

Star

DHAKA MONDAY OCTOBER 7, 2024, ASHWIN 22, 1431 BS

SPORT

What to WATCH

SONY SPORTS AND PTV
Pakistan vs England
First Test, Day 1
Live from 11:00 am

NAGORIK TV AND STAR SPORTS 1
ICC Women's T20 World Cup
England vs South Africa
Live from 8:00 pm

Tigers' skill and mentality under scanner

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Gwalior*

From the second Test in Kanpur to the first T20I in Gwalior, the format changed and so did most of the players. India had a new setup while Bangladesh were looking into new avenues to approach T20 cricket with more aggression. However, just as the

BRIEF SCORES

Bangladesh: 127 all out in 19.5 overs (Miraz 35, Shanto 27; Arshdeep 3-14, Chakravarthy 3-31)
India: 132 for three in 11.5 overs (Pandya 39, Suryakumar 29; Miraz 1-7)
Result: India won by seven wickets
Player of the match: Arshdeep Singh

Rohit Sharma-led side had dominated in Kanpur, the Suryakumar Yadav-led India dismantled Bangladesh with ease.

There was a slightly slow track on offer in the first T20I but the approach in the Powerplay showed that the Bangladesh batters were still far off from making solid shot selections across formats.

"We need to do proper planning in the next match. We need to focus on rotating the strike. T20 is not only about hitting. If we keep wickets in hand, we can get a good score," Shanto had said at the post-match presentation.

Bangladesh lost two wickets in the Powerplay with openers Liton Das and Parvez Hossain Emon picking shots that were not on for those particular deliveries.

When Shanto was asked in the press conference whether the brand of cricket Bangladesh play is not good enough, he said: "I won't say it is bad, but I think we are a better team than this. We have not been doing well in this format for a while but I don't believe we are this bad."

Bangladesh making 127 after being sent to bat first tells the story of how bad the game was for the visitors, whose standard score in the format seems to be stuck in 120-130.

Asked where they were lagging behind against an inexperienced India, he pondered slightly before replying, "skill and mentality."

"We have the capability, I believe that. But there is a lot of room for improvement in skill... If you see the last 10 years, this is how we bat and sometimes we play well. So maybe when we practice at home, maybe the wicket needs to be different...there must be some sort of change."

"When we play at home, usually we get 140-150 wickets. So, batters know how to go about that but don't know how to make 180 scores. It will be better if we practice in those sorts of wickets but it's not just wickets, there is a mental and skill factor to it," he said.

Going into the second T20I, Shanto and Co are in need of a quick turnaround otherwise another one-sided drubbing may be in the cards.



India pacer Arshdeep Singh celebrates after having Bangladesh opener Parvez Hossain Emon chop one onto his stumps during their first of the three T20Is in Gwalior yesterday. [Bottom] The Tigers' meek batting display was, however, in stark contrast to the festive scenario in Gwalior, a city in which international cricket returned after 14 years as crowds flocked to the Shrimant Madhavrao Scindia Cricket Stadium in numbers.

PHOTO: AFP

A festival for Gwalior

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Gwalior*

The streets of the Shankargarh village area were packed with incoming traffic at 5:00 PM, some two hours before the first T20I between India and Bangladesh yesterday. There was tight security but that hardly dampened the fans' excitement for the game in Gwalior, where international cricket had returned after 14 years.

The last time this city saw an international game of cricket, India's greatest-ever had captured the imagination of the world with a double hundred – the first-ever in ODIs.

That venue – Roop Singh Stadium – is almost in ruins now and international cricket has remained out of Gwalior's reach for a long time. The Holkar Cricket Stadium in Indore would sate the cricket appetite of Madhya Pradesh fans till Sunday when Gwalior's long wait finally ended as the city hosted its first ever T20I.

Sachin Tendulkar's double ton saw the changing of times in white-ball cricket. A homage to Tendulkar's knock was shown on the big screen during the game. The progress of T20I and the latest venue in Gwalior, the 54th international cricket venue in India, has caught the trend of times with the right facilities.

The eagerness to host international cricket could be felt too. Even on walks around the city, BCCI media accreditation card holders who are here to cover the match would often have to field queries from locals about match tickets. So, it was not a surprise that tickets were sold out on the very first day they went on sale.

The stadium has only undergone the first phase of its completion. A roof and more tiers in the stands are to be built. The eventual capacity of the stadium will surpass 30,000.



On Sunday, hundreds of bikes were parked in the field adjacent to the stadium and thousands of cheerful fans were entering the gates before the match, creating an epic atmosphere for a historic event.

"We used to watch matches in Roop Singh Stadium and many matches were held there. We are so excited right now to watch a game in the new stadium. We have waited so long. This is a festival for us," a job-holder who came with a few of his friends, told this reporter before entering the stadium.

A couple were seen hurrying along excitedly, perhaps wanting to catch every bit of the action. Catching up to them, they informed that it was their first ever live cricket match at any venue.

"We are very excited and we are going to show our full energy in this match," both exclaimed.

India skipper Suryakumar Yadav appeared to be a crowd favourite of sort. "Surya's innings is what we are looking forward to. I think he will smash it to all parts and India will win by a big margin," a couple named Shubham and Harpritha said together.

They also said how fast they had to act to get tickets. "The first day that tickets were on sale, within one hour everything got booked. Gwalior crowd is totally invested in this and you will see the energy in the stands," he said.

Some 40 minutes later, the toss took place and another 30 minutes later the game began. A loud reaction was expected, but the roar of the crowd still was something significant. There appeared to be no empty space in the stands.

The latest international stadium in India got its warm welcome.

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP Kaur leads India to victory over Pakistan



AFP, Dubai

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur produced a steely 29 to steer her side to a scrappy six-wicket victory over Pakistan in Dubai on Sunday.

Set 106 to win after restricting Pakistan to 105-8 in their 20 overs, India were looking comfortable at 61-1. But two wickets in two balls by Pakistan captain Fatima Sana opened the door before Kaur took her side to the brink of victory.

With India two runs short, however, she slipped and appeared to rick her neck, leaving the field unbeaten on 29 from 24 balls.

Sajeevan Sajana hit the winning runs from the next delivery as India closed on 108-4, winning with seven balls to spare.

"We have been very disciplined, followed the plans," said India's Smriti Mandhana. "In the field we were very good. Better start with the bat would have been good, but we will take that win."

Nida Dar top scored for Pakistan with 28 from 34 balls but there was little else to cheer after Fatima had won the toss and elected to bat on a wicket that produced some awkward bounce.

"We were not up to the mark in the batting. We were 10-15 runs short," said Fatima.

All of the Indian bowlers contributed with Arundhati Reddy the most successful as she removed Omaira Sohail (3) and Aliya Riaz (4) in the middle order before clean bowling Dar in the final over to finish with 3-19 from her four overs.

Bavuma doubtful for Bangladesh series

REUTERS

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma will miss the third and final ODI against Ireland in Abu Dhabi on Monday and is a doubt to lead the Test team on a two-match tour of Bangladesh that starts on Oct. 21.

Bavuma sustained a soft tissue injury in his arm after diving for the crease while batting in South Africa's 174-run victory in the second ODI on Friday, the same injury that kept him sidelined for a lengthy period two years ago.

"Bavuma will return home with the rest of the squad on Tuesday and will consult a specialist.

An update on the extent of his injury will be provided in due course," Cricket South Africa said in a statement on Sunday.

Bavuma is a key part of the Test batting lineup and his absence for what is likely to be a challenging series in Bangladesh would be a massive blow to the side.



Manchester United defenders Jonny Evans and Matthijs de Ligt stand in dejection after their side battled hard to earn a goalless draw against Aston Villa away at Villa Park yesterday. The game was steeped in speculation about the future of United's under-fire manager Erik ten Hag whose situation seemingly has worsened amid The Red Devils' worst start to a Premier League campaign as they have gathered just eight points from seven matches.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Struggling Pakistan look to thwart adaptable England

AFP, Multan

Pakistan play England in a three-Test series starting Monday in Multan with the visitors favourites to inflict more damage on a team mired in a painful losing streak.

England's 3-0 whitewash on their last trip to Pakistan in 2022 was the first clean sweep by any visiting team to the country, and plunged the hosts into a slump that has left them winless in their last 10 home Tests.

The visitors will be buoyed by memories of that famous win, but begin the series without talismanic leader Ben Stokes, who will miss the first Test due to a hamstring injury.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood, however, warned on the eve of Monday's first Test that his side would still be facing a formidable England, despite the absence of their captain Stokes.

"We all know the quality of Ben Stokes," said Masood on Sunday ahead of the start of the three-Test series.

"England's strength will not lessen with one individual (missing)," he warned. "They are still very competitive."

"If you look at their playing eleven then it's very balanced with all-rounders, and they have two spinners and three fast bowlers with deep batting, so their loss is that of an individual."

Pakistan, meanwhile, are known for their unpredictability and will be desperate to wipe away the humiliation of a shock 2-0 defeat at the hands of low-ranked Bangladesh last month.

Pakistan cricket is flailing in all formats, with a revolving door of bosses and allegations of nepotism crushing the development of their most popular sport.



Superstar batter Babar Azam relinquished the white-ball captaincy this week, saying he wanted to focus on his batting after a run-drought of 16 Test innings without a half-century.

The three Tests in Multan and Rawalpindi scheduled to wrap up on October 28 will be the first trial of the

29-year-old's renewed commitment to his craft.

Ollie Pope will again lead England after deputising successfully in the recent 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka.

"They've obviously not had their strongest run recently, but we still see them as a highly skilled side," said Pope. "They are a team we don't take lightly."

Pakistan named their team with a bowling attack of two fast bowlers in Shaheen Shah Afridi and Naseem Shah, medium-pacer Aamer Jamal, and frontline spinner Abrar Ahmed.

An impressive Jamal took 18 wickets against Australia in three Tests in his debut series earlier this year, but missed the Bangladesh series with a back problem.

"With Jamal we get an edge in the seam department," said Masood.

While England sit in third place in the ICC Test rankings, five spots above Pakistan, they travel to Pakistan with an inexperienced pace attack.

With James Anderson and Stuart Broad retired, Mark Wood injured and Ollie Robinson not selected, none of England's pace bowlers from the 2022 series remain.

But Masood cited Gus Atkinson and Brydon Carse as threats. "You cannot underestimate anyone and need to be more cautious against any unknown player," said Masood.