

OUT OF SORTS IN A FACE TROCKLE REGIONS



India vs Afghanistan Live from 7:30pm IST STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

PTI ■ DUBAI

Al but out of reckoning for the summit clash, a dishevelled India would like to put their house in order before facing a gummy Afghanistan team which could prove to be a proverbial banana peel in the final Super 4 clash of the Asia Cup on Thursday.

The Indian team hasn't performed to its full potential in the Super 4 stage and lack of resources and poor team selection can also be blamed for back-to-back demoralising defeats against Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

However, Suryakumar (775 rating points), apart from his sensational 68 off just 39 balls against Hong Kong, failed to replicate his performances against Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the big games.

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T20I Rankings: Rohit climbs three places to 14th

PTI ■ DUBAI

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also progressed. Hardik Pandya remained at fifth spot in the all-rounder's chart.

Topping the batting chart is Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan (815 rating points), who has dispatched his team mate and captain Babar Azam (794 rating points).

Rizwan has scored 192 runs in three matches in the Asia Cup and is the leading run getter in the tournament so far.

Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka has gained one spot to be placed at number eight, after notching scores of 20, 35, and 52.

The 24-year-old also made 52 off 37 balls to help his side beat India in a Super 4 match on Wednesday. Afghanistan batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz also gained 14 places to be ranked 15th, after his knock of 84 against Sri Lanka in the Super 4 match.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka one would expect the skipper to take an inspired call and rejig the top three for a few games to see if there is any apparent change in the results as well as the approach.

One of the reasons for India not being able to close out matches at the death has been Bhuvneshwar Kumar's poor run in the final three consecutive games. That left young Arshdeep Singh with only seven runs to defend in both games.

Skipper Rohit however urged everyone not to be too harsh on Bhuvneshwar.

Even experienced bowlers go for runs. Bhuvhi has been playing for us for so many years and has won us so many matches in death overs," Rohit said in his senior seamer's defence.

TEAMS (FROM)

India: Rohit Sharma (c), KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Deepak Hooda, Dinesh Karthik, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Arshwin, Yuvendra Chahal, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Arshdeep Singh, Deepak Chahar.

Afghanistan: Mohammad Nabi (C), Najjibullah Zadran (VC), Afsar Zazai (WK), Azamullah Omarzai, Farid Ahmad Malik, Fazaal Haq Farooqi.

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Team is 95% settled, but we still need some answers: Rohit

PTI ■ DUBAI

Starting at an early exit from the Asia Cup, the Indian team is facing some flak for a below-par show but skipper Rohit Sharma insists that the team combination is more or less settled going into the T20 World Cup, though, they are still looking for some 'answers'.

The absence of an indisposed Avesh Khan and Ravindra Jadeja, who underwent a knee surgery, meant that India competed with only two frontline seamers -- Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Arshdeep Singh -- with Hardik Pandya being the third fast-medium option.

Lack of enough sting in its bowling attack meant that the team suffered back-to-back Super 4 defeats against Pakistan and Sri Lanka, failing to defend par-scores of 181 and 173 respectively.

"It's 90-95% settled, just a few changes that will happen," Rohit said of the team combination after a humiliating defeat against Sri Lanka on Tuesday.

"The skipper added that he wanted to experiment a bit in the Asia Cup and see what happens when four specialist bowlers are used."

"When you talk about experiments, yes, we wanted to try out certain things. If you look at the combination, we have been playing before the start of the Asia Cup, it was with four seamers, two spinners and the second spinner was an all-rounder.

"I always wanted to try and find answers as to what hap-



pen if you play with three seamers and two spinners, and the third spinner being an all-rounder. We are still looking for answers," he explained.

"I want to be prepared for the World Cup where you are challenged as a team. When you go to the World Cup, you want to have all the answers. Since Hardik Pandya has come back, we have played with 3 seamers, two spinners... These deficits teach us a whole lot of things," he added.

Still looking for some answers While Rohit said that 95 percent of the team is settled, he contradicted himself when he said that a lot of answers are yet to be found.

"There are a lot of questions we need to answer, and along the way, in the three-four series we've played, we have found some answers."

"There will be a time where we will draw a line and say, 'this is the combination we want to play for the World Cup'. After this, we have two more series and then the World Cup. Till our squad is announced, we can try out a few players."

ENGLAND RECALL HALES FOR T20 WC

AP ■ LONDON

Alex Hales' long international exile is over after he was recalled to the England squad for the T20 World Cup in Australia as a replacement for the injured Jonny Bairstow.

The 33-year-old Nottinghamshire batsman has not represented his country for three-and-a-half years, having been dumped on the eve of the 2019 World Cup in the aftermath of two failed recreational drug tests.

While his official ban only totalled 21 days, in line with England and Wales Cricket Board policy, he was left out in the cold after what then white-ball captain Eoin Morgan described as a "complete breakdown in trust". Now, with Morgan

retired, Bairstow sidelined by a "freak" leg injury and fellow opener Jason Roy dropped due to lack of form, circumstances have combined to hand Hales a fresh chance.

Hales recently became the first Englishman to reach 10,000 runs in the T20 format, and also has useful experience in Australia's Big Bash League so knows the tournament pitches well.

The hand-hitting batter has scored 1,644 runs in 60 T20Is at an average of 31, with a strike rate of more than 136 per 100 balls. Hales will also be available for the upcoming tour of Pakistan. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed the player's recall in a short team update issued on Wednesday.

Rahane starts comeback fight with Duleep Trophy

PTI ■ CHENNAI

It won't be an easy fight to reclaim what he has lost but Ajinkya Rahane will not deviate from his 'process-driven' methods as he gears up to lead a star-studded West Zone against minnows North East in the opening Duleep Trophy game starting Thursday.

The Indian domestic cricket season starts with revival of Duleep Trophy, back in its zonal format as two quarterfinal matches kick off proceedings.

There couldn't have been a bigger mismatch between the two sides as West boasts of a batting line-up with names like skipper Rahane, the marauding Pritivi Shaw, talented

Yashashvi Jaiswal, KKR captain Shreyas Iyer and Rahul Tripathi, as recently as tour of Zimbabwe was with the Indian team.

But focus will be on Rahane, who will certainly make a last ditch attempt to get back into the Test team after being dropped earlier this year after two years of ban on him.

"See, I believe in following my processes. Right now, my focus is on the Duleep Trophy and doing well for West zone team and we will see what happens in future," Rahane said on the eve of the match.

For him, it is about taking each match as it comes. "Playing one game at a time... Coming back after injury, the focus on what is in hand rather than



back for the final game in place of Rishabh Pant or Deepak Hooda. Hooda, who batted at No. 7 wasn't given an over to bowl and the skipper defended the move by stating that presence of two rampaging Sri Lankan openers (Pathum Nissanka and Kusal Mendis) didn't allow him to introduce the Baroda man into the attack.

Also the Sri Lanka match proved that India can't afford to play Hardik Pandya as the specialist fifth bowler, which would always put heavy burden on the all-rounder.

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the future. Looking forward to doing well," he said in response to a question if he saw it as the first opportunity towards working for the comeback.

He said it was good that Duleep Trophy had returned to the zonal format and said it provided opportunity to domestic players.

Along with the skipper, Shaw and Jaiswal can rack up big scores and the North-East bowlers would be hard pressed to stop them.

Domestic stalwart Jayde Unadkat forms part of a strong bowling attack that also comprises Baroda pacer Atit Seth and Sauresha's chirag Jani.

The powerful West Zone side is expected to carry too many guns for their opponents which consists of players from the North-Eastern region and the Plate teams.

North in what appears to be an evenly matched contest on paper. The experienced Manoj Tiwary leads the men from the East with a mix of experience and youth to call upon.

North, on the other hand, led by Mandeep Singh includes Yash Dhull, who captained the India team to under-19 World Cup triumph earlier this year. His previous performances will be watched keenly after a brilliant start in his first-class career.

The team includes several experienced names with Navdeep Saini and Siddharth Lalki likely to lead the bowling attack.

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