



Abhishek slams 30-ball 100, breaks Rohit Sharma's record for fastest T20I ton by Indian

NEW DELHI, SEP 17: Abhishek Sharma on Thursday slammed the fastest T20 International century by an Indian batter off only 30 balls during the third and final match against Afghanistan here.

The left-handed opener hammered as many as 11 sixes in his 108 off 34 balls to break former captain Rohit Sharma's record of scoring the fastest T20I century, which he had recorded against Sri Lanka in December 2017.

The breathtaking century was also the fastest by a cricketer from a Test-playing nation against a Test-playing nation, surpassing the 33-ball effort from New Zealand's Finn Allen against South Africa earlier this year.

Majority of Abhishek's thundering strikes sailed over the bowler's head.

With India already securing the series, Abhishek added the much-needed zing to a dead rubber with his sensational hitting. The sixes kept coming, whether he made room to play an inside out stroke or stayed still to dispatch the bowler down the ground.

It was the first time in the series that India batted first, allowing Abhishek to make most of his time in the middle.

Thanks to his six-hitting spree, India raced to 100 for



no loss in the powerplay, their highest in T20s in the first six overs.

Sanju Samson did not get to do much while Abhishek was going hammer and tongs in the powerplay but went on to make a fluent 50 off 35 balls, his second successive fifty plus score.

With both the openers in top form, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will need to warm the bench for the foreseeable future. Abhishek was unstoppable from the get go, maintaining same intensity against the fast bowlers and spinners.

Afghanistan, who have

not been able to compete with India in the latter's own backyard, had their task cut out with Abhishek disdainfully slaying Azmat Omarzai and Fazalhaq Farooqi, who conceded 17 and 23 runs in the second and third over respectively.

Captain Ibrahim Zadran tried spin early in the powerplay but that also did not work against a rampaging Abhishek. Samson got going with a couple of straight sixes off Mohammed Nabi before Abhishek too cleared the fence twice in the same over that went for 29 runs.

Samson was also dropped on 22 at mid-off by Zadran. Abhishek's fifty came off 16 balls before he completed his memorable hundred in the ninth over. He got to 99 via a pulsating pull off Abdullah Ahmadzai and got to three figures with a rare single.

He celebrated his milestone with a seated meditation pose as the crowd duly stood on their feet after witnessing a special knock. In the end, Afghanistan did well to restrict India to a sub 250 total. India only managed 37 runs in the last five overs with the loss of four wickets.

Overwhelming favourites India women begin Asian Games cricket title defence against Japan

NAGOYA, SEP 17: Fresh from their record-extending Asia Cup triumph, defending champions India will begin their Asian Games title defence as overwhelming favourites against hosts Japan in the women's quarterfinals here on Friday.

India head into the continental showpiece with confidence after lifting their eighth T20 Asia Cup in Dubai last week, but the knock-out format leaves them with little margin for error.

Eight teams are competing in the women's event and the competition starts directly with the quarterfinals, meaning there are no group stage matches to provide teams with time to settle into the tournament. One defeat is enough to end a campaign.

Shafali Verma will be one of India's key weapons after an outstanding Asia Cup, where she emerged as the team's leading batter and finished as the tournament's highest run-scorer. Her consistency at the top gave India a strong start in the UAE.

Smriti Mandhana, how-



ever, endured an inconsistent campaign and will be eager to rediscover her touch as India embark on another title bid.

Much of India's bowling will revolve around experienced all-rounder Deepti Sharma and left-arm spinner Sree Charani, who has rapidly established herself as an important member of the attack.

Charani was among India's standout performers in the Asia Cup and reached the landmark of 50 T20I wickets in only her 30th appearance. The 22-year-old's ability to control the middle overs could prove important.

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur will also be looking for

a better outing after an indifferent Asia Cup, with her experience in pressure situations likely to assume greater significance in a tournament where every game is a must-win.

India have plenty of bowling resources at their disposal with Nandini Sharma, Renuka Thakur and Kranti Gaud offering pace options. Deepti, Charani, Radha Yadav and Shreyanka Patil, who has recovered from her ankle injury, give the side multiple spin choices.

The batting, too, has depth beyond the opening pair. The wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh is capable of providing impetus in the middle and lower-order.

India will hope that

Shafali and Mandhana can set the platform, allowing their middle order to play with greater freedom.

Japan, playing on home soil, will be looking to make the most of the occasion against a superior opponent.

The hosts face a formidable bowling attack and will need to negotiate India's spin options effectively while restricting their aggressive top-order batters.

Squads:
India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Captain), Smriti Mandhana (Vice-Captain), Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), G Kamalini (WK), Shreyanka Patil, Bharti Fulmali, Shree Charani, Renuka Thakur, Kranti Gaud, Arundhati Reddy, Radha Yadav, Nandni Sharma.

Japan: Mai Yanagida (c), Erika Oda (vc), Ahilya Chandel, Ayumi Fujikawa, Hinase Goto, Haruna Iwasaki, Akari Nishimura (wk), Shimako Kato, Ayaka Kato-Stafford, Elena Kusuda-Nairn, Nonoha Yasumoto, Meg Ogawa, Kurumi Ota, Seika Sumi, Erika Toguchi-Quinn.

Pakistan survive Thailand scare to reach Asian Games 2026 semi-finals

NISSHIN [JAPAN], SEPTEMBER 17: Pakistan survived a major scare from Thailand before completing a tense three-wicket chase to reach the women's cricket semi-finals at the Asian Games 2026 here on Thursday.

Chasing a revised target of 92 from 11 overs in a rain-affected quarter-final, Pakistan slipped to 47 for four before a 25-run over led by captain Fatima Sana turned the contest in their favour. They eventually reached the target with two balls to spare, according to the ICC.

The match had been delayed by almost two hours due to a wet outfield, with Pakistan opting to bowl after winning the toss. The reduced powerplay lasted only 3.2 overs, during which Sana struck early to dismiss experienced Thailand opener Natthakan Chantham.

Koncharoenkai then an-



chored Thailand's innings, finding boundaries around the ground while building a partnership with captain Naruemon Chaiwai. She accelerated after the sixth over, hitting consecutive fours off Umm-e-Hani in a 14-run over.

Koncharoenkai moved to 49 in the final over, but Sana denied her a half-century by trapping her in front with a full delivery. Sana finished with two for 22, while Nashra Sandhu ac-

counted for Chaiwai as Thailand posted 91 for four. Pakistan made a flying start to the chase through Shawaal Zulfiqar, who struck three fours and a six in the opening three overs. Thailand, however, responded with a remarkable spell that saw four Pakistan wickets fall for 11 runs in 14 balls.

Zulfiqar was dismissed for 25 off 14 balls by off-spinner Onnichia Kamchomphu, who also ac-

counted for Ayesha Zafar for one, Gull Feroza for 16 and Aliya Riaz.

Pakistan had slumped from 36 for no loss to 47 for four and needed 45 runs from the final 30 deliveries.

Sana then took charge, hitting two boundaries and a six through the leg side before a chance at long-off was dropped, with the resulting misfield bringing another boundary. Eyman Fatima finished the over with a six as Pakistan collected 25 runs from it to reduce the equation to 19 from 18 balls.

Sana fell at the start of the next over after scoring 21 from 13 deliveries, and only three runs came from the over. Eyman Fatima was then caught in the 10th over with Pakistan still 15 runs short.

Tuba Hassan revived Pakistan's chase with a six and a four, bringing the target down to four from seven balls.

NAVA RAIPUR, SEPTEMBER 17 (ANI): Khalin Joshi returned a one-under 33 to retain a one-shot lead after the third round of the inaugural Rs 1 crore SECL presents Nava Raipur Open 2026 at the Fairway Golf & Lake Resort in Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

The 34-year-old Bengaluru golfer (29-30-33), who began the day with a two-stroke advantage, mixed two birdies with his first bogey of the week to reach 10-under 92 heading into the final round, according to a press release from Nava Raipur Open.

Joshi, a two-time winner on the DP World PGTI this season and currently 12th in the Race to DP World India Championship, has dropped only one shot through the opening 27 holes.

Heavy rain left the course unsuitable for full 18-hole rounds, prompting the Tournament Committee to stage each of the tournament's four rounds over the back nine.

Chandigarh's Angad Cheema (34-29-30)



emerged as Joshi's closest challenger after producing a bogey-free four-under 30. The 36-year-old climbed from tied 13th to second at nine-under 93.

Seven players shared third place at eight-under 94, leaving eight golfers within two shots of the lead ahead of the final nine holes.

Delhi's 18-year-old Prithvi Singh Karayat (34-31-29) made the biggest move of the day, firing a bogey-free five-under 29 to surge from tied 36th into the seven-way tie for third.

Karayat was joined by Ahmedabad's Anshul Patel (32-31-31), Bangladesh's

Badal Hossain (33-30-31), Faridabad's Karan Pratap Singh (32-30-32), Gurugram's Veer Ahlawat (32-30-32), Chandigarh's Umed Kumar (33-29-32) and Panchkula's Raunil Kukar (31-30-33).

Kukar slipped from a share of second place after posting a one-under 33.

Joshi admitted he was below his best but took satisfaction from retaining the lead on a difficult day.

"I didn't have my best game today," Joshi said. "I wasn't driving the ball particularly well, didn't hit my approaches close enough and wasn't able to hole many putts. I made a lot of

two-putts, but at least I didn't play myself out of the tournament. I'm still very much in contention, and hopefully I can produce my best golf tomorrow."

Play was briefly suspended because of rain and lightning, with Joshi recovering strongly after making his only bogey of the week on the 11th.

"The rain and lightning caused a delay of around 15 to 20 minutes," he said. "I made a bogey on the 11th after a poor tee shot, but the interruption seemed to restart my round. I responded with birdies on the 12th and 13th, which were the highlights of the day."

Joshi expects an enjoyable final-round battle with Cheema, his friend and former teammate.

"Angad and I know each other well and have been teammates in a couple of events," Joshi said.

"We have also played a lot of golf together, so there will be good camaraderie between us. It should be an exciting battle, and I'm looking forward to both of us giving it our best in the final round," he added. (ANI)

Abhishek's record ton helps India beat Afghanistan by 127 runs in third T20I, clean sweep series

NEW DELHI, SEP 17: India completed a clean sweep of the T20I series against Afghanistan with a commanding 127-run victory in the third and final match at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Thursday, riding on Abhishek Sharma's record-breaking century before Rav Bishnoi and Nitish Kumar Reddy shared six wickets between them.

After posting a formidable 221 for seven, India bowled Afghanistan out for 94 in 14.1 overs to register their 10th win by a margin of 100 or more runs in men's T20Is.

The 127-run defeat was Afghanistan's heaviest in the format, while their total of 94 was their lowest against India in T20Is, eclipsing their previous lowest of 111 for eight in Dubai during the 2022 Asia Cup.

Asked to bat first, India got off to a blistering start as Abhishek

Sharma took the attack to Afghanistan's bowlers. He struck 16 runs off Azmatullah Omarzai in the second over before smashing 22 off Fazalhaq Farooqi in the next, taking India to 45 without loss.

Sanju Samson joined the assault, hitting consecutive sixes off Mohammad Nabi in the fifth over to complete 9,000 runs in T20 cricket. Abhishek brought up his half-century off just 16 balls in the same over as India raced to 85 without loss during the powerplay.

Abhishek continued his onslaught, launching Mujeeb Ur Rahman for two more sixes before reaching his third T20I century in just 31 balls against Abdullah Ahmadzai. The effort made him the fastest batter from a Test-playing nation to score a T20I hundred, surpassing the previous Indian record of 35 balls set by Rohit Sharma



against Sri Lanka in 2017.

Rashid Khan ended Abhishek's breathtaking innings in

the 10th over, dismissing him for 108 off 34 balls, with nine fours and 11 sixes. India were

142 for one at the halfway stage.

Rashid then contributed to the dismissal of Tilak Varma, who

was run out for two, before Samson completed his second consecutive half-century. Samson scored 50 off 35 balls, including two fours and four sixes, before Omarzai dismissed him in the 14th over.

Shreyas Iyer made 29, while Shivam Dube added 14 as India crossed the 200-run mark in the 16th over.

Rashid took a sharp catch to dismiss Dube, and Afghanistan struck again late in the innings to remove Ishan Kishan (10) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (1). India finished on 221 for seven, with Omarzai taking two wickets and Rashid and Abdullah claiming one apiece.

Afghanistan began their chase positively, with Rahmanullah Gurbaz and captain Ibrahim Zadran collecting 15 runs in the opening over. India, however, quickly wrested control.

Axar Patel struck twice in the

fourth over, dismissing Gurbaz for 15 off 11 balls and Sediqqullah Atal for a duck. Jasprit Bumrah then removed Darwish Rasooli for a golden duck, while Yash Thakur, playing his first match of the series, dismissed Zadran for 25 off 16 balls.

Afghanistan crossed 50 in the sixth over but struggled to build partnerships. Bishnoi broke the stand by dismissing Noor ul Rahman for 11 in the ninth over.

Reddy then dismantled the middle and lower order in the 12th over, removing Mohammad Nabi, Omarzai and Mujeeb Ur Rahman in quick succession. Bishnoi followed up by dismissing Rashid Khan and Abdullah Ahmadzai to wrap up the innings at 94.

Bishnoi and Reddy finished with three wickets each, while Axar claimed two. India's emphatic win sealed the series 3-0. (ANI)