

## Clock's ticking away on bowler Shakib

ASHFAQ UL-ALAM

The perpetual pendulum of time is perhaps the greatest enemy of all sportsmen as every great of every sport has eventually had to concede to the ticking clock.

One of the tell-tale signs that a player's career is nearing its end is that the skills that once were second nature to them, which they could execute without even thinking, become difficult.

For the last four weeks or so, Bangladesh's cricket fans have been watching and slowly coming to terms with the fact that perhaps Shakib Al Hasan, the greatest all-rounder the country has ever produced, is slowly losing his impossible battle against age as the once bankable left-arm spinner has become almost a liability for the team in this T20 World Cup.

Yesterday, Shakib added another entry in his long list of records when he took the wicket of India captain Rohit Sharma to become the first and only bowler to claim 50 wickets in T20 World Cups.

Shakib, who has featured in all nine editions of the T20 World Cup, came into this tournament needing just three wickets to complete the feat and it took him six outings to reach it.

It's not like Shakib has only been struggling on the wicket's column. Till



yesterday's match, the left-arm spinner has bowled only 13.2 overs in the tournament and conceded at a rate of more than eight runs an over, being the most expensive of all Bangladeshi bowlers.

Shakib has only once completed his quota of overs in this tournament, against the Netherlands, and wasn't brought into the attack in the rain-truncated match against Australia.

Shakib, who had been the team's leading spinner for years, has been used more like a part-time option in this tournament and at times had to be shielded from the batters.

Against India, Bangladesh went with a spin heavy attack, which was surprising considering the success of their pace attack.

Captain Najmul Hossain Shanto

handed the ball to Shakib in the second over, perhaps because of the presence of two right-handers in Rohit and Virat Kohli in the middle.

But the India openers showed no respect to the veteran Bangladeshi spinner, taking 15 runs off the second over.

Shanto again handed the ball to Shakib for the fourth over, where he conceded 10, but also prized out the wicket of Rohit, getting him caught at mid-off.

One could try to defend the hiding Shakib with the wicket of Rohit, but on a pitch which usually gets slower as the innings progresses, making scoring runs difficult, Shakib's two overs allowed India to score 53-1 in the Powerplay.

The dip in Shakib's bowling, something the all-rounder has always said came to him naturally and he admitted to not have paid too much focus on it, projects a dire signal.

Considering Shakib's age, 37, his decline in bowling shouldn't be that much of a surprise. But as the all-rounder has expressed his desire to feature for Bangladesh in the next T20 World Cup as well, this dip is a worrying sign. His batting has been subpar since the issue with his eyes has surfaced. If the all-rounder wishes to continue being an asset for Bangladesh cricket, not a liability, perhaps it is time for him to change his ways and seriously work on his bowling.

### SHORT CORNER



PHOTO: BHF

**Bangladesh players celebrate after confirming their maiden berth in Women's Junior Asia Cup following a 10-1 win against Indonesia in their penultimate match of the Women's U-21 AHF Cup match in Singapore yesterday.**

#### Four Bangladesh players in GT20 Canada

Bangladesh's Rishad Hossain, Mohammad Saifuddin, Shakib Al Hasan and Shoriful Islam were drafted to play in the upcoming Global T20 Canada, starting on July 25. Rishad was drafted by Toronto Nationals while Saifuddin was signed by Montreal Tigers. Shakib and Shoriful were roped in by Bangla Tigers Mississauga.

#### 'Copa America is the best preparation for the World Cup'

The Copa America will be Mexico's best preparation for the 2026 World Cup as they will face world-class teams, coach Jaime Lozano said ahead of their first match against Jamaica.

\*Read full stories on The Daily Star website

## England's drive for semis, USA's final flourish

STAR SPORTS DESK

As the T20 World Cup heats up, holders England face co-hosts USA in a crucial Super Eights fixture at the Kensington Oval Stadium in Barbados on Sunday.

Both teams have different stakes in this match, with England likely to go all out, aiming for a comprehensive win to boost their net run rate and secure their place in the semi-finals, while USA will be looking to upset the odds and conclude their fairytale World Cup journey.

England enter the match with a mix of urgency and optimism. Their recent game against South Africa saw them fall short by seven runs, but a valiant 78-run partnership for the fifth wicket by Harry Brook and Liam Livingstone was instrumental in keeping England's semifinal hopes alive.

With the West Indies' dominant win over USA, England find themselves third in Group Two, tied with the Men in Maroon on points but way behind on net run rate - 0.412 compared to 1.814. For England to secure a semi-final spot, a win against the USA is crucial, especially if group leaders South Africa - on four points with a net run rate of 0.625 - lose to the West Indies.

One of the tournament's surprise packages, USA have showcased their potential on the world stage. Despite a recent nine-wicket loss to the West Indies, they have demonstrated exceptional performances, including victories over Pakistan and Canada.

USA's journey in the T20 World Cup has been a testament to their growth as an Associate nation. Captain Aaron Jones said, "Over the last couple of weeks, starting from winning the series against Bangladesh [prior to the T20 World Cup], it really opened the eyes of everybody."

As both teams take the field, fans can expect an exciting clash that encapsulates the spirit and unpredictability of T20 cricket.

## Proteas-Caribbeans clash in high-stakes affair

AGENCIES

Hosts West Indies and undefeated South Africa will clash in a high-stakes Super Eight match on Monday in Antigua, the outcome of which will have huge implications in the semifinals race from Group 2 in the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup.

After an unbeaten run in the group stage, the men in maroon were rocked in their first Super Eight game when England defeated them by eight wickets. However, they bounced back with a comprehensive nine-wicket win over co-hosts USA on June 21.

Not only did they gain two crucial points, but also improved their net run rate substantially. They are now placed second in the Group 2 table and a strong win in their next game can help seal a semi-final spot.

South Africa sit at the top of the table with four points and a net run rate of +0.625. England and West Indies are at two points each, but the latter are ahead based on a superior net run rate of +1.814 as compared to England's +0.412. USA are fourth with zero points.

This means that irrespective of the result in the England-USA fixture, West Indies can secure a semi-final spot if they manage to



win against South Africa and maintain a superior net run rate over Jos Buttler's men.

For the Proteas, a win will ensure a berth in the final four and a defeat could see them exit the tournament if England beat the USA handsomely and overtake South Africa in net run rate.

Up against the Proteas on Sunday evening, West Indies all-rounder Roston Chase said that despite South Africa's undefeated run, they are not going to budge away from a contest.

"We're going to be coming hard," Chase said. "So, we'll collide, and whoever's the strongest, I think, will win. So, it's just for us, as I say, to just go there and give it your all. As I say, it's a win-win situation."

For South Africa, opener Quinton de Kock has found form

at precisely the right moment, scoring two superb knocks in succession to help South Africa to the top of Group 2.

Their bowlers have been on point throughout the tournament and David Miller has been efficient in the middle-order, bailing them out of tricky situations a number of times.

South Africa, who have managed to eke out victories under pressure on a few different occasions in this T20 World Cup, find themselves in a tough spot once again as a defeat against the Caribbeans could pull the plug out of what has thus far been a promising campaign.

If the Proteas indeed succumb under pressure, their reputation as cricket's ultimate chokers, a moniker they have been trying to get rid of, will grow further.

## 'Calm' Endrick hopes to leave his mark

REUTERS

Brazil's teenage prodigy Endrick will be hoping to make his first appearance for the national team at a major tournament when his country take on Costa Rica in their Copa America opener on Monday.

The 17-year-old striker, who joined Real Madrid from Palmeiras, knows he has a long way to go to break into the Brazilian starting line-up in a squad that includes Raphinha, Vinicius Jr and Rodrygo in attack.

"Only God knows (when I will start). I am very grateful to have Abel (Ferreira) as a coach, he knew when to play me. Everything is up to God and Professor Dorival Jr. He is a spectacular coach.

He is doing what is best for the Brazilian team," Endrick told a press conference on Friday.

Endrick, who in March became the youngest player to score in an international match at Wembley when he gave Brazil a 1-0 win over England, made his mark in the other warm-up fixtures ahead of

Copa America with a goal in a 3-2 victory over Mexico, having also scored against Spain.

"I have always been very precocious in my life and since I became a professional I have played against opponents who have always teased me, insulted me, talked about my family, my girlfriend," he said.

"But I got used to it quickly because I was 16. I'm calm and I hope I can help, I think it's right, in football you have to destabilise the other player. It's been like that since I arrived, so I've adapted and I'm very confident that I can help the team."



## 'Rejuvenated Germany can win Euros'

REUTERS, Berlin

German fans welcomed the start of Euro 2024 on home soil more in hope than expectation, but their performances have surprised many and they are now serious contenders to win the title, German World Cup winner Olaf Thon told Reuters.

The 58-year-old, who scored a memorable goal against Denmark in his home town of Gelsenkirchen in the 1988 European Championship, has remained in the game through his punditry work for Sport1, where he provides expert analysis on the Bundesliga and the German national team.

"Last year, I would have predicted that Germany would not make it very far, but based on the group stage games and the performances of other good teams such as Spain and France, I'd say we can definitely keep up with them," Thon said in an interview.

"We have a home advantage, with the fans as 12th player ... and now, I believe that everything is possible for Germany. We can win the title,"

he added. The modest pre-tournament expectations of Thon and many German fans were heavily influenced by a run of bad results in 2023, during which Germany drew two and lost six of their 11



friendlies.

They made a fast start at Euro 2024, however, with a 5-1 thrashing of Scotland and a comfortable 2-0 win over Hungary ensured the Germans were the first team through to the knockout stage, leaving coach Julian Nagelsmann with tough calls to make for their final group game against Switzerland.

"It is the dream of every head coach to send the same starting XI out on to the pitch. However, 'never change a winning team' has its perils," Thon said.

"I expect Nagelsmann to start the same players again, if no one gets injured. However, it is the group stage where you have to manage the workloads and act strategically.

For Thon, who coached for a brief period before pivoting to his media career with Sport1, the current German team is reminiscent of the one that was taken over by Franz Beckenbauer in 1984 and won the World Cup in 1990.

"In 1988 the Euros on home soil, Germany lost against the Netherlands in the semis, who then went on to win the tournament. In 1990, there was revenge - Germany beat the Netherlands and won the title confidently," Thon recalls.

"It is therefore possible that Julian Nagelsmann first starts with this attempt and doesn't win the title right away, but instead builds up something to win in 2026."



PHOTO: REUTERS

Czech Republic forward Patrik Schick celebrates his equalising goal with teammates Robin Hranac and Ondrej Lingr during their 1-1 draw against Georgia in a Group F fixture of Euro 2024 at Hamburg Volksparkstadion yesterday.