandwip, money and cricket coaching do not go hand in hand, Ariful informed. There are 150 students in the academy where he teaches but participation is sporadic.

"Yes, it's a risk as a source of income because people there don't know that in order to learn to play, you also need to pay. I'm doing it out of passion," he said.

One of the participants involved former women's national team skipper Jahanara Alam, who had a women's

level 3. When you have undergone courses, it will help make an impact in your game," Jahanara told The Daily Star regarding taking the class, adding that coaching was an option for her in the future.

A mentor to many such as Bangladesh



Dhaka Premier League game on Saturday but took the time to do the evening workshop nonetheless.

"It's a workshop based on level A. As you know, Australian and England players have already completed level 2 and when they finish playing, they go

ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, Salahuddin wanted to pass on his knowledge and passion. His students seemed mesmerised during his three-hour session.

The dearth of local coaches who have been in national setups had been felt.

The national team has not had many local coaches in the head coach role due to one reason or the other.

"Having coached for the last 25 years, I feel I have some responsibility so that coaches coming after me are better than me and can do something good for Bangladesh," Salahuddin said.

"I think coaching education should be looked at seriously since we haven't had a world-class coach yet. We have to improve the standards of coaches' education system and if we don't, we won't go forward. We have been playing international cricket for a long time and we have a few players of international standard, but we are yet to get coaches of international standards. It's not like this sector needs a lot of facilities," he added.

He felt that local coaches have the ability and need guidance.

"We need more talented coaches than just talented players since you need to nurture talented players. Our local coaches are nursing talents at grassroots level and if they improve, these players would also do well," he said.

The organisers intend to introduce online classes, further ushering hopes that young coaches like Ariful can attend workshops from afar and take Bangladesh forward.