



Women's Asia Cup: India favourites against arch-foes Pakistan



DUBAI, SEP 04: Having already made the semi-finals, a far superior India will be expected to step up the intensity against traditional foes Pakistan in their final league game of the Women's Asia Cup here on Saturday.

Men or women, routinely scheduled Indo-Pak fixtures in multi-team events have not lived up to the off-field hype for a while now.

Nothing different is expected when the two teams meet at the Dubai International Stadium with overwhelming title favourites India expected to steamroll Pakistan.

That is not to say that India don't have work to do in the shortest format, having made premature exits in the past two World Cups.

They need to develop a

pool of power-hitters and fast bowlers to challenge the hegemony of Australia.

However, at the Asia level, no side comes close to India's level. The Indians had somehow finished runners-up to Sri Lanka in the previous edition. Pakistan, on the other hand, have won their opening game against Thailand and remain in contention for the last-four stage.

Ahead of the game, both India openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma looked at the top of their game. Mandhana broke a battery of records against Hong Kong en route a memorable hundred to fire out a warning for the other teams in the competition.

The pitches here have not been the easiest to bat on.

The batters usually take

about 10 balls or so to assess the pace of the surface and accordingly plan their innings. This is exactly what both Mandhana and Shafali did on Thursday night.

The likes of Pratika Rawal, Richa Ghosh and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur will look to spend more time in the middle, having not been able to convert starts.

Pressure is mounting on new number three Rawal, who has not been able to meet the demands of the T20 game, having found plenty of success in the ODI format.

The addition of Nandani Sharma in the pace attack is a step in the right direction as she is delivering on her promise while opening the bowling alongside spearhead Kranti Gaud.

Pakistan, on the other hand, need drastic improvement in their batting to competing with India. The shortcomings in the batting department have let the team down for a number of years.

Even in their last game against Thailand, Pakistan found themselves under pressure in the powerplay with the loss of three wickets. However, they managed to defend a lowly 119 against a less-established side.

The team over-relies on opener Muneeba Ali and bowling all-rounder Fatima Sana who is also the captain of the side. That will need to change if Pakistan are to challenge their mighty rivals.

Squads:

Harmanpreet Kaur ©, Smriti Mandhana (vc), Shafali Verma, Bharti Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (wk), G Kamalini (wk), Arundhati Reddy, Prema Rawat, Radha Yadav, Sree Charani, Renuka Thakur, Nandni Sharma, Kranti Gaud, Pratika Rawal.

Fatima Sana (captain), Ayesha Zafar, Eman Naseer, Eyman Fatima, Gull Feroza, Momina Riasat, Muneeba Ali Siddiqui (wk), Sadaf Shamas, Nashra Sundhu, Sadia Iqbal, Saira Jabeen, Shawaal Zulfiqar, Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani, Waheeda Akhtar.

Match starts 8pm IST.

'We are always one step ahead of Pakistan': Deepti Sharma ahead of Asia Cup clash



DUBAI, SEP 04: Senior all-rounder Deepti Sharma on Friday said that India have always been one step ahead of Pakistan in their recent meetings and would look to continue just like that when they face each other in the Women's Asia Cup here on Saturday.

India, who have already made it to the semi-finals with one game in hand, will start as favourites against Pakistan in their final league game. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led team is currently on top of Group A with two dominating wins—against Thailand and Hong Kong.

"Look, there is no advantage as such. The only thing is that whatever we have won against them (Pakistan), whether it is the Asia Cup or any other matches, we are always one step ahead of them. And that's it," Deepti said at the pre-match press conference.

"The whole team is performing well. If you look at the bowling unit or the bat-

ting unit, I think both things are balanced. The one who has a good day, she tries to do better and take the game further. And those around her, they try to stay positive things so that they step in more in their game."

Asked about the Pakistan team, she said, "Look, our team is also good and their bowlers are also good. We know that. But we focus more on the strengths we have. And as I said, we want

to play a good brand of cricket. That's what we are focusing on.

"We just want to play good cricket. As a bowling unit, as a batting unit, the team should be as compact as we are playing in two games. That's the mindset," said Deepti who has taken six wickets from the two matches so far.

She refused to give out anything on the team combination, saying "That's the

call of the management."

The 29-year-old Deepti had words of praise for left-arm spinner Shree Charani and leg-spinner Prema Rawat.

"Charani is a very good talent. He is number one in the rankings. She has performed very well in the last year. The way she turns the ball, unbelievable. It's not easy to play for a batter."

"It's the same with Prema. She has not played so many matches. But whenever she gets a chance to bowl, she is always one step ahead. It's like 'I have to find breakthroughs for the team'." Charani has taken four wickets from two matches while Prema has two scalps from two games.

Deepti said as a senior player she has tried to help them as much as possible.

"I have tried to help them as much as I can in the ground and in the nets, and share my experience with them. Being a senior player, I help them as much as I can."

Cricket breaks new ground: India, Japan to meet in historic first T20I



NEW DELHI, SEP 4: The Indian men's cricket team will take on Japan in their first-ever T20 International on September 22, marking the launch of celebrations for the 75th anniversary of India-Japan diplomatic relations.

The match, to be played in Sano in Japan, will offer the Indian team valuable game time to fine-tune combinations and build momentum ahead of the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4.

"The Japan Cricket Association (JCA) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are delighted to announce that the men's teams from each nation will play a T20 International match to launch the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of India-Japan Diplomatic Relations," said BCCI in a statement.

The teams will compete for the Suzuki Cup at the Sano International Cricket Ground in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan.

"The match will be the first step of 'Sport 75', an initiative that stems from an agreement reached during a summit between Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and aims to promote human exchanges and cooperation between India and Japan in the field of sports, taking note of India's ambition to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2036," the statement added.

The Indian team will be

led by Shreyas Iyer, with vice-captain Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson and teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi among the key names in the squad.

India are the defending Asian Games champions after claiming gold at the previous edition in Hangzhou, China, where their final against Afghanistan was washed out by rain and they were awarded the title on the basis of their higher T20I seeding.

Seeded directly into the knockout stage, India will begin their Asian Games campaign in the quarterfinals on September 28.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said the India-Japan clash will provide cricket with a platform to expand its footprint and reach new, uncharted territories.

"The BCCI is delighted to be part of this historic occasion as the Indian and

Japanese men's teams come together for a special T20 International in Japan.

This is a significant moment for cricket, as it takes the Indian team to new territory and provides an opportunity to introduce the sport to a wider audience in Japan and East Asia," said Saikia.

"India and Japan share a strong and longstanding relationship and friendship, and we are pleased that cricket will be part of the celebrations marking 75 years of bilateral relations between the two countries, and we thank the Japan Cricket Association (JCA) for its efforts in making this fixture possible," he added.

He said it was the responsibility of the world's largest cricket board to take the sport beyond its traditional strongholds and into new territories.

"The BCCI believes that

the growth of cricket must extend beyond its traditional territories, and as the world's largest cricket board, we recognise our responsibility to contribute to that growth.

"The BCCI will work closely with the JCA to further strengthen cricket in Japan and to build on this relationship in the years ahead."

JCA CEO Naoki Miyaji said: "To be able to invite the reigning world champions to the home of cricket in Japan is a landmark moment for our association."

"We thank the BCCI for working with us towards this goal and greatly look forward to welcoming the passion of Indian cricket fans, and we actively encourage any local Japanese people curious about cricket to come and cheer on our team in what will be a truly memorable occasion

India storm into quarter-finals, set up USA clash at Pickleball World Cup



MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 4: The Indian contingent remains unbeaten at the end of day 2 of the team event at the Pickleball World Cup, currently ongoing in Da Nang, Vietnam till September 6, according to the press release.

The Indian contingent stormed into the quarter-finals and will play the formidable team from the USA.

The India pro squad consisting of Harsh Mehta, Arjun Singh, Anish Froilan, Aman Patel, Pearl Amalsadiwala, Naomi Amalsadiwala, Aaliya Ebrahim and Mihika Yadav beat China in the round of 32 with a scoreline of 4-0.

Pearl Amalsadiwala and Mihika Yadav set the tone by winning the first tie of the match 21-19 after which Harsh Mehta and Arjun Singh chalked up another point for Team India. In the third tie, Harsh Mehta and Pearl Amalsadiwala won a challenging match to set up Arjun Singh and Mihika Ya-

day to defeat the Chinese 4-0.

Pearl Amasadiwala expressed happiness with India's execution and progress to the quarter-finals, praising Harsh Mehta's leadership and her teammates. She said the team is ready for the crucial quarter-final challenge.

"Really happy with the way we have been executing our plans and making it all the way to the quarter finals. Playing with Mihika and Harsh has been a great experience for me and Harsh Mehta has been pivotal in his leadership. I am very happy to have played my role for the team and look forward to the quarters. Tomorrow is a crucial day for us and the rest of the Indian teams, but we are ready for the challenge," said Pearl Amasadiwala.

The round of 16 was poised to be a tough draw for India against the Philippines but the Indians managed to clinch the match

with a scoreline of 4-1. The women's doubles pair of Pearl and Mihika once again gave India their first point whilst the men's doubles went down fighting for the second tie 19-21. The next two mixed doubles went in the way of India giving them a 3-1 lead as Aaliya Ebrahim completely shut down her opponent 21-12 to take India into the quarter-finals.

"Tomorrow, our Kids, Juniors, Open, and Masters (60+) teams step into the quarter finals with unstoppable spirit. Each player is giving their absolute best and playing with heart, grit, and pride for the nation. Watching them pour everything into the game fills us with joy and pride. Their performances make us believe even more strongly that nothing is greater than seeing India triumph," said Aalap Sharma, Treasurer, Indian Pickleball Association.

"Congratulations to all

the squads. Making the quarter finals is a formidable statement by Team India and the entire Indian Pickleball Association is backing them to go deep into the final leg of the tournament. All the players in each team have played their part well and taken up the responsibility for the team," said Suryaveer Singh Bhullar, President, Indian Pickleball Association.

The India Masters squad, Junior squad and the Kids squad have all three made their way into the quarter finals against Vietnam, Chinese Taipei and Australia respectively. The India Senior team lost to New Zealand in the round of 16 ending the campaign for this edition of the World Cup.

India Masters edged out China in the round of 16 in the very last tie of the match winning with a final score of 3-2 with Bhushan Akut and Petulia Balaji dominating the decider 21-9. (ANI)

BCCI hands Bengal leg-spinner Rohit Yadav 2-year ban for age fraud, CAB crackdown on 62 cricketers

KOLKATA, SEP 04: The BCCI has imposed a two-year ban on Bengal leg-spinner Rohit Yadav for allegedly misrepresenting his age, weeks after he was selected in India's Under-19 squad for the upcoming series against Australia.

Rohit, who is originally from Uttar Pradesh, had represented India during the Under-19 team's tour of Sri Lanka in July, taking six wickets and helping the side win the final Test.

"He has been banned for

two years," said a BCCI source. He was also part of India's U-19 home onedayers and multi-day games against the touring Australia U-19 side in Rajkot and Ahmedabad, slated later this month.

The age discrepancy came to light when his documents were scrutinised in Sri Lanka. Rohit has three birth certificates carrying different years of birth -- 2007, 2009 and 2010 -- making him ineligible to play in age-group cricket.

There were also discrep-

ancies in his Aadhaar records. When he was registered with the Cricket Association of Bengal his year of birth was recorded as 2007. His Aadhaar records subsequently showed 2006 in updates in 2017 and 2020 before being changed to 2009 in 2021.

The CAB had earlier kept Rohit out of its junior teams over the discrepancies and subsequently informed the BCCI.

The Board has now barred him from participating in domestic cricket

for two years and informed all affiliated state associations. Rohit is among 62 players declared ineligible for registration or transfer for any tournament during the 2026-27 and 2027-28 seasons by the CAB over documentation and age-related discrepancies.

The list also includes former India Under-19 World Cup winner Ravi Kumar and left-arm spin all-rounder Vishal Bhatti, who has made three first-class and two List A appearances.