

Afghanistan beat Sri Lanka to boost World Cup semi-final bid

Afghanistan secures their third World Cup victory in an all-around performance, staying in contention for the semi-finals

● Azmatullah Omarzai scores unbeaten 73 and captain Hashmatullah Shahidi makes 58 not out in an unbroken 111-run stand

AFP | Pune

Afghanistan defeated Sri Lanka by seven wickets in Pune yesterday to record their third win of the World Cup and maintain their hopes of a semi-final place.

Set 242 to win after a disciplined bowling display, Afghanistan finished on 242-3, with Azmatullah Omarzai unbeaten on 73 and captain Hashmatullah Shahidi 58 not out, the pair sharing an unbroken stand of 111.

Afghanistan now have six points and sit in fifth place in the table, two behind New Zealand and Australia with the top four guaranteed to make the semi-finals.



Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai plays a shot

Victory also meant Afghanistan, who'd already beaten champions England, had won back-to-back matches at the World Cup for the first time after they defeated Pakistan by eight wickets last time out.

Prior to this edition, they had managed just one win -- against non-Test nation Scotland in 2015 -- from their appearances at two

previous World Cups.

Yet they have now beaten three World Cup winners in England, 1992 champions Pakistan and 1996 kings Sri Lanka.

An impressive all-round effort was set up by recalled left-arm fast bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi's 4-34 in 10 overs as Sri Lanka were held to 241.

Shahidi and Omarzai saw

their team home with nearly five overs to spare.

Afghanistan lost Rahmanullah Gurbaz just four balls into their chase when he was bowled by a swinging delivery from Dilshan Madushanka.

But Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmat Shah (62) then shared a stand of 73.

Omarzai added fresh impetus with three sixes in a run-a-ball



Afghanistan, with their impressive win, has now beaten three World Cup winners in the 2023 tournament, including England, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka

Scorecard

Afghanistan 242 for 3 (Omarzai 73, Rahmat 62, Shahidi 58*) beat Sri Lanka 241 (Nissanka 46, Farooqi 4-34, Mujeeb 2-38) by seven wickets

fifty.

Shahidi had got to the landmark in 67 balls but his runs were just as valuable all the same.

Sri Lanka, who've now lost four of their six matches, missed a couple of chances and their day was summed up when Omarzai scored the winning run after being dropped at deep midwicket.

Victory was another notable triumph for Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott, with this success coming against a Sri Lanka team coached by another former England international in Chris Silverwood

Farooqi had been recalled in place of Noor Ahmad despite the teenage spinner's three wickets

against Pakistan.

But on a pitch offering less turn, Afghanistan's judgement was vindicated as Farooqi struck through-out the innings, while off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman kept things tight with 2-38 in 10.

Sri Lanka opener Pathum Nissanka made 46 but no other batsman managed more than skipper Kusal Mendis' (39) after they were sent into bat.

Nissanka, fresh from his unbeaten 77 in an eight-wicket rout of England, was in sight of his fifth fifty in six innings this World Cup.

But he was caught behind for 46, trying to cut Omarzai.

Mujeeb then struck in successive balls, removing Mendis and Sadeera Samarawickrama (36) after both batsmen had made starts.

Farooqi then cleaned up late on, expertly yorking tailender Maheesh Theekshana (29) before he had Angelo Mathews well caught in the deep by Afghanistan veteran Mohammad Nabi.

India's Samprit cruises in ITF tennis

TDT | Manama

Top seed Samprit Sharma of India cruised into the second round of the boys' singles main draw in the third Bahrain ITF Juniors 2023 tournament, being played at the Bahrain Tennis Federation (BTF) hard courts in Isa Town.

The competition is a J30 event that is part of the ITF World Tennis Tour Juniors, which features the world's top tennis talents aged 13 to 18.

Samprit advanced from the opening stage after defeating Zein Ionescu of Canada 6-0, 6-0. He will next take on the winner of the other first-round clash between Akmal Abdullaev of Uzbekistan and Matei Cucu of Romania.

Also advancing to the boys' second round yesterday were fourth seed Issah Ali of Great



A player in action in the girls' singles yesterday

Britain, fifth seed Radu Cojocaru of Australia, Emre Atlamis and Doruk Calikoglu of Turkey, Amjad Bukary of Saudi Arabia, and Nikita Gribyakin of Estonia.

Issah defeated Bahrain's Faris Al Toobli 6-2, 6-4 to make it

through.

Meanwhile, in the girls' singles, fifth seed Alina Sogomonyan led yesterday's winners into their second round.

Alina defeated Asli Oktay of Turkey 6-2, 6-4 to advance, and

will next take on Simona Cucu of Romania, who beat Alicja Tomczyk of Poland 6-0, 6-1.

Also winning their first-round clashes were Arina Malygina, Saiyette Varadkar of India, Luisa Fusil of Slovenia, sixth seed Ophelia Korpanec Davies of Great Britain, seventh seed Katarina Curcic of Serbia, Isabella Marquina of Colombia, eighth seed Sara Dessouky of Egypt, Vitharanage Dona Wijewardana of Sri Lanka, and Yasemin Eiselmeyer and Sade Ulueren of Turkey.

Tournament action continues today at the BTF.

The ongoing competition is the first of three straight ITF tournaments to be hosted by Bahrain in succession. The second, which begins on 6 November, is also a J30 event, while the third, a J60 competition, will begin on 13 November.

Man Utd's Evans blames injury woes for miserable run

AFP | London

Manchester United defender Jonny Evans has blamed his team's dismal form on a rash of injuries after their troubled season hit a new low with Sunday's derby disaster against Manchester City.

City swept to a 3-0 victory at Old Trafford in a one-sided clash that could have been an even bigger defeat for Erik ten Hag's outclassed side.

After winning their previous three matches, United were back to the sloppy, lethargic form that condemned them to six losses in their first 10 games in all competitions.

United boss Ten Hag has had to deal with a significant injury list including Casemiro, Lisandro Martin-

ez, Luke Shaw, Tyrell Malacia, Aaron Wan-Bissaka and Amad Diallo.

And Evans believes the absence of so many players has destabilised the squad.

"I think we've been disrupted with a lot of injuries this season in terms of key personnel," Evans told MUTV.

"Probably a lot of our starting players would be, you know, they're missing."

"I think the manager's found out difficulties having

to sort of work on team, on tactics and having

to change the personnel quite a lot with only two days in between



Jonny Evans

Shakib says 'talk is cheap' as Bangladesh's World Cup falls apart

AFP | Kolkata

Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan warned his players that "talk is cheap" and demanded they put words into action to rescue their battered pride at the World Cup.

Bangladesh tackle Pakistan in Kolkata on Tuesday having lost five of their six matches with virtually no hope whatsoever of making the semi-finals.

"We discussed it, we had our team meetings, so we sat down, we talked about it, but we have to show it in action and that the talk is cheap when it's not working," said Shakib.

"So, we'll do it at the ground so the action can take care of it and everyone can see it. I mean,



Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan reacts during a match

only we can change the situation of the team with our actions. So that's what we are trying to do."

Like his team, Shakib has struggled in India and was widely criticised for dashing home last week to work with his personal batting coach.

In the five matches he has played at the World Cup, the 36-year-old veteran of 245 one-day internationals has mustered just 61 runs and seven wickets.

"There is a lot to play for. As you know, we have to win to be able to qualify for the Champions Trophy. That's an important target I think we can set at this moment," said Shakib.

The International Cricket Council yesterday announced the top seven teams plus hosts

"We discussed it, we had our team meetings, so we sat down, we talked about it, but we have to show it in action and that the talk is cheap when it's not working"

SHAKIB AL HASAN

Pakistan will qualify for the Champions Trophy in 2025.

"We have to win. We have no other option and that's what we would look to do," said Shakib whose team is ninth in the 10-team World Cup table with defending champions England at the bottom.

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