



6s
450

4s
2093

WHACK 0 METER

SHAH CEMENT

Most 6s hit by a player
Chris Gayle
West Indies
26

Most 4s hit by a player
M Guptill
New Zealand
58

Captain fantastic Brendon McCullum not only kept up his amazing strike-rate of over 200 in the World Cup with a 26-ball 59 but also laid New Zealand's foundation to chase down a revised D/L target of 298 against South Africa in a pulsating semifinal at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday.

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Win wasn't for Grant-ed

AGENCIES, Auckland

New Zealand's Grant Elliott realised a childhood dream when he belted South Africa speedster Dale Steyn into the stand for six at Eden Park on Tuesday to get his adopted homeland into the World Cup final.

South Africa-born Elliott gave a brief celebratory wave as the ball sailed into the crowd before running to comfort a distraught Steyn, who lay sprawled on the ground.

The winning runs came on the penultimate ball of the rain-affected match where New Zealand were set a revised target of 298 under the Duckworth-Lewis method after South Africa had made 281 for five.

For a horrible moment there, Elliott thought he had left his run too late, that he was going to be left out and not going to Melbourne.

runs would do it because a tie was as good as a win. That was in the back of my mind.

"The chase, we probably left it a little bit late to be honest. It was stressful."

Off the last over they needed 11 to tie, Vettori, in his inimitable style, squeezed a four to backward point, but a couple of byes left Elliott needing the big shot. Steyn was thinking length ball; Elliott was thinking four or six. Elliott won.

"That's the first moment that you actually feel a release of emotion. Cricket's the sort of game where you have to be quite unemotional in your approach. It was a great feeling... to savour that moment and know you're through to the final."

Elliott is aware that the result, and his heroics, have elevated this team to a special place in the public's consciousness, but does not want it to

end here.

He said he had always wanted to play in a World Cup since 1992 when his mother let him stay home to watch Australia play South Africa in Sydney in what was the Proteas' inaugural appearance at the tournament.

"I got suspended from cricket and from school for a while because I did that, but it left a massive impression on me," said Elliott, who turned 36 last weekend.

"I thought that tournament, the coloured clothing and everything was what I wanted to do and it's funny how life works. It's amazing to be at Eden Park today to hit the winning run."

Although Elliott has immersed himself in New Zealand culture since leaving South Africa in 2001, he said he still felt sorry for the Proteas, adding that was why he tried to console Steyn and helped him to his feet.

"You have to feel compassion. Humble in victory, humble in defeat. I felt quite sorry for him. I felt quite sorry for a lot of the South African guys for losing the game," said Elliott, who made his New Zealand debut seven years ago.

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Never more de-jected Villiers

AGENCIES, Auckland

South Africa faltered yet again at the critical moment of a cricket World Cup on Tuesday when New Zealand snatched a semifinal victory which had appeared to be beyond their grasp for much of a rain-affected match at Eden Park.

And captain AB de Villiers admitted he's never felt worse on a cricket field yet, at Eden Park last night he still played a starring role in New Zealand's compelling victory with four wickets and a ball to spare.

On one hand, de Villiers's 65 off 45 balls, an innings truncated by the Auckland rain, set New Zealand a formidable Duckworth-Lewis adjusted 298 runs for victory.

On the other, at 204 for four in the 32nd over, Corey Anderson and Grant Elliott had a mix-up over a single and Anderson was short of his ground at the non-striker's end when the stumps were broken. Unfortunately de Villiers didn't have the ball.

"I have absolutely no regrets in this tournament, not one," de Villiers said. "We had a few

chances to win, mine wasn't the only chance but I tried my best to catch it, I didn't. Life moves on. I didn't take it. We had our chances again after that. If I cost us, I'll gladly take the blame."

It's a mark of respect that when de Villiers came through the Eden Park north stand for his media conference the assembled punters rose in a

spontaneous standing ovation to acknowledge the respect for his approach to the spirit and skills of the game.

Using his customary graciousness, de Villiers paid tribute to the spectacle.

"We left it on the field tonight, that's all I can ask of the guys. We had our chances in the second-half of the game, but we didn't take them.

We badly wanted to take it. It's obviously a painful loss to all those people supporting us back home.

"It's a credit to New Zealand. It was a wonderful game of cricket and they held their nerve to the end."

De Villiers says he and Dale Steyn had a plan for the penultimate delivery which Grant Elliott sent into the stand.

"We had the option of a yorker, a slower ball or a good length. Elliott was walking across [his stumps] trying to take the pace off. Normally when a player does that he wants you to go for a yorker so he can use the pace down to the boundary. We decided to go for a [good] length ball hoping he'd play and miss.

"He played one of the best shots of his life... probably the best."

De Villiers felt emptiness in the aftermath.

"I have absolutely no idea what to do from here. I don't even know when we're going home. I'll take some time as a captain to be there for the guys as much as I can."

SCAN CEMENT
HEIDELBERGCEMENT

THIRD EYE Still no rainbow

ATIQUE ANAM

It was interesting to note the desperation in the words of AB de Villiers after South Africa lost their semifinal match against New Zealand by such a small margin yesterday. "We left it all out there.... worst of all is we don't play for ourselves. The bigger picture is for the people back home. We play for them. I hope they can still be proud of us," is what the 31-year-old skipper said at the post-match press conference, as if pleading his countrymen to realise that he and his side did not choke; that their best efforts on the day were just not good enough.

Did South Africa really choke yesterday? Or were they desperately unlucky? Or did they just come up against a team who were playing their best cricket of all time? This is a topic which will be trending for a long time - from social media to cricket conversations and perhaps more importantly, on the minds of the South Africa players themselves.

One thing South Africans could feel is that they were dealt a cruel hand by the rain gods yet again. De Villiers himself hinted as much during his post-match reaction. At

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SCORECARD

SOUTH AFRICA V NEW ZEALAND

SOUTH AFRICA	R/B	A/O
Amla b Boult	10/14	2/0
De Kock c Southee b Boult	14/17	2/0
Du Plessis c Ronchi b Anderson	82/107	7/1
Rossouw c Guptill b Anderson	39/53	2/1
De Villiers not out	65/45	8/1
Miller c Ronchi b Anderson	49/18	6/3
Duminy not out	8/4	1/0
Extras: (b-1, w-13)	14	
Total: (For 5 wickets in 43 overs)	281	
Did not bat: Philander, Steyn, M Morkel, Tahir.		
Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-31, 3-114, 4-217, 5-272.		

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Southiee	9	1	55	0
Boult	9	0	53	2
Henry	8	2	40	0
Vettori	9	0	46	0
Williamson	1	0	5	0
Elliott	1	0	9	0
Anderson	6	0	72	3

NEW ZEALAND	R/B	A/O
Guptill run out	34/38	3/1
McCullum c Steyn b Morkel	59/26	8/4
Williamson b Morkel	6/11	1/0
Taylor c de Kock b Duminy	30/39	4/0
Elliott not out	84/73	7/3
Anderson c du Plessis b Morkel	58/57	6/2
Ronchi c Rossouw b Steyn	8/7	1/0
Vettori not out	7/6	1/0
Extras: (b-6, lb-2, w-5)	13	
Total: (For 6 wickets in 42.5 overs)	299	
Did not bat: Henry, Southee, Boult.		
Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-81, 3-128, 4-149, 5-252, 6-269.		

Baz Proud to be here

AGENCIES, Auckland

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum savoured the experience of a lifetime as his team celebrated an epic cricket World Cup semifinal victory over South Africa at Eden Park on Tuesday.

Grant Elliott gave the co-hosts a four-wicket victory when he struck Dale Steyn over long-on off the penultimate ball of the rain-reduced match.

New Zealand will now meet the winners of Thursday's semifinal in Sydney between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday.

"Pretty amazing," McCullum said at the presentation ceremony. "It was a great advertisement for cricket, everybody will remember this for the rest of their lives."

"It's the greatest time of our lives. We have enjoyed the experience, the crowds that have turned up, the brand of cricket we have tried to play. "Hope they're all dreaming as much as we are, we've got a huge occasion in a few days' time, and jeez it would be nice to win it."

"We don't mind who we face in the final, they are both quality sides but we know if we play the way we want to we are a good chance. I'm really proud to represent New Zealand."

Chasing a revised target of 298 in 43 overs, New Zealand won with only one ball to spare. McCullum revealed he had welcomed the rain interruption that

stopped play for close to two hours during South Africa's innings. When the players went off the field, South Africa were 216 for 3 after 38 overs, with Faf du Plessis and AB de Villiers already past their century partnership.

"Keep raining," McCullum, nicknamed Baz, said, when asked what was running through his mind when the drops began falling. "They were obviously setting it up quite nicely, they were two set batsmen, two very destructive batsmen at the crease as well."

"I still looked at the innings and I thought that the way we kept giving in the field, the way that we bowled, I still thought we were controlling everything we possibly could. Sometimes you come up against people who play significant hands and that's what those guys were doing and we just knew we had to hang in there, I guess. Even with the bat, as long as we could hang in there we gave ourselves a chance towards the end."

McCullum laid the platform for the chase with a 26-ball 59, and Grant Elliott finished the match with an unbeaten 73-ball 84.

McCullum played down his own role in the win.

"It's all bits and pieces, really, when it boils down to the significance of the innings Grant played. We had to generate some sort of run rate early when you're chasing such a big score and that's obviously what we tried to do."

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Man of Steel

GRANT ELLIOTT

Grant Elliott was a big gamble for the New Zealand selectors. The 36-year-old Johannesburg born all-rounder have had a stop-start career ever since he made his international debut for the New Zealand in 2008. Dropped quite a few times and being out in the wilderness for lengthy periods, Elliott was written off by many people only two years ago. But a good season lulled the selectors to call him back at the start of this year, and this time Elliott seems bent on repaying the faith showed towards him. The right-hander scored an unbeaten century, his first since 2009, earlier in January against Sri Lanka and followed that up with a few more decent scores leading up to the World Cup. In the mega event, though, Elliott played a few cameos before playing arguably the most important knock in New Zealand's ODI history as his unbeaten 73-ball 84 took the Kiwis to their first ever World Cup final.

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