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## SPORT

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## SCORES IN BRIEF

**Pakistan:** 176 for 4 in 20 overs  
(Rizwan 67, Fakhar 55 not out,  
Babar 39; Starc 2-38, Zampa 1-22,  
Cummins 1-30)

**Australia:** 177 for 5 in 19 overs  
(Warner 49, Marsh 28, Stoinis 40  
not out, Wade 41 not out, Shaheen  
1-35, Shadab 4-26)

**Result:** Australia won by five  
wickets.

**Player-of-the-match:**  
Matthew Wade.

## ‘It was a great game of cricket’

AGENCIES



Matthew Wade smacked three sixes in a row to clinch a see-saw chase as Australia beat Pakistan by five wickets in a dramatic game on Thursday to reach the

Twenty20 World Cup final.

Chasing 177 for victory, Australia needed 22 runs from the last two overs and Wade got a reprieve when Hasan Ali dropped him off Shaheen Afridi in the penultimate one.

Wade sent the next three balls from Afridi soaring over the ropes and Australia reached their target with one over to spare.

“It was a great game of cricket,” Australia captain Aaron Finch said after his team booked a place in Sunday’s final against New Zealand and stayed on course to win the only major global trophy that has eluded them.

“The way Matthew Wade held his nerve was outstanding, that partnership with Marcus Stoinis was crucial.” Wade’s 41 not out from 17 balls included four sixes and Stoinis finished unbeaten

on 40. “I just got my feet in a tangle first up. It happens, in T20 cricket you get some good ones every now and then. I thought we were pretty sloppy today, we dropped a couple, though they were tough ones. But what we showed today was that you need all your players, everyone in your 15 to contribute,” said Finch.

“[On chasing teams winning so many games] It’s really strange. There’s no dew, but the lights take effect and the wicket speeds up a bit. I was hoping to lose the toss and put a total on the board and defend it, but it was good to chase that target down in the end,” he added.

Australia suffered an early blow when Shaheen trapped Finch lbw for nought as the Pakistan-dominated crowd erupted.

The in-form Warner kept up the attack from one end with support from Mitchell Marsh.

But Shadab Khan turned up the heat in the seventh over to get Marsh out for 28.

The leg-spinner struck in each of his four overs to claim the big wickets of Steve Smith, for five, Warner, and Glenn Maxwell, for seven as Australia lost half their side for 96.

Warner walked when he was caught behind after hitting three fours and three sixes in his 30-ball stay but replays later showed there was no contact off the batsman’s bat. Stoinis and Wade steered the team to their second T20 World Cup semi-final and dream of a maiden title. Earlier, Rizwan’s opening stand of 71 with skipper Babar Azam, who made 39, unsettled the Australian bowling in the first six overs of powerplay.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa broke the opening stand after sending back Babar, who has amassed 303 runs to lead the tournament’s batting chart, caught at long-on following his 34-ball knock laced with five fours. Rizwan kept up the attack and smashed Zampa for a six to become the first player to aggregate 1,000 runs in T20 internationals in a calendar year.

He survived a hit on the helmet grill by a quick bouncer from Pat Cummins as the physio came in to conduct a concussion test with the batsman smiling. Rizwan finally fell to Mitchell Starc while trying to force the pace and was caught at mid-off. Zaman finished off the innings with two sixes in the final over from Starc who took two wickets.



## ‘That catch might have made the difference’

AGENCIES

Matthew Wade’s late blitz ensured Australia sailed through, comfortably at the end, for a T20 World Cup final clash against New Zealand and ended Pakistan’s unbeaten run in the event.

Praised throughout for their fielding and overall enthusiasm, a dropped catch in the penultimate over followed by three successive sixes took the game from Pakistan.

Babar Azam-led side set a competitive total that set up the semi-final nicely but a sensational finish saw Australia maintain their dominance over Pakistan in ICC knockout games, which stretched their unbeaten run to five games.

“The way we started in the first half, we got the total we targeted,” said Pakistan skipper Babar Azam.

“But we gave them too much of a chance at the end of the chase. If we had taken that catch, it might have made the difference.”

“But the way we played this tournament, the way we gelled, I’m very satisfied as a captain. I hope we try and learn from our mistakes after this. We’ll continue to try and play this way. The roles we’d defined for the players, they all executed very well,” he added.



“Talking to Marcus Stoinis at the other end, we discussed what the bowlers were looking to do. [Shaheen] probably bowled more pace-on than I expected. When I got out there with Marcus, he was really confident we’d get them, even though I was a little unsure. He found the boundaries early on, and I was happy to chip in at the end. It got down to two a ball, and from there it was if you got one in your arc, just try to hit it. Probably hasn’t sunk in, I’ve just finished batting. I’m just happy to contribute. I was out of the team for a while, just happy I got an opportunity again.”

MATTHEW WADE



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## Long live the sporting spirit

KHALID HOSSAIN

New Zealand’s outstanding five-wicket victory over hot favourites England in the first semifinal of the T20 World Cup is destined to go down as one of the classics, given how the game unfolded.

But amid the overall drama and the quality of cricket on offer, one particular little event stood out in all its glory, although it will probably not be classified as a turning point if one watches the highlights or scorecard. It all happened against the backdrop of enormous pressure, that too when all eyes were watching, when Kiwi opener Daryl Mitchell ended up prioritising sporting spirit above all else.

Chasing 167 and needing 34 off 18, at a time when every run or every dot ball

act of sportsmanship will arguably be the cherry on top and should place him as the frontrunner to receive this year’s ICC Spirit of Cricket Award, which was introduced in 2011, and join his compatriots Daniel Vettori, Brendon McCullum and Kane Williamson, who won the awards in 2012, 2015 and 2018, respectively.

“If anything sums up New Zealand cricket, it was that,” former England captain Nasser Hussain said while commenting on Mitchell’s sporting gesture.

Another former England captain, Michael Atherton, heaved praise on the Kane Williamson-led side while talking to Sky Sports, which reminded the fans of the hallmark of a truly great side in all its layers.

“Across formats, you would have to say



mattered with the game heading down to the wire, Mitchell had turned down a single when he could have easily opted for one after having inadvertently collided with England spinner Adil Rashid at the non-striker’s end.

In hindsight, that single might not have mattered as Jimmy Neesham’s blistering 11-ball 27 cameo in tandem with Mitchell’s unbeaten 72 off 47 enabled the Kiwis to reach the shores of victory with an over to spare. However, it can be safe to say that Mitchell’s sporting gesture has perhaps immortalised this particular encounter for the ages and encapsulated the beauty of cricket and sport in general.

Mitchell demonstrated a masterclass on how to mix caution with aggression, showed the art of knowing when to raise the tempo and how to play in a partnership. But his

they are the strongest team at the moment so congratulations to them, a fantastic achievement with limited resources,” said Atherton.

To the ardent cricket romantics, the latest sporting act is a refreshing continuation of great gestures from former legends in this so-called gentleman’s game. Of course, there have been several instances of such moments throughout history, but the impact is amplified, and rightly so, when the stage is as grand as a World Cup semifinal and also considering it came from a top quality side, in an era defined by commercialisation and ultra-competitive result-oriented mentality.

Thanks to Mitchell’s ‘statement’, surely, New Zealand have swayed more than a few neutrals to their ranks to cheer for them in times to come.

## ‘Sport is a great teacher’

AGENCIES

Jimmy Neesham nearly quit the game after being dropped from New Zealand’s one-day squad in 2017 but four years later he now stands on the cusp of Twenty20 World Cup glory.

History beckons for New Zealand and Neesham after he became an unlikely match-winner in his team’s remarkable win over England in the first semi-final on Wednesday.

Neesham smashed an 11-ball 27 in New Zealand’s tense chase of 167 and then sat calmly in the dugout amid the celebrations after Daryl Mitchell hit the winning boundary in his unbeaten 72.

The photos of the moment went viral on social media and Indian website ESPNcricinfo captioned it “Jimmy Neesham didn’t move” to which the allrounder replied: “Job finished? I don’t think so.”

New Zealand will play either Pakistan or Australia in their first ever T20 World Cup final on Sunday in Dubai but the spotlight remains on 31-year-old Neesham who came close to delivering the Kiwis the 50 over World Cup trophy in 2019.

The allrounder, a left-hand batsman who bowls medium-pace, scored 13 runs off five balls in a super over during the dramatic



final which England won.

Neesham also took three wickets and was involved in the final ball run out to level the scores on 241 before the super over also ended in a tie.

Hosts England won on boundary count.

Neesham took to humour to pass off their heartbreaking loss and wrote on Twitter, “Kids, don’t take up sport. Take up baking or something. Die at 60 really fat and happy.”

He has shown real strength of character

since a poor 2017 Champions Trophy -- he scored one half-century in 11 ODI matches and took four wickets -- led to him being dropped.

He later admitted to being frustrated by the turn of events and took help from an Auckland-based psychologist P a u l a

Dennan.

He also revealed that Heath Mills, the head of the New Zealand Cricket Players Association, talked him out of retirement and advised

him to “take one game at a time”.

The suggestion not only helped him get back to the game he loves but also gave the Black Caps a winner they needed.

“I had observed him and suspected that he was struggling mentally. I got in touch with him and we started talking,” Mills told The Indian Express, hours after Neesham’s thrilling knock in the T20 world cup semifinal.

“I told him why don’t you just step away from the game for a while. A short break. This isn’t the time to take any drastic decisions,” said Mills.

And then Neesham agreed and went to see a psychologist Paula Dennan in Auckland. “I think I got to the point where I needed to have a full overhaul of the way I was approaching the game and she facilitated that,” Neesham said in the past.

Now praise has flowed for the Auckland-born cricketer with both captains--Kane Williamson and Eoin Morgan, saying Neesham’s knock was the “deciding factor”.

“Jimmy Neesham, was thinking of quitting the game in 2017 and today playing a match defining innings to help New Zealand qualify for the final,” India’s batting great VVS Laxman wrote on Twitter. “Never give up is the lesson, Sport is a great teacher.”

