

Double Super Over and a game for the ages

T20s – the format itself – demand edge-of-the-seat thrillers, and in that regard, the T20 World Cup group-stage clash between South Africa and Afghanistan at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad delivered in full yesterday. A run-out off the fourth ball of the final over of the Afghan innings eventually pushed the match into a Super Over, while Tristan Stubbs' six off the final delivery of Fazalhaq Farooqi in the first Super Over led to an unprecedented double Super Over in a T20 World Cup game. Rahmanullah Gurbaz's three consecutive sixes even opened up the possibility of a third Super Over. That, however, did not materialise, as South Africa spinner Keshav Maharaj had Gurbaz caught off the final ball of the match, bringing an end to an epic contest that saw both teams' 20-over innings finish on 187, with 17 scored by each side in the first Super Over, before Afghanistan managed 19 while chasing 24 in the second Super Over.



PHOTO: ICC

- This was the first time a T20 World Cup match went into a second Super Over, and only the second such instance in T20s.
- Afghanistan were also involved in the other double Super Over, losing that match as well – against India in Bengaluru in 2024.
- Meanwhile, this was the fifth time a T20 World Cup match has gone into Super Overs.
- However, including yesterday's thriller between Afghanistan and New Zealand, a total of six matches have ended in ties in T20 World Cups. The first instance came in a game between India and Pakistan at the 2007 T20 World Cup, with India winning through a bowl-out.
- So far, South Africa have won both of their T20s that went into Super Overs -- against Sri Lanka in Cape Town in 2019 and in yesterday's

- game.
- Afghanistan, meanwhile, are yet to win a Super Over contest in T20s, having lost all three so far.
- Quinton de Kock smashed a 41-ball 59 yesterday, becoming South Africa's top scorer in T20 World Cups with 737 runs. He surpassed AB de Villiers, who scored 717 runs in T20 World Cups.
- Rahmanullah Gurbaz's 84 off 42 is now the highest score by an Afghan batter in a T20 World Cup, surpassing his previous best of an 80-run knock against New Zealand in the last edition of the tournament.
- Yesterday's defeat means Afghanistan will not only have to win big in their next two group-stage games -- against UAE and Canada -- but also hope other results go their way.

Australia cruise past Ireland

AFP, Colombo

A depleted Australia shrugged off the loss of their captain Mitchell Marsh to injury to cruise to a dominant 67-run opening T20 World Cup win over Ireland in Colombo yesterday.

Marsh was ruled out before the match after being struck in the groin during training on Tuesday. Australia were quick to call up Steve Smith, who will fly to Sri Lanka on standby in case opener Marsh is unable to take any part in the tournament.

Australia made 182-6 after stand-in captain Travis Head elected to bat and then bowled Ireland out for 115.

Josh Inglis was promoted to open in place of Marsh and made 37 off 17 balls, while Marcus Stoinis top scored with 29-ball 45.

Nathan Ellis, who had been nursing a hamstring injury in the run-up to the tournament, bowled brilliantly to take 4-12 while spinner Adam Zampa took 4-23 as Ireland were dismissed in 16.5 overs.

Ellis ripped through Ireland's top order with two wickets in his first over and they were soon 27-4. A 46-run sixth wicket stand between Lorcan Tucker (27-ball 24) and George Dockrell (29-ball 41) offered some resistance but Ireland could never stay in hunt.

Nepal eye first win as India, SL seek momentum

AGENCIES

Three fascinating contests headline today's T20 World Cup action, each carrying its own importance.

Nepal enter their clash against Italy full of belief after pushing England to the brink in their opener, falling short by just one big hit.

Emerging stars Dipendra Singh Airee and Lokesh Bam showed they can match elite attacks, while Sandeep Lamichhane's presence continues to inspire confidence.

However, Nepal's death bowling -- conceding 33 in the final two overs -- remains an area to tighten. Italy, meanwhile, are still finding their feet at this level after a heavy defeat to Scotland and the loss of captain Wayne Madsen to injury. With nothing to lose, they'll aim to play freely and spring a surprise, but Nepal sense a golden chance to open up their group before facing West Indies.

In Delhi, India will look to shake off a nervy opening win over the USA and rediscover their high-scoring rhythm at the small-boundary Feroz Shah Kotla. Despite talk of 300, pitches haven't

been as flat as expected, making adaptability key.

Fitness concerns around Jasprit Bumrah and others like prolific opener Abhishek Sharma, who has been hospitalised with an upset stomach, add intrigue, offering Namibia a rare opportunity to challenge tournament favourites.

Namibia struggled against Netherlands but will hope to unleash their batting and make a statement on the global stage.

Sri Lanka vs Oman in Kandy presents the most tactical battle of the day. Sri Lanka would normally start as heavy favourites, but the absence of Wanindu Hasaranga has disrupted both their bowling balance and middle-order firepower. Oman, bottom of Group B, must win to stay alive and will target Sri Lanka's vulnerable middle order with their spin-heavy attack. With confidence from a warm-up win over Sri Lanka A, Oman believe an upset is possible.



Inaugural WBPL: BPL franchises to get priority

SPORTS REPORTER

A Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) official said on Wednesday that the board will prioritise existing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 franchises when finalising teams for the inaugural Women's Bangladesh Premier League (WBPL) T20.

"Obviously, we will give them priority. We will look for three franchises, and if they are interested, they will take the teams," BCB director Iftekhar Rahman Mithu told The Daily Star.

He added that if three franchises are not secured from current BPL owners, the board will explore alternative options.

Earlier in the day, the BCB's women's wing officially announced that the first WBPL T20 will be held from April 3 to 15, marking Bangladesh's first franchise-based T20 competition for women.

Local players -- including national cricketers and emerging talents -- will be selected through a draft system to ensure competitive balance and squad depth, while franchises will also be allowed to recruit overseas professionals to raise the tournament's standard and provide local players with international exposure.

The decision followed a recent meeting between BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul and several board directors and officials. According to Iftekhar, the primary objective is to create more competitive match opportunities for women cricketers. Another official present at the meeting said two windows -- early April and May -- were considered, with April chosen due to greater availability of foreign players.

The WBPL governing council will be chaired by Rubaba Dowla, BCB director and chairperson of the BCB women's wing.

Mimo eyes Asian Games for last bow

SPORTS REPORTER

Experienced forward Pushkor Khisa Mimo is considering retirement from international hockey after the 20th Asian Games in Japan, subject to earning a place in the final squad for both the Asian Games Qualifiers and the Games proper.

Mimo has been recalled to the preliminary squad for the Asian Games Qualifying tournament in Oman, marking a comeback after missing recent major assignments.

Bangladesh will compete in the qualifiers in Oman from March 25 to April 25, with the top four teams securing tickets to the Asian Games, scheduled to be held in Japan from September 19 to October 4.

The 32-year-old forward has represented Bangladesh for the past 11 years. According to FIH statistics, he has scored 39 goals in 92 international appearances. However, he was left out of the 18-member squad for the Men's Asia Cup in India last year and also missed the three-match playoff against Pakistan for the 2026 Hockey World Cup Qualifiers in Dhaka in November.

Newly appointed head coach Ashiquzzaman has included Mimo in the 36-member preliminary squad, which was given a four-day break from Wednesday due to the national elections after completing a five-day training camp at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium.



"Being recalled to the preliminary squad is an honour and a chance to prove myself again. I want to try my best to secure a place in the final squad and I have a dream to retire from international hockey after the next Asian Games in Japan," Mimo told The Daily Star over the phone from Ranganmati, where he travelled to cast his vote.

His dream will only be realised if he

regains his place in the national team and Bangladesh qualify for the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

While there is little question about his goal-scoring ability, fitness remains a concern. Mimo said he is satisfied with his condition after the recent camp.

"I am satisfied with my fitness and I think it will improve as the training progresses. I tried to train individually two to three days per week," he said.

Mimo scored twice in Tuesday's three 15-minute trial matches. The camp will resume on February 15, with players asked to report by the evening of February 14.

To make the final squad, Mimo must compete with talented juniors, around 15 of whom were called up after impressing at the FIH Men's Junior (U-21) World Cup in India.

"Most of the junior players, five to seven of whom also represent the senior team, have quality as they played in the World Cup," Mimo said. "They are ahead in terms of performance but lack experience, and I think the national team also needs experienced players. If the squad combines both, it will be excellent for the upcoming competitions."



WINDIES WEAR WIDE SMILES

West Indies' Gudakesh Motie celebrates a dismissal with his teammates during their ICC T20 World Cup clash against England in Mumbai yesterday, as the two-time champions sealed a 30-run victory to register their second successive win of the campaign. After Sherfane Rutherford's unbeaten 76 off 42 balls, featuring seven sixes and two fours, and Jason Holder's no-less-brutal 33 powered the Windies to 196 for six at the Wankhede Stadium, left-arm spinner Motie starred with three wickets as England were bowled out for 166 in 19 overs, ensuring the Caribbean side's trademark smiles remained firmly in place.

PHOTO: REUTERS