

Tough World Twenty20 draw excites Shahid Afridi

Shahid Afridi, Pakistan's T20 captain, on Thursday (December 17) said he hoped a tough World Twenty20 draw would motivate his team to win the title for the first time in seven years and beat arch-rival India along the way.

The 2009 champions are placed in Group 2 of the Super Ten round of the World T20 along with hosts India, Australia, New Zealand, and a yet to be decided qualifier.

The qualifier in this 'group of death' is most likely going to be Bangladesh, given that the Tigers emerge champions of Group A after three matches against Netherlands on March 9, Ireland on March 11 and Oman on March 13.

If Bangladesh qualify, they will face Pakistan in the Super 10 Group 1 match on March 15, 2016.

Tigers will next play on March 21 against Australia at Bangalore.

On March 23, Bangladesh's opponent will be hosts India at the same stadium.

On March 26, Bangladesh cricket team will face New Zealand at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata.

"We have a tough draw but I am hopeful that this challenge will pump-up my team to win the title and on the way beat India," Afridi told AFP.

Pakistan lost to India in both the group round and final of the inaugural World Twenty20 in 2007



Nasir Hossain (R) celebrates with his teammates after the dismissal of the Zimbabwe cricketer Malcolm Waller during the second T20 cricket match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. Photo: AFP

and then in

two subsequent tournaments. They have also lost to India every time they have faced them in six World Cups. But Afridi said it was time for a change. "I don't want to live in history. Whatever mistakes we usually make in the matches against India we have to overcome them."

Pakistan's recent form, however, does not augur well. Last month, they lost to England 3-0 in a Twenty20 series in the United Arab Emirates, slipping to sixth in the rankings.

"We made school boy errors and despite putting up good fights in all three matches we lost by narrow margins so we have to be on our toes and should not repeat those mistakes," said Afridi, who is set to draw the curtain on his two-decade long career after the event.

Pakistan who have three Twenty20 matches on their tour of New Zealand next month before featuring in the six-nation Asia Cup Twenty20 in Bangladesh in February.

"We have enough matches before the World Twenty20 so we have to find a settled combination and I hope we do well in these matches and carry that form into the World Twenty20."

The sixth edition of the World T20 is scheduled to be held between March 8 and April 3, 2016 across eight venues in India.