

Qatar result has changed everything for us, says Chhetri

Gurpreet Sandhu, who led from the front, thrilled with keeping a clean sheet for the national team this year

TALKING FOOTBALL

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA & N. SUDARSHAN
BENGALURU

Sunil Chhetri watched on from his hotel room in Doha as his teammates battled Qatar at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium. He was not, he admitted, the calmest of supporters.

With every save, every blocked Qatari shot, every Indian counter-attack, and every additional second on the clock, his nerves were fraying. When the final whistle went, he simply erupted.

"I was screaming. I lost my voice. The hotel people came up to ask what happened. I said, 'Get lost.' I didn't know what I was saying. I didn't know what I was doing. I was just so happy and proud to be a part of that team. Somebody asked me who played well, and I took 14 names. They were all so good," he said as Bengaluru FC began training for the new season here on Friday.



Just reward: Stand-in skipper Gurpreet Sandhu says the draw against Qatar was apt for the effort his teammates put in for 90-95 minutes. • K. MURALI KUMAR



Charged up: Sunil Chhetri said he could not control his emotions as he watched India tackle Qatar. • K. MURALI KUMAR

are capable of...it just gives you so much confidence."

Nice feeling
"After the 80th minute, they were desperate and we had three or four counter-attacks. If the game had gone on for 10 more minutes, trust me, we would have scored. I saw Xavi (former Spain and Barcelona midfield legend and current Al Sadd coach) biting his fingernails. And I was thinking, 'Wow, this is really nice.'"

Chhetri had stayed away from sugar for a long time but that evening, he just let go. "I had two big pieces of cake, some *kheer*," he says. "I just devoured everything."

The man central to this result was goalkeeper Gurpreet Sandhu, who took over captaincy duties from Chhetri and led by example with a string of high-class saves to deny Qatar.

Take responsibility
"What I have learnt in Chhetri in these years is that he is

the kind of guy who will do his job perfectly and by seeing him perform others would try and replicate it," Gurpreet said.

"That is what I try to do whenever I get the responsibility. I had to do my job well first. It won't help the other players if a senior player is not performing up to the mark."

Personally, the performance brought great relief and was deeply satisfying, Gurpreet said. "I wanted to get a clean sheet. It had been a while and this was my first clean sheet with the national team this year. So very happy about that."

"But it wasn't just me on the pitch. There were ten other people who gave their hearts out. I watched the game again twice over. I could see the amount of effort every single player put. To get rewarded like that was very very satisfying. My teammates deserved it for the kind of effort they put for 90-95 minutes."

India, SA in quest for the 'perfect' team

SA IN INDIA

RAKESH RAO
DHARAMSHALA

With just around 13 months to go for the World T20 in Australia, many strong contenders have begun their quest for getting their squads right.

India is already in preparatory mode after testing out a few new names in the West Indies. An almost unchanged squad takes on South Africa in the three-match series beginning here on Sunday.

Rookie attack
At home, India has never experimented with inexperience like the one seen in the present bunch of specialist bowlers. Leggie Rahul Chahar, cousin Deepak and Navdeep Saini have played a total of six matches.

Left-arm pacer Khaled Ahmed, who is yet to firm up his place among the T20 regulars, has figured in 11.

The venues of the first two matches – here and Mohali – should help the faster bowlers get into the groove before travelling to Bengaluru.

Though heavy rain late on Thursday night should leave some moisture under the covers, a 7 p.m.-start considerably brings down the advantage offered by the conditions at this hilly destination.

Moreover, the surfaces to



Bracing up: The South Africans practise at an overcast HPCA Stadium, ahead of the first T20I on Sunday. • AKHILESH KUMAR

be used in this series are not likely to offer the Indian bowlers the kind of assistance that the ones in the West Indies did.

Given a longer run and backed by performances, at least a couple of these bowlers could be in the reckoning when the selectors meet to choose the squad for the T20 World Cup.

Like Rahul Chahar, all-rounder spin-options Washington Sundar and Krunal Pandya are also the beneficiaries of the selectors' rotation policy.

What gives the selectors, captain and coach the confidence to try out such a combination is the fact that

South Africa, too, is in rebuilding mode.

Apart from speedster Kagiso Rabada and chinaman bowler Tabraiz Shamsi, the other specialist bowlers in the squad are those trying to establish themselves in the game's shortest format.

Left-arm fast-medium Beuran Hendricks (10 matches) and medium-pacer Junior Dala (9) are accompanied by left-arm spinner Bjorn Fortuin and fast bowler Anrich Nortje, who are looking to make their T20I debut.

Nortje, regarded as one among the best from South Africa, missed this year's World Cup owing to a thumb

injury.

But what brings balance to the South African bowling, despite this apparently inexperienced set of specialists, is the presence of bowling allrounders Dwayne Pretorius and Andile Phehlukwayo, both part of South Africa's forgettable World Cup campaign in England.

The duo, along with Rabada and Shamsi, gives wicket-keeper-captain Quinton de Kock quite a few options.

Meanwhile, the South African squad had a three-hour practice session at the HPCA ground. The Indian side arrived in the city in the evening.

Archer's six-for gives England the advantage

Prolific Smith conjures up another masterclass

THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Jofra Archer took six for 62 as England bowled Australia out for 225 to gain the upper hand on the second day of the fifth Ashes Test on Friday despite another Steve Smith masterclass.

Joe Root's team is desperate to level the series at 2-2 to end its historic World Cup-winning season on a high but have been consistently dogged by the peerless Smith.

The former Australian skipper has now amassed 751 runs in just six innings – more than double the tally of the next highest runscore on either side.

But he was forced to settle for his lowest score of the series – 80 – when Chris Woakes trapped him leg-before in the evening session, leaving the sun-drenched Oval crowd dumbfounded.

Despite a late flurry of runs, Australia had to settle for a first-innings deficit of 69.

Smith came to the crease with Australia in trouble at 14 for two in reply to England's first-innings total of 294 after Archer had removed openers David Warner and Marcus Harris.

Smith, who was watchful at the start of his innings, brought up his 10th consecu-

tive Ashes fifty with a six over midwicket off left-arm spinner Jack Leach.

Warner's woes continue
Earlier, Warner was dismissed for five by Archer, his eighth score of less than 10 in the series. Archer then struck again with a 90-miles-per-hour thunderbolt, with Ben Stokes holding onto a sharp chance from Harris at second slip.

Smith and Marcus Labuschagne repaired the damage, putting on 69 before Archer struck again, trapping Labuschagne lbw for 48.

Matthew Wade was lbw to

Sam Curran for 19 as Australia slipped to 118 for four but the unruddiff Smith eased to his half-century off 91 balls.

Wickets tumbled after tea, with Archer removing Mitchell Marsh and Curran dismissing Tim Paine and Pat Cummins in successive balls.

Smith's dismissal left Australia 187 for eight but Peter Siddle and Nathan Lyon played enterprisingly to add 37 for the ninth wicket.

At the start of the day England added just 23 runs to its overnight score, with Jos Buttler out for 70. Marsh took five wickets on his return to the Test side while Pat Cummins took three.



Fast and furious: The fiery Jofra Archer helped England take the bragging rights in the first innings. • REUTERS

SCOREBOARD

England – 1st innings: Rory Burns c Marsh b Hazlewood 47, Joe Denly c Smith b Cummins 14, Joe Root b Cummins 57, Ben Stokes c Lyon b Marsh 20, Jonny Bairstow lbw b Marsh 22, Jos Buttler b Cummins 70, Sam Curran c Smith b Marsh 15, Chris Woakes lbw b Marsh 2, Jofra Archer c Paine b Hazlewood 9, Jack Leach b Marsh 21, Stuart Broad (not out) 0; Extras (nb-2, b-3, lb-7, w-5); 17; Total (in 87.1 overs): 294.

Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-103, 3-130, 4-170, 5-176, 6-199, 7-205, 8-226, 9-294.

Australia bowling: Cummins 25.5-6-84-3, Hazlewood 21-7-76-2, Siddle 17-1-61-0, Marsh 18.2-4-46-5, Lyon 4-0-12-0, Labuschagne 1-0-5-0.

Australia – 1st innings: David Warner c Bairstow b Archer 5, Marcus Harris c Stokes b Archer 3, Marnus Labuschagne lbw b Archer 48, Steve Smith lbw b Woakes 80, Matthew Wade lbw b Curran 19, Mitchell Marsh c Leach b Archer 17, Tim Paine c Bairstow b Curran 0, Peter Siddle c Burns b Archer 18, Nathan Lyon b Archer 25, Josh Hazlewood (not out) 1; Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-5); 8; Total (in 68.5 overs): 225.

Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-14, 3-83, 4-118, 5-160, 6-166, 7-166, 8-187, 9-224.

England bowling: Broad 12-3-45-0, Archer 23.5-9-62-6, Curran 17-6-46-3, Woakes 10-2-51-1, Leach 6-1-18-0.

England – 2nd innings: Rory Burns (batting) 4, Joe Denly (batting) 1; Extras (lb-4); 4; Total (for no loss, in 4 overs): 9.

Australia bowling: Cummins 2-2-0-0, Hazlewood 2-1-5-0.

Teenager Afif delivers for Bangladesh

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

Youngster Afif Hossain struck 52 off 26 balls as Bangladesh survived a scare to beat Zimbabwe by three wickets in the opening match of the tri-nation Twenty20 international tournament on Friday.

Afif, batting at number eight, hit eight fours and a six in his maiden international fifty that guided Bangladesh to 148 for seven in 17.4 overs after the host had restricted the visitor to 144 for five in the rain-hit 18-ov-

ers-per-side match.

The 19-year-old's performance overshadowed an excellent effort by Ryan Burl who hit an unbeaten 57 (32b, 5x4, 4x6) to help Zimbabwe recover from 63 for five to post a competitive score. Zimbabwe plays Afghanistan on Saturday.

The scores:
Zimbabwe 144 for five in 18 overs (Hamilton Masakadza 34, Ryan Burl 57, Tinotenda Mumbodzi 27 n.o.) lost to Bangladesh 148 for seven in 17.4 overs (Mosaddek Hossain 30 n.o., Afif Hossain 52).

PKL Standings

Team	P	W	L	D	Pts
Dabang Delhi	14	11	2	1	59
Bengal Warriors	16	9	4	3	58
Haryana Steelers	14	9	4	1	49
Bengaluru Bulls	16	9	7	0	49
U Mumba	15	7	7	1	43
Jaipur Pink Panthers	15	7	7	1	42
UP Yodha	14	7	5	2	42
Gujarat Fortunegiants	14	5	8	1	34
Patna Pirates	15	5	10	0	30
Telugu Titans	14	4	8	2	30
Puneri Paltan	14	4	8	2	29
Tamil Thalaivas	15	3	10	2	27

'Many factors count for white-ball rest'

Bumrah looks forward to the new experience of playing Test matches at home

G. VISWANATH
MUMBAI

India has been shrewd to keep fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah away from the thick of action in white-ball cricket in recent times and thus make him raring to go for the traditional Test cricket.

With the ICC's World Test Championship having got off the ground immediately after the World Cup in England, captain Virat Kohli, coach Ravi Shastri and the five selectors believe that the speed merchant with a unique action needs to be preserved for the tough multi-day campaigns and have rested the 25-year-old for white-ball cricket.

Bumrah did not figure in the T20I and ODI series in the West Indies that India won hands down and the lithe pacer has also not been chosen for the T20I home series against South Africa.

Measured answers
After joining Seagram's Royal Stag dream team as brand ambassador, Bumrah answered in a measured tone when asked about him being kept away from white-ball cricket.

"A lot of thought-process goes behind this. It's not that

I will just rest from white-ball cricket; a lot of preparation goes on during this time. You cannot keep playing all three formats.

"You need to be fresh as well. So when you come back after a break, you are hungry; you want to do well



Revelation: Bumrah's astonishing success in Test cricket means his workload has to be managed judiciously. • AFP

again and all of that plays a massive role for you to be fit and fresh. So all of that is taken into consideration and then the decision is taken to rest."

Bumrah has not played a T20I after a match against Australia in Chennai last Fe-

bruary and has not played an ODI after the World Cup semifinal against New Zealand.

In these two formats also Bumrah has been very impressive, taking 51 wickets at 20.18 and 103 at 21.88.

First Test at home
After what has been a splendid demonstration of speed and skill in 12 overseas Tests, Bumrah is all set to play his first Test in India against South Africa at Visakhapatnam from Oct. 2.

Aware of the excitement around his debut-Test appearance in India, Bumrah said: "I have played all my cricket in India before playing for the country; so these are not alien conditions to me."

"But playing Test matches will be a different experience and I am looking forward to it. The preparations have already started."

"And as soon as I join (the team) we will discuss with the team management and the senior players who have played a lot of cricket over here as to what works and what doesn't. So I will take everything into consideration and let's see how it goes."

Nihal crushes Safarli

Hari Krishna overcomes Fedoseev

CHESS WC

SPORTS BUREAU
KHANTY MANSIYSK

Teen sensation Nihal Sarin continued his dream run crushing Azerbaijan's Eltaj Safarli in 37 moves, while P. Hari Krishna ended Vladimir Fedoseev's resilience in 54 moves in the first game of the second round of the World Cup chess championship here on Friday.

On a day when all five Indians played white, B. Adhiban held formidable Chinese Yu Yangyi to a 55-move draw. Vidit Gujrathi forced a similar result against lower-rated Russian Aleksandr Rakhmonov in 31 moves.

However, Aravindh Chithambaram lost to Russia's Evgeny Tomashevsky in 37 moves. Nihal, 15, seized

his opportunities in the Ruy Lopez game. The Azerbaijani, who battled hard and long to reach the second round, looked jaded and a sharp Nihal made him pay.

Following his planned assault on black's castled king, Nihal unleashed a precise knight-sacrifice and broke open Safarli's defence.

With the black queen and rook-pair far from the on-the-run king, Nihal's rook and queen were poised to land the knockout punch. At this stage, Safarli gave up.

The results (involving Indians): Round two game one: P. Hari Krishna bt Vladimir Fedoseev (Rus); Nihal Sarin bt Eltaj Safarli (Aze); Vidit Gujrathi drew with Aleksandr Rakhmonov (Rus); B. Adhiban drew with Yu Yangyi (Chn); Aravindh Chithambaram lost to Evgeny Tomashevsky (Rus).



Staying on course: P. Hari Krishna had the measure of Vladimir Fedoseev. • PHOTO: FIDE.COM