

## Kane philosophical as Babar, Rizwan come to the party

REUTERS, Sydney

Pakistan's hitherto misfiring opening pair of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan chose Thursday's semifinal against New Zealand to roar back into form, combining in a century stand to put the 2009 champions into the final of the T20 World Cup.

Rizwan and skipper Babar headed into the tournament as the top two T20 batters in the official rankings but endured run droughts in the group stage even though Pakistan made the last four after the Netherlands upset South Africa in Group 2.

None of them managed a fifty in the Super 12 matches and Babar's strike rate of 61.90 prompted demands to vacate the opener's slot for a more attacking Mohammad Haris.

Pakistan's bowlers and their middle order carried them into the last four but Babar and Rizwan regained their mojo just in time to put them one victory away from a second T20 World Cup title.

After just one 50-plus stand in the previous five matches, Babar and Rizwan forged a 105-run partnership to set up Pakistan's seven-wicket victory against last year's runners-up New Zealand.

"Such up and down in form is part and parcel of the game, every player goes through such phases," Babar said



England will be wary of Indian batting firepower, especially with the form of Virat Kohli, and will want to counter that with a fiery pace attack, spearheaded by Mark Wood, in the second semifinal of the T20 World Cup in Adelaide today.

PHOTO: AFP/TWITTER



### SCORES IN BRIEF

**New Zealand vs Pakistan**

**New Zealand:** 152 for four in 20 overs (Mitchell 53 not out, Williamson 46, Conway 21; Shaheen 2-24, Nawaz 1-12)

**Pakistan:** 153 for three in 19.1 overs (Rizwan 57, Babar 53, Haris 30; Boult 2-33, Santner 1-26)

**Result:** Pakistan won by seven wickets

**Player-of-the-match:** Mohammad Rizwan



after their victory.

"I could not perform well in the first three matches but it could not shake my believe in myself. My team mates also kept their faith in me."

Babar appeared to have luck on his side too.

The 28-year-old could have been dismissed for a golden duck but New Zealand wicketkeeper Devon Conway floored a tough catch diving to his right.

The elegant right-hander raced to a 38-ball fifty, smashing even boundaries in his fluent 53 before holing out in the deep.

Rizwan needed two balls fewer for his half-century, offering a silent prayer after reaching the mark with a single off Ish Sodhi.

Rizwan was also caught in the deep after making 57 having put Pakistan on the brink of their victory.

"When you perform, it's very satisfying and I try to perform every time I go out," Babar said of his return to form.

"Today both Rizwan and I decided to attack in the powerplay... it gave us a momentum which we didn't drop."

Meanwhile, New Zealand captain Williamson tried to play down concerns that New Zealand seem incapable of winning a global limited overs title following another big-match defeat.

"We want to achieve something every tournament," Williamson said. "To me it comes down to the cricket and that's where our focus is, the environment, how well we're tracking and there's been a lot of good stuff."

Williamson denied time was running out for his team and this group of players to win a global white-ball trophy. "I mean guys get older and that's the nature of sport," he said.

"We have a bit of time. We have another one (World Cup) next year," he said, referring to the 50-over World Cup in India, to be played in 12 months' time.

## England bowlers look to stifle India firepower

REUTERS, Melbourne

England's bowlers have helped cover for their batting team mates' patchy Twenty20 World Cup and will now face their biggest test against the firepower of India in Thursday's semifinal.

The challenge may be even greater for Jos Buttler's team, with express paceman Mark Wood joining number three batsman Dawid Malan as an injury doubt for the clash at Adelaide Oval.

Barring a solid win over fellow semi-finalists New Zealand, England's trip to the last four has been a rocky one with a shock loss to Ireland, a washout against Australia and unimpressive wins over Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

Only opener Alex Hales is ranked in the top 10 of the runs list among players who competed exclusively in the Super 12's.

However, the bowling of Sam Curran and Wood, with support from Chris Woakes and Ben Stokes, has carried England through.

They may have their hands full against India's heavy hitters, though, with a rejuvenated Virat Kohli and the marauding Suryakumar Yadav in ominous form.

The battle at the death is likely to be important, if not decisive, in the teams' first meeting in the tournament's knockout rounds



given England's bowlers and India's batters have been standouts in the final overs.

It will be England's first match of the tournament at Adelaide Oval but India have already played at the ground, cruising to victory over Bangladesh.

Kohli may be jumping out of his skin to take strike in Adelaide, where he has scored five hundreds

and three fifties across 14 innings in all formats.

England have bitter memories from their last World Cup match at the ground, where Bangladesh knocked them out of the 50-overs tournament in 2015.

That proved a turning point, with England reaching the semi-finals or better at every World Cup since.

"There's some moments or memories that will not always be good ones, unfortunately," Buttler, who played in the 2015 defeat along with several current team mates, said on Wednesday.

"To be now in a semi-final and going into tournaments that we should perform well is a great place to be as a team."

While England sweat on the fitness of key players, India's sole selection dilemma is whether to bring back Dinesh Karthik as wicketkeeper or stick with Rishabh Pant as a left-handed batting option to counter England's spinners.

India failed to reach the knockout rounds in last year's T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates but have cruised into the last four Down Under with only a blip against South Africa.

"We can take pride in ourselves from where we have come," said captain Rohit Sharma.

"One bad game can't truly define who you are."

## Senegal holds breath over Mane injury

AFP, Dakar

Doubts over Senegalese talisman Sadio Mane being fit for the World Cup finals had a nation holding its collective breath on Wednesday with Senegal President Macky Sall tweeting: "Sadio, heart of a Lion! All my heart is with you!"

Mane limped off just after 20 minutes of Bayern Munich's Bundesliga clash with Werder Bremen on Tuesday and the 30-year-old forward is due to undergo further scans on his leg on Wednesday.

Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann said Mane had taken a blow to his right knee but French newspaper L'Equipe claimed it was a tendon injury and had ended his hopes of playing at the World Cup which gets underway in Qatar on November 18.

The two-time African player of the year -- who finished runner-up to Karim Benzema for the Ballon d'Or award in October -- is pivotal to the African champions hopes of progressing to the knockout stages.



"Sadio, I wish you a speedy recovery following your injury in the Bayern-Werder Bremen match," tweeted Sall.

"Like I said to you: Sadio, heart of a Lion! All my heart is with you! God bless you!"

Augustin Senghor, president of the Senegalese football federation, told AFP he was

"worried".

"Imagine if France lost Benzema," he said.

"We cross our fingers, we have been worried since we received the news yesterday.

"We are waiting for the Bayern medical staff to do their diagnosis and then to be officially informed by them.

"We want to wait for reliable information from the club itself."

Senghor said that the team would just have to adapt if Mane failed to recover in time.

Senegal -- who beat then world champions France in a group match on their way to the 2002 World Cup quarter-finals -- are in Group A and begin their campaign against the Netherlands on November 21.

They follow up with a clash with hosts Qatar on November 25 and round off their group matches against Ecuador four days later.

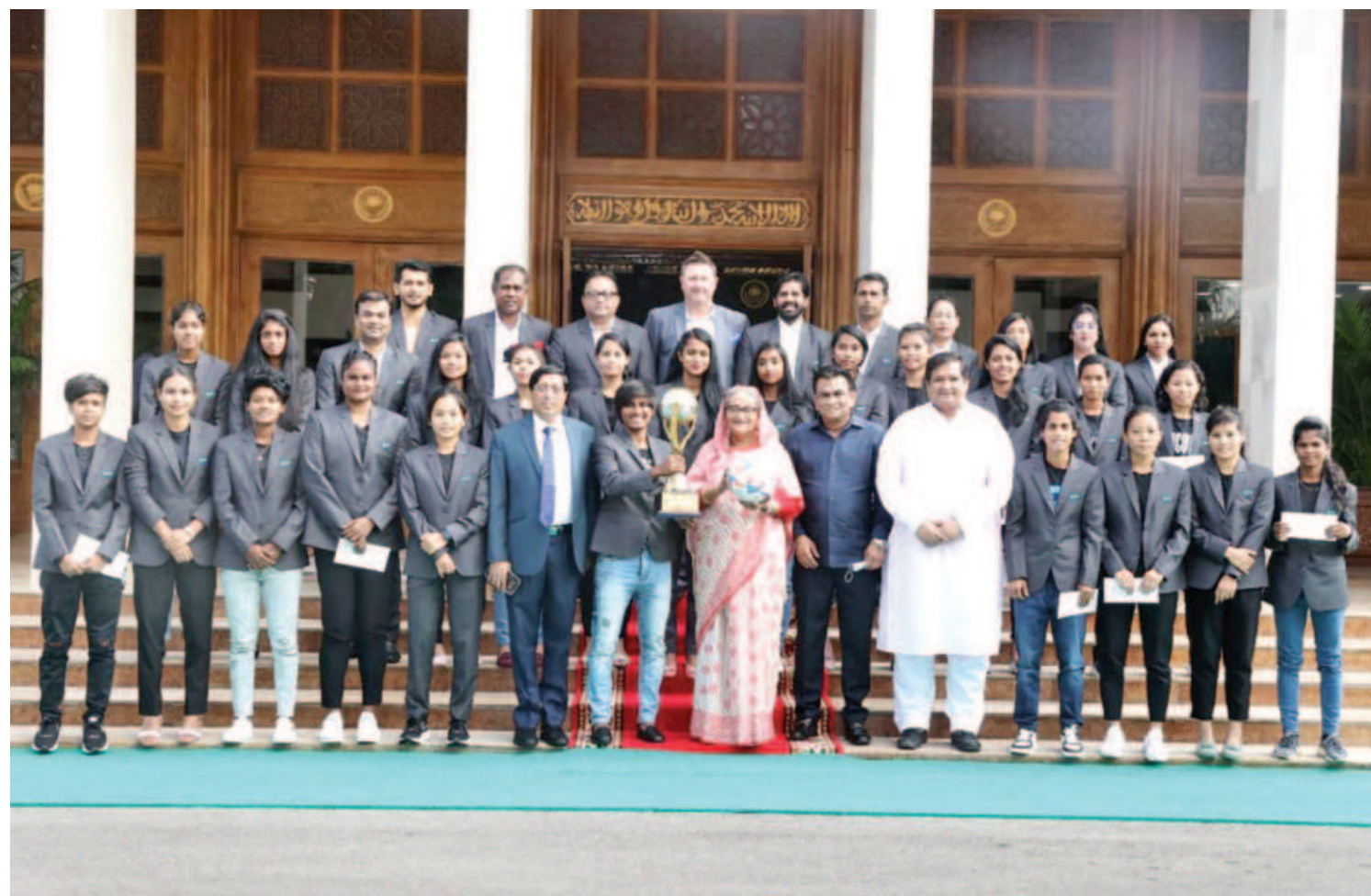
### WHAT TO WATCH

**T SPORTS & GTV**

T20 World Cup  
2nd Semi-final  
England vs India

**T SPORTS**

Hockey Champions Trophy  
Padma vs Khulna  
Live from 06:30 pm  
Barishal vs Chattogram  
Live from 08:30 pm



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photograph with the members of the SAFF Women's Championship winning team at a reception programme at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday. Cash awards of five lakh taka for each player and two lakh taka for each official was announced during the programme.

PHOTO: BFF