



T20 World Cup: South Africa beat West Indies by 9 wickets

AHMEDABAD, FEB 26: A clinical South Africa outclassed West Indies by nine wickets in their Super 8 clash to stretch their unbeaten run and all but seal a place in the semifinals of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

A dominating show by the Proteas pacer was followed by authoritative batting. Yet again, South Africa executed their plans perfectly to further their cause, racking up their sixth win on the trot and halting West Indies' unbeaten run in the tournament.

With South Africa taking two vital points off the West Indies, hosts India now have their qualification hopes firmly in their own hands as a Proteas defeat would have dented their chances severely.

The loss hurt the Caribbean side's net run rate that came down to 1.791 from a healthy 5.350.

First it was South Africa pacers that rocked the West Indies' batting line-up before a lower-order fightback from Romario Shepherd (52 not out) and Jason Holder (49) lifted the two-time champions to 176 for eight.

Then skipper Aiden Markram (82 not out), Quinton De Kock (47) and Ryan Rickelton (45 not out) batted with authority as the Proteas overhauled the target in 16.1 overs.

By collecting 69 runs from the six powerplay overs, the South Africans had demoralised the Windies attack. Except for a few hit-and-miss shots, the two openers controlled the proceedings.

They struck both pacers and spinners with equal ease and raised a quick 95-run stand in 7.5 overs, hitting 16 boundaries including six shots over the rope.

De Kock hit four sixes and



as many fours in his 24-ball knock before offering a catch to Jason Holder at long-on. Markram raised his fifty with a single off Gudakesh Motie.

With Rickelton, Markram raised an unbeaten 82-run stand and finished the game in style with a straight four off pacer Jason Holder.

"We actually bowled pretty well, obviously the powerplay was a big thing for us, to get off nicely. The partnership with Quinny [set things up]," said Markram, who was adjudged Player of the Match.

"The second innings was good to bat on, it was slightly tacky early on and the guys bowled pretty well early on." Earlier, from the high of their dominant win over Zimbabwe, the West Indies were in for a rude shock as Kagiso Rabada (2/22) and Lungi Ngidi (3/30) got the ball to bounce from good length to trouble the batters, reducing the big-hitting West Indies line-up to 83 for seven.

Holder (49 off 31) and Romario Shepherd (52 not out off 37) then stitched together a record 89-run

stand for the eighth wicket to prevent a complete collapse of the innings.

Opting to bowl, South Africa opened with spinner Keshav Maharaj but Shai Hope (16 off 6) showed early intent, launching him for two sixes and a four. At the other end, Brandon King (21 off 11) threw his bat around against Marco Jansen, collecting quick boundaries as the Caribbean side raced to 29 in just over two overs.

Rabada, however, brought the Proteas back into the contest by having Hope caught behind as the skipper fished outside off stump. It could have been two in two but Shimron Hetmyer (2) was dropped at mid-on by Corbin Bosch, but the reprieve proved brief. However, Rabada sent back the left-hander three balls later when he miscued a pull.

The in-form Ngidi then struck a double blow in the fourth over. After being hit for two consecutive fours by King, he had the opener caught behind and two balls later rattled Roston Chase's (2) stumps. In the space of 10 deliveries, West Indies

had lost four wickets and were 44 for four after four overs.

Sherfane Rutherford (12) briefly counterattacked, smashing Bosch for a towering six over midwicket, but perished next ball, top-edging to Quinton de Kock.

Ngidi's third wicket -- Rovman Powell (9) -- left West Indies tottering at 71 for six, while Matthew Forde (11) became Bosch's second victim soon after a six.

Just when a collapse seemed inevitable, Holder and Romario came to the team's rescue.

Holder, who hammered 22 runs in a Jansen over towards the end, fell to a run-out off the penultimate ball, but Shepherd ensured West Indies finished strongly.

"Losing so many wickets in the powerplay cost us. We were 40-50 short. Must commend the guys in the bottom half for giving us a chance, never know things could have changed," Hope said. "The way we play our cricket, there will be a loss, aim was to get it out early. Next game will be quarter-final."

Kathua skier bags Silver in Khelo India Winter

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 26**

International Cross Country Skier from Nagri Parole in district Kathua, Aman Kumar won Silver medal in the 6th Khelo India Winter Games which concluded today at Gulmarg in Kashmir.

Serving with the Indian Army and trains at the Gulmarg peaks, Aman, a resident of village Daralan, contested in 10 kilometers Nordic Cross Country skiing event in the open category. In this event, 35 skiers from all over India contested for the top honours.

Important to mention here that in February last, 23-year old, Aman had represented India in the 9th Asian Winter Games held in Harbin, China. He contested in 4x7.5 kilometers Relay.



Ranji Trophy Final: J&K on the brink of history as pacers advance victory run

**HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, FEB 26**

After batting brilliance with a century and five fifties to put J&K in commanding position, the J&K pacers on the third day of the play today led the victory run with Aquib Nabi spearheading the attack taking three off the five wickets lost by the champion side of Karnataka for 220 in 69 overs play today at KSCA Stadium, Hubli.

With five wickets remaining, Karnataka still trail by 364 runs in the all important game of Ranji Trophy final. The highlight of the day was dismissal of danger man, India cricketer, K L Rahul, who was caught behind off Aquib Nabi at 13 on a review which ruled out the decision of the field umpire. The Rahul dismissal brought in jubilation in the J&K team.

However, opener, Mayank Agarwal turned out to be the savour for struggling Karnataka, who faced with utmost courage the J&K pace attack from trio of Aquib Nabi, Yudhvir Singh Charak and Sunil Kumar thereby built up the in-



nings with his unbeaten 130 runs made with the help of 17 boundaries spread all around the field.

The J&K pacers were so dominant that Karnataka openers, K L Rahul and Mayank Agarwal could not open the account in the first five overs of the play. Soon after the breakthrough by Aquib, young Sunil Kumar took another important wicket of Skipper Devdutt Padikkal, who was back to

the pavilion at 11 with team total of 56 in 16.1 overs.

It was followed by two wickets by Aquib on consecutive deliveries which caused the maximum damage to Karnataka reducing the side to 57 for four. Aquib, who took his 58th wicket of the season, virtually advanced the J&K victory run.

It was followed by a valuable 105 runs partnership between Shreyas and

Mayank. This time, Yudhvir brought in the breakthrough taking Shreyas (lbw) wicket.

Earlier, J&K resumed from overnight score of 527 for six and the whole side bowled out for 584 runs with Yudhvir adding quick 38 (off 28 balls) hitting two sixes and three boundaries.

India bowler, M Prasad was the most successful bowler with five wickets from Karnataka.

T20 WC: With one foot in semis, New Zealand spinners set to test Brook's England

COLOMBO, FEB 26: New Zealand spinners, led by their mercurial skipper Mitchell Santner, will pose some difficult questions to an English line-up spearheaded by the marauding Harry Brook when the two sides clash in a Super Eight game of the T20 World Cup here on Friday.

The match is of greater significance to the Black Caps as they bid to seal a semi-final spot while England are already through to the last four stage after logging two consecutive wins.

The huge 61-run win over Sri Lanka has elevated New Zealand's net run-rate to +3.050 and to ensure that they progress, the Kiwis have to just avoid a heavy defeat.

Pakistan, after their defeat to England, have a net run-rate of -0.461 and would not only need New Zealand to lose badly but also have to beat Sri Lanka by a heavy margin to eclipse the Black Caps' NRR.

New Zealand have shown that they are comfortable playing against as many six spinners in the match versus Sri Lanka. They actually beat the co-hosts in their own game.

While Brook and Will Jacks have both been comfortable against the likes of Saim Ayub, Mohammed Nawaz and Shadab Khan, New Zealanders Santner, Rachin Ravindra, Glenn



Phillips, Cole McConchie could prove to be more handy on a slightly tackier Premadasa track compared to Pallekele.

Brook is in good form, as demonstrated by his match-winning hundred against Pakistan, and the team would expect veteran Jos Buttler to up his game after having a quiet tournament so far. A good start by Buttler will put England in a strong position.

At the other end, the off-spin of Jacks and the left-arm spin of Liam Dawson could be equally challenging for the Kiwis.

At Premadasa, anything in the range of 165 to 175 can be considered a winning score if the spinners are in operation.

"You're always confident going into these fixtures, especially when we know what the surface is going to be like, but I think it'd be silly to underestimate England at any point," Black Caps all-rounder Rachin Ravindra said after his match-winning performance against Sri Lanka on Wednesday.

"They're obviously such a quality unit, and they've shown this in bowling, and how well they've been bowling. I mean, they've got world class batters throughout their order. So it's nothing necessarily like that," he added.

But he was well aware that Friday is a new day and it will be a new challenge for the New Zealand team.

"Obviously, we'll take con-

fidence from today and move on, but realize in two days' time it's a different challenge and hopefully we can be up for it," Rachin said.

Squads: England: Harry Brook (captain), Jos Buttler (wk), Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Phil Salt (wk), Ben Duckett, Sam Curran, Will Jacks, Jamie Overton, Rehan Ahmed, Liam Dawson, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, Josh Tongue, Like Wood

New Zealand: Mitchell Santner (captain), Finn Allen, Tim Seifert, Devon Conway, Mark Chapman, Cole McConchie, Daryl Mitchell, James Neesham, Rachin Ravindra, Jacob Duffy, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Ish Sodhi.

India finally unleashes 'SKYBall' in T20WC; a historic top-six batting record headlines list of records broken

CHENNAI, FEB 26: Team India unleashed the 'SKYBall' during the do-or-die T20 World Cup against Zimbabwe, smashing several records in the process and once again showing why they are one of the finest T20I units ever.

Team India registered a fine 72-run win over Zimbabwe to keep themselves in contention for the semifinal spot in the T20 World Cup at home. After a humiliating 76-run loss to South Africa at Ahmedabad, Team India learnt from its mistakes with regard to tactics and their performance and responded with a memorable confidence-booster performance that will get the fans smiling.

Each of India's six batters in action struck at a 150-plus strike rate, making it the first instance of six or more batters scoring 20-plus runs at 150+ SR in an innings during the T20 World Cup.

India also played out a total of just 26 dot balls, the lowest by them in a T20 World Cup, with South



Africa also playing out 26 dots against England at Wankhede Stadium in 2016. During that match, England chased down 230 set by Proteas, courtesy a masterclass 83 by Joe Root, which outshone half-centuries from Hashim Amla, Quinton de Kock and JP Duminy.

India has hit 63 sixes this World Cup so far - the most by them in an edition of the tournament, surpassing 61 in 2024; only West Indies' tally of 66 this edition ranks higher for a team. In their innings at Chennai, they hit 17 sixes, the most for them

in a T20 World Cup inning, surpassing 15 against Australia in the 2024 edition at Gros Islet, during which Rohit Sharma played an iconic knock of 92 in 41 balls, with seven fours and eight sixes, powering India to 205/5.

The partnership between Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya of 84 runs in just 31 balls had a run-rate of 16.25. There has been only one more partnership with a better run-rate of 18.00, a partnership of 87 runs in 29 balls between Sanath Jayasuriya and Mahela Jayawardene in the 2007 edition of the T20 WC. In this match,

Sri Lanka made the highest total in tournament history of 260 runs, a record which still stands to this day.

With this win, India has a win and a loss each in the Super Eight phase, same as West Indies, making the March 1 clash between them a virtual knockout match for the second semifinal spot, with Proteas having qualified for the semifinal with two wins in two matches so far. India was put to bat first by Zimbabwe and they put their highest T20 WC total on the board courtesy knocks from Abhishek Sharma (55 in 30 balls, with four boundaries and four sixes), Hardik Pandya (50* in 23 balls, with two fours and four sixes) and Tilak Varma (44* in 16 balls, with three fours and four sixes). In reply, Zimbabwe was valiant, posting 184/6 in 20 overs, courtesy a fine 97* in 59 balls, consisting of eight fours and six sixes by Brian Bennett and a 21-ball 31 by skipper Sikandar Raza. Arshdeep Singh (3/24) was the top wicket-taker for India. (ANI)