

FIRST SEMIFINAL

Afridi, Vettori hold key

CRICINFO, undated

ICC WORLD TWENTY20 SOUTH AFRICA 2007
This is a clash of Pakistan flair versus Kiwi functionality. Although New Zealand have again more than held their own, they owe their passage to the semi-finals on India, after their 37-run win against South Africa dumped the home side out on net run-rate and allowed Daniel Vettori's side to sneak in.

"I didn't actually watch any of it," said Vettori. "I was trying to avoid it as much as possible because we knew what it was going to be like. In the end it was a little bit tense and there was relief from the guys."

Pakistan have reached the last four playing their typically blend of aggressive cricket, despite a stuttering display against Bangladesh, under the guidance of their new coach Geoff Lawson. Some of the permutations for the final are mouth-watering: a Trans-Tasman clash, a replay of the 1999 World Cup final or, the ultimate match-up, an India-Pakistan showdown.

Pakistan's top order has failed to fire throughout the tournament; their first four matches brought scores of 50 for 3, 47 for 4, 33 for 3 and 46 for 4 before the middle order led recover-

ies. Their best start came against Bangladesh went Shahid Afridi was finally promoted to open, but Shoaib Malik was keeping his cards close to his chest over Pakistan's plans. Salman Butt has laboured in every innings and his strike-rate is down at a paltry 70.

New Zealand haven't been blessed with a mountain of runs from the top four and their best start -- 68 without loss -- ended in defeat against South Africa. Craig McMillan has been their saviour with 44 off 23 against India and 57 off 31 against England. Scott Styris (52 runs) and Lou Vincent (89 runs) have both struggled and their scoring rates have only crept above a run-a-ball.

The leading wicket-takers for both teams are spinners, Vettori and Afridi. Vettori is pushing to be bowler of the tournament after conceding a miserly 5.30 and should be a handful on a worn Newlands surface. However, he wasn't making any early decisions on his team. "We saw Australia run through Sri Lanka with pace." Jacob Oram hasn't enjoyed Twenty20 with the ball, taking one wicket and going at nearly 11-an-over.

Pakistan's attack is packed with variety. Afridi has bagged the wickets,

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Wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthick hugs India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (L) as Harbhajan Singh joins them after they beat South Africa in their crucial Super Eights tie in the ICC Twenty20 World Championships at Kingsmead in Durban on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

SECOND SEMIFINAL

Big guns ready

AFP, Durban



Captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and key batsman Yuvraj Singh will play in Saturday's Twenty20 semifinal against Australia after recovering from injuries.

Yuvraj missed Thursday's crucial encounter against South Africa due to tendonitis in his left elbow sustained against England the previous day in which he hit Stuart Broad for six sixes in an over.

Dhoni, suffering back pain, handed the wicket-keeping gloves to Dinesh Karthick in the 37-run win over South Africa which propelled India to the top of group E in the Super Eights round.

"I am still smiling so I will hopefully play the next match," said Dhoni.

"It was just a strain in the lower back, on the right hand side. I had the luxury of having Karthick in the side, who is a specialist keeper."

"I did not want to aggravate the injury. I think hopefully it will be fine before the semifinal."

Dhoni said Yuvraj also will be fit against the formidable Australians, adding the left-hander was rested against South Africa as a precautionary measure.

"Yuvi had a bit of a problem with his elbow but he should be ready for the next match as well," the Indian captain said.

"It was decided to leave out Yuvi at the last moment. We wanted to assess his condition and see what exactly the situation was. We wanted to save him for the rest of the season."

"There is no point playing someone who is not fit just for the sake of the team, because throughout the year we play cricket."

An inspired India, restricted to 153-5 in a game they had to win to stay afloat, hit back to stop South Africa to 116-9 in a rousing finish at the Kingsmead on Thursday night.

India, South Africa and New Zealand finished group E of the Super Eights on four points each, but India took the Kiwis along into the semifinals due to superior net run-rates.

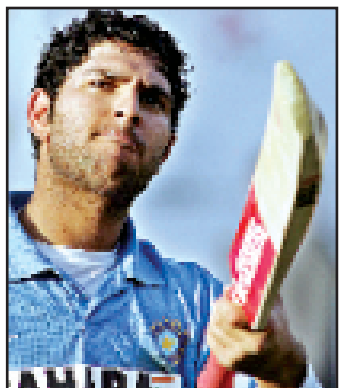
While India await Australia at the Kingsmead here on Saturday night, New Zealand meet group F leaders Pakistan at the Newlands in Cape Town the same afternoon.

Left-arm seamer Rudra Pratap Singh led India's charge with 4-13 from his four overs while Shanthakumaran Sreesanth and Harbhajan Singh claimed two wickets each.

India, who elected to bat after winning the toss, were struggling on 61-4 before Rohit Sharma hit 50 and skipper Mahendra Dhoni 45 to turn the innings around with a stand of 85.

Dhoni said his team's display against the South Africans gave him hope for the semifinal.

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Yuvraj Singh

(Indian batsman)
"A lot of people tell me I bat like him (Sobers), but I'm not even halfway there. But it's a great feeling when people tell you that."

Dismissing comparisons with the West Indian legend Gary Sobers after his six sixes in an over in the Twenty20 World Championships.



ESPN

ICC World Twenty20 SEMIFINALS

New Zealand v Pakistan
Live from 4:45pm

India v Australia
Live from 9:45pm

Primera Liga
Barcelona v Sevilla
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)

STAR Sports
English Premier League
Arsenal v Derby County
Live from 7:55pm

Fulham v Man City
Live from 10:10pm

Australia ponder Watson sub

BBC ONLINE, undated

Australia are considering calling up a replacement to their World Twenty20 squad after Shane Watson was ruled out of the rest of the tournament.

The all-rounder pulled a hamstring in the 10-wicket victory over Sri Lanka which sealed a place in Saturday's semi-final against India at Kingsmead.

Australia coach Tim Nielsen has had problems contacting the chairman of selectors, Andrew Hilditch.

"We're feverishly making phone calls to get something happening," said Nielsen.

Watson had just recovered from a similar problem and replaced injured captain Ricky Ponting in the team but has now been sent home.

"After bringing him over here and nursing him through and doing everything we could to get him right we decided the best thing was to get him home and give him time to recover," Nielsen added.

Ashraful admits mistakes

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful said

careless mistakes have dashed his side's hopes of playing in the semifinals of the ICC World Twenty20 Championship in South Africa.

The Tigers lost their final Super Eights game, which only had an academic interest for both the teams, against Pakistan by four wickets on Thursday in Cape Town to complete their bittersweet journey of the inaugural event.

Bangladesh will return home on Sunday.

Ashraful's men fulfilled their pre-tournament target of reaching in the second round with a six-wicket victory over West Indies, their first success against the Caribbean in any form of the game, but they could have hardly justified their berth and rather gave the impression that it was a flash in the pan.

"I think we made small mistakes here and there and that probably cost

us a place in the semifinals. This has been a great education for all the boys and everyone has learnt something," the Tigers skipper was quoted as saying in TigerCricket.com.

Bangladesh lost all three of their Super Eights matches besides the last Group A game against South Africa, mainly because of their same old thick-headed batting and that was the reason the 23-year old skipper, who for another occasion showed inconsistency, highlighted his team's bowling when asked to comment on the positives from the competition.

The only high point in the end was the batting of young left-handed opener Zunaed Siddique, who spent most of his time on the bench because of poor planning by the team management despite the fact that the opening pair didn't click, who took the opportunity on debut with a 49-ball 71 which brought him the man-of-the-match award.

"The bowling has been superb. Special mention should go to (Abdur) Razzak, (Syed) Raseel and Shakib (Al Hasan). (Mahmudullah)

Riyad played the last two games and bowled really well. Aftab (Ahmed) was the most consistent scorer for us. I must also thank Zunaed (Siddique) for an outstanding innings. Nazimuddin was brilliant in the lead up matches but was unlucky here," he explained.

No doubt the performance of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza was the most frustrating episode for him as the deputy agonisingly failed to serve the side although the Bangladesh skipper had considered him as the 'trump card'.

Ashraful however was mainly disappointed for the lost opportunities in the tournament and he believed that his side could have finished the tournament with a win.

"I felt we had a chance (against Pakistan). The wicket was not easy to bat on especially against the spinners. We had three slow bowlers and if Riyad had taken the Imran Nazir's catch with 25-odd to get, then anything could have happened. We also missed opportunities against South Africa and

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SA Games budget a concern

SPORTS REPORTER

The authority seemed to be a bit worried about the huge budget of hosting the 11th South Asian Games in Dhaka next year.

While attending the Bangladesh Special Olympics team's farewell party at BKSP yesterday, Sports Adviser Tapan Chowdhury told reporters that they were thinking about the budget.

"We are under financial pressure, so we have to think seriously about the estimated budget of Tk 126-crore for the SA Games because we have to give subsidy to different sectors, especially after the recent flood situation," he said.

"We have to think about the everyday necessities of people. But it doesn't mean that we are not concerned about sports."

While replying to a question, the sports adviser, however, mentioned that they were not yet considering deferring the Games.

LOCAL SNIPPETS

SPORTS REPORTER

Enamul Hossain Rajib won his second match in the VI Asian Individual Chess Championships in Cebu City, Philippines.

In the third round yesterday, the Bangladesh International Master defeated Balgan Bayarmanakh of Mongolia to increase his collection to two points in the qualifying event for the World Cup Chess Championships.

GM Wang Hao of China, Indonesian GM Susanto Megarnta and IM GN Gopal of India were leading the table with maximum three points.

Rajib will face local IM Richard Bitoon in today's fourth round clash.

DIV 3 SOCCER

PWD and Lalbagh SC recorded comfortable and identical 3-1 wins in the Third Division Football League at the Outer Stadium.

Kader scored a brace after

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They remain chokers

AFP, Durban



One word -- guaranteed not to have been uttered by anyone in the South Africa team -- haunted their entire innings. No prize for guessing that word was "choke".

Going in to this match today, South Africa were the only unbeaten team in the tournament, and it counted for nothing. It almost seemed make the result all the more inevitable.

"Choke" was almost the first word of the end-of-match press conference, and it elicited an embittered response from Graeme Smith, who sniped at the South African journalist: "I guess I expected that question from you," before conceding, "I guess we do find ways to get out of these tournaments... It's very disappointing knowing you've lost only one game in the tournament and you're out... That does seem a little bit weird."

It shouldn't feel too weird to three members of the team. Herschelle Gibbs, Mark Boucher and Shaun Pollock were there at Edgbaston in 1999, and at Headingley one match earlier, when Steve Waugh dryly told Gibbs that he'd just dropped the World Cup.

Gibbs's urge to celebrate catching Waugh was premature -- he never had the ball under control -- setting off the chain of events that culminated in that infamous run-out middle involving Lance Klusener and Allan Donald. The match was tied, and South Africa, from a position of strength, had succumbed to a side that had needed to win every one of their remaining games to stay in the tournament.

The same trio were there -- as well as Smith, de Villiers and Kemp -- when Australia humiliated South Africa at the 2007 World Cup semi in St Lucia. That game was never South Africa's: they had been psyched out before play began, and there was no way back from 27 for 5.

Unhappily for South Africa, the litany goes on. At Durban in the

2003 World Cup, they made an unholy mess of the Duckworth/Lewis tables. Probably best not to mention that game to Boucher, who declined to take the single off Murali that would have put South Africa through to the Super Sixes. That was a ghost the team were desperate to put to rest.

The same happened yet again in the Champions Trophy in Sri Lanka in 2002. India were the assassins then as now. Smith, Gibbs, Boucher, Pollock and Ntini will have miserable memories of a

September night in Colombo.

"When you lose like that it's always difficult to make excuses," mullied Smith at Kingsmead tonight. "As a team we've got to take these losses and try to come back better people. Yah, it was disappointing."

Smith kept coming back to the word "disappointing". There might have been another, uglier word at the back of his mind. He couldn't say it: it would have caught in his throat.



PHOTO: AFP

PICTURE TELLS THE STORY: South Africa captain Graeme Smith looks crestfallen as he waits for the presentation ceremony to begin after his side lost to India in a crucial Super Eights tie in the ICC Twenty20 World Championships at Kingsmead in Durban on Thursday.



PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea fans gather outside their home ground Stamford Bridge in London on Thursday protesting Jose Mourinho's resignation as Chelsea's manager.

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TODAY'S MATCHES

Teams	Time	Venue
New Zealand v Pakistan	5:00pm	Cape Town
India v Australia	10:00pm	Durban

AD 2x2