



Battle of Nerves: Can India's middle-order calm tame Pak's spin threat?

COLOMBO, FEB 14: Amid the still-smouldering embers of an impasse that mixed cricket with politics like never before, India will need middle-order stability and a fully fit Abhishek Sharma to maintain domination over Pakistan when the two teams clash in the T20 World Cup's marquee fixture, here on Sunday.

A temporary 'peace season' has dawned after Pakistan made a U-turn from its boycott stand and agreed to take the field against India at the Premadasa stadium here.

It came after weeks of intense parleys that involved the International Cricket Council, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Practically, the whole of South Asia was turning the wheel to make this match happen, should the weather gods allow, because of its power to attract millions — fans and bank balance alike.

So, a train of events set off by the BCCI-instructed release of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the roster of Kolkata Knight Riders, that so transformed into a cross-border crisis has come to halt, for now.

On their part, cricketers from both the teams have also tried to temper down the accompanying swirl of hype, terming this match as just another game in the calendar.

It's hard to fathom the precise nature of their thoughts in that regard, but certainly both sides do not want the result to go against them because of the frenzy of negativism it can kick up.

For that, they will have to push the thoughts of a fan backlash behind and focus on the more controllable factors.

For India, the worries start with Abhishek as he was forced to skip the match



against Namibia with a stomach bug that needed hospitalisation.

If he is not available, then India have the option of either sticking with Sanju Samson or bringing in a fit-again Washington Sundar to open with an on-song Ishan Kishan.

Washington can also offer an off-spin option on the slow and tacky Premadasa pitch.

That nature of the track here also might prompt the management to bring in left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

But the inclusion of Kuldeep will have to come at the expense of a batter and the unfortunate one missing out could be Rinku Singh.

Bringing in Kuldeep is also a massively tantalising option because of his hold over Babar Azam and he also had fine figures of 4 for 30 in the Asia Cup final at Dubai — his last outing against the cross-border rivals.

the run-up to the World Cup, the India batting line-up resembled a bulldozer rolling down a slope, crushing everything in its route.

But the two matches in the marquee event so far have revealed a mild concern — a propensity to lose wickets in a cluster.

India slid to 77 for six against the USA at Mumbai, while the home side lost five

for four against Namibia in the death overs, but its impact was masked by a 200-plus total and a large 93-run victory at New Delhi.

On both those occasions, India were propped up by skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and Hardik Pandya.

But a collective effort is needed to win a long tournament like this, rather than repeatedly relying on individual brilliance.

With four points in the kitty, the management would not be overly concerned about it, but they certainly would not want another show of profligacy because Pakistan have the capacity to exploit it.

Keeping up with the hybrid model chalked out last year, Pakistan have been stationed in Colombo, and it has given them a better understanding of the pitch and conditions here.

The pitch at the RPKS has been a speed-sucker and the 2009 champions have five capable spinners in their ranks — Usman Tariq, Saim Ayub, Abrar Ahmed, Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz.

Tariq's side-arm stop and pause action has already become the talk of the town and the battle with the versatile Indian batters would be an intriguing sub-plot of the showdown.

Pakistan's batters led by

the irrepressible Sahibzada Farhan, who seemed to have gotten a grip over Jasprit Bumrah during last year's Asia Cup, Ayub, and all-rounder Faheem Ashraf can pack a punch on their day. Without any disrespect to the Netherlands and the USA, they are yet to be tested by a quality bowling unit and India possesses one.

From Bumrah to Varun Chakravathy, India have proven match-winners in their den and even pace all-rounder Shivam Dube has improved leaps and bounds as a bowler in recent times.

It gives the defending champions immense flexibility while deciding combinations.

But all calculations aside, this match is all about finding that mental equilibrium and rise above multi-pointed pressures — external and internal.

The Sri Lanka Department of Meteorology has cautioned of a developing low-pressure point over Bay of Bengal, which potentially can mean up to 70 per cent chance of rain in the Khetarama area on Sunday evening.

Teams
India: Suryakumar Yadav ©, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravathy, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Rinku Singh.

Pakistan: Salman Ali Agha ©, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafay, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan, Usman Tariq.

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, FEB 14

Shahabad Academy Haryana lifted the title trophy of the 5th Martyrs Memorial Hockey Tournament concluded today at K K Hakhu Stadium, here today.

The winning team presented a title trophy and prize of Rs 1.5 lakh by the chief guest, former Director General of J&K Police, Kuldeep Khoda in the presence of senior officers of the J&K Police, including organising secretary, Anand Jain.

The runners-up J&K Police received cash prize of Rs one lakh in the six-day event which was organized under the Civic Action Programme (CAP) under the patronage of Director General of Police, Nilin Prabhat.

Third place went to Punjab Police, who beat Jammu Central 3-2 to receive Rs 75,000 prize money. In total, a cash prize worth Rs



3.86 lakh presented in this tournament which was an approved event of the Hockey India.

Neeraj of Shahbad Hockey Academy Haryana was declared man of the tournament while man of the match title went to Yuvraj Singh and presented Rs 10,000 cash award each. The best goal-keeper prize worth Rs 10,000 bagged by SPO Probjot Singh of J&K

Police. The chief guest eloquently emphasized the profound importance of sports in cultivating discipline, fostering teamwork, and nurturing a strong sense of camaraderie within the community.

This tournament was organized to honor the supreme sacrifices of brave martyrs, served as a powerful platform to promote

sportsmanship and reinforce unity both within the Police and among the wider public.

Among other senior officers present were Manish Sinha, ADG Hqrs (PHQ) J&K; Anand Jain, ADG Armed J&K; Nitish Kumar, ADG CID J&K; Bhim Sen Tuti, IGP Jammu Zone; Suleman Chowdhary, IGP Traffic J&K and Vivek Gupta, IGP Railways J&K.

Asmita Khelo India City League in Judo begins

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, FEB 14

Two days Asmita Khelo India City Women's League held at Indoor Sports Complex, MA Stadium, here involving around 150 young female judokas.

The League was organised by Judo Association of J&K under the aegis of Sports Authority of India. In the closing function, Manager Indoor Complex, Arshi Nad was special guest, who felicitated the winners in the presence of Vikas Dogra, Ritika Slathia and Jugal Kishore.

The technical penal comprised Manish, Rohit Sadotra, Aman Gupta, Avinash Sharma, Sajaan Sharma and Tanvi Thakur under the guidance of organising secretary, Suraj



Sharma.

Medal winners: GOLD: Myra, Anshika, Aardhya, Kavya, Mavi Manhas, Nayara, Sonakshi, Smalika, Sonakshi, Jiya, Nayara, Sonali, Manya, Pinki, Chandani, Muskan, Guatri, Mehvish, Ankita, Mehak, Prachi, Manpreet Singh, Gouranshi Thakur, Janvi, Anaya, Babhani, Shruti, Shilpa Rajput, Manya,

Smakha Khajuria, Priya Sharma, Harshita and Angel. SILVER: Sanvi, Mehvish, Aaruhi Thapa, Mahita, Rafia, Yuvika, Ridhima, Harnoup, Aarohi, Svasti, Yuvika, Nitadani, Shalu, Deepika, Bhumika, Anvee, Ahine, Ismita, Khushi, Smariti, Shivanshi, Monika, Janvi Sharma, Radhika, Manpreet Singh, Alisha and Varsha.

BRONZE: Stuti, Jasleen, Madalsa, Haraidh, Advita, Minarva, Manya, Kanak, Sharuti, Ridhima, Jeena, Ruhi, Nirvana, Mehroon, Janja, Veronica, Tehins, Anu, Dhanasvi, Jeena, Ruhi, Jasmin, Myra, Shajanvi, Raghav, Remesmee, Angelpreet, Palvi, Engeta, Diksha Bhagat, Aarti, Manvi Sharma, Driti, Shakti and Saanvi Sharma

BWF Para Badminton World C'ships: Pramod secures two gold medals

MANAMA, FEBRUARY 14: India's ace para shuttler Pramod Bhagat delivered a historic performance at the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Para Badminton World Championships 2026 in Bahrain, clinching the gold medal in men's singles SL3 and adding a second gold in men's doubles SL3-SL4 to complete a sensational double triumph.

In the men's singles SL3 final, Pramod defeated Indonesia's Muhammad Al Imran in commanding fashion with a scoreline of 21-12, 21-18. With this spectacular victory, he secured his sixth World Championship Gold in Singles and his fourth consecutive World Championship title, creating history once again for the nation, as per a press release.

With this latest gold medal, Pramod Bhagat overtakes the legendary Lin Dan, who had five World Championship gold medals in men's singles, further cementing his legacy as one of the most accomplished shuttlers in the sport's history.

Pramod's World Championship Men's Singles Gold Medal victories now stand at 2009, 2015, 2019, 2022, 2024 and 2026 -- a remarkable tally of six gold medals in the marquee category.

Reflecting on his milestone achievement, Pramod Bhagat said, "Winning my sixth World Championship gold and fourth consecutive title is an emotional mo-



ment for me. Lin Dan has always been my idol, and to surpass his record is truly special. Every medal represents years of hard work, sacrifice and belief. To continue making history for India and raise the bar higher motivates me even more. I dedicate this victory to my country and everyone who has supported me throughout my journey."

Pramod's golden run in Bahrain extended to the men's doubles SL3-SL4 category, where he partnered with Sukant Kadam to claim the gold medal. The Indian duo defeated fellow Indians Jagadesh Dilli and Naveen Sivakumar 21-19, 21-16 in a high-intensity final, showcasing exceptional teamwork and composure.

For Sukant Kadam, the championship proved equally rewarding. Along-

side his doubles gold with Pramod, he also secured a bronze medal in Men's Singles, highlighting his consistency across categories.

Sukant Kadam said, "Winning doubles gold with Pramod at the World Championships is a proud moment. We have worked extremely hard to build our partnership, and delivering on the biggest stage is very satisfying. Adding a singles bronze makes this campaign even more meaningful for me."

Krishna Nagar further strengthened India's medal tally with an impressive double podium finish. He clinched a bronze medal in the men's Singles SH6 category and added another bronze in Mixed Doubles along with Nithya Sre.

Krishna Nagar said, "It's always an honour to repre-

sent India at the World Championships. Winning two medals is satisfying, but it also motivates me to push harder and aim for gold in the coming events."

With Pramod Bhagat's historic sixth singles gold and double crown, and Sukant Kadam's gold and bronze medal performances, India once again reaffirmed its dominance in global para badminton at the BWF Para Badminton World Championships 2026. India's medal haul extended across multiple categories, underlining the country's growing depth in para badminton.

Prem Kumar Ale and Alphia James won silver, marking India's first-ever medal in the Wheelchair category at the BWF Para Badminton World Championships -- a significant milestone for the sport in the country. Kumar Nitesh claimed bronze in men's singles SL3, while Umesh Kumar and Surya Kant Yadav secured bronze in men's doubles SL3-SL4.

In women's events, Manasi Joshi and Thulasimathi Murugesan won bronze in Women's doubles SL3-SU5, while Chirag Baretha and Mandeep Kaur secured bronze in mixed doubles SL3-SU5. Naveen Sivakumar clinched silver in SL4, Manisha Ramdas won silver in Women's Singles SU5, and Nithya Sre added another silver in women's singles to cap off a memorable campaign. (ANI)

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, FEB 14

To give fillip to the domestic activities, the Jammu and Kashmir Kho-Kho Association (JKKKA) has decided to introduce School Olympiad in J&K in the coming sports season.

Aiming at the school going boys and

girls, the Association has planned to involve 20 such schools to start with in district Jammu.

"To strengthen our talent pool and to catch them at young, it has been decided at the Association level to reach out to the youngsters in the school. With the sole intention of tap the talent and then groom them on professional lines, the JKKKA has planned to

launch School Olympiad from coming sporting season of 2026-27," said Amrinder Singh, general secretary of the Association.

"In the first phase of the first phase of the specially designed programme, 20 schools will be involved in the Jammu district. Similar initiatives will be taken in other districts of the Union Territory in a phased manner," he added.

Khelo India NTPC City Archery meet begins

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, FEB 14

The two-day Khelo India NTPC City Archery Tournament started today at Green Playfields Gandhi Nagar, here today under the banner of Archery Association of J&K.

The event was declared open by prominent sports promoter, Rajeev Sharma in the presence of president of the Archery Association, Vikram Singh.

The chief guest laid emphasis on

channelizing the energy of the youth in a positive direction.

He told the gathering that Archery was the only game in J&K which has given J&K two Arjuna Awardees in the recent past.

Over 100 archers are taking part in this event in Compound, Recurve and Indian Round in both boys and girls sections.

Among other prominent present were Dr. Taran Singh, Ajay Sharma and Pawandeep Kour. The competition is being conducted by Anant, Archery Coach, under the overall su-

pervision of Darshana Devi.

The Results:
Recurve Boys: Asif Ali, gold; Niteen Sharma, silver and Pariv Khajuria, bronze. Recurve Girls: Feriha, gold.

Compound Boys: Amit Thakur, gold; Anil Kumar, silver and Sangarsh Dev Singh, bronze. Compound Girls: Sheetal Devi, gold; Saima Kousar, silver and Romika Sharma, bronze.

Indian Round (Boys): Vinod Singh, gold; Nitish Bawa, silver and Bhawani Jasrotia, bronze. Indian Round (Girls): Swastika, gold; Meenu Choudhary, silver and Tanviya Sharma, bronze.

T20 WC: Markram's blistering knock guides South Africa to dominant win over New Zealand

AHMEDABAD, FEBRUARY 14: South Africa captain Aiden Markram played a pivotal role in his team's commanding seven-wicket victory over New Zealand in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup match at the Narendra Modi Stadium, leading the chase with a blistering 86* off 44 balls on Sunday.

With this victory, the Proteas registered their third consecutive win in the ongoing marquee tournament. The

Markram-led side is at the top in the Group D standings, with six points to their name in three matches.

New Zealand, on the other hand, are placed second with two wins and one loss in three matches. The Black Caps have four points.

South Africa captain Aiden Markram won the toss and elected to field against New Zealand. With left-arm seamer Marco Jansen spearhead-

ing the attack, South Africa restricted New Zealand to 175/7 in 20 overs.

While the Black Caps openers Tim Seifert (13) and Finn Allen (31) gave the team a brisk start, they lost too many early wickets to end the power-play at 58/3.

It looked like New Zealand were setting themselves up for a big score when Daryl Mitchell and Mark Chapman (48) built a 74-run stand.