

Netherlands keep Super 8 hopes alive with win over Namibia

AMANPREET SINGH ■ New Delhi

Bas de Leede hit an assured 72 as the Netherlands kept their Super 8 hopes alive in the men's T20 World Cup with a confident seven-wicket win against Namibia in their Group A match here Tuesday, bouncing back from a painful defeat to Pakistan from a strong position.

The Netherlands produced a tidy, disciplined bowling performance to restrict Namibia to a modest 156 for 8 in the clash between the associate nations despite a spirited middle-overs recovery from the African side.

This is Namibia's first outing of the tournament, and it showed in patches.

Short of match time in recent weeks, with their last T20I being that last-ball win over South Africa in October 2025, they took time to find rhythm.

With the Indian team not involved, the stands were sparsely populated, but the cricket on display was of good quality.

Jan Frylinck (30) and Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton (42) revived the Namibian innings with their steady 50-run stand after an early setback while JJ Smit (22) provided fire-works down the order. However, the late flourish did not come for Namibia as they settled for a modest total on a sporty wicket.

Bas de Leede, who remained unbeaten, and



Netherlands' captain Scott Edwards, left, and teammate Bas de Leede walk off the field after Netherlands' won the cricket match against Namibia at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi

Colin Ackermann (32) did the bulk of scoring after opener Mochale Levitt (28) provided a quick start as Netherlands overhauled the target without fuss.

Netherlands next play the USA in Chennai on Friday while Namibia have a tough test against hosts India at the same venue on Thursday.

The Dutch, who had lost to Pakistan in Colombo after dictating terms for large parts of the match, showed far greater composure this time. After losing Max O'Dowd (7) early, Levitt provided early momentum with a brisk innings before falling in the powerplay.

Ackermann steadied the innings with a fluent 32,

forging a vital stand with Bas de Leede.

De Leede anchored the chase with a measured knock off 48 balls, mixing caution with aggression. He hit nine boundaries, including four sixes.

Skipper Scott Edwards finished things off in style, scoring an unbeaten 18, as the Netherlands reached 159 for three in 18 overs. Namibia's bowlers struggled to contain the Dutch middle order once the platform was set.

Earlier, the Dutch set the tone early. Pacer Logan van Beek (2/13) hit the deck hard with the new ball, while off-spinner Aryan Dutt (1/13) bowled a probing, miserly spell that choked the scoring.

Dutt provided the first breakthrough when he lured Nikolaas Davin Steenkamp (6) down the track. Steenkamp walked forward to negate the spin but missed the line and length completely, allowing Scott Edwards to complete a sharp stumping.

The Netherlands largely controlled the powerplay, conceding just 29 runs in the first five overs. Namibia managed only one maximum in that phase, Frylinck briefly breaking the shackles by pulling Klaassen for six.

Seeing the impact Dutt was making, Dutch skipper Edwards introduced Colin Ackermann, but the off-break bowler was handled confidently. (PTI)

Shaken by Nepal, England aim to step up game in T20WC clash against Windies

DEVARCHIT VARMA ■ Mumbai

Given a scare by lower-ranked Nepal in the lung-opener itself, England would eye a more assured performance when they take on the West Indies in an evenly-matched and crucial Group C clash of the T20 World Cup, here on Wednesday.

Both the teams have won the competition twice in the past and are chasing a third title win like tournament co-hosts and defending champions India. The challenge would be to remain at their best on the given day as margins can be dangerously thin in T20 cricket.

It was something which England experienced when they took on a team several rungs below them but one



that gave them a tough challenge on the field.

Nepal's four-run defeat, or a narrow win which England emerged with in their opening match here a

few nights ago, was a challenge the former champions overcame by a very close margin. But it certainly will keep the Harry Brook-led side on its toes going

forward. Sam Curran was the hero of the game for England, who had put on an at-par total of 184/7. He was relentless in his line and length in the final over to

defend 10 runs and help his side escape unscathed in a contest which Nepal had threatened to run away with.

All in all, England would feel their batting department did a better job than their bowlers collectively.

Adil Rashid went wicketless after a long time and Jofra Archer, who has almost all the requisite skills for the format, was picked apart as Nepal exposed the shortcomings in this England bowling attack.

But Brook and the young Jacob Bethell hit half-centuries and the other batters also looked in rhythm, even if they could not push on after making starts.

England would also be keen to improve their standing in Group C as despite a

win, they are placed third with a Net Run Rate of 0.200 while Scotland are placed second with two points and NRR of 0.950. The West Indies, who have two points, have the best NRR of 1.750.

However, the West Indies will also know that there is very little room for a slip-up especially at a venue where the pitch has had something for the bowlers in the first two matches.

Both India and England had to show application with the bat, while the shorter boundary limits here at the Wankhede Stadium did not exactly come into play until Nepal batted, for what was the fourth innings on the same surface where India and USA played earlier. (PTI)



T20WC: Australia start as favourites against Ireland

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Their recent form has been far from convincing and the loss of two lead pacers has only added to Australia's woes but the former champions will still start as overwhelming favourites in their T20 World Cup opener against Ireland on Wednesday.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood form one of most potent fast-bowling units of the modern game and Australia will miss their services in the show-piece event.

While Cummins and Hazlewood were ruled out due to injuries, left-arm pacer Starc has retired from the format internationally.

In their absence, Nathan Ellis is expected to lead the pace attack but even he has an injury cloud hovering over him and is yet to play a game since missing the Big Bash League (BBL) final with a hamstring issue.

Seasoned leg-spinner Adam Zampa is entering the tournament after overcoming a groin issue, which made it possible for him to be avail-

able for the group stage. Considering the conditions across the sub-continent, Zampa will be critical to Australia's hopes in the tournament, which they last won in 2022. The team lost in the semifinals of the last edition to India.

While leading the spin attack, the experienced Zampa will look to form a fruitful partnership with fellow tweakers Cooper Connolly and Matt Kuhnemann with all four of the side's group stage matches to be played in Sri Lanka.

While the bowling unit no doubt wears a depleted look compared to their attacks of the past, Australia have the requisite firepower in batting and the team also features a long list of all-rounders, who can trouble most sides on their day.

Australian chair of selectors George Bailey had said they had the luxury of focusing on a player group likely to handle the conditions in India and Sri Lanka with aplomb, even as several players came into the tournament under a fitness cloud.

My experience will help Afghan players: Rashid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Skipper Rashid Khan said the familiarity with South African players through his SA20 stint will help him pass useful information about the opposition to his young Afghanistans teammates ahead of their T20 World Cup match.

Rashid has been a constant presence in the SA20 over its four editions, and the premier spinner is coming to the ICC showpiece after spending a month in South Africa with MI Cape Town.

"I think it helps you to share that information with the team. Like, personally I've been playing for long, played with each and every one (SA players) for a long time," Rashid said on the eve of the match against the Proteas.

"I think it does help the youngsters who haven't played and give them the kind of idea of what's going to happen, what their mindset is, and I think it really helps. "Spent one month there and I think that information you bring to the

national team, it really helped the youngsters," he added.

Rashid also opined that both Afghan and South African players have equal advantage in the match because of their familiarity with Indian conditions through the IPL.

"It definitely helps, but even if you don't know how the wicket will behave. If you play in the IPL, it's different, but when you play in the ICC event, it's different.

"There is a pressure when you play for your country. So, it's a different feeling. But to be honest, no one around the world will tell you how the wicket will behave before the game. I think they know the condition here as well. So, it's not just like me playing a lot and it's going to be favouring us, no, I think it's equal for everyone," he noted.

The 27-year-old also hoped for his pace bowlers to come up with a better effort against South Africa, after they failed to sustain the pressure created by spinner Mujeeb Rahman in the match against New Zealand at Chennai.

Afghanistan look to bounce back against South Africa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

With only two teams slated to make the Super Eight stage from each group, Afghanistan find themselves in a must-win situation when they take on an in-form South Africa in their Group D match of the T20 World Cup on Wednesday.

South Africa are perched at the top, head and shoulders above the rest as their 57-run victory over minnows Canada bolstered their Net Run Rate to 2.850 along with two points.

On the other hand, a five-wicket defeat to New Zealand (+1.162) saw Afghanistan slip to third with a Net Run Rate of -1.162, which they would have to



improve in order to advance to the next round.

Therefore, the competition in Group D can be expected to be intense in the coming days as Afghanistan are among the teams to beat in the tournament.

South Africa, the last edition's runner-up, and the resolute Kiwis will heat up the battle as Group D is set to witness some tension in the first round. Afghanistan

bowled wayward. Afghanistan fast bowlers collectively failed to put pressure on the Kiwis and even their skipper Rashid had an off day, giving away 1/36 in his four overs. Mujeeb Ur Rahman's 2/31 was the only bright spot for the Afghans with the ball, who will be determined to make significant improvements as they move to the world's biggest stadium.

Rashid's experience of playing here in the IPL will be crucial for Afghanistan, who need a win to bounce back and resurrect their campaign. Additionally, their bilateral record against South Africa will also weigh heavily on the Afghans who have lost each of their three matches in history.

Marsh backs Australia's inexperienced bowling attack to do the job

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh is confident that his side's relatively inexperienced bowling attack will rise to the challenge in the absence of frontline pacers Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood during the T20 World Cup.

This will be the first major ICC tournament since 2016 where Australia will not feature a single member of their famed pace trio.

While Starc retired from the format last year, Cummins and Hazlewood have been ruled out by injuries.

In their absence Nathan Ellis, Ben Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett will spear-



head the pace department.

"Guys like Patty (Cummins) have played a lot for us over the last few years due to his hectic schedule and over the last 12 months guys like Benny Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett have played pretty much all of our games," Marsh said on the eve of their opening game against Ireland. "We've got great confidence that they've been

able to do a role for us, and they've excelled in some games. So we're confident with the group that we've got here. And we've built that for the last 12 months."

Australia head into the tournament on the back of a historic 0-3 T20I series loss to Pakistan, which included their heaviest defeat in the format - a 111-run drubbing.

"It (Pakistan tour) was some great learnings from that tour. We had some young guys that got exposed to those conditions for probably the first

time in their career.

"We take the lessons and we move on and we obviously welcome some experienced guys back into our group for this part for this tournament so yeah we've certainly parked that and we move on and we look forward to the World Cup," Marsh said.

Australian batters struggled against spin during the Pakistan tour, and Marsh admitted that the team needs to adapt quickly, especially with Sri Lankan conditions expected to favour

slower bowlers.

"We certainly know the conditions that we're going to be faced with and I think most teams will have, I guess, similar ideas on how they're going to go about it. So we're prepared for that and we're ready to go," he said.

"Look, I think we certainly want to be positive in the way we go about things. I think in these conditions, it's just about being really clear on how you're going to go about it and playing what's in front of you," Marsh said ahead of

Australia's T20 World Cup opener against Ireland.

"The word adaptability has been thrown around in our team meetings so far and just adapt to whatever situation is put in front of us and get the job done," he added.

Marsh confirmed that Tim David will miss Australia's tournament opener as he continues to recover from a hamstring injury.

"He's not available tomorrow, but we'll certainly see him come back into contention over the next few games," Marsh said.

'Cricket is a bit behind': Buttler on using walkie-talkie

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Senior batter Jos Buttler said cricket is relatively behind other sports in relaying messages to on-field players, after head coach Brendon McCullum was seen communicating with England captain Harry Brook through a walkie-talkie during drinks break in their T20 World Cup clash against Nepal.

But in some sports like Formula 1, Race Engineers direct drivers in real-time via radio, covering strategy, engine settings, tire management, and safety info. In football, managers are allowed to communicate with players from the side-



lines. "I think so, there's (been) walkie-talkies for a while to be fair. But then the communication from top to bottom has always been really good in the group," Buttler told reporters when asked if the motive behind

using walkie-talkie was way for McCullum to have a more hands-on approach.

"Baz can sit with his feet up and his sunglasses on and look very relaxed, but he's as sharp a coach as I've ever worked with. He doesn't miss a beat," Buttler said.

"I think also for cricket in general, actually, coaches are getting more involved in real-time in cricket, I've played in the IPL, at Gujarat (Titans), Ashish Nehra is very active on the boundary rope. "But it seems like cricket is a kind of sport where we are still a bit behind, maybe in that area where you look at other sports, the managers and coaches, and you think of rugby, running messages.

So, maybe that will come more and more into cricket."

After the game on Sunday, McCullum's approach was described by England player Will Jacks as a "simple and effective way to pass on information" to the captain or batters in the middle.

The former England captain Buttler said a close finish against Nepal was another indication of the fact that T20 matches can get tighter than expected.

"In the T20 World Cups, (or) T20 cricket, generally the game is so close, one or two players can win games for their side on the day. Ultimately, we found a way to win, which is the most important thing," he said.

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