

Sports

Sri Lankans target Pakistan record for final Test in Dubai

Day-night affair with pink ball starts tomorrow

DUBAI: Sri Lanka will hope their left-arm spinner Rangana Herath maintains pressure on Pakistan when the second and final Test—a day-night affair with pink ball—starts at Dubai stadium tomorrow. The 39-year-old took 6-43 on the final day to fail Pakistan's modest 136-run chase in the first Test in Abu Dhabi on Monday. The narrow 21-run win gives Sri Lanka a unique chance for a series win over Pakistan on their neutral venues of United Arab Emirates where they have never lost a series in nine attempts.

They have won five and drawn four series in the UAE ever since the 2009 terrorist attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus forced them to play home matches out of Pakistan. Herath exposed the new batting line up of Pakistan, playing without their batting greats Younis Khan and Misbah-ul-Haq for the time since they retired in May this year.

Sri Lankan skipper Dinesh Chandimal described Herath as “a team man and an asset.” “I have no idea how long he is going to play, but I am sure he will do what he can for the team,” said Chandimal of Herath who completed 400 wickets in his 84th Tests in Abu Dhabi. “He is a team man and an asset.” The left-arm spinner also reached 100 wickets against Pakistan during the first Test.

“We need to be at our best again and can't underestimate Pakistan because we know they are a good team,” said Chandimal whose team will rise one spot to replace Pakistan on sixth, even with a 1-0 result. Chandimal anchored the batting with a polished 155 not out in Sri Lanka's first innings total of 419, ably filling in for the more experienced Angelo Mathews who didn't come with the squad due to a calf injury. Sarfraz

Ahmed hopes Pakistan team moves on from the defeat in his first Test as captain.

“We will do our best to be more positive against Herath,” said Ahmed. “We have never lost in UAE so it's also important to keep that record intact.” Pakistan will be assessed pacer Hasan Ali in the next two days after he had fitness issues while they also hope spearhead Mohammad Amir returns to form with the pink ball after going wicketless in the first Test. Debutant Haris Sohail provided a positive in the batting after scores of 76 and 34 while Azhar Ali scored 85.

The match will be the sixth day-night Test after the innovation was first adopted by Australia when they took on New Zealand at Adelaide in 2015. Pakistan beat the West Indies in their first day-night Test at the same venue last year but this will be the first time Sri Lanka feature in a pink ball Test.

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Herath is a team man and an asset

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Squads (from):

Pakistan: Sarfraz Ahmed (capt), Azhar Ali, Shan Masood, Sami Aslam, Babar Azam, Asad Shafiq, Haris Sohail, Usman Salahuddin, Yasir Shah, Mohammad Asghar, Bilal Asif, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Amir, Hasan Ali, Mohammad Abbas, Wahab Riaz
Sri Lanka: Dinesh Chandimal (capt), Lahiru Thirimanne, Dimuth Karunaratne, Kaushal Silva, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Roshen Silva, Niroshan Dickwella, Rangana Herath, Lakshan Sandakan, Dilruwan Perera, Suranga Lakmal, Nuwan Pradeep, Vishwa Fernando, Lahiru Gamage
Umpires: Nigel Llong (ENG) and Richard Kettleborough (ENG)
TV umpire: Sundaram Ravi (IND)
ICC match referee: Andy Pycroft (ZIM). —



ABU DHABI: File photo shows Sri Lanka players celebrating after they beat Pakistan during their fifth day at First Test cricket match in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, Monday. — AP

Govt decision to pump \$10m for baseball divides Venezuelans

CARACAS: Baseball-mad Venezuelans are bitterly divided over a government decision to pump millions into the game while basic food and medicines are in short supply in the crisis-ridden South American country.

President Nicolas Maduro is making \$10 million available to the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League (LVBP) as the season gets set to open next week. The money is being used to subsidize the transfer of players and purchase equipment ahead of the start of the popular eight-team national league.

But the move has angered many fans who believe the money should go to help alleviate shortages caused by the deep economic and political crisis after months of protests cost at least 125 lives.

“They should instead opt to buy medicines, food, things we don't have. The fact that the government is giving money to the league is absurd,” said Javier Hernandez, 45, at a fan shop in the capital dedicated to the Caracas Lions. Others, like Leonardo Perez, 39, think that even a hint of normal life is badly needed in Venezuela, where baseball is the most popular sport. “Despite so much crisis, I think we also need recreation, and baseball runs in the veins of Venezuelans,” said Perez, after buying tickets to a Lions game at the same shop.

NEW SEASON

The debate was being played out as Caracas Lions players practiced on their lush green pitch at the Universitario Stadium, the air filled with the thock of wood on leather as batters honed their skills. Hernandez, one of the fans in the shop, thinks the League “should be suspended”—an idea supported by baseball figures such as Alfredo Pedrique, a manager with Major League experience.

“We should be conscious. We should have no baseball. For human reasons, for the children who are dying for lack of food and medicines,” Pedrique, who coached the Lions last year, told local radio.

However Leonardo, with his tickets in hand, stressed that “you need to disconnect once in a while,” from so many problems. Strict exchange controls are in place in cash-strapped Venezuela as foreign reserves have trickled away in a country that has been in economic freefall under Maduro's rule. Most Venezuelans are subject to an official exchange rate of 3,345 bolivars to the dollar as they struggle to feed their families. But dollars are hard to come by. Many have to resort to the abyss of the black market, where dollars are available for 28,000 bolivars to the dollar. The government rate given to the baseball league is 10 bolivars to the dollar, the same preferential rate as for food and medicine importers.

League officials consider that the championship would not survive without the subvention, because it allows teams to pay foreign players and import balls, uniforms and even teams' medical supplies.

Without the government preferential rates, the private sector has to import products and supplies on the black market, lifting inflation into the stratosphere. The IMF forecasts inflation will reach 720 percent this year.— AFP

IOC, Tokyo organizers aim to cut costs for the 2020 Olympics

TOKYO: The International Olympic Committee and the Tokyo organizing committee wrapped up a two-day project review yesterday vowing to cut costs for the 2020 Games and address concerns over water pollution in Tokyo Bay.

IOC vice president John Coates said the IOC needs to see cuts of \$1 billion from the \$12 billion budget. Coates said he saw potential for cost reduction in 11 of the 14 areas that were discussed during the meetings.

“That's the target that we think should be achievable not just by Tokyo but by all summer organizing committees,” said Coates, who chairs the IOC's Coordination Commission for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. “What we are trying to do is create a situation where there is no strain on the public purse.”

For example, Coates said IOC data from previous games shows that Olympic family lounges operate at only 40 percent capacity, meaning Tokyo organizers could save money on staffing such facilities. The IOC is seeking to make the games more affordable as part of President Thomas Bach's “Agenda 2020” reforms. In a bid to cut costs, Tokyo organizers have moved several events to existing facilities in neighboring prefectures.

In late May, local governments outside Tokyo that are to host competitions agreed with the Tokyo metropolitan government, the Japanese government and games organiz-

ers on basic principles concerning cost sharing. Yoshiro Mori, the head of the 2020 Tokyo Games organizing committee who also took part in the meetings, said it will be important to explore cost cutting “based on the framework” reached in May.

Mori said that while there have been some heated debates on the cost-cutting efforts, all sides agree that the ultimate goal of delivering the best possible games should be adhered to. Meanwhile, a recent water quality survey at the venue for marathon swimming and triathlon found E. coli bacteria at concentrations up to 21 times the level permitted by the sport's governing body, the Tokyo metropolitan government said.

The metropolitan officials attributed the excessive reading to a record rainfall in the Japanese capital in August when there were 21 consecutive days of rain. Precipitation exceeding the processing capacity of sewage facilities can cause sewage water diluted by rain to be discharged into the ocean.

Tokyo organizers have ruled out moving the venue and said they plan to implement water quality improvement measures in advance of the games. “We are conscious that due to exceptionally bad weather this summer, the readings were not

what they should be,” Coates said. “We are looking for reports from the Tokyo municipal government as to what



IOC vice-president John Coates

they are planning to do to ensure that even in worst of conditions those matters will be addressed and the health of the athletes in those two sports will not be prejudiced in anyway.” — AP

Man City's Stones keen to repay Guardiola faith

LONDON: Manchester City centre-back John Stones says he is determined to repay manager Pep Guardiola for the faith he showed in him during his difficult first season at the Etihad Stadium. Stones, 23, produced several error-strewn displays last season after joining City from Everton in a £47.5 million (\$62.9 million, 53.6 million euros) move that made him the world's second most expensive defender. But Guardiola stuck by the England international and has been rewarded this season as Stones has contributed to six clean sheets in City's last seven games, helping the club to top spot in the Premier League. “Really good,” Stones said when asked how Guardiola had helped him last season. “Always positive and wanting me to do better and that's what I try to repay him on the pitch.”

“The games this season speak for themselves: clean sheets both in the Champions League and Premier League. I feel like I'm developing as a player and a person under him. “That's all down to the players around me, him and the staff that are there. All I want to do is keep this run going and see where it takes us.” Stones produced a strong performance in City's 1-0 win at defending champions Chelsea last Saturday and he agreed it was one of his most impressive displays in City's colours.

“I think I've always been moving in the right direction. Everyone has their ups and downs,” he told journalists ahead of England's penultimate World Cup qualifier at home to Slovenia today. “We've started this season well as a team. It was an important match against Chelsea. They won the league last season. “It was an important game to keep the run going and keep another clean sheet. Defensively, on a personal note, it was maybe one of the best games I've played in.” — AFP

Kuwait Airways signs sponsorship contract with KFA referees

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Company signed a sponsorship contract for Kuwait Football Association referees yesterday morning. A press conference was held in the presence of Chairman of Temporary Committee running KFA

affairs Ibrahim Al-Shihab, KFA Secretary General Dr Mohammad Khalil, Vice-president of Marketing Committee Abdallah Al-Jeeran and KAC Public Relations and Information Director Fayez Al-Enezi. KFA's Ibrahim Al-Shihab said the decision of KAC to sponsor referees is a confirmation of the company's care for sports and athletes, hoping that other companies do the same. Meanwhile, PR Director at KAC Fayez Al-Enezi said the decision to sponsor referees is an important move towards more steps to reach a permanent partnership with the association, especially that there is a wide-ranging cooperation between the two sides. He said KAC works towards developing Kuwait society through four strategies: Environment, health, education and youth, which the company supports.



Kuwait Airways and KFA referees' officials during the signing ceremony.