

## England, South Africa into Super Eights

AGENCIES

England survived a spirited challenge from Italy to seal a 24-run victory and book their place in the Super Eights of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on Monday.

An unbeaten 53 from 22 balls by Will Jacks proved decisive as the two-time champions posted 202 for 7, their highest total of the tournament. England were wobbling at 105 for 5 in the 13th over when Jacks arrived, but he transformed the innings with four sixes and three fours, helping his side plunder 88 runs in the final six overs. Sam Curran added a brisk 25, ensuring England crossed the 200 mark.

Italy, playing in their maiden World Cup, refused to fade quietly. After slipping to 22 for 3, they rebuilt through Ben Manenti and Justin Mosca, who shared a 92-run stand to revive hopes of a major upset. Manenti struck 60 off 25 balls, including six sixes, while Mosca contributed 43.

The game remained alive until the 19th over, when Curran dismissed Grant Stewart for 45 with Italy needing quick runs. Jamie Overton then wrapped up the tail as Italy were bowled out for 178. Curran and Overton finished with three wickets apiece.

England ended Group C with three wins, progressing alongside West Indies.

Elsewhere, South Africa advanced to the Super Eights from Group D without taking the field, their qualification confirmed after Afghanistan defeated the United Arab Emirates in New Delhi.

## RASHID hits 700

Afghanistan kept their flickering campaign alive in Delhi, riding Azmatullah Omarzai's all-round show to a five-wicket win over the UAE in a T20 World Cup Group D fixture yesterday.

Put in to bat, UAE recovered through Sohaib Khan's 68 to post 160-9. Omarzai then ripped through them with 4-15 before blasting an unbeaten 40 off 21 balls as Afghanistan got home with four balls to spare – their first victory of the tournament.

Afghanistan now need Canada to spring an upset against New Zealand today to stay alive.

While Omarzai sealed the win, Afghanistan spin king Rashid Khan became the first bowler in T20 history to reach 700 wickets.

"Rashid has led the format's wicket charts since overtaking Dwayne Bravo (631) in February 2025 and now sits 69 clear of the West Indian.

"Sunil Narine (613), Imran Tahir (572) and Andre Russell (508) round out the top five.



PHOTO: AFP

## SHORT CORNER

### Bangladesh in semis of Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars

Bangladesh Women's 'A' team eked out a three-wicket win over Thailand in a low-scoring Group B match to seal a place in the semifinals of the Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars at the Terdthai Cricket Ground, Bangkok on Monday. This was Bangladesh's second win in as many games as they had earlier beaten Sri Lanka by four runs in their tournament opener.

### BCB boss Bulbul off to Australia

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul has departed the country on Monday citing family reasons, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury confirmed to The Daily Star. "Bulbul bhai has gone out of the country due to family reasons. He will be in Australia to meet his family. He will be returning in a few weeks," Nizamuddin informed.

### Carlsen wins first FIDE Freestyle World Championship

Norway's Magnus Carlsen added another crown to his collection on Sunday by becoming the first official FIDE Freestyle Chess world champion after a comeback win over Fabiano Caruana in Germany. Carlsen has now won 21 world titles in various formats.

\*\* Read full stories on The Daily Star website

## BFL restart in limbo

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite most clubs continuing costly training camps, the Professional League Management Committee of the Bangladesh Football Federation appear reluctant to resume the Bangladesh Football League (BFL) since its first phase ended on January 3.

The league was expected to restart after the month-long mid-season break but was postponed due to the February 12 national elections. Five days after the polls, clubs are yet to receive even a draft fixture list.

"We have been training and spending money without purpose," said a top club coach, requesting anonymity.

While the top division remains stalled, the second-tier Bangladesh Championship League resumed on Sunday, and the final round of the Bangladesh Women's Football League was completed on Friday.

A federation source said the BFL could restart later this month.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Muhtasin Ahmed Ridoy of Dhaka University, the number one table tennis player of the country, plays against Sakib Khan Redoy of Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University during the men's team event on the opening day of the Inter-University Table Tennis Fest at the Shaheed Taj Uddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium yesterday. Ridoy won in straight sets.

## India-Pakistan: An illusion of a rivalry

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

When was the last time you were ripped off?

Getting ripped off is pretty much a universal human experience. Kids get tricked into buying shiny toys that break down in the first try, adults get talked into investing in a pyramid scheme and lose their savings, and the elderly get duped into buying a supposed all-curing cream from online, which ends up giving them rashes.

Usually, people learn their lesson after getting duped once, and steer well clear of it. However, there are some people who never seem to learn their lesson and keep getting deceived the same way.

On Sunday, every cricket fan who tuned in to watch the India-Pakistan Group A match of the ICC T20 World Cup hoping to see a competitive game of cricket, one that lives up to all the hype surrounding the encounter, fell into this category.

In terms of generating interest, the India-Pakistan cricketing rivalry is going through a golden age – just not where it matters.

Just consider the buildup to Sunday's match in Colombo. For weeks, the entire cricketing world was intently following the multilateral communications to convince Pakistan to reconsider their decision to boycott the match, a stance they had taken in solidarity with Bangladesh, who were replaced by Scotland in the World Cup for refusing to play in India over security concerns.

Experts weighed in, rumours swirled, ramifications of an India-Pakistan match



not happening were discussed, and eventually Pakistan reverted its stance, to the relief of the International Cricket Council (ICC) and all other stakeholders.

After that part was sorted, attention moved to the non-handshake issue, which India had started last year when its players refused to go through the customary post-match handshakes with the Pakistan team – an unprecedented virtue-signalling move in international cricket.

Before Sunday's match, both captains were asked about it, but no decisive answers were given, which inevitably built up more drama over what would happen.

On game day, the captains did not shake hands at the toss, and the two teams did not share the customary greeting after the match either, and in between,

India completed an absolute demolition of Pakistan.

India won the match by 61 runs, but the margin of defeat does not properly reflect India's dominance.

Having posted 175-7 after being put in to bat on a pitch that was holding up and providing turn, India killed the match inside the first five overs of the Pakistan innings by sending back four batters.

India toyed with the Pakistani batters afterwards, giving rank part-timers like Tilak Verma and Rinku Singh three overs collectively, even though all three of their frontline spinners had overs in the tank.

The only cricketing aspect that was getting any attention before the game was the curious bowling action of Pakistani spinner Usman Tariq. In the match, the off-spinner did decently with the ball,

taking 1-24, and was the last Pakistan batter dismissed, getting clean bowled for a duck by Hardik Pandya and then giving a wry smile, indicative of the embarrassment Pakistan had just been dealt with.

The worst part of the entire affair is how unsurprising it all was.

Pakistan has not beaten India in any format since 2022. Overall, they have only ever won three T20Is against India and lost 13. India are the defending champions and ranked No.1 in the format, while Pakistan have not won the tournament since 2009 and are sitting at No.6.

Now, every rivalry has its ups and downs. In the 80s and 90s, Pakistan used to dominate India, and had a much higher win percentage.

But what has been disheartening about their encounters in recent times is the lack of fight in the Pakistani players, especially batters, who seem to get overwhelmed by the occasion and allow India to walk all over them.

Still, fans all over the world tune in to see this match in record numbers because of nostalgia, as they remember the heydays of this rivalry, when both sides used to play with their hearts on their sleeves, cricketers would battle tooth and nail for their flag and at the end of it all, a sense of camaraderie would prevail. As the gulf between Pakistan and India widens, the prospect of those fierce matches returning grows dimmer. Still, nostalgic fans will continue tuning in every time these perennial rivals face off and then go away with the sinking feeling of getting ripped off.

## Real seek payback against Benfica

STAR SPORTS DESK

Benfica host Real Madrid at the Estadio da Luz on Tuesday in the rematch everyone wanted – a Champions League play-off first leg dripping with narrative.

Their last meeting, on the final matchday of the league phase, produced bedlam. Goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin thumped in a 98th-minute header, the final kick of the phase, sealing a 4-2 win that carried Jose Mourinho's men into the play-offs on goal difference and shoved Madrid from third to ninth – outside the automatic spots.

For a club that has lifted this trophy 15 times, it was a jolt.

Mourinho expects a reaction.

"They are wounded. And a wounded king is dangerous," said the former Madrid boss.

"We will play with our heads, ambition and confidence. We know what we did to the kings of the Champions League."

Benfica squeezed through in 24th, their league phase a mix of grit and gamble: three wins, five defeats, qualification decided by that wild night against Madrid.

Yet form has hardened since. The Eagles have won four of their last five in all competitions, drawing the other, and arrive on the back of a 2-1 victory away at Santa Clara. At the Luz, they believe anyone can fall.

Madrid's aura has flickered too. Across their



last 11 Champions League outings, they have lost six and won five.

Still, Mourinho urged calm over first-leg mathematics.

"Trubin won't be in the attack," he quipped. "People think you need a certain result in the first leg. I say there is no definitive result. It will be very demanding, without a doubt."

### Monaco vs PSG

Monaco host holders PSG in an all-French duel. They have never met in Europe, though Monaco won 1-0 domestically in November. A weekend defeat at Stade Rennais FC left Luis Enrique's men a point off the Ligue 1 summit

with 12 games left. Yet PSG's knockout record under the Spaniard is fierce in the Champions League: 10 wins from 15, far stronger than their league-phase return.

### Qarabag vs Newcastle

A draw against PSG on MD8 wasn't enough for Newcastle United to finish inside the top eight but despite a 2,529-mile haul to Azerbaijan – the longest distance ever travelled by an English team for a Champions League away match – Eddie Howe will fancy to get the job done against Qarabag.

### Club Brugge vs Atletico Madrid

Club Brugge meet an Atletico Madrid side fresh from smashing FC Barcelona 4-0 in the Copa del Rey, then losing 3-0 to Rayo Vallecano. The head-to-head record between these two sides is finely balanced across eight previous European meetings, with three wins each and two draws. Atletico have conceded in eight straight Champions League games, shipping 15 goals. Another game without a clean sheet would mark their longest such run in the competition.

### Dortmund vs Atalanta

Dortmund and Atalanta both stumbled late in the league phase. Dortmund, though, are flying domestically, thrashing Mainz 4-0 for a sixth straight Bundesliga win, while Atalanta have lost their last five Champions League knockout ties.

## REMEMBRANCE



**Mr. Ekram Uddin Mollah**

(30<sup>th</sup> January 1991–17<sup>th</sup> February 2019)

Honorable Director, Osman Group of Industries

*Repent for all your sins and ask for forgiveness. Allah almighty is the most merciful, the greatest and the mightiest.*



We remember with respect to his 7<sup>th</sup> death anniversary

*We pray for the forgiveness of his departed soul in the court of almighty Allah. May Allah accept his all good deeds and blessed him highest place of Jannatul Ferdaous. (Ameen)*

We will always cherish your immense love

**Osman Group of Industries Family**

