# Australia make it to semi-finals after washout against Afghanistan

The match was halted by a downpour when Australia were 109 for 1 in 12.5 overs, chasing a target of 274

PTI, LAHORE: Australia entered the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy after their crucial Group B clash against Afghanistan was called off due to rain, here, on Friday. The match was halted by a downpour when Australia were 109 for 1 in 12.5 overs, chasing a target of 274.

Despite the ground staffs' efforts to clear the field, several pools of water remained on the pitch and the umpires ultimately declared the match abandoned after an inspection.

The interruption came just an hour before the cut-off time for completing the match. With the game called off, Australia advanced to the semi-finals with four points. Their last match against South Africa in Rawalpindi was also abandoned.

At the time of interruption, Travis Head was in superb form, having scored 59 runs off 40 balls, including nine fours and one six.

His knock came after a reprieve Rashid when dropped Khan him on six, diving at mid-on off Fazalhaq Farooqi. Head capitalised on this opportunity

TROPHY
PAKISTAN 2025 and dominated the Afghanistan bowlers, particularly taking 28 runs off Farooqi's 17 balls.

Skipper Steve Smith was at the other end, playing a more measured knock with 19 not out from 22 balls, including two boundaries.



Afghanistan's Rahmanullah Gurbaz (centre) reacts as Australia's Spencer Johnson (third right) celebrates with teammates after his dismissal during the ICC Champions Trophy match, in Lahore, Pakistan, on Friday

With no result from this match, Afghanistan's chances are slim and would depend on the result of

Saturday's match between South Africa and England. If South Africa win, they will top the group with five points.

England emerges victorious, South Africa and Afghanistan will both finish on

three points, leading to a net run-rate (NRR) calculation. Afghanistan's current NRR of -0.99 would almost certainly eliminate them unless South Africa loses by a margin of over 200 runs.

CHAMPIONS

#### **SCOREBOARD**

Afghanistan: Rahmanullah Gurbaz b Johnson O. Ibrahim Zadran c Labuschagne b Zampa 22, Sedigullah Atal c Smith b Johnson 85, Rahmat Shah c Inglis b Maxwell 12, \*Hashmatullah Shahidi c Labuschagne b Zampa 20, Azmatullah Omarzai c Carey b Dwarshuis 67, Mohammad Nabi run out (Johnson) 1, Gulbadin Naib c Inglis b Ellis 4, Rashid Khan c Maxwell b Dwarshuis 19, Noor Ahmad c Inglis b Dwarshuis 6, Fazalhag Faroogi not out 0. Extras: 37. Total: 273-10. Fall of wickets: 3-1, 70-2, 91-3, 159-4, 176-5, 182-6, 199-7, 235-8, 272-9. 273-10. **Bowling:** Spencer Johnson 10-0-49-2, Ben Dwarshuis 9-0-47-3, Nathan Ellis 10-0-60-1, Glenn Maxwell 6-1-28-1, Adam Zampa 8-0-48-2, Matthew Short 7-0-21-0. Australia: Matthew Short c Gurbaz b Omarzai 20, Travis Head not out 59, \*Steven Smith not out 19. Extras: 11. Total: 109-1. Fall of wickets: 44-1. Bowling: Azmatullah Omarzai 5-0-43-1, Fazalhaq Farooqi 3-0-32-0, Mohammad Nabi 3-0-13-0, Noor Ahmad 1.5-0-13-0.

Earlier in the day, Afghanistan posted a competitive total of 273, largely due to Sediqullah Atal's gritty 85

and Azmatullah Omarzai's explosive 67.

Atal anchored the innings after a shaky start, but it was

#### **CAPTAIN TALK**

That's what we were after in the start, to finish in the top two and qualify for the semis. I thought the guys did a good job, made good changes and took wickets in the middle. Did well to restrict them to 270 and we were in a good position. There were a few (extras) today, and Spencer

(Johnson) was getting it to swing too much. Josh Inglis (wicketkeeper) was happy when that spell ended. The guys though did a good job, beat the bat on a few occasions. It was a good performance, shame the game was washed out

- Steve Smith, Australia's stand-in skipper

Unfortunate that the game went without a result. Was a good game. I think we should have scored 300-plus but they bowled well in the middle overs. It (273) was a good score but we didn't start well with the ball and gave them too much width and many hitting options. We'll learn from

this. Sedigullah Atal played really well, first two games he didn't play the way we expect but his comeback was good. Omarzai is top class, that's why he got ODI Player of the year, he always performs for us. He plays a good role

- Hashmatullah Shahidi, Afghanistan skipper

Omarzai's late fireworks which propelled Afghanistan past 270 after they were 235 for 8 following Rashid Khan's dismissal.

Omarzai's 63-ball knock under pressure had five sixes and one four. He launched two massive sixes off Nathan Ellis in the penultimate over, including a breathtaking 102m hit over midwicket, sending the ball over Glenn Maxwell at the boundary. He then struck a tow-

ering six wide of long-off as Afghanistan produced a late flourish for a total that would give their spin-heavy bowling lineup a big boost.

over off Ben Dwarshuis who also dismissed Noor Ahmed in the final delivery of the day to finish with figures of 3/47 from nine overs.

tralia also leaked 37 runs in extras that included 17

#### a position to play". The middle game surfaced with Dai Van being on the defensive despite his extra pawn typical of the structure and the Indian crossed the complexities at ease. The decisive moment came on the 14th move But he got out in the final itself when Praggnanandhaa got an undeniable advantage and after that the game took a few twists but the result was never in doubt. Having played two draws in

happened in the game, the Indian won a rook for a minor World champions Auspiece and when it comes to technicalities, no one can doubt the acumen of Praggnanandhaa.

## SA look to seal semis spot

PTI, KARACHI: As the battle for the semifinals intensifies in Group B, top-ranked South Africa will aim to assert their dominance and secure a spot in the final four when they face a struggling England in a high-stakes Champions Trophy clash here on Saturday.

A favourable result should not be too difficult all their bases covered and more importantly, have their key players in-form compared to a misfiring England, who are overly dependent on Joe Root.

While on-paper, South Africa are a formidable unit and have been the events, their overall form over the last one year or so doesn't inspire confidence as South Africa have lost eight of their last 12 ODIs and won only four since January 2024.

South Africa had also failed to make the tri-seires final in Pakistan also involv-

#### **PREVIEW**

for South Africa who have ing New Zealand, prior to the Champions Trophy, and Bavuma's side will be required to find consistency against a hurting England who will be determined to sign off on a high.

Barring Root, England do not inspire much confidence as they are amid a losing team to beat in recent ICC streak which began with a

0-3 hammering by India before this tournament.

Root's 120 was the only bright spot for England against Afghanistan as the venerable batter was the only one to convert his start and show the promise to do the job for his side, which ideally should have been completed but the 2019 World Cup winners lacked the gumption.

England, who had begun the tournament with a defeat to Australia, are likely to go through changes in terms of leadership but before all that unfolds, Jos Buttler would be keen to rally his troops around for one final laugh.

Match starts at 2.30 pm IST

Buttler bows out as England skipper

after Champions Trophy exit

### We're excited to play in different conditions: Michael

PTI, DUBAI: New Zealand off-spinner Michael Bracewell on Friday brushed aside any talks about India getting an unfair advantage in the ongoing Champions Trophy by playing all their

games in Dubai, simply saying that his team was TATA - -"excited to try and play in different conditions". Rohit Sharma's

team is playing all its matches in Dubai, and even the final will be held here if India goes the distance. New Zealand will be playing their first match of the tournament here

-- against India on Sunday -- after their last two games were held in Pakistan.

Some cricketers, including South African top-order batter Rassie van der Dusostox sen and former

Australia skipper Cummins, have said India are in an advantageous position as RED they have played all their games at one venue while other teams have

had to travel to different venues in Pakistan.

India had refused to travel to Pakistan for the tournament citing security reasons. "Look, it is what it is. It's been

decided, and that's the way it is, and there's no point dwelling on that," said Bracewell, when asked if India have unfair advantage in Dubai.

"It's part of what makes it exciting. I personally think it's coming to a different ground and trying to figure out those different conditions. Yeah, not much more to say on that other than we're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions," added the 34-year-old off-spinner.

The New Zealander opined that the pitches here would aid spin and it would be a good idea to train hard before the game against India.

#### Pak senior players may skip NZ tour

March 16-April 5.

Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, Naseem Shah were considering making themselves unavailable for the tour.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is looking for a new role for interim head coach Aaqib Javed at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore.

According to a source, Javed had made several requests to the Chairman Mohsin Naqvi last year for

"All decisions would be taken after the Champions Trophy ends on February 9."

PTI, LAHORE: Some of the senior Pakistan players could withdraw from the next month's New Zealand tour in the aftermath of the team's embarrassing exit from the Champions Trophy, sources said on Friday.

According to sources aware of developments in the Board, a few players are contemplating if they should travel to New Zealand. Pakistan are scheduled to play five T20Is and three ODIs during the white-ball tour from

Babar Azam, Shaheen

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sportspopup

WPL: All-round Delhi Capitals thrash Mumbai Indians by 9 wickets to claim top spot BENGALURU: Delhi Capitals dished out an all-round effort to

comfortably beat former champions Mumbai Indians by nine wickets and jump to the top of the table in the Women's Premier League, here, on Friday. Asked to bowl, DC first restricted inaugural edition's winner MI to 123 for nine, riding on Jess Jonassen's fine effort with the ball. Jonassen

returned with impressive figures of 3 for 25 from her four overs to break the backbone of DC with the crucial wickets

of in-form Nat Sciver-Brunt, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur

and G Kamalini. Chasing the modest target, skipper Meg

Lanning (60 not out off 49) and Shafali Verma (43 off 28) shared 85 runs off just 59 balls to hand DC a great start.

Shafali was going great guns but was dismissed in the pro-

cess, trying to hit right-arm pacer Amanjot Kaur over deep

midwicket. She failed to get the elevation, resulting in a

straightforward catch for Amelia Kerr near the boundary.

Earlier opting to bat, DC had a decent start before losing

(22) in quick succession. In-form Sciver-Brunt continued

(18) shared 38 runs for the third wicket before the latter

MULHEIM AN DER RUHR (Germany): Indian mixed dou-

bles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto entered the

semifinals of the German Open Super 300 tournament

straight sets, here, on Friday. The eighth seeded Indian

duo won 21-14 21-17 to set up a last-four clash against

elle Widjaja. Rakshitha Sree Santosh Ramraj lost to Mia

Indonesia's Rehan Naufal Kusharjanto and Gloria Emanu-

Blichfeldt of Denmark 12-21 12-21 to bow out of women's

singles quarterfinals. Tharun Mannepalli also crashed out

of the tournament after losing 16-21 21-17 21-8 to Toma

PRAGUE: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa cruised

to a smooth victory against Nguyen Thai Dai Van of Czech

Friday. It was a swift victory for Praggnanandhaa who has

been tipped the favourite to win this tournament. It was a

Nimzo Indian defense and in Praggnanandhaa words "just

the first two rounds, it was an essential victory for Prag-

gnanandhaa and he achieved the final result in style. As it

Neil Harvey, now becomes the oldest living Test player at

the age of 96. Both previous oldest Test cricketers were

South Africans -- Norman Gordon, who died aged 103

in 2016, and John Watkins, who was 98 when he died in

2021. Draper, who was born on 24 December 1926, made

a century on first-class debut for Eastern Province against

Orange Free State on his 19th birthday. After making 86 for

the province against the touring Australians in 1949/50 he

was selected for the last two Tests against the tourists but

**ISTANBUL:** Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho was given a

four-match ban and fined by the Turkish Football Federation

following his comments about Turkish referees after a match

at Galatasaray. The Turkish federation on Thursday fined

the 62-year-old Portuguese coach 1.6 million Turkish lira (\$44,000) after he criticized the match officials in a media conference following a 0-0 Super Lig draw on Monday.

Republic in the third round of the Prague Masters on

Junior Popov in the men's singles quarterfinals.

Prague Masters: Praggnanandhaa

registers first win, beats Dai Van

Oldest Test cricketer Ron Draper

dies in South Africa aged 98 GQEBERHA (South Africa): Ron Draper, who was the oldest living

Test cricketer, has died in Gqeberha

at the age of 98 years and 63 days,

his family said Friday. Draper, a top-

order batsman and occasional wick-

etkeeper, played in two Test matches for South Africa against Australia

scored only 25 runs in three innings.

Mourinho banned for four matches

in 1950. One of his opponents,

after beating Gao Jia Xuan and Wu Meng Ying of China in

was dismissed LBW by Jonassen in the 11th over.

Dhruv Kapila, Tanisha Crasto

enter German Open semi-finals

her fine form and together with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur

both their openers Yastika Bhatia (11) and Hayley Matthews

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"It's quite clear. This tournament was important, results-wise, for my captaincy, and obviously. two losses and being out of the tournament, with a bit of a hangover from past tournaments, I think it just probably reached the end of the road for me and my captaincy, which

Says there is no retirement in the pipeline for him as he wants to 'get back to really enjoying' his cricket

Afghanistan

and Sri Lanka.

In the T20 World Cup, they lost to the eventual winners India in the semi-final in the Caribbean last year. "It's the right decision for me, for the team. Hopefully, somebody else can come in and

I'm going to stand down as England captain. It's the right decision for me and the team. It's quite clear. This tournament was important, results-wise, for my captaincy, and obviously, two losses and being out of the tournament, with a bit of a hangover from past tournaments, I think it just probably reached the end of the road for me and my captaincy, which is a shame - Jos Buttler, England captain

work closely alongside Baz (coach Brendon McCullum) to take the team back to where it needs to be," he added. Buttler has captained England in 44 ODIs, securing 18 wins and 25 losses, and recording one no result. His T20 record is slightly better, with 26 wins, 22 losses, and three no results

from 51 matches. With Brendon coming in recently, I was really excited to work closely alongside him and hoped for a very quick turnaround to take the team forward. But it's not quite worked out that way. So, yeah, it just feels like it's the right time for me and also for the team to have a change," he said.

Buttler, however, said there is no retirement in the pipeline for him as he wants to "get back to really enjoying" his cricket. "Maybe in time, it will be... I

think sort of overriding emo-

tions are still there, sort of sad-

ness and and disappointment,

but I'm sure in time that will pass." "I can get back to really enjoy my cricket, and also I'll be able to reflect on what an a job at the academy. immense honour it is to captain your country and all the special things that come with it."