

Cricket: Six to watch at the women's T20 World Cup

Dubai (AFP) – As the 10 teams prepare for the start of the 2024 T20 Women's World Cup, AFP Sport takes a look at six players who are at the forefront of their team's hopes of lifting the trophy on October 20.

The 25-year-old left-arm spinner from Cheshire made her international debut eight years ago. She is now the highest-ranked bowler in the ICC's T20 and ODI rankings and in June she became the youngest bowler to take 100 ODI wickets. Nearly six feet tall, Ecclestone brings accuracy, economy and guile to the attack, making her a key weapon for skipper Heather Knight. "I love captaining her," says Knight. "The control she gives you as a captain and the attacking threat she gives you on both edges is really cool."

– India: Deepti Sharma –



Indian off-spinner Deepti Sharma is ranked the second best T20 bowler in the world © Marco Longari / AFP

Notorious to some for her controversial 'Mankad' dismissal of England's Charlie Dean in an ODI two years ago, Deepti Sharma is celebrated more widely for the all-round excellence of her game. The 27-year old, who bats left-handed and bowls right-arm off-spin, is ranked second among T20 bowlers worldwide and the third best all-rounder. India have never won a women's World Cup and Sharma believes victory in the UAE could change the sport at home: "If we win the World Cup things will really change from every perspective and each woman will want to play cricket after that, so I'm hoping for the best," she told Cricinfo.

South Africa: Sune Luus



Sune Luus led South Africa to the final of the 2023 T20 World Cup © Marco Longari / AFP

A year after leading South Africa to their first ever white-ball final, Sune Luus is in the ranks in the UAE as a batter who also bowls off-spin, having switched from leggies. The 28 year-old had a terrible white-ball series against Sri Lanka earlier this year, making just 22 runs in the T20Is and 43 in the ODIs but bounced back with 65 and 109 in a losing cause in a one-off Test in Chennai, following that with 53 not out in a T20I against Pakistan in Multan in a three-match series where her strike rate was 136. “You always want to score and contribute,” she said. “But I think before the World Cup, just having those performances gave me that confidence to know that you can still hit the ball.”

– Sri Lanka: Vishmi Gunaratne –



Teenage opener Vishmi Gunaratne is just the second Sri Lankan woman to post an international century © Darren Staples / AFP/File

Only just turned 19, Vishmi Gunaratne is a great player in the making. Thus far the young opener's figures since coming on to the senior international scene aged 16 do not stack up with the very best – in 43 T20Is she averages 20, at a strike rate of 92, with three fifties. She does, however, have an ODI hundred to her name. The fact that it came against Ireland in Belfast last month a week before her birthday – becoming only the second Sri Lankan after veteran skipper Chamari Athapaththu to hit a ton – suggests she is running into form at the right time. Maybe this is the tournament where Gunaratne shows off the full potential that was so evident when she hammered a 128-ball 417 in an Under-19 women's tournament in Sri Lanka two years ago.

West Indies: Hayley Matthews

West Indies skipper Hayley Matthews has two centuries in T20I cricket including one against Australia in Sydney last year © DAVID GRAY / AFP/File

As an 18-year-old, Hayley Matthews gave early notice of her talent, clubbing 66 off 45 balls as West Indies chased down 149 to halt the Australian juggernaut and win the 2016 T20 World Cup. Not surprisingly, she was named Player of the Match with the game acting as a springboard for a career that has seen her playing franchise cricket across the world. In 96

T20Is, the West Indies captain averages 25 with two centuries with the bat (at a strike rate of 112) and has taken 99 wickets with her off-spin. Now 26, Matthews is under no illusions about the task ahead: "We're going in as underdogs again and there's no doubt about that," she said.

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