

## India wary of Archer 'challenge'

AFP, London

Jofra Archer will pose a fresh "challenge" for India should the England fast bowler make his long-awaited return to Test cricket at Lord's this week.

The 30-year-old is poised to end four years of injury-induced exile in the third Test starting Thursday, after India levelled the five-match series at 1-1 with a 336-run win at Edgbaston.

England could refresh their pace attack at Lord's by recalling both Archer and Gus Atkinson. Archer played the last of his 13 Tests in February 2021 and this season has bowled just 18 first-class overs.

"It will be a challenge, Jofra coming in," India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak told reporters. "There might be a couple of bowling changes for England, but that we don't know."

England captain Ben Stokes said the pitch at Edgbaston was more of a sub-continental than typically English surface, with the hosts making it clear they would like the rest of the series played on pitches with more pace and bounce.

## Pak stars left out for Bangladesh T20Is

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan on Tuesday left out injured all-rounder Shadab Khan and fast bowler Haris Rauf from the fitness-hit squad for Bangladesh T20Is this month.

Shadab, vice captain of the team in a 3-0 home win over Bangladesh last month, has undergone a shoulder operation and is recuperating in England.

Rauf injured his hamstring during a T20 League game in the United States on Sunday while another pacer, Hasan Ali, is out due to his commitment in county cricket in England.

Pakistan continues to leave out former captains Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan, and spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi as selectors said they want to try some new players in build up to the World Cup, to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka next year.

Azam and Rizwan were last part of the T20I squad in South Africa last year, while Shaheen featured on the New Zealand tour in March this year.

Salman Agha will lead the side in Bangladesh where the matches will be played in Dhaka on July 20, 22 and 24. Also left out are pacers Naseem Shah and Mohammad Wasim who both continue to regain full fitness after injuries.

It left the selectors to choose uncapped pacers in Salman Mirza and Ahmed Daniyal, 28, who both performed well in Pakistan Super League this year.

Spinning allrounder Mohammad Nawaz returns to the squad after last playing for Pakistan in January 2024.

### SQUAD

Salman Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Haris, Mohammad Nawaz, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Sufiyan Muqeem



PHOTO: AFP  
Sri Lanka wicketkeeper-batter Kusal Mendis celebrates reaching his sixth ODI ton, and his second against Bangladesh, during the series-deciding third match at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium yesterday. Mendis' 114-ball 124 helped the hosts post a challenging 285 for seven on the board, in reply to which Bangladesh failed to make a decent start, with [inset] opener Tanzid Tamim (17 off 13) getting dismissed after getting yet another start.

## Second-string SA sweep Zim

REUTERS, Bulawayo

South Africa completed an innings and 236-run victory over hosts Zimbabwe on the third day of the second Test on Tuesday to convincingly sweep the two-match series at Queens Sports Club.

South Africa rested most of the team that won the World Test Championship against Australia at Lord's last month, but still proved too strong for their neighbours as they won last week's first Test by 328 runs.

South Africa, who were put into bat and declared their first innings on 626-5, bowled Zimbabwe out for 220, having enforced follow on after skittling out the hosts for 170 in first innings.

South Africa seamer Corbin Bosch took 4-38 to clean up the tail.

Takudzwanashe Kaitano (40), Nick Welch (55), and skipper Craig Ervine (49) offered resistance in a clash best remembered for the decision by South Africa stand-in captain Wiaan Mulder (367\*) not to chase down the highest score in a Test innings.

## SAFF U-20 WOMEN'S C'SHIP Teams arrive in Dhaka today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh is all set to host the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship at the Bashundhara Kings Arena from Friday, with all the three foreign teams expected to land in Dhaka today.

Sri Lanka are scheduled to be the first team to arrive before Bhutan and Nepal are expected to arrive in the after afternoon before checking in at Holiday Inn.

All match officials – two match commissioners, four referees and as many assistant referees – are also scheduled to touch down in Dhaka today.

The tournament was initially supposed to be held with five teams but two-time champions India withdrew in the last moment. Bangladesh are believed to be the favourites as they feature eight to 10 players who recently played in the successful AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Myanmar.

Even though the Bashundhara Kings Arena hosted the club's AFC Cup matches and matches of Bangladesh men's national team, the venue is going to host an international tournament for the first time, with hosts Bangladesh taking on Sri Lanka in the opening match on Friday.

The teams will play against each other twice in double-leg round robin format, with the top finishers to be adjudged champions.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED  
Two players jostle for the ball while others look on during the first day of the four-day trial of under-17 players at the National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. The trial is being held with an eye on October's SAFF U-17 Championship.

## Mbappe set for PSG reunion

AFP, East Rutherford

Kylian Mbappe will come up against Paris Saint-Germain for the first time since leaving the French club a year ago as Xabi Alonso's Real Madrid revolution gets its biggest test yet in Wednesday's Club World Cup semifinal.

Mbappe should be remembered as a PSG legend, having spent seven prolific campaigns there and eventually departing as their all-time top scorer with 256 goals in 308 games.

But his legacy was a little tainted by the manner of his departure, the sense among many that for the last half of his time in Paris, he was just waiting for the right moment to move to Madrid.

Mbappe's latter years at PSG turned a bit ugly, with the player lodging an official complaint over the way he was treated by PSG in the summer of 2023. However, one of Mbappe's lawyers told AFP this week that the France captain had withdrawn a complaint of moral harassment against his former employers.

All of that should have been behind Mbappe long ago, given the way his first season at Real has gone on a personal level.

The 26-year-old, a World Cup



winner in 2018, scored 43 goals in 56 matches for his new club across all competitions up to the end of the campaign in LaLiga, a remarkable tally.

However, Mbappe has endured frustration at the Club World Cup, not featuring at all during the group stage due to a stomach bug which led to him requiring hospital treatment.

In his absence, young forward

Gonzalo Garcia has made the step up in impressive fashion, starting all five matches in the United States and scoring four goals.

The last of those was the

opener in the 3-2 quarterfinal win over Borussia Dortmund at the MetLife Stadium on Saturday, but it was Mbappe who got what was ultimately the deciding goal.

"He is still not perfect, not 100 percent, but he is getting better

every day," Alonso said of Mbappe after that match.

"Now he will have three days to keep progressing and feeling better ahead of the semifinal."

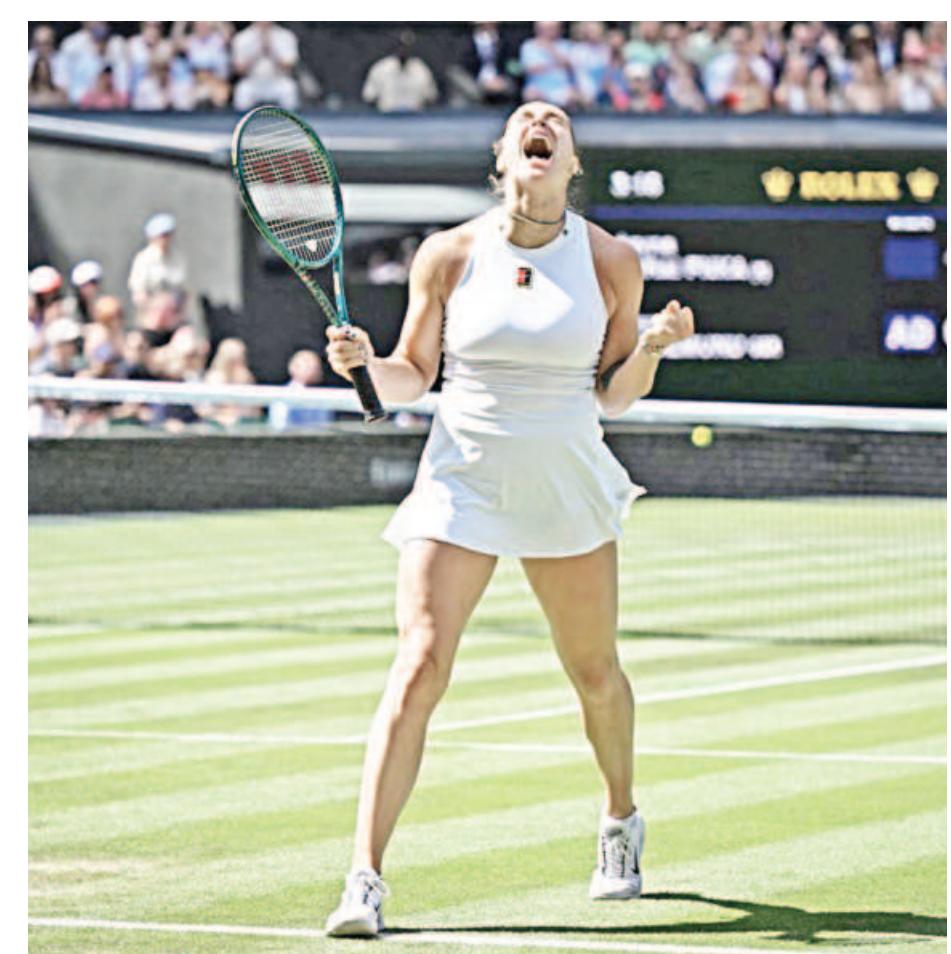
It is hard to imagine Mbappe not getting his first start of the tournament against PSG, the club who won the Champions League in the season following his departure after so many years of disappointment in Europe with him in the team.

PSG reached the last four with a 2-0 win over Bayern Munich in Atlanta in the last eight -- despite having Willian Pachá and Lucas Hernandez sent off -- and need not fear Real.

"It doesn't matter who we play in the semifinals. All that matters is that we are there and that we want to get to the final," said PSG coach Luis Enrique.

Alonso has just taken over as Real coach after an outstanding spell with Bayer Leverkusen and has already displayed great tactical flexibility, flitting between a back four and a three-man central defence at the tournament.

It will be fascinating to see which system he opts for here, and if Mbappe starts as he prepares to play against PSG for the first time since July 2017, when he was still a thrilling teenager at Monaco.



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus is ecstatic after beating Germany's Laura Siegemund in their Wimbledon women's singles quarterfinal fixture at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on Tuesday. The world No. 1 lost the first set before staging a fightback to take the match 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

PHOTO: AFP