

# South Africa storm into semis

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**PTI, KARACHI:** South Africa secured their place in the Champions Trophy semi-finals after hammering a struggling England by seven wickets in the last Group B match, here, on Saturday.

South Africa first dismissed England for just 179 before comfortably chasing down the target with 20.5 overs to spare.

England, already eliminated from the semi-final race, needed a victory by at least 207 runs to give Afghanistan a chance of qualifying for the last-four stage based on net run-rate. However, South Africa quickly quashed any hopes, bundling out their opponents for the lowest total of the tournament this edition in just 38.2 overs.

Marco Jansen (3/39) shone with the new ball, while Wiaan Mulder (3/25) and Keshav Maharaj (2/35) applied pressure throughout the middle overs, ensuring that South Africa's knockout berth was secured even before the run chase began.

South Africa completed the chase with ease, reaching 181/3 in 29.1 overs, thanks to impressive fifties from Heinrich Klaasen (64) and Rassie van der Dussen (72 not out). Klassen and van der Dussen added 127

**SCOREBOARD**  
**England:** Philip Salt c der Dussen b Jansen 8, Ben Duckett c and b Jansen 24, Jamie Smith c Markram b Jansen 0, Joe Root b Mulder 37, Harry Brook c Jansen b Maharaj 19, \*Jos Buttler c Maharaj b Ngidi 21, Liam Livingstone st Klaasen b Maharaj 9, Jamie Overton c Ngidi b Rabada 11, Jofra Archer c Jansen b Mulder 25, Adil Rashid c Klaasen b Mulder 2, Saqib Mahmood not out 5. **Extras:** 18. **Total:** 179-10. **Fall of wickets:** 9-1, 20-2, 37-3, 99-4, 103-5, 115-6, 129-7, 171-8, 173-9, 179-10. **Bowling:** Marco Jansen 7-0-39-3, Lungi Ngidi 7-0-33-1, Kagiso Rabada 7-1-42-1, Wiaan Mulder 7-2-0-25-3, Keshav Maharaj 10-1-35-2.

**South Africa:** Ryan Rickelton b Archer 27, Tristan Stubbs b Archer 0, Rassie van der Dussen not out 72, Heinrich Klaasen c Mahmood b Rashid 64, David Miller not out 7. **Extras:** 11. **Total:** 181-3. **Fall of wickets:** 11-1, 47-2, 174-3. **Bowling:** Jofra Archer 9-0-55-2, Saqib Mahmood 5-0-31-0, Jamie Overton 5-0-34-0, Adil Rashid 7-0-37-1, Liam Livingstone 3.1-0-24-0.

**Man of the match:** Marco Jansen

runs for the third wicket.

With this victory, South Africa joined Australia in the semi-finals from Group B. The Proteas topped the group with five points from three matches ahead of Australia (4 points).

The semi-final line-up will be confirmed after the final Group A match between India and New Zealand on Sunday.

Chasing 180 for a win, South Africa lost opener Tristan Stubbs (0) early, with Jofra Archer cleaning him up. Ryan Rickel-

ton (27) played a quick-fire knock, smashing five boundaries to keep the scoreboard ticking. Once Rickelton was dismissed by Archer, van der Dussen and Klaasen settled in and built a vital partnership, taking South Africa closer to the target.

Klaasen, returning to action after missing earlier matches due to a soft tissue injury to his left elbow, played an aggressive knock, hitting 11 boundaries in his 56-ball innings. Van der Dussen hit six fours and



South Africa's Rassie van der Dussen (left) and David Miller walk back to the pavilion after their win against England at the end of the ICC Champions Trophy One-Day International match at National Stadium in Karachi on Saturday

three maximums during his unfinished innings.

Six runs from the target, Klaasen was caught by Saqib Mahmood off Adil Rashid (1/37) for a consolation wicket. David Miller then clobbered a six to knock off the winning runs and seal the victory.

In his final game as England's ODI captain, Jos Buttler won the toss and chose to bat, but the decision backfired as Jansen wreaked havoc early, reducing England to 37 for 3 by the seventh over.

Opener Phil Salt (8) topped a rising Jansen delivery, while Jamie Smith (0) failed to handle a short ball and followed Salt back to the pavilion. Ben Duckett (24) then perished to a caught-and-bowled effort by Jansen, as England's top-order collapsed.

Harry Brook (19) and Joe Root (37) attempted a recovery with a 62-run stand, but just when the partnership seemed to gain momentum, South Africa struck twice in quick succession. Brook fell to Maharaj as

Jansen took a superb catch in the deep while Root's off-stump was sent cart-wheeling by Mulder.

England's woes continued as Liam Livingstone (9) and Jamie Overton (11) quickly fell, leaving the side in disarray at 129-7 in the 26th over.

Buttler (21) and Jofra Archer (25) added some respectability to the total with a partnership of 42, but Archer was dismissed by Mulder, and the England skipper was then removed by Lungi Ngidi with a slow ball.

## CAPTAIN TALK

**“A really disappointing performance. We were so far short of the mark there on Saturday. It was a decent surface - pretty slow but a bit two-paced. We're not going on and making those big, telling contributions which has been a story of this side for some time now with the bat. There's no doubt that the talent is there. I'm sure (coach) Brendon and the guys at the top will formulate some plans, and it's down to individuals as well to say they want to be part of something and get this team back to where it should be - Jos Buttler, a dejected England captain**



**“It (the pitch) was slow initially, the boys adapted really well to the conditions. We held our lengths and bowled in good channels. Marco Jansen has been huge for us, he takes wickets upfront, he finds different ways of doing so and he pairs well with KG (Kagiso Rabada) as well. Heinrich Klaasen has been in ridiculous sort of form for the last many months. He had a little niggly but he never really left; he has been great for us - Aiden Markram, South Africa stand-in captain**



## India look to sharpen spin play, giving a run to fringe players against Kiwis

Shami likely to be rested against New Zealand; Arshdeep may replace him

**PTI, DUBAI:** A seemingly invincible India will be eager to sharpen their game against spin and give a run to second-line players ahead of the semi-final when they take on New Zealand in their last group match of the Champions Trophy, here, on Sunday.

A win in their last league match will help India top the Group A. But that position of pride is of little value because they are set to face either Australia or most likely South Africa in the last four, and both of them have handy spin units at their disposal.

### PREVIEW

Indian batters have not been really comfortable against spin despite two victories thus far in the event, and New Zealand, who are also qualified for the semifinals, could offer them a tough challenge.

The star Indian batters were focusing more on playing out Bangladesh spinners Mehidy Hasan Miraz (0/37) and Rishad Hossain (2/38) without taking risks, and they followed the same approach against Pakistan leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed (1/28). But they will come up against more wily customers in Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell on Sunday, and it could be their harshest test against spin yet in this event.

Both the Kiwi spinners are in fine fettle here, and could be even more effective on the worn out surface at Dubai.

Indian batters have been clever enough to milk spinners for singles and twos, while reserving the big shots against pacers when the ball came much more



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### TEAMS

**India:** Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakravarty.

**New Zealand:** Mitchell Santner (c), Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Will O'Rourke, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Nathan Smith, Kane Williamson, Will Young, Jacob Duffy.

**Match starts at 2.30 pm IST**

quickly and predictably at them. But they will face 20 overs from Santner and Bracewell while a few more of Glenn Phillips' part-time off-spin.

India do not have very fond memories of facing Santner and Phillips in a Test series at home late last year, which they lost 0-3, and now they have Bracewell too to tackle. The off-spinner has been quite parsimonious so far, conceding just 3.2 runs per over across two matches.

So, the effectiveness of Shubman Gill, India's stand-out batter in ODIs of late, batting icon Virat Kohli, who made a morale-boosting 100 against Pakistan, Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul against them will have a telling impact on the outcome of the game.

And even beyond this match, considering the slowing-down nature of the decks at the DICS.

But there is a pleasing side to spinners' dominance here.

The selection of five spinners Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarty, Washington Sundar was not viewed with any conviction ahead of the marquee event because of the overwhelming success pacers had at this venue in the past.

But what India encountered at Dubai are tired pitches after the venue hosted the ILT20 recently, vindicating the selection call to a large extent.

The three tweekers India employed so far Jadeja, Axar and Kuldeep have bowled as per the conditions, making it tough for their opponents.

They have not produced any magical spells but were able to keep the opposition batters in check in the middle overs, as none of them have given in excess of five runs per over in this event.

But they might just face a different scenario against New Zealand as batters such as Kane Williamson, Will Young, Tom Latham, Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra etc are excellent against spin.

If the Indian spinners can contain them, then it will do a world of good to their already high confidence.

While India would want to sustain the momentum, they will think of giving

skipper Rohit Sharma and Mohammed Shami some more time to hit the peak ahead of the semi-finals.

Rohit had experienced some discomfort during the match against Pakistan and stayed away from the field for some 20 minutes before returning. He batted too without any obvious struggle.

But with no tournament riders hanging on this match, the management will be tempted to give Rohit a break. If that is the case, Rishabh Pant may get his first match here.

There will also be discussion on resting Mohammed Shami because he had struggled with his calf during the match against Pakistan, and the think tank might just give him an extended recovery break ahead of the semis on March 4.

Hence, Arshdeep Singh could come in for Shami, and the in-form Chakravarty might replace Kuldeep as he is also coming off an injury lay-off.

## Short likely to miss semis

**PTI, LAHORE:** Australian opener Matthew Short will likely miss the Champions Trophy semi-final against either India or New Zealand after the in-form batter suffered a quad injury in the washed out match against Afghanistan here.

Short had scored a 15-ball 20 on Friday but had looked in visible pain before he was dismissed by Azmatullah Omarzai as Australia advanced to the semi-finals with four points.

The 29-year-old white-ball player had scored 63 as Steve Smith's Australia had chased down England's mammoth 351 in their opening match of the Champions Trophy.

Smith said he didn't think the star opener would be fit to play in next week's semi-final.



**“I think he'll be struggling. I think we saw tonight he wasn't moving very well. I think it's probably going to be too quick between games for him to recover,”** Smith was quoted as saying on Prime Video by Australian Associated Press (AAP).

Australia could include in big-hitter Jake Fraser-McGurk as a like-for-like replacement in the playing XI, though he suffered two failures in the recent one-day series in Sri Lanka.

All-rounder Aaron Hardie too could be an option, while the team also has Cooper Connolly as a travelling reserve in case Short is completely ruled out from the tournament.

**“We've got a few guys there to come in to fill a job,”** added Smith.

## sportspopup

### WPL: Shafali's blitz powers Delhi Capitals' nine-wicket hammering of RCB

**BENGALURU:** Shafali Verma smacked 80 not out as Delhi Capitals handed a fourth consecutive defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru with a commanding nine-wicket win in their Women's Premier League contest, here, on Saturday. After Ellyse Perry's fourth fifty (60 not out) of the season took the defending champions to a competitive 147/5, DC batters Shafali (80 not out) and Jess Jonassen (61 not out) brushed aside the challenge without much ado. Chasing 148 to win, DC prevailed with nine wickets in hand and 4.5 overs to spare, consolidating their position at the top of the WPL points table with 10 points from seven games, including five wins and two losses. RCB, on the other hand, slipped to fourth position with only two wins so far in six matches. The defeat for the Smriti Mandhana-led side was fourth in a row for RCB on their home ground here at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. Shafali continued to dazzle with her stroke play to make 80 not out off only 43 balls with four sixes and eight fours for her first half-century of the season after falling in 40s thrice in the tournament. She produced a cracking hit for a six over cover off Georgia Wareham in the 13th over to complete her fifty off 30 balls. Earlier, Perry's 47-ball 60 not out was crucial for RCB as it guided them to 147 for five.

### Gukesh attains career-best No 3 ranking; Praggnanandhaa back in top 10

**NEW DELHI:** India's reigning world champion D Gukesh climbed to a career-high number three ranking, while compatriot R Praggnanandhaa broke back into the top 10 in the latest FIDE classical ratings released on Saturday. The 18-year-old Gukesh, who has been in sublime form ever since he beat China's Ding Liren to clinch the world title in Singapore in December, has gained 10 points and now has a 2787 rating. Gukesh, who lost the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee to Praggnanandhaa on tiebreak, is behind second-placed Hikaru Nakamura (2802) while and Norway's Magnus Carlsen (2833) continues to be the top-ranked chess player in the world. The Indian Grandmaster has overtaken compatriot Arjun Erigiasi and USA's Fabiano Caruana. Erigiasi, who was the highest-ranked Indian for a long time, has moved down to fifth with a rating of 2777. Praggnanandhaa, who is currently competing in the Prague Masters, is back in the top 10 for the first time since July last year thanks to his win at the Tata Steel Masters. He has moved up to the eighth spot after gaining 17 points. He has a 2758 rating. Koneru Humpy remains the sole Indian in the top 10 in the women's list at number six with a rating of 2528, while R Vaishali (2484) and Harika Dronavalli (2483) are 14th and 16th respectively. The FIDE rating are different from the live Elo ratings.



Pakistan's former cricketer Shahid Afridi displays the trophy before start of the ICC Champions Trophy match between England and South Africa, in Karachi, Pakistan Saturday

### PCB announces full refund for two rain-cancelled CT matches

**LAHORE:** The Pakistan Cricket Board on Saturday announced full ticket refunds for the two Champions Trophy matches in Rawalpindi that were washed out by rain. The affected matches -- Australia vs South Africa on February 25 and Bangladesh vs Pakistan on February 27 -- were abandoned without a ball bowled. As per the PCB ticket refund policy for Champions Trophy, ticket holders are eligible for a full refund if the match was abandoned before the toss. All enclosure tickets will be refunded, the PCB said in a statement. Ticket holders of hospitality tickets (boxes and PCB gallery) will not be eligible for a refund, it said. Eligible ticket holders can claim their refund at select TCS outlets between March 10 and March 14. To process the refund, ticket holders must present an original, undamaged ticket as proof of purchase and must personally visit the TCS outlet, as refunds cannot be claimed on behalf of someone else.

### Dravid hopes AI will be able to predict injuries to cricketers in future

**MUMBAI:** Former India captain and coach Rahul Dravid on Saturday hoped Artificial Intelligence would be able to predict injuries to players in future but also warned against over-use and dependency on technology in cricket. Dravid said predicting injuries to players is something that has not been done so far despite the advancement of technology. **“On the sporting field, one of the things that you are really hopeful about what AI might be able to do, is (to predict) injuries,”** Dravid said at a panel discussion during AMFI Mutual Fund Summit here on Saturday. **“You just look at the level of injuries that we have and no one really has a perfect answer as to why people pick up stress fractures and there is no one size fits all; I am just using a stress fracture for the back as an example for fast bowlers.”** **“You have seen over the last years so much of data, so much of sports medicine, science and stuff going into it but no one being able to really predict that, that's sad, that's (about) people's careers, lives. So if AI can get us there and we will be able to predict injuries,”** he added.

### FIFA President Infantino defends Saudi World Cup, Trump relationship

**LONDON:** FIFA President Gianni Infantino stood by his governing body's decision to award the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia, while also defending his relationship with Donald Trump. The Gulf kingdom was controversially handed the right to host the World Cup at a FIFA Congress in December despite concerns about its human rights record, the risks to migrant labourers and criminalisation of same-sex relationships. The process followed by FIFA was also criticised by the Norwegian football federation but, speaking in Belfast on Friday, Infantino said: **“There was a Congress decision, uniting the entire world.”** **“I think it was a very positive step for football, bringing in, in eight years, football from all over the world, hosting everyone.”** **“We have to be bringing everyone to the table. We will go to North America in 2026, now we go to South America, go to Africa, we'll go to Europe in 2030. We'll go back to Asia for 2034.”** **“The FIFA Congress approved that, it was done after an in-depth report on all this.”**