



Kiwis crush Canada

New Zealand batsman Brendon McCullum acknowledges the applause upon reaching his century against Canada at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AFP, Mumbai



New Zealand's in-form Ross Taylor and opener Brendon McCullum blitzed Canada Sunday, helping to fire the Black Caps into the World Cup quarterfinals with a thumping 97-run win in Mumbai.

New Zealand scored a mammoth 358 for 6 in their 50 overs and it proved too much for the minnows, who never looked remotely like challenging the target and ended on 261-9 after their 50 overs.

Canada were in a perilous position at 4-2 before captain Ashish Bagai (84) and Jimmy Hansra (70 not out) came together to put on 125 for the fourth wicket and give the scoreboard a look of respectability.

Veteran John Davison was dismissed in bizarre fashion, run out by a direct hit from wicketkeeper Brendon McCullum as he ambled a single when he was in no danger.

Kyle Mills did the early damage for the Black Caps, dismissing Ruvindu Gunasekera and Zubin Surkari with just four runs on the board but he had to leave the field injured midway through his third over. Jacob Oram took 3-47.

Earlier, stand-in skipper Taylor came to the crease at the Wankhede Stadium in the 30th over with his side on 149-2 after a steady start and injected urgency into the innings.

In one devastating over Taylor, who smashed 131 in 124 balls against Pakistan, took 28 off Harvir Baidwan, smashing four

sixes and a four.

He was caught by Hansra off the bowling of Balaji Rao for 74 off just 44 balls, including five sixes and six fours.

Brendon McCullum was the mainstay of the innings, scoring 101 in 109 balls as New Zealand had few problems with the toothless Canada attack.

Kane Williamson (34 not out) and Scott Styris (35) also joined in the onslaught, as the Canadian bowlers wilted, before a stunning cameo of 31 from James Franklin off just eight balls including three sixes and two fours.

New Zealand lashed 31 off the final over.

The pick of the bowlers for Canada was Davison, whose 10 overs of spin yielded 1-30 but they were ragged in the field, dropping catches amid the New Zealand onslaught.

Baidwan went for a whopping 84 runs in his 9.1 overs and Rizwan Cheema was thrashed for 64 off just 4.5 overs.

The victory for New Zealand, without injured skipper Daniel Vettori, takes them to top spot in Group A with eight points, one clear of Sri Lanka, the only other team who have qualified for the quarterfinals.

Canada have two points after one win and four defeats.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the World Cup Group A match between New Zealand and Canada at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday:

NEW ZEALAND
Guptill c Bagai b Baidwan 17
McCullum c Gunasekera b Baidwan 101

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'Bat for country, not for crowd'

AFP, Nagpur



India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni lashed out at his batsmen for playing to the gallery and not for their country in the three-wicket World Cup defeat to South Africa.

India looked set to post a mammoth total in Saturday's game when they reached 267-1 following Sachin Tendulkar's brilliant 111, but lost their last nine wickets for just 29 runs in nine overs.

"In the batting powerplay, it's important that you don't play for the crowd, but for your country," said Dhoni.

The captain was furious over India's inability to master the powerplay and he insists his men will have to learn to make the most of the fielding restrictions if they are to achieve their World Cup dream.

India still top Group B with seven points from five games and should still make the quarterfinals, but Dhoni has concerns over his team.

"The batting powerplay was the turning point of the match as we lost too many wickets during that period. After that, we should have curbed our instincts and looked to play out the 50 overs," said the captain.

India lost four wickets, including those of Tendulkar and Gautam Gambhir (69) for 30 runs during the batting powerplay which eventually restricted their total to 296 in 48.4 overs.

"Spectators love to see fours and sixes, but when you lose

two-three wickets, you need to change your approach. When you have 270-280 runs on the board, batsmen want to play big shots," said Dhoni.

"You need to curb your thinking. Different people have different roles and responsibilities."

India's dramatic collapse was triggered by South African paceman Dale Steyn in a man-of-the-match performance of 5-50.

South Africa achieved their 297-run target with two balls to spare.

"Cricket is a cruel game. This is not the first time I've experienced it (the batting collapse). I am not disappointed, but it is a big learning curve and it happens with all sides," said Dhoni.

"Sometimes, when you look for those extra 20 runs, you risk a few things and end up with 30-40 runs less, which can matter in the end. Today was an ideal example of that."

In contrast, Graeme Smith's South Africans did better in their batting powerplay, scoring 52 runs for the loss of just one wicket before tail-ender Robin Peterson completed the win with an unbeaten 18.

With South Africa needing 13 to win in the last over bowled by left-arm seamer Ashish Nehra, Peterson took 16 runs off the first four balls, including two fours and a six.

"I had two options, either Ashish or (off-spinner) Harbhajan Singh. Ashish has been the pick of our bowlers for the last two years," said Dhoni.

"If you see his performances, he has done well in the past in the first powerplay or second or at the slog."



Chokers no more

AFP, Nagpur



South Africa captain Graeme Smith insists his team shook off their chokers' tag in Saturday's win over India which came on the fifth anniversary of cricket's most famous run chase.

It was March 12, 2006, that South Africa stunned Australia at the Wanderers when they chased down a world record 435-run target with one ball to spare.

Saturday's three-wicket win in Nagpur, where they needed to make 13 off the final over, wasn't as dramatic but it was significant.

Just the weekend before, Smith's men had crumbled to a six-run defeat in pursuit of a modest 172-run target against England in Chennai.

Smith was delighted to ram the word 'chokers' back down the throats of his critics.

"I'm happy that our guys challenged the perception. It was a fantastic comeback on the fifth anniversary of our successful run-chase against Australia in 2006," said Smith whose side are within touching distance of the last eight.

India were on course for a massive total on Saturday when they reached 267-1 following brilliant knocks from Sachin Tendulkar (111) and Gautam Gambhir (69), but the Proteas managed to restrict the home team.

"This morning the team manager told me it was the anniversary of the 438 game and at one stage I was having nightmares about chasing 400 again," Smith said, referring to India's top-order flourish.

Fast bowler Dale Steyn (5-50) led South Africa's fightback with a maiden five-wicket haul as he sparked a sensational collapse that saw India lose their nine wickets for 29 runs in nine overs.

"For the first 15 overs, we were on the end of a massive beating. But we came back really hard and showed some real fight. The guys showed a lot of composure," said the South African captain.

"It was not so easy to bat later in the day, but the guys just hung in there for partnerships that counted in the end. To chase 300 was a terrific effort."

"There was a lot of raw emotion around towards the end, the match was on the edge throughout. This is a massive win for all of us. It's a confidence booster not just for the guys who were there at the end but for all of us as a group."

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