

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

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

What happened to Tigers’ batting all-rounders?

ASHEAQ UL-ALAM

In an ideal world, having five bowling options with a quota of 10 overs each should be sufficient to bowl the required 50 overs in an ODI innings.

Unfortunately, cricket, just like the real world, is far from ideal and more often than not teams need one or two extra bowling options to get the job done.

For years, even decades, this has not been an issue for Bangladesh. Having an all-rounder of the calibre of Shakib Al Hasan, who could come into the side as a bowler and a batter, meant the Tigers practically played with 12 players in every game.

Bangladesh cricket also never had a shortage of batters who could roll their arm over when required.

From players like Alok Kapali, Aftab Ahmed and Mohammad Ashraf in the early 2000s to the likes of Mahmudullah Riyad, Naeem Islam and Nasir Hossain more often than not, there were a few bowling options ready in hand in case any of the frontline options had a bad day.

From having a plethora of such handy part-time options, who could at least do the job in favourable conditions, the Tigers now find themselves scraping from the bottom of the barrel in search of a reliable sixth bowling option.

In the ODI series against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh had seemingly gone into the first ODI without a sixth option before captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz handed the ball to Najmul Hossain



Shanto, someone who had bowled only seven times in his previous 48 ODI appearances.

Shanto, with his wonky off-spin, conceded 32 runs in four overs but claimed the wicket of Janith Liyanage, his second-ever scalp in ODIs.

After the defeat in the first match, Bangladesh management went back to the drawing board and in the next game replaced the experienced Litton Das for batting all-rounder Shamim Hossain.

Before the second one-dayer, Shamim had just played four ODIs for the Tigers, was not brought into the attack in two of those and bowled just one over each in the other two games without any success.

But Shamim rose to the occasion in Colombo, bowled a nine-over spell which cost just 22 runs and also fetched a wicket – playing a pivotal role in the series-levelling win.

In the series decider in Pallekele yesterday, Shamim's figures of 1-30 in four overs does not look nearly as impressive. But the 24-year-old deserves credit for his second spell as he conceded just 15 runs from the 44th and the 46th overs and also claimed the prized wicket of Kusal Mendis on 124, effectively shaving off a few runs from Sri Lanka's eventual total of 285-7.

Still, however impressive Shamim may have been in Sri Lanka with the ball, it would be imprudent of the management to call off the search for a sixth bowling option just now as once his novelty wears off, chances are the opposition will target him for easy runs.

But the bigger problem right now is that other than Shamim, Soumya Sarkar is the only name in the current white-ball setup who could play that batting all-rounder's role. Promising players like Mosaddek Hossain and Afif Hossain failing to live up to their potential has created this void, one that Bangladesh is trying to fill with Shamim at the moment.

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 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.



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