

Shubhangi bullish on women's team despite reverse

Former India skipper bats for a mental trainer and a women's IPL



On the rise: The wonderful run of the Women in Blue showed the spectacular progress they have made in the last one year. ■ ICC

T20 WORLD CUP

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
NEW DELHI

The loss may have been crushing and devastating for fans who were convinced the Cup was India's but the lessons have been huge too.

For former India captain Shubhangi Kulkarni, the journey at the ICC T20 women's World Cup was nothing

short of "glory on the best stage."

Speaking to *The Hindu* from USA, she insisted there was no reason to feel "gloomy" about the 85-run defeat against Australia on Sunday. "The gap between the teams looks big when you see the end result but the same girls beat Australia in the opening match."

"It only confirms the spectacular progress India has

made in the last one year."

Shubhangi pointed out the lack of support from players like Harmanpreet Kaur (30 in five innings) and Smriti Mandhana (49 in four).

Good fielding

"The star players did not perform. It hurt the team. Imagine what would have happened had they scored! I must say the Indian fielding was far better than most other

teams. Earlier, fitness and fielding were issues. Not this time."

"Shafali (Verma) gave us great starts but most batters missed out on taking ones and twos. They kept getting out to shots in the air. Maybe, Smriti could have been cautious. Don't forget Alyssa Healy got an early reprieve. All this in hindsight, though."

Shubhangi, who played 19 Tests and 27 ODIs in a 15-year

The women's T20 World Cup in numbers

Batting

Name	Inn	Runs	HS	Avg.	S/R	50/100s
Beth Mooney (Aus)	6	259	81*	64.75	125.12	3/0
Alyssa Healy (Aus)	6	236	83	39.33	156.29	3/0
Natalie Sciver (Eng)	4	202	59*	67.33	113.48	3/0
Heather Knight (Eng)	4	193	108*	64.33	136.87	1/1
Shafali Verma (Ind)	5	163	47	32.60	158.25	0/0



Bowling

Name	M	Wkts	BB	Avg.	Econ.	4/5W
Megan Schutt (Aus)	6	13	4/18	10.30	6.33	1/0
Poonam Yadav (Ind)	5	10	4/19	11.90	5.95	1/0
Jess Jonassen (Aus)	6	10	3/20	14.00	6.08	0/0
Sophie Ecclestone (Eng)	4	8	3/7	6.12	3.23	0/0
Anya Shrubsole (Eng)	4	8	3/21	10.62	6.07	0/0



Well tried #BC-Clwomen. You stood up to some stern challenges in the last few weeks.. You learn a lot from games which didn't go your way.. Thanks folks, for all the support and encouragement through the #ICCWomen T20WorldCup
W.V.Raman, India Coach

Poonam lone Indian in World Cup XI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav was the lone Indian to make the ICC Women's T20 playing XI of the World Cup, which featured teenage sensation Shafali Verma as the 12th player and was dominated by champion Australia.

Five players from Australia's victorious team made the side.

The team:

Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Natalie Sciver, Heather Knight, Meg Lanning, Laura Wolvaardt, Jess Jonassen, Sophie Ecclestone, Anya Shrubsole, Megan Schutt and Poonam Yadav.

12th player: Shafali Verma.

Faf's experience will come in handy: Boucher

Proteas' tour begins on March 12

SA IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former skipper Faf du Plessis' long experience of playing the IPL and international cricket in India will come in handy during the upcoming three-match ODI series, says South Africa head coach Mark Boucher.

The series starts in Dharamsala on March 12.

"If you go to a place like India, you need to find a balance between youth and experience. I think Faf is really doing well in ODI cricket. The last time he played, he got a hundred. He knows the Indian conditions very well," Boucher said at the team's pre-departure press conference on Sunday.

The South Africans reached India on Monday



Faf du Plessis. ■ FILE PHOTO

and will take a chartered flight to Dharamsala on Tuesday. Boucher feels that having du Plessis also means he will have some selection headaches, which is a good thing to have.

"It's a good headache to have. Just him being around the squad will add a lot of value and experience. We will look at conditions and then put together combinations."

Bengal claims bragging rights on opening day

Saurashtra starts well but loses way; Pujara falls ill; Akash scalps three

Y.B. SARANGI
RAJKOT

Amid a swift change in plot in the last one hour, gritty half-centuries by Avi Barot and Vishvarajsinh Jadeja

took Saurashtra to 206 for five on the opening day of the Ranji Trophy final against Bengal at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium here on Monday.

Electing to bat, Saurashtra conceded some momentum when it lost three wickets and saw star batsman Cheteshwar Pujara (5) retiring owing to a throat infection.

Good start

Openers Harvik Desai (38, 11b, 5x4) and Avi Barot (54, 142b, 6x4) gave Saurashtra a



Breached: Vishvarajsinh Jadeja becomes one of Akash Deep's three victims. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

solid start through a fine 82-run partnership on a batsman-friendly track. It was the best opening stand by any side against Bengal this season.

Displaying sound temperament and footwork, the home openers denied the visiting pacers any early ad-

career (from 1976), wanted the team to have a good mental trainer.

"This is one field I thought they need to concentrate on. Playing on a big stage like MCG, in front of such a big crowd, the girls could have gained from some guidance to manage their nerves. These things count."

To capitalise on the good work by the team, Shubhangi backed the idea of an IPL for

women. "Australians learnt to play in front of huge crowds because of the Big Bash. We can have a women's IPL to encourage the girls as not many are comfortable playing in front of a huge audience."

"An IPL would give financial security and attract more youngsters to look at a career in cricket." Shubhangi, 60, emphasised. "You need to have a proper under-16 com-

petition. Have to get them to play matches at an early age and not just spend time in the nets. The game is growing fast. Recently, we had a tournament in Pune where 20 teams participated.

"The demand for bats (Harrow size) in my shop has been growing. This is the best time for women's cricket with very good facilities and money. How I wish I was a 13-year-old!"

dent-looking Vishvaraj (54, 92b, 7x4) to strengthen Saurashtra's position. Young Vishvaraj, who played some crisp shots including three consecutive boundaries off Shahbaz, scored his second half-century inside three weeks.

Akash broke their association finding Barot's outside edge. The hard-working opener opted for the DRS, but could not extend his stay.

The Bengal bowlers found better line and length on a pitch that became slower.

The ball virtually rolling to the wicketkeeper on a few instances raised doubts of the match extending beyond four days.

Clutch of wickets

Bowling with a big heart, the strongly-built Akash breached Vishvaraj's defence with a delivery that cut in sharply. Three overs later, Ishan Porel trapped Sheldon

Jackson in front and Akash had nightwatchman Chetan Sakariya caught behind.

The health issues of Pujara, who came in at No. 6 and could face only 24 deliveries owing to overnight throat infection and fever, affected Saurashtra's plans.

Captain Jaydev Unadkat expressed confidence that Pujara would be fit on Tuesday.

The scores: Saurashtra – 1st innings: Harvik Desai c sub b Shahbaz 38, Avi Barot c Saha b Akash 54, Vishvarajsinh Jadeja b Akash 54, Arpit Vasavada (batting) 29, Sheldon Jackson lbw b Porel 14, Cheteshwar Pujara ret'd hurt 5, Chetan Sakariya c Saha b Akash 4; Extras (b-1, lb-5, nb-1, w-1): 8. Total (for five wkts. in 80.5 overs): 206.

Fall of wickets: 1-82, 2-113, 3-163, 4-182, 5-206.

Bengal bowling: Porel 16-5-37-1, Mukesh 22-3-55-0, Shahbaz 23-6-56-1, Akash 14-5-34-3, Nandi 5-1-11-0.

Toss: Saurashtra.

Love Rahul's style, says Lara

'He's got the skills to play all forms and secure his place'

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

It's been 13 years since Brian Lara quit the international scene, but the West Indies icon still keeps a tab on world cricket and considers K.L. Rahul his favourite batsman.

"Rahul is just class... he is my favourite. He is a great entertainer and a great person to watch bat," Lara said here on Monday.

Skilful

The former West Indies captain, however, clarified that even though India captain Virat Kohli is the best batsman in the world, he personally enjoys Rahul's style of play.

Despite enjoying success in the limited-overs series, Rahul was left out of India's Test squad against New Zealand last month, raising a few eyebrows.

But, Lara – here for the UnAcademy Road Safety World Series, where he is captaining West Indies Legends – said Rahul has the skills to make it to any team, irrespective of the format.

"I don't know (why he was not included). I just know that with his technique and the way I see him bat, he should not have a problem being in any team," the 50-year-old said.

"He's got the skills to play all forms of the game and to



Up-to-date: Despite having retired 13 years ago, Lara keeps himself informed of events in world cricket. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

secure his place. He should be one of the first names after Virat Kohli in any Indian team," Lara stated.

The West Indies legend – not a big fan of day-night Tests – also believes it is time the longer format of the game is revived.

"When I was a kid, Test was the form of the game everybody wanted to watch. We had thousands of people outside Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad. We would wait to get inside to watch a Test at six o'clock in the morning. That's not the case today.

Bangladesh goes 1-0 up

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das struck half-centuries as Bangladesh registered a 48-run win against Zimbabwe in the first T20I on Monday.

Chasing 200, the visitors were bowled out for 152.

Sarkar smashed an unbeaten 62 off 32 balls after the in-form Liton had made

59 off 39 balls to entertain the home crowd.

Earlier, Liton set the platform with a 92-run opening stand with Tamim Iqbal, who made 41 off 33 balls.

The scores: Bangladesh 200/3 in 20 overs (Liton Das 59, Tamim Iqbal 41, Soumya Sarkar 62 n.o.) bt Zimbabwe 152 in 19 overs (Mustafizur Rahman 3/32, Aminul Islam 3/34).

BBC honour for Sindhu

Usha gets lifetime achievement award

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

P.V. Sindhu was voted as the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year here on Sunday.

She gained more popular votes than boxer Mary Kom, para-shuttler Manasi Joshi, sprinter Dutee Chand and wrestler Vinesh Phogat.

Sindhu, away in London for the upcoming All England badminton championship, said in a video message, "I would like to dedicate this award to my supporters and fans who have supported me and vot-



P.T. Usha. ■ FILE PHOTO: PTI



P.V. Sindhu
■ FILE PHOTO: M. VEDHAN

ed for me."

On the occasion of International Women's Day, legendary athlete P.T. Usha was bestowed the Lifetime Achievement Award.

"We did not have any facilities when I started my career," said Usha and continued, "I used to train alongside railway tracks and on beaches as there were no training spaces then. Things have changed a lot since then."

Mary Kom books ticket to Tokyo

Panghal, too, makes it to Olympics; Kaushik still in the hunt

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AMMAN (JORDAN)

Six-time World champion Mary Kom (51kg) and World No. 1 Amit Panghal (52kg) qualified for the Olympic Games, while Manish Kaushik (63kg) remained in the hunt for a Tokyo berth despite losing his quarterfinal bout at the Asia/Oceania Qualifiers here on Monday.

Second-seeded Mary Kom notched up a comfortable 5-0 win over the Philippines' Irish Magno in her quarterfinal bout to book a ticket to her second Olympics. She won a bronze in the 2012 London Games.

Panghal qualified for his maiden Olympics, edging out familiar foe Carlo Paelam of the Philippines in a 4-1 split quarterfinal verdict, while Kaushik lost 2-3 to third seed Chinzorig Baatar-sukh of Mongolia after another intense battle.

"I dedicate my Olympic quota to my uncle Raj Narayan, it's his birthday and he is someone who gives me a lot of courage," said Panghal. "I followed the instructions given by my coaches. I ensured that he didn't get on top of me. I think I was pretty consistent in all three rounds," Panghal said.

Next up for Panghal is China's Jianguan Hu, who



On the attack: Mary Kom was hardly troubled by Philippines' Irish Magno. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Boarding pass: Amit Panghal, seen with his coaches, is all smiles after qualifying for his maiden Olympics.

stunned world bronze-medallist and fourth seed Kazakh Saken Bibossinov 5-0.

"I have beaten him in the Asian Championships and I know how to get the better of him," Panghal said of his next opponent.

Kaushik also remains in contention for a berth if he

can win the box-off between losing quarterfinalists as the top six boxers will claim Tokyo tickets in the 63kg category.

Former junior world champion Sakshi Chaudhary (57kg) failed to secure a berth after losing to Korea's Im Aeji in the quarterfinals.