

## SPORT

What to WATCH

## T SPORTS

Euros  
England vs Slovakia  
Live from 10:00 pm  
Spain vs Georgia  
Live from 1:00 am  
(Monday)

## T SPORTS AND SONY SPORTS 2

Copa America  
Mexico vs Ecuador  
Live from 6:00 am (Monday)  
Jamaica vs Venezuela  
Live from 6:00 am (Monday)

PHOTO: ICC/AFP

## SCORES IN BRIEF

**India:** 176 for seven in 20 overs (Kohli 76, Patel 47, Dube 27; Maharaj 3-23, Nortje 2-26)  
**South Africa:** 169 for eight in 20 overs (Klaasen 52, De Kock 39; Bumrah 2-18, Arshdeep 2-20, Hardik 3-20)  
**Result:** India won by seven runs  
**Player-of-the-match:** Virat Kohli  
**Player-of-the-tournament:** Jasprit Bumrah

## INDIA END DECADE OF HEARTBREAK

## SPORTS REPORTER

Rohit Sharma, the captain who led India from the front with his fearless batting, fell to the ground with a look of relief washing over his face, the confident but sometimes brash Hardik Pandya shed tears of joy while at the dressing room, coach Rahul Dravid, known for his calm demeanour, roared in triumph.

These were the scenes at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Saturday after India overcame a decade of heartbreak with a win over South Africa in the final of the ICC T20 World Cup 2024.

The win, one they snatched from the jaws of defeat with Proteas at one point needing just 30 off 30 balls, made them the tournament's first-ever undefeated champions and also put them on par with England and West Indies as the only other two-time winners of the competition.

This T20 World Cup was about absolution for Rohit and his side after the heartbreak in the ODI World Cup final last year in Ahmedabad at the hands of Australia, which was their fifth defeat in a final of an ICC event since 2014.

Rohit revealed that many years of preparation went into this year's triumph and commended his team for coming through in such a grand manner under pressure.



"Hard to sum up what we've been through in last three-four years. A lot behind the scenes, not what we did today [yesterday], it's what we did before," Rohit said after the match.

"A lot of high-pressure games, and we have been on the wrong side of it. Guys understand when the pressure is on what needs to be done, today [yesterday] was perfect example, stuck together with backs to the wall," he added.

There were several heroes in India's win over the Proteas, but the man who stole the spotlight and was named the player of the final was the indomitable

Virat Kohli, whose 76 off 59 balls took India to a total they could defend.

After the match, however, Kohli announced that this was his last T20I, "God is great, and I got the job done for the team on the day it mattered. Now or never, last T20 for India, wanted to make the most of it. Wanted to lift the cup."

With the win, Kohli, one of the greatest batters of this or any generation, will get to walk off into the sunset in the shortest format with the biggest prize in hand.

**India great Virat Kohli said he had played his last T20I after starring in India's thrilling seven-run win over South Africa in the T20 World Cup final in Barbados on Saturday. The star batsman put a run of low scores behind him to make 76 as he was named player of the match, with the 35-year-old Kohli saying afterwards: "This was my last T20 World Cup, and this is what we wanted to achieve. One day you feel you can't get a run, then things happen. God is great, and I got the job done for the team on the day it mattered. Now or never (that was my) last T20 for India, wanted to make the most of it. Wanted to lift the cup, wanted to respect the situation rather than force it." The prolific right-hander retires from the format with 4,188 runs from 125 T20I with a strike rate of 137.**



## Holders Italy sent packing

AFP, Berlin

Switzerland dumped reigning champions Italy out of Euro 2024 with a stunning 2-0 victory on Saturday to reach the quarterfinals for the second time in their history.

Murat Yakin's supremely well-drilled side outplayed the flat two-time winners in the last 16 clash in Berlin and will face England or Slovakia in the next round.

Ruben Vargas teed up Remo Freuler for Switzerland's 37th-minute opener before curling home superbly himself right at the start of the second half to deservedly double their lead.

A new-look Italy, short on star power and without many of the key figures that led them to Euro 2020 glory, offered little in response to Switzerland's energetic display.

"It hurts, it really hurts," said Italy's captain and goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Former Arsenal midfielder Granit Xhaka,



arriving at the Euros after a stunning season with German champions Bayer Leverkusen, pulled the strings as the Swiss rarely looked like letting the lead slip away.

Italy coach Luciano Spalletti dropped Jorginho after his worrying group stage performances, bringing in Nicolo Fagioli in defensive midfield among a hefty six changes which failed to bring the Azzurri to life.

Italy scraped through the first phase thanks to Mattia Zaccagni's last-gasp strike in the 1-1 draw with Croatia and Spalletti said his team had no alternative but to improve in the knock-out rounds.

However, it was Switzerland who grew in confidence and pulled off their best display yet, making a bright start at the Olympiastadion in a sweltering Berlin, where a far more impressive Italy won the 2006 World Cup.

Spalletti hooked Stephan El Shaarawy at half-time for Zaccagni, but Italy gave the ball away from the kick-off and Switzerland doubled their lead just 27 seconds into the second period.

Augsburg midfielder Vargas, who started in place of the suspended Silvan Widmer but on the left of the attack, broke into the area and arced a superb curling shot over Gianluigi Donnarumma.

The closest Italy came to scoring in the first hour was when Swiss defender Fabian Schar misjudged a header and hit the frame of his own goal.

Substitute Mateo Retegui produced Italy's first shot on target as the clock ticked down and the near-invisible Gianluca Scamacca hit the post from close range, but the defending champions could never really threaten their opponent as they saw their run end rather meekly.

## Non-conformist blockbuster conserves charm

## KHALID HOSSAIN

Bob Woolmer, the late South African coach renowned for his cricketing insights and innovation, once said, "Football is a game of space, whereas cricket is a game of time," in his book 'The Art and Science of Cricket', shedding light on the trials and tribulations a cricketer goes through on the battlefield.

Woolmer's book, a decade in the making and published in 2009, emerged at a time when the shortest format of the game – Twenty20, designed to draw a wider range of audiences for the sake of making cricket a global sport – had already found its footing and threatened the status quo of its elder siblings – Tests and the 50-over format – in terms of mass appeal.

Much like how fast food has surpassed fine dining in popularity in this millennium, the intimidating T20 cricket proved to be an unstoppable force as the cash-rich franchise leagues reshaped the sports' landscape, leading the game's global governing body ICC to hold the T20 World Cup in every two years.

Eventually, when it came to the 20-over format, cricket m a t c h e s

became less and less about the element of time and more about the initial conditions: the nature of surfaces, playing conditions, which had become predominantly batting-friendly, and about the

between the leather and willow, negating extrapolations made from recent performances in major franchise leagues, to perennial underachievers and minnows having their moment in the sun, the marquee event held in West Indies and the USA has ticked all the boxes for a truly memorable global tournament.

Super Over thriller, one of the seven final-over nail-biters witnessed in the group stage.

USA, meanwhile, en route to amping up cricket's fan following in the country, remained hungry for more as they cemented further history by entering the second round – the Super Eights – in their maiden appearance, setting the narrative for one of the fairytale triumphs of the mega event.

Even though fellow hosts West Indies could not make the cut to the

who shrugged off the tag of 'Chokers' to land a coveted place in the final – a first for the Proteas after being on the receiving end of seven excruciating exits in the last-four stage.

As far as individual glories are concerned, elite superstars like Australia's swashbuckling opener Travis Head, India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and opener Rohit Sharma, among others, lived up to their reputations while promising talents were unearthed in Bangladesh's leggie Rishad Hossain, pacer Tanzim Sakib, et al. Rishad was the joint third in the wicket-taker's column before the final, a list that features an almost even mix of pacers and spinners in the top 15.

Last but not the least, the 29-day tournament verified the notion that a n

tournament up until he got his bearings right in the final, while a struggling Hardik Pandya rekindled his form in every department. Like Pandya, his IPL teammates in Suryakumar Yadav, Rohit and Bumrah from bottom dwellers Mumbai Indians, who ended the campaign at rock bottom, were unfazed in national colours.

All in all, this T20 World Cup will go down in the memory lane as an unforgettable one that refused to play by conformism, and yet it

- Expanded World Cup lives up to billing
- Minnows and hosts get boost
- Perennial underachievers flip script
- Thrillers in abundance
- Superstars shine, promising talents leave trace
- Pacers and spinners grab spotlight in tandem
- IPL expectations did not match

number of power-hitters a team possess.

However, the ninth edition of the T20 World Cup, an expanded version featuring 20 teams from the last edition's 16, disproved the existing consensus and went on to preserve the timeless charm of the game.

At the same time, the 2024 instalment churned out almost everything that makes it an undeniable blockbuster, meeting the ever-increasing demands of modern times.

From even contests

The associate teams disproved the notion of being pushovers, as former champions Pakistan and England found out.

Pakistan fell prey to the USA in one of the greatest upsets in the history of the tournament, setting the ominous tone of the last edition's finalists' eventual exit. On the other hand, England were forced to edge past a driven Scotland in the group stage based on net run rate.

And even Nepal, devoid of any expectation, almost pulled off the highly improbable, losing to South Africa and Bangladesh by a whisker, whereas teams like Namibia and Oman made their mark by locking horns in a

semifinals, they would be pleased to give their fans the impression that the two-time champions are on the right track, especially following a string of debacles in the preceding white ball World Cups.

The team that accompanied the West Indies in the Super Eights were Afghanistan, who created their own fairytale chapter. Defying odds, Afghans first scripted New Zealand's exit and then set the Super Eights alight by taking down the mighty Australia before holding their nerves against Bangladesh in two World Cup classics.

Afghanistan's triumphant run was eventually cut short by South Africa,

international competition is a completely different beast, in terms of the challenges it presents, compared to what franchise leagues keep dishing out.

Case in point, the influence of the latest edition of Indian Premier League (IPL), which made way to a bunch of 200-plus scores, did not go onto set the tone in the USA and West Indies by any means. Prior to Saturday's final, this edition saw only four 200-plus totals in 54 matches – three of which materialising in Saint Lucia – while 175-plus totals were achieved 16 times.

Negating the IPL narrative further, Virat Kohli, who had been IPL 2024's highest run-scorer, limped the entire

