

# Rickel(ton), bowlers script Proteas win

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PTI, KARACHI: Opening batter **Ryan Rickelton** struck a flawless maiden century before a clinical display by the bowlers as South Africa began their Champions Trophy campaign with a comprehensive 107-run win over Afghanistan, here, on Friday.

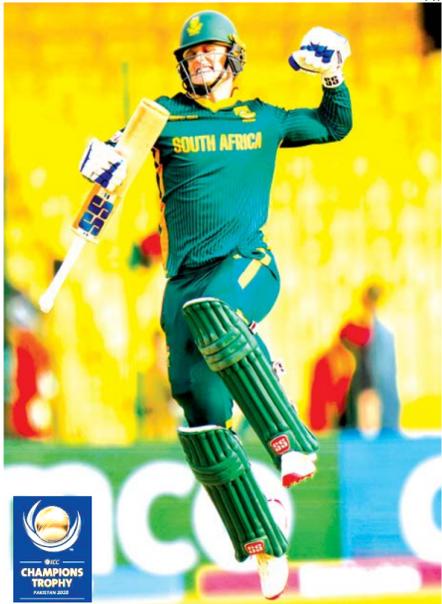
Rickelton smashed 103 off 106 balls with the help of seven fours and one six while captain **Temba Bavuma** (58 off 76 balls), **Rassie van der Dussen** (52 off 46 balls) and **Aiden Markram** (52 not out off 36 balls) scored half centuries as South Africa posted 315 for 6 after opting to bat.

Rickelton's ton was the tournament's fifth in three days' time and the third at the National Stadium here.

Chasing a big target of 316, Afghanistan couldn't repeat their series-winning performance of late last year against South Africa when they won the series 2-1 in Sharjah.

They were bowled out for 208 in 43.3 overs with South Africa pacers **Kagiso Rabada** (3/36), **Lungi Ngidi** (2/56), **Wiaan Mulder** (2/36) and **Marco Jansen** (1/32) sharing eight wickets among them as they never allowed Afghanistan to get going in the first 15 overs. The Afghans slipped to 50 for 4 and then to 89 for 5 in the 23rd over. They never recovered from there.

Rahmat Shah played a lone hand with a 92-ball 90 while **Rashid Khan** (18) and **Azmatullah Omarzai** (18) were the second highest scorers for Afghanistan who were never in the game after conceding a big total.



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## SCOREBOARD

**South Africa:** Ryan Rickelton run out (Gurbaz) 103, Tony de Zorzi c Nabi b Omarzai 11, \*Temba Bavuma c Atal b Nabi 58, Rassie van der Dussen c Shahidi b Ahmad 52, Aiden Markram not out 52, David Miller c Shah b Farooqi 14, Marco Jansen b Omarzai 0, Wiaan Mulder not out 12. **Extras:** 13. **Total:** 315-6. **Fall of wickets:** 28-1, 157-2, 201-3, 248-4, 298-5, 299-6. **Bowling:** Fazalhaq Farooqi 8-0-59-1, Azmatullah Omarzai 6-0-39-2, Mohammad Nabi 10-0-51-1, Rashid Khan 10-0-59-0, Gulbadin Naib 7-0-42-0, Noor Ahmad 9-0-65-1.

**Afghanistan:** Rahmanullah Gurbaz c Maharaj b Ngidi 10, Ibrahim Zadran b Rabada 17, Sediqullah Atal run out (Jansen) 16, Rahmat Shah c Rickelton b Rabada 90, \*Hashmatullah Shahidi c Bavuma b Mulder 0, Azmatullah Omarzai c Rickelton b Rabada 18, Mohammad Nabi c Rabada b Jansen 8, Gulbadin Naib c Bavuma b Ngidi 13, Rashid Khan c Markram b Maharaj 18, Noor Ahmad b Mulder 9, Fazalhaq Farooqi not out 0. **Extras:** 9. **Total:** 208-10. **Fall of wickets:** 16-1, 38-2, 50-3, 50-4, 89-5, 120-6, 142-7, 169-8, 208-9, 208-10. **Bowling:** Marco Jansen 8-1-32-1, Lungi Ngidi 8-0-56-2, Kagiso Rabada 8-3-1-36-3, Wiaan Mulder 9-1-36-2, Keshav Maharaj 10-0-46-1.

**Man-of-the-match:** Ryan Rickelton

# England face depleted Australia

PTI, LAHORE: An off-colour England and an injury-hit Australia will be eager to start their Champions Trophy campaign on a winning note in what seems like an evenly-matched Group B contest between the Ashes rivals, here, on Saturday.

Both teams have struggled in the ODI format recently, with world champions Australia losing to Sri Lanka (0-2) and Pakistan (1-2) in their last two rubbers.

England, who are now coached by **Brendon McCullum** in all formats, have not won an ODI series since their disastrous 2023 World Cup campaign.

The **Jos Buttler**-led side is coming off a 0-3 drubbing by India, where they appeared out of sorts and failed to match up to the hosts. Both teams will be eager to make their mark in this ICC showpiece event.

Australia had the upper hand against their Ashes rivals the last time they faced off in England, winning a five-match series 3-2 in September last year.

However, much has changed since then, with the world champions missing five key players from their initial squad. Their pace attack will be particularly affected, as they will be without their famed trio of **Pat Cummins**, **Josh Hazlewood**, and **Mitchell Starc**, all ruled out of the tournament.

They will also be without all-rounders **Mitchell Marsh** (back injury), **Cameron Green** (injury) and **Marcus Stoinis**, who has made a shock retirement from the format after featuring in the initial squad for the tournament.

In such a scenario, it remains to be seen whether Australia, under stand-in skipper **Steve Smith**, can replicate their past success in what is often referred to as a 'mini' World Cup. With **Marsh** absent, **Smith** is likely to come in at No. 3 and will carry the batting workload for a side. All eyes will be on explosive white-ball opener **Travis Head**.

**Australia:** Steve Smith (capt), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Matthew Short, Adam Zampa. Travelling reserve: Cooper Connolly.

**England:** Phil Salt, Ben Duckett, Jamie Smith (wk), Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jos Buttler (capt), Liam Livingstone, Brydon Carse, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, Mark Wood.

**Match starts: 2.30 pm IST**

## PREVIEW

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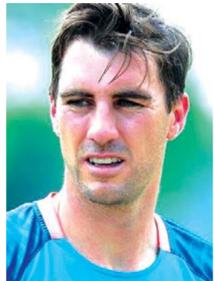
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# Cummins eyes IPL return ahead of WTC Final, Caribbean tour

PTI, SYDNEY: Australian Test captain **Pat Cummins** is eyeing the upcoming Indian Premier League as his comeback platform from an ankle injury and has expressed confidence in regaining full fitness ahead of the World Test Championship final against South Africa starting June 11 at the Lord's.

The 31-year-old, who led Australia to their first Border-Gavaskar Trophy win in more than a decade, battled through pain during the final Test against India in Sydney.

He was subsequently ruled out of the two-Test series in Sri Lanka and the ongoing Champions Trophy in Pakistan. The injury layoff coincided with the birth of his second child -- daughter **Edi**. "It's been an amazing month or so just having full



focus on family time and not having to do too much training or have my eye on a tour. Just being totally present has been really special," Cummins told 'cricket.com.au'.

He has resumed running and hopes to return to action with his franchise **Sunrisers Hyderabad**, the last year's IPL runners-up, when the tournament begins on March 22.

SRH kick off their campaign at home against **Rajasthan Royals** on March 23. "That's the aim at this stage -- start bowling over the next week or so, building up, and should be right for IPL," he said.

"It's probably just making sure you're still bowling quite a few balls (during the IPL). The good thing about a T20 tournament is the intensity is really high, so that obviously helps quite a bit."

Cummins believes the IPL will provide an ideal build-up to the WTC final against South Africa, followed by a three-Test series in the Caribbean extending into July. "The ankle is starting to come good... It's a funny one -- it's not like a hamstring where you need six weeks (to recover).

## sportspopup

### India beat Ireland 3-1 in men's FIH Pro League hockey

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Indian men's hockey team came back from a goal down to beat Ireland 3-1 in FIH Pro League here on Friday. The Indians were stunned by the Irish in the eighth minute when **Jeremy Duncan** scored from a field effort. But the Indians bounced back strongly, scoring a field goal through **Mandeep Singh** in the 22nd minute. **Jarmapnpreet Singh** (45th) and **Sukhjeet Singh** (58th) then scored a goal each from penalty corners to hand India the convincing win. India will next take on Ireland in the return leg match here on Saturday. India are currently placed fifth in the standings with nine points from five games.

### India women loses to Germany 0-4 in FIH Pro League

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Indian women's hockey team continued to disappoint as it lost 0-4 to Germany in FIH Pro League, here, on Friday. The Germans controlled the match from the start to finish, scoring their first three goals -- all field efforts -- through **Amelie Wortmann** (3rd minute) and **Sophia Schwabe** (18th, 47th) before **Johanne Hachenberg** converted a penalty corner in the 59th minute. The Germans secured as many as 10 penalty corners in the match as against India's just two. India will next play Germany again here on Saturday. India are currently placed seventh in the nine-team standings on six points from four games, while Germany are a rung above on seven points from six games.

### Indian boxing in slumber: BFI skips international tournaments

**NEW DELHI:** Indian boxing finds itself in a state of inexplicable slumber post the Paris Olympics with the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) skipping major international tournaments, delaying national camps, and repeatedly postponing the women's national championship. Senior Indian boxers haven't competed in any international tournament since the Olympics. The prestigious **Strandja Memorial Tournament**, set to begin in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Saturday, is the latest high-profile event where Indian boxers will be absent. India had also skipped the Asian Championship last November, owing to BFI's alignment with the breakaway World Boxing and the ongoing conflict with the IOC-suspended International Boxing Association (IBA).

### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE KNOCKOUT PHASE DRAW

Paris Saint-Germain vs Liverpool, Club Brugge vs Aston Villa, Real Madrid vs Atletico Madrid, PSV Eindhoven vs Arsenal, Feyenoord vs Inter Milan, Bayern Munich vs Bayer Leverkusen, Borussia Dortmund vs Lille, Benfica vs Barcelona. First legs to be played March 4/5, second legs on March 11/12.

Quarter-finals: Paris Saint-Germain/Liverpool vs Club Brugge/Aston Villa, PSV Eindhoven/Arsenal vs Real Madrid/Atletico Madrid, Benfica/Barcelona vs Borussia Dortmund/Lille, Bayern Munich/Bayer Leverkusen vs Feyenoord/Inter Milan. First legs to be played April 8/9, second legs on April 15/16. Semi-finals: PSV/Arsenal/Real Madrid/Atletico vs PSG/Liverpool/Club Brugge/Aston Villa, Benfica/Barcelona/Dortmund/Lille vs Bayern Munich/Leverkusen/Feyenoord/Inter. First legs to be played April 29/30, second legs May 6/7. Final to be played in Munich, Germany on May 31.

### WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

Delhi Capitals vs UP Warriorz at M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, at 7.30 pm

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**VENUE: SAI POINT CARS PVT LTD, H.NO:17, WARD V, MARGAO PONDA HIGHWAY, SONFATOR LOUOLIM CAMURLIM SALCETE GOA.**

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