

BRIEFLY

Ghaffari scalps six as Afghanistan shock SA by 7 wkts

Kimberley: Leg-spinner Shafiqullah Ghaffari wreaked havoc with deadly figures of 6 for 15 as Afghanistan shocked hosts South Africa by seven wickets in the opening game of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Friday. Opting to bat, South Africa were bundled out for 129 in 29.1 overs with only three players – Bryce Parsons (40), Luke Beaufort (25) and Gerald Coetzee (38) getting into the double figures. In reply Afghanistan knocked off the runs in 25 overs riding on half-centuries from Ibrahim Zadran (52) and Imran (57).

The victory was another indication about the kind of talent that Afghanistan cricket possesses at the moment having given the world a performer of Rashid Khan's calibre. Earlier, when South Africa batted, Parsons and Beaufort had steadied the innings with a 55-run third wicket stand after opening bowler Fazal Haque (2/43) had removed the two openers in quick succession. Once Parsons was dismissed by chinaman bowler Noor Ahmed, there was a battig collapse as none of the middle and lower-order batsman could negotiate Ghaffari's leg-breaks. He literally ran through the opposition line-up as the home team lost six wickets for 28 runs to be reduced to 90 for 8.

BRIEF SCORES: SA U19 129 in 29.1 overs (Brye Parsons 40, Shafiqullah Ghaffari 6/15). Afghanistan U19 130/3 in 25 overs (Ibrahim Zadran 57, Imran 52). Afghanistan won by 7 wkts.

Hafeez to retire after T20 World Cup

Lahore: Recalled Pakistan allrounder Mohammad Hafeez Friday said he will retire from international cricket after the Twenty20 World Cup later this year, vowing to end his career on a positive note. The 38-year-old was Thursday recalled to Pakistan's Twenty20 series against Bangladesh starting in Lahore from January 24. Hafeez has been one of Pakistan's key players--in all three formats, as a top order batsman and a handy off-spinner--since making his debut during an England tour in 2003. But his career was dogged by questions over the legality of his bowling action, reported on three occasions during international matches. He was also banned from bowling for 12 months in 2015.

Mitch Marsh desperate to make Test return

Chennai: Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, who has recovered from a wrist injury, on Friday said he's enjoying his Big Bash League stint and looking forward to returning to the national side. Marsh was set to be in contention for national duties this summer until he broke his wrist while punching a wall in frustration after being dismissed in Western Australia's Sheffield Shield clash against Tasmania earlier this season. "Yeah the wrist is good. Got plenty of time to rest up and recover the damage and feeling great now," he said.

AGENCIES

Rahul fits like a glove

His match-winning knock at No.5, tidiness behind the stumps lent balance to team in 36-run win

DEVENDRA PANDEY
RAJKOT, JANUARY 17

IT'S HARD to be Rahul in this country as there is too much to live up to. In the recent past, after losing out on a Test spot and not performing in pressure games in the World Cup, KL Rahul, whose compact game had fans salivating with David comparison in his initial days, has done all he could to bounce back into public imagination. Can you open? How about No.3? Can you finish from lower-middle-order? Can you also keep, please?

In some sense, this was a repeat of the plea put to David at one stage in his career.

On Friday, Rahul became the first Indian batsman since November 2013 to score a fifty with a strike rate of over 150 batting at No. 5 or lower when batting first – the effort propelled India from a par total to a very competitive 340 that helped them bounce back in the series.

That particular stat tells us how India have struggled to find a big-hitting all-rounder in ODIs who has the hitting skills and the class to last long.

It also raised a wistful sigh about the possible lost opportunity in the World Cup semi-final. India could well have pushed Mayank Agarwal to open and had Rahul beef up the middle order but now that will be binned as one of the what-if-scenarios.

Back to the present. Rahul's fireworks could well offer the middle-order balm that Indians were desperately looking for. Virat Kohli at No.3, Shreyas Iyer would hopefully stabilize and own that No.4 spot, leaving Rahul to accelerate and finish.

The best part about Rahul's game is his versatility – the shift from compactness to aerial-shots doesn't feel like a transformation but almost natural and easy for him. Rahul ensured that India would loot 91 in the final 10 overs – the difference between win and loss. Even in his partnership with Kohli from 197 for 3, he had dominated, hitting 42 off the 78 runs. Kohli fell in his first attempt at big shot holing out at the boundary and when Manish Pandey fell, India were 287 in 45 overs.

Five overs remained but Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins had four of those. Rahul piled on Starc, who as ever went round the stumps in his final overs, flaying an attempted yorker to square boundary and slamming a length ball over extra-cover boundary.

In the 49th over, off Cummins, after being late on the pull by a fast bouncer, he upper cut the next ball – another bouncer – over third man. Cummins followed with a crunchy yorker but Rahul somehow managed to create space with his shuffle and clipped it to fine-leg boundary.

He contributed with the 'keeping gloves too, stumping Aaron Finch off Ravindra Jadeja as India removed the two openers relatively early in the piece. David Warner's dismissal too was earned with a great fielding effort, this time by Manish Pandey who leapt at cover point to bring down a powerfully-hit shot.

While Rahul finished off the job, it was Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli, not to forget Rohit Sharma, who laid the foundation. Indian batting unit does look different when Sharma gets off to a start and this time both him and Dhawan didn't take too much time to get going. By the time Sharma fell for 42 with India on 81 in the 14th over, Dhawan was well-set and kept the game moving forward in company of Kohli.

Dhawan had started with a classy straight driven four against Starc off the first ball he faced before he creamed Cummings through covers in the next over. He settled down thereafter, ticking the score along with the odd four here and there.



KL Rahul hit 80 off 52 as he put pedal to metal. Behind the stumps he was quick to catch Finch out of his ground. PTI



Best that Rahul has ever batted: Kohli

Rajkot: It is very difficult to leave out a player like KL Rahul and his 52-ball-80 is the "best that he has batted at the international level", India captain Virat Kohli said after a series-levelling 36-run win against Australia here on Friday. Kohli was even more happy that Rahul batted at No 5 and also kept wickets which will now give India some serious options moving forward.

"It's very important to figure out the best team you can put on the park and when you see how KL was batting today, it's very difficult to leave someone like that out. Batting at No.5 and batting like that for the team, this is probably the best he's played at international level. That knocked showed maturity and class,"

In the 25th over, bowled by Ashton Agar, he hit successive fours that once again kick-started the momentum shift. An aerial sweep was followed by a reverse version and Dhawan had begun to flow again. Agar

Kohli said at the post-match presentation ceremony. Kohli himself was back at No 3 and contributed an effortless 78 off 76 balls. Asked about the change from the last game, the skipper said: "We live in the days of social media and the panic button was pressed too early....We know exactly what we're doing in the dressing room. On the outside there's a lot of panic that we don't really focus on."

He was happy that Shikhar Dhawan contributed a stylish 96, which he believes augurs well for the team. "Back to No.3 was good for the team so I'm happy from that point of view. In ODI cricket, Shikhar has been one of our most consistent performers. I am very happy that he scored runs as well." PTI

started to feel the heat, and in his next over, Dhawan smoked him for a six over mid-wicket and crashed a short ball to fine-leg boundary – and Kohli was pleased as punch. In the 29th, he swatted a slower one from

Kane Richardson for a four to move to 96 but fell pulling a long hop to deep midwicket fielder – he would later say that he wasn't aware that he was so close to the 100.

Kohli and Rahul steadied the innings after fall of Iyer, and in the 35th, Kohli pressed on with successive fours off Cummins – a swat-flick and cover drive to nearly-identical deliveries.

As Rahul took over the more domineering role, Kohli carried on until his first attempt at an aerial hit in the 44th over ended at long-on with Ashton Agar relaying the ball to Starc to complete the catch. Things could have turned dire at this stage but Rahul stepped up to provide the finishing touches to take India to a good total.

The Australian chase depended on Steve Smith and he started off slowly, taking 5 from his first 17 balls, before he hit three fours off Navdeep Saini in the 10th over to kick-start his innings – two whiplashed flicks and a straight drive had the chase up and running. Smith and Marcus Labuschagne added 96 runs for third wicket but the chase derailed in the space of seven overs from the 31st. It was even stevens until then but Manus Labuschagne, who had looked in control for his 46, holed out at long-off. It was brave of Jadeja to toss it up, inviting a big hit, and Labuschagne ended up finding Mohammad Shami.

In the 38th over, Alex Carey chipped Kuldeep Yadav to covers before Australia's back was broken three balls later in the same over. It was a googly from Yadav, shortish and turning away, and Smith had read it and went for the cut but ended up chopping it on his stumps.

That Carey dismissal was Yadav's 100th ODI wicket – third fastest Indian to get there and he would have been thrilled with his 101st that effectively sealed the game. A livid Smith walked back, swinging his bat in air in disgust. India have levelled the series courtesy to an allround performance led by Rahul, and now the caravan moves to Bangalore for the finale.

SCORECARD »

India vs Australia

2nd ODI | Rajkot | Toss: Australia

INDIA 340/6 IN 50 OVS

R Sharma lbw b Zampa 42 (44b, 6x4)
S Dhawan c Starc b Richardson

96 (90b, 13x4, 1x6)
V Kohli (c) c Starc b Zampa 78 (76b, 6x4)
S Iyer b Zampa 7 (17b, 1x4)

KL Rahul † run out (†Carey) 80 (52b, 6x4, 3x6)
M Pandey c Agar b Richardson 2 (4b)

R Jadeja not out 20 (16b, 1x4)
Md Shami not out 1 (1b)

Extras: (b5, 4lb, 5w) 14
Fall of wickets: 1-81 (Rohit Sharma, 13.3 ov), 2-184 (Shikhar Dhawan, 28.4 ov), 3-198 (Shreyas Iyer, 32.4 ov), 4-276 (Virat Kohli, 43.1 ov), 5-280 (Manish Pandey, 44.1 ov), 6-338 (KL Rahul, 49.4 ov)

Bowling:
P Cummins 10-1-53-0
M Starc 10-0-78-0
K Richardson 10-0-73-2
A Zampa 10-0-50-3
A Agar 8-0-63-0
M Labuschagne 2-0-14-0

AUSTRALIA 304 IN 49.1 OVS

D Warner c Pandey b Md Shami 15 (12b, 2x4)
A Finch (c) st †Rahul b Jadeja 33 (48b, 3x4)

S Smith b Kuldeep 98 (102b, 9x4, 1x6)
M Labuschagne c Md Shami b Jadeja 46 (47b, 4x4)

A Carey † c Kohli b Kuldeep 18 (17b, 1x6)
A Turner b Md Shami 13 (15b)

A Agar lbw b Saini 25 (25b, 3x4)
P Cummins b Md Shami 0 (1b)

M Starc c †Rahul b Saini 6 (11b)
K Richardson not out 24 (11b, 4x4, 1x6)

A Zampa c †Rahul b Bumrah 6 (6b, 1x4)

Extras: (lb 10, w10) 20
Fall of wickets: 1-20 (David Warner, 3.2 ov), 2-82 (Aaron Finch, 15.1 ov), 3-178 (Marnus Labuschagne, 30.5 ov), 4-220 (Alex Carey, 37.2 ov), 5-221 (Steven Smith, 37.5 ov), 6-259 (Ashton Turner, 43.1 ov), 7-259 (Pat Cummins, 43.2 ov), 8-274 (Ashton Agar, 46.1 ov), 9-275 (Mitchell Starc, 46.3 ov), 10-304 (Adam Zampa, 49.1 ov)

Bowling:
J Bumrah 9.1-2-32-1
Md Shami 10-0-77-3
N Saini 10-0-62-2
R Jadeja 10-0-58-2
Kuldeep Yadav 10-0-65-2

Ind won by 36 runs



Shikhar Dhawan top-scored for India with 96. PTI

Stokes, Pope tons deflate Proteas

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PORT ELIZABETH, JANUARY 17

BEN STOKES and Ollie Pope made centuries to hammer a South Africa team already hit by a ban for its top bowler as England took control on a potentially decisive day of the Test series on Friday. Stokes made 120, Pope 135 not out for his maiden Test century, and England surged to 499 for 9 declared on the second day of the third Test in Port Elizabeth.

South Africa couldn't safely see out 18 overs at the end and lost Pieter Malan (18) and Zubayr Hamaza (10) to be 60 for 2 in reply. Spinner Dom Bess took both wickets. England was on top throughout a one-sided day and South Africa was relieved when rain finally allowed it to get off the field in the early evening. Bess constantly troubled the batsmen and fast bowler Mark Wood was clocking speeds of 90 mph (145 kph) at the other end.

With star all-rounder Stokes leading the charge once again, England built a commanding position in the match and had possibly carved out a key moment in the series, which is level at 1-1 but leaning heavily in the tourists' favor with one more test to come. South Africa was way behind – trailing by 439 runs – and burdened by the additional blow of fast bowler Kagiso Rabada being banned for the series-deciding fourth and final test in Johannesburg next week. Rabada's ban was announced on Friday morning, a punishment for his provocative celebration in the face of England captain Joe Root on the first day of the test at St. George's Park.

With that news hanging over them, the South Africans appeared completely deflated in the field and Stokes and Pope took full advantage on a pitch that's pretty tough for bowlers anyway.



Stokes and Pope added 203 runs for the fifth wicket at Port Elizabeth. Reuters

Stokes and Pope took their careful 76-run partnership overnight to an unbroken and flourishing stand of 187 by lunch. They put on a mammoth 203 for the fifth wicket by the time Stokes hit a square drive to be caught by Dean Elgar after lunch and give Dane Paterson a first test wicket on his debut for South Africa.

On a day when the start of play was delayed by nearly an hour, also because of rain, the overall outlook for South Africa was particularly gloomy.

Stokes, voted the world player of the year this week, played cautiously at the end of the first day to consolidate England's promising position but broke free on the second morning and was in complete attack mode.

He lashed 12 fours and two sixes in all as

he charged to a ninth test century. Three of those hundreds have come in the last five months and Stokes continued to punish South Africa on this tour.

He blitzed 72 off 47 balls, took a record-equaling five catches in an innings, and collected the match-winning wickets in England's series-tying victory in the second test in Cape Town. Stokes also had strong support from Pope in Port Elizabeth, and Pope went on to a big century after Stokes' exit. Sam Curran added 44 down the order in a half-century stand with Pope, and tailender Wood (42) and Pope added 73 for the ninth wicket as South Africa fell apart.

BRIEF SCORES: England 499 for 9 dec (Pope 135*, Stokes 117; Maharaj 5-180) lead South Africa 60 for 2 (Bess 2-12) by 439 runs.

Bapu Nadkarni, economy rate champion, dies aged 86

VISHAL MENON
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 17

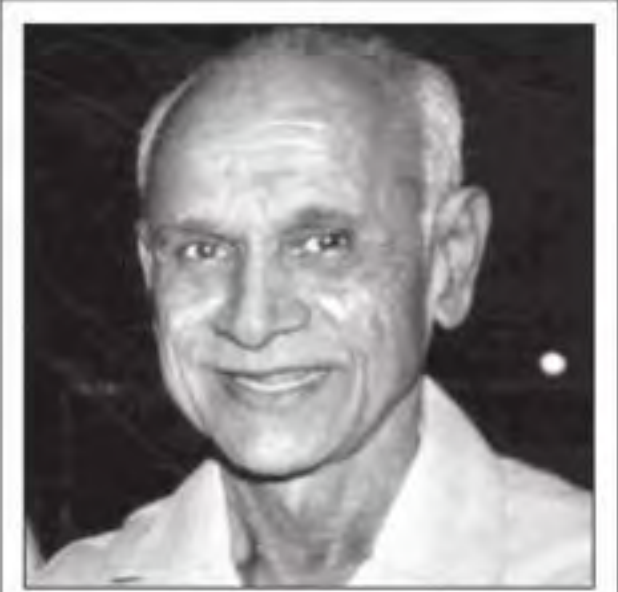
FORMER INDIA spinner Bapu Nadkarni, famous for his pin-point precision and enviable economy rate of 1.67, passed away on Friday evening in Mumbai due to age-related ailments. He was 86.

Nadkarni, a 41-Test veteran, plied his trade in the 1950s and 60s, a period when Test cricket was a turgid affair.

When asked about the secret behind his unrelenting accuracy, Nadkarni attributed it to his long, indefatigable sessions at the nets. Former India wicket-keeper batsman Nana Joshi also had a role in Bapu, a left-arm spinner, honing his craft.

As the story goes, Joshi would keep only the middle stump and ask the spinner to bowl for hours at Pune's SP College in the early 1950s. Without doubt, his finest hour came against the Englishmen in Madras during the 1964 season, where he produced scarcely believable figures of 32-27-5-0, which included 21 successive maidens, still considered a gold standard of bowling miserliness. Amidst the brouhaha surrounding his economical bowling, it's his resolute and gritty batsmanship down the order that often got overlooked. Unbeaten knocks of 52 and 122 against England in 1963 established him as a player of great all-round value.

His batting was fundamentally built upon a simple tenet: never give up. This was a trait that would get ingrained with Nadkarni in the years to come and it would also serve as a template for the future generation of



BAPU NADKARNI
1933-2020

Bombay batsmen.

"Bapuji epitomised gritty batsmanship. He played during the days when there were no thigh pads and equipment were not all that great. But still he would hang in there and not give an inch to the opposition. He was just fantastic. Indian cricket has lost a true champion," former India captain Sunil Gavaskar said.

Overall, Nadkarni scored 1,414 runs that included a century and seven half-centuries, even as he claimed 88 Test scalps in an international career that spanned for more than a decade.

But Nadkarni was much more than these numbers. Beyond his bowling and batting, he was also a sound strategist, who as the manager of Mumbai's Ranji squad in the

1970s, would chalk out plans to outwit opposition teams.

"He would always come up with strategies. At lunch time or at tea interval he would always talk to the team and give us ideas, like asking the captain to bring a certain bowler on or ask someone else to bowl from around the wicket," Gavaskar remembered.

Another inherent trait about Nadkarni was his ability to spot talent.

"As the assistant manager during India's tour to Australia in 1980-81, Bapuji was one of the main guys instrumental in getting Sandeep Patil back in the team after he copped the blow on his head by Lenny Pascoe's bouncer. He kept encouraging him despite his failures. Patil responded in style by scoring a 174 in the subsequent Test match in that same tour," Gavaskar quipped.

His cricketing nous notwithstanding, Nadkarni was also a compassionate human being and a loved team-mate. Chandu Borde, the former India all-rounder, remembered an incident when India were playing a Test against Australia in 1964.

"Bapu was my room-mate during that match, and I was battling to save my spot in the team. That was when he got a telegram about my uncle's demise. But he hid it under his pillow and only disclosed the news to me after the match was over and I had scored 68 runs while batting at No.8," Borde reminisced. "He was a very affable human being and we even after all these years would still keep in touch and wish each other on our birthdays and during Diwali. Last Diwali was the last time when I had spoken to him," Borde said.