



The final showdown between India and South Africa in the grand finale of the T20 World Cup 2024 will be the ninth final of the showpiece event. This will be the first time that the two sides will meet in an ICC final. They did face off in the semifinal of the 2014 edition in which India came out victorious but the Men in Blue lost against the Proteas in the 2022 edition in Australia.

● VENUE: KENSINGTON OVAL, BARBADOS ● TIME: 8:30 PM BANGLADESH TIME

HEAD-TO HEAD

INDIA: 14
SOUTH AFRICA: 11
NO RESULT: 1
IN T20 WORLD CUPS
INDIA: 4
SOUTH AFRICA: 2

SOUTH AFRICA

T20 world ranking: 5
Best result: Semi-finalists (2009, 2014)
Coach: Rob Walter
Captain: Aiden Markram
Top-ranked batter:

Markram (8)
Top-ranked bowler: Anrich Nortje (9)
ROAD TO FINAL
GROUP-STAGE
Wins against Sri Lanka, Netherlands,

Bangladesh, Nepal
SUPER 8
Wins against USA, England, West Indies
SEMIFINAL
Win against Afghanistan

INDIA

T20 world ranking: 1
Best result: Champions (2007)
Coach: Rahul Dravid
Captain: Rohit Sharma
Top-ranked batter: Suryakumar Yadav (2)

Top-ranked bowler: Axar Patel (8)
ROAD TO FINAL
GROUP-STAGE
Wins against Ireland, Pakistan, USA
*Match abandoned

against Canada
SUPER 8
Wins against Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Australia
SEMIFINAL
Win against England

Only courage can take Tigers forward

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's performances in the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup showed that team is lacking in many crucial aspects. But lack of courage was again evident, especially in how Bangladesh threw in the towel thinking they would not be able to chase down Afghanistan's total in 12.1 overs in the third Super Eight fixtures, with semifinals at stake.

The team returned home yesterday following a disappointing campaign despite picking up three wins in the group stages. Vice-captain Taskin Ahmed, while talking to media, spoke highly of the youngsters. The youngsters in the bowling unit played to their potential and held their own in a campaign where a lot of the experienced names did not fire.

Rishad Hossain picked up 14 wickets in seven matches while Tanzim Sakib took 11 and both youngsters gave a positive image of themselves.

"Tanzim Sakib, Rishad [Hossain] were among the top wicket takers and in top five. Rishad is still there. Overall they did well and it's a positive for Bangladesh that youngsters for the future will come up. It will show the world that we have different kinds of abilities," Taskin said.

A bulk of the blame for the effort in the



Afghanistan game would fall on the coaching staff and think tank, including head coach Chandika Hathurusingha. The batting unit looked like they were chasing a moving target, their plans changing from over to over. Taskin said they tried as a batting unit.

If the coaches did not however plan for it, individual batters' intent will not always pave the way. Bangladesh failed to use Towhid Hridoy or Rishad Hossain further up the order in the game. Many believe that Hridoy, who had performed sporadically but not without impact in this World Cup, could have been promoted up the order and not sent in at number six where the game had already become difficult.

If Bangladesh are to bring in youngsters, coaches too must have belief in fearless cricket. Thus while Hathurusingha should be credited for playing Rishad, he will have to bear responsibility for baffling planning during the Super Eights.

Following Australia's loss to India, some former and current players were talking about an overhaul. Taskin said that senior stars Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad not performing had an impact. It remains to be seen if Bangladesh do move on from them.

"Both seniors not being in flow had an impact, although not outside the field since they are great teammates out of it. It's normal when key players do not perform," he said.

The batting unit altogether did not find form in the tournament. "I haven't seen such a long bad patch for the batters in my 10 years playing for Bangladesh. I hope it goes away quickly," Taskin added.

In T20s, however, one or two batters can often make the difference. Bangladesh need courage going forward, backed by actual skill. A lot of restructuring needed as well, and it has to begin with the think tank which failed to use resources tactically and plan a better World Cup.

More than a title at stake

REUTERS

India will be out to end their global title drought while South Africa will be seeking to bury their 'chokers' tag at Kensington Oval on Saturday when the tournament's two unbeaten sides clash in the Twenty20 World Cup final.

Their blemish-free campaigns and comprehensive victories in the semifinals leave no doubt that the 20-team tournament's best two sides have made the final in Bridgetown, but both sides will still have a point to prove as they look to get rid of their own ghosts in the final showdown.

A day after South Africa stopped Afghanistan's fairytale run in the first semi in Trinidad, India ended England's title defence in Guyana to make the third consecutive final of a global event across all formats.

Skipper Rohit Sharma will hope India, who lost in the finals of the World Test Championship and the 50 overs home World Cup last year, will make it third time lucky.

Both Rohit, 37, and stalwart Virat

● It is a historic occasion for South Africa as they will be playing in their first-ever final in ODI or T20 World Cups.

● India have not won a World Cup title since their triumph in the 2011 ODI World Cup at home.

● India are also without an ICC silverware since the 2013 Champions Trophy.

● This is the first time that both T20 World Cup finalists have made it through unbeaten -- South Africa have won all eight matches

while India won seven and saw their group game against Canada washed out.

● South Africa skipper Aiden Markram is yet to lose a game while in charge in World Cups. He guided the Proteas to victories in all six matches in the Under-19 World Cup in 2014, won two as a stand-in captain in the 2023 ODI World Cup before marshalling his troops to this World Cup final unbeaten.

● The average first-innings total at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown for completed matches in this World Cup is 150.

Kohli, 35, are playing what could be their last T20 World Cup, and winning the trophy would be a perfect farewell for them.

It will be a test of nerves for their opponents as well as South Africa look to shed their baggage from having reached their first World Cup final in any format after seven semifinal heartbreaks.

Their pace attack has been on the money, bailing them out whenever their

batters failed.

Opener Quinton de Kock has used his Caribbean Premier League experience to good use, while there is significant firepower in their middle order.

In Aiden Markram, South Africa also have a composed leader who has gone 10 matches unbeaten as captain.

"We feel and we believe that we can compete with the best in the world and we can win trophies," said Markram.

Euro knockout kings Germany ready for another deep run

AGENCIES

Germany's remarkable record in the knockout stages of the European Championship enters a new chapter in Dortmund on Saturday, with Denmark standing in the way of more glory for "Die Mannschaft", as they are known at home, at the tournament.

Of the 10 times the Germans have made it out of the group stage at the Euros, they have gone on to reach the semifinals on nine occasions and the final six. They are level with Spain with three titles.

Germany also boast the only man to win the tournament as a player and a coach in Bertie Vogts, who was victorious in 1972 and as manager in 1996, beating the Czech Republic 2-1 after extra time at Wembley.

However, that victory, almost 28 years ago to the day, remains the last time the Germans lifted the Henri Delaunay trophy, but even if Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann does not bring the cup home, his job is likely secure.

Their only three group-stage exits came in 1984, 2000, and 2004, and a round-of-16 loss in 2020 coupled with another group-stage departure at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar had lowered expectations ahead of this tournament.

A 5-1 win over Scotland and a dramatic late equaliser against the Swiss sent them through as Group A winners, however, setting them up for their last-16 clash



against the Swiss, said after that match.

Germany won just three of 11 games in 2023 but are yet to lose in 2024, winning five times and drawing twice, thanks at least in part to Nagelsmann picking the same starting XI.

The coach only deviated from his starters when forced through injury or unavailability.

The policy may have given Germany stability, but it cost him centre-back Jonathan Tah for the Denmark clash, after the defender picked up a second yellow card against Switzerland.

In his place, Borussia Dortmund's talented yet unpredictable central defender Nico Schlotterbeck will line-up on Saturday.

What bodes well for the Germans is that defender Antonio Rudiger returned to training on Friday ahead of their clash with Denmark, having missed earlier sessions with a hamstring strain that he picked up towards the end of Germany's 1-1 draw with Switzerland but managed to complete the game.

Denmark however will be forced to sweat on the fitness of midfielder Christian Eriksen, who did not take the pitch in the Danes' pre-match training session.



Key Italy midfielder Nicolò Barella (L) and forward Federico Chiesa (R) were in jovial mood in training yesterday alongside centre-back Gianluca Mancini, who is likely to replace the suspended Riccardo Calafiori, ahead of tonight's Last 16 tie of Euro 2024 against Switzerland. The defending champions will need a much-improved performance from their group-stage showing against the Swiss, a side they beat 3-0 in group stages of the last edition before drawing twice on their way to be eliminated from the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM