



## T20 WC: Can India pacers Arshdeep and Siraj pass the acid test in Americas

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** Four spinners in India's T20 World Cup squad suggest that the Indian selectors are expecting slow turners in the Americas but have they missed a trick by picking only three pacers in the final 15?

Also questionable is the choice of pacers. Before the IPL began, Jasprit Bumrah was the lone certainty in the pace department while the other contenders had to prove themselves in the league.

As it turned out on Tuesday, the selectors chose to play safe and picked Mohammed Siraj and Arshdeep Singh to support the one-of-a-kind Bumrah in the ICC event beginning June 1.

The likes of Sandeep Sharma, Avesh Khan and T Natarajan, who all have impressed with their death bowling skills in this IPL, were ignored.

Both Siraj and Arshdeep, who have played 10 and 44 T20 Internationals respectively, have not had the best of times in the IPL but they have got the nod on the basis of their past performances for India.

The duo has the ability to swing the new ball but in the shortest format, how one handles batters' onslaught in the death overs is equally important if not more. That is one as-



pect of the game in which both Arshdeep and Siraj have been off the mark in the IPL.

Siraj has leaked run at 9.50 runs per over while Arshdeep has been unusually expensive, leaking 9.63 runs per over though he has 12 wickets to his name in nine games. He picked up 10 wickets during the 2022 T20 World Cup.

In the left-arm pacer's case, his form in the death overs has been worrying but the selectors have also considered his healthy record in national colours, having taken 62 wickets at a striking average of 20.87 and a decent economy rate of 8.63. Siraj has an economy rate of 8.78 in 10 T20 Internationals.

In former chief selector MSK Prasad's opinion, taking three pacers to the World Cup will be enough and he is also fine with the chosen men.

"The pitches over there are expected to assist the slower bowlers and that is why they have gone with

four spin options.

"In the playing eleven, I see only two specialist pacers playing alongside Hardik Pandya," Prasad, who is currently a strategic consultant with Lucknow Super Giants, told PTI.

"I would like to start with Bumrah and Siraj but the management can rotate between Siraj and Arshdeep depending on the composition of opposition batters."

Prasad described it as a "balanced squad" even though he felt K L Rahul deserved a place.

"On the batting front, it is unfortunate that someone of K L Rahul's quality has missed but I am sure he will make a strong comeback," said the former India wicketkeeper, who would also like to see both Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal in the playing eleven.

However, all don't agree with Prasad's views on India's bowling composition for the ICC event.

T20 World Cup-winning

captain Aaron Finch feels Bumrah needed more support in the pace department with Siraj and Arshdeep not being consistent enough.

"I was surprised by the four spinners as well. I had Rinku (Singh) in there and only two spinners.

"In my initial squad, I had the extra quick because I think, because of the inconsistency that we have seen with everyone bar Jasprit Bumrah with the ball, especially in the power-play, I wanted the extra cover of that quick," he said.

"And if they want to play three spinners in the game, one of them has to be prepared to bowl in the powerplay, and I don't see any of those guys doing it consistently, so I think they've backed themselves into a corner slightly," Finch told 'Star Sports'.

Former West Indies fast bowler Ian Bishop added that four spinners in a squad of 15 is more of a luxury than necessity.

"I guess spin will play a part in the tournament. The only concern I have is that the pitches for the World Cup may be slightly different from the ones we have seen in bilateral series or domestic tournaments. So I think it's a luxury to have four spinners rather than it being a necessity," said Bishop.

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Pace sensation Mayank Yadav's participation in the remainder of the IPL round-robin stage seems doubtful after he sustained a suspected abdominal muscle "tear" during the game against Mumbai Indians, making it his second injury breakdown in past four weeks.

However, there is a silver lining for the 21-year-old Delhi man as he is all set to be given a pace bowling contract by the BCCI alongside Umran Malik, Vidwath Kaverappa, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Yash Dayal and Akash Deep.

The contract will place Mayank under the supervision of NCA's Sports Science and Medical team, who will take charge of his injury management and fitness programme from his IPL franchise Lucknow Super Giants.



"Mayank has a tear but it is more likely a grade 1 tear. It will be cutting it fine but in case LSG qualifies for the play-offs, he might just be able to play the knock-out games. But it is like hoping against hope and right now he is

doubtful for the remaining IPL games," a BCCI source informed PTI on condition of anonymity.

Mayank, who burst into the scene with 155 click deliveries and back-to-back 'Player of the Match' awards at the start of the

IPL, broke down in the third match and was ruled out for four weeks.

He made a comeback against Mumbai Indians on Tuesday after passing fitness tests but was forced back into the dugout after bowling 3.1 overs in which he gave away 31 runs.

Had Mayank been fit all this while, there was a possibility of him being a left-field selection in the T20 World Cup but right now, handling him with care is the primary job of the Indian cricket establishment.

"He will soon be handed a pace bowling contract and once he is in BCCI Pathways structure, his growth will be systematically monitored.

"The national selection committee and the Indian team management would like to gradually blood him and ensure that he can maintain peak fitness," the BCCI source added.

## Smith, McGurk miss out as Australia unveil Mitchell Marsh-led T20 World Cup squad

**MELBOURNE, MAY 01:** All-rounder Mitchell Marsh was formally announced full-time captain while veteran Steve Smith and young Jake Fraser-McGurk were left out of the preliminary 15-member T20 World Cup squad announced by Australia on Wednesday.

It is the first time in a decade that Smith, a former captain and one of Australia's finest batters of the generation, has been excluded from a World Cup squad.

The 34-year-old had hoped to open in the marquee tournament but the selectors decided to go with Travis Head, David Warner and Marsh at the top. The lack of an IPL contract didn't help Smith's case either.

Moreover, Smith is not as prolific as some of the best T20 batters in the world though he is among the finest in the Test and ODI formats. He has scored 1094 runs from 67 T20 matches at an average of 24.86 and a strike rate of 125.45.

Uncapped 22-year-old Fraser-McGurk, who made a strong case form



himself courtesy his recent sensational run in the ongoing IPL where he has scored 247 runs in five matches for the Delhi Capitals at an astounding strike rate of 237.50, was also snubbed.

The selectors chose all-rounder Cameron Green and Josh Inglis instead. Green offers support for the injury-prone Marsh and Marcus Stoinis, while Inglis serves as the backup wicketkeeper.

"Steve Smith, Matt Short, Jason Behrendorff, Aaron Hardie, Spencer Johnson and Xavier Bartlett were all part of long conversations, along with several others, including Jake Fraser-McGurk who is yet to play T20 international cricket but continues to impress and is developing rapidly.

"Being constrained to a squad of 15 for World Cups is always a challenge given the different scenarios and options we'd like to cover," selection chair George Bailey said.

After serving as the interim captain of the T20I squad for the past year, 32-year-old Marsh has officially been named full-time skipper in the short-term format.

"It's been an immense privilege to play for my country and now an even greater honour to lead the squad to a World Cup.

"We have had some strong success in recent times and I am hopeful that will continue in what looks like a wide-open tournament," said Marsh.

Left-arm spinner Ashton Agar has earned a re-

call despite last playing a T20I in October 2022 while Stoinis, Tim David and Green join Glenn Maxwell in the final squad as all-rounder options.

"It's great to have Ashton Agar back into the squad following a spate of unfortunate and untimely injuries," Bailey said.

"We believe Ashton can play a critical role in this tournament along with Marcus Stoinis, Glenn Maxwell, Cam Green and Mitch Marsh in complementing our front-line attack options.

"The batting options available allow a tailored approach to each venue and opponent," he added.

Teams have until May 25 to change their squad, after which it requires ICC Event Technical Committee approval.

**THE SQUAD:** Mitchell Marsh (c), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

## Sunrisers Hyderabad looks to return to winning ways against high-flying RR

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** Table-topper Rajasthan Royals take on fifth-placed Sunrisers Hyderabad as the home team desperately needs to regain the winning touch in the Indian Premier League (IPL 2024) match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium here on Thursday.

Royals' batting line-up consists of openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and Jos Buttler in top form, captain Sanju Samson at number three, who is always there to chip in under pressure and bolstered by his inclusion in the T20 World Cup squad, clean-hitting Riyan Parag followed by Shimron Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel who can easily test the best of bowling attacks in any conditions.

The fact that Royals lost just one game from nine



so far to top the table is testimony to the all-around skills of the team which is arguably the most consistent so far even as the fear of peaking too early might lurk around.

The huge plus for Royals has been the fact that at least two players either in the bowling or batting department have been able to raise the bar and help the team cross the line.

The variety in bowling with the likes of left-arm

pacer Trent Boult, Nandre Burger, vastly-improved Avesh Khan with the new ball, backed by Sandeep Sharma, and the quality spin of Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal, has been adept at the challenges so far.

It will be interesting to watch how good the Royals' bowlers will be against the Sunrisers' batting unit which has clearly set the benchmark for the others in terms of a dominating display in the

PowerPlay. However, the failure of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma at the top in the last two matches proved to be costly for Sunrisers.

When they failed to get going, the others including the free-stroking South African duo of Aiden Markram and Heinrich Klaasen, and Nitiish Reddy failed to come good. Surprisingly, the side has more losses in chasing targets despite the striking prowess of some of these batters.

With five wins and four losses, Sunrisers' bowling has been pretty inconsistent except for left-arm pacer Jaydev Unadkat and death overs specialist T. Natarajan.

On a typical high-scoring wicket, it can be a feast for the cricket fans as a high-scoring contest is predicted

## Mayank Yadav doubtful for remainder of IPL; all set to get BCCI pace bowling contract

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## Jos Buttler pushed for T20 WC-bound England players' withdrawal from IPL play-offs, says team's MD Rob Key

**NEW DELHI, MAY 01:** Captain Jos Buttler pushed for withdrawal of English players from the Indian Premier League play-offs ahead of the T20 World Cup, the team's managing director Rob Key has revealed.

The IPL play-offs are scheduled from May 21-26, clashing directly with England's four-match T20I series against Pakistan.

The Buttler-led think tank wants the players be available for the final phase of preparation before defending champion England take on Ireland at Barbados on June 4.

"I asked him (Buttler) very early on in the piece and said, 'Look, as England captain, you're obviously going to have this series against Pakistan. How do you see it?' And straightaway, he said, 'No, no, I want to come back and start getting ready for the World Cup in that series that's just before it,'" Key was quoted as saying by



ESPNCricinfo.

Buttler, who has hit two centuries for IPL table toppers Rajasthan Royals, will look for an encore with England after having captured them to their second T20 World Cup title win in 2022.

Besides Buttler, the players involved in both England's World Cup squad and the IPL are Phil Salt (Kolkata Knight Riders), Will Jacks and Reece Toppley (Royal Challengers Bengaluru), Moeen Ali (Chennai Super Kings) and Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow and Liam Livingstone (Punjab Kings).

Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders are likely to be hit the most since both the teams are poised to make the play-offs.

The English stars' departure, though, may not hamper teams such as Punjab Kings and RCB as they are unlikely to make the final four.

According to Key, he had told the IPL-bound England players to be prepared for the scenario of leaving IPL early in order to be available for the Pakistan series.

"Look, there is a good chance that you'll be coming back (early)," he told the players before they de-

parted for the IPL.

"There is a chance you could stay out there. We may feel that if you get through to an IPL final that, maybe, that's the best thing to do. It might be that if there's only one of you then you'd let you go on and do that... we have to keep it pretty fluid."

The group stage of the IPL runs until May 19 and England are keen for their World Cup-bound players to have a few days together, before they set off for the Americas.

"You can't just call people back for no reasons: there are protections," Key said on Tuesday after announcing England's squad.

"Without injury or England commitments, we couldn't say to Phil Salt, for example, come back and have a rest for the next 15 days. But there is a window just before an England series when you can bring players back for England duty or injury."