

Shreyas, Varun shine as India set up semis clash with Australia on Tuesday

Iyer's 50, Chakravarthy's fifer help India beat New Zealand by 44 runs; New Zealand take on South Africa in second semi-final the following day in Lahore

PTI, DUBAI: Shreyas Iyer's pressure-defying fifty and Varun Chakravarthy's spin masterclass helped India script a 44-run win over New Zealand, here, on Sunday to top Group A, setting up the semi-final against Australia in the Champions Trophy.

Iyer made a composed 79 off 98 balls under pressure but New Zealand, led by pacer Mark Henry (5/42), managed to stifle India to an under-par 249 for nine.

Chasing 250 was not a tall order for New Zealand's capable batting unit but they struggled against India's spin quartet led by Chakravarthy (5/42) to be all out for 205 in 45.3 overs. Kane Williamson's gritty 81 went in vain.

India will face Australia, who finished second in Group B, in the first semi-final, here, on Tuesday, while the Kiwis play South Africa in the other semi-final in Lahore on Wednesday.

As they have been doing throughout this tournament, the Indian spinners placed efficiency ahead of wizardry, and bowled in a manner suited to the conditions. Ravindra Jadeja found massive turn off the pitch but the New Zealand batters were done in by the effort from Chakravarthy who relentlessly targeted the stumps.

Spinners took over once Hardik Pandya got rid of Rachin Ravindra early. Williamson, who was dropped on 17 by stumper KL Rahul off Axar Patel, played a refined



Shreyas Iyer plays a shot during the ICC Champions Trophy match against New Zealand, in Dubai, UAE, on Sunday

innings full of placements and elegance, but there hardly was any support for him from the other end.

There was a 44-run alliance between him and Daryl Mitchell for third wicket, but just as it was blooming Kuldeep Yadav trapped the latter in front. They lost Tom Latham (14), Glenn Phillips (12) and Michael Bracewell (2) in quick succession, however, Williamson remained unruffled by the rumblings.

He used soft hands for deft placement of balls through the gaps, but two lofted cover drives off Jadeja for fours adorned his innings like bright diamonds.

But Axar deceived an on-charge Williamson with a

SCOREBOARD

India: *Rohit Sharma c Young b Jamieson 15, Shubman Gill lbw b Henry 2, Virat Kohli c Phillips b Henry 11, Shreyas Iyer c Young b O'Rourke 79, Axar Patel c Williamson b Ravindra 42, KL Rahul c Latham b Santner 23, Hardik Pandya c Ravindra b Henry 45, Ravindra Jadeja c Williamson b Henry 16, Mohammed Shami c Phillips b Henry 5, Kuldeep Yadav not out 1. **Extras:** 10. **Total:** 249-9. **Fall of wickets:** 15-1, 22-2, 30-3, 128-4, 172-5, 182-6, 223-7, 246-8, 249-9. **Bowling:** Matt Henry 8-0-42-5, Kyle Jamieson 8-0-31-1, William O'Rourke 9-0-47-1, *Mitchell Santner 10-1-41-1, Michael Bracewell 9-0-56-0, Rachin Ravindra 6-0-31-1. **New Zealand:** Will Young b Chakravarthy 22, Rachin Ravindra c Patel b Pandya 6, Kane Williamson c Rahul b Patel 81, Daryl Mitchell lbw b Yadav 17, Tom Latham lbw b Jadeja 14, Glenn Phillips lbw b Chakravarthy 12, Michael Bracewell lbw b Chakravarthy 2, *Mitchell Santner b Chakravarthy 28, Matt Henry c Kohli b Chakravarthy 2, Kyle Jamieson not out 9, William O'Rourke b Yadav 1. **Extras:** 11. **Total:** 205-10. **Fall of wickets:** 17-1, 49-2, 93-3, 133-4, 151-5, 159-6, 169-7, 195-8, 196-9, 205-10. **Bowling:** Mohammed Shami 4-0-15-0, Hardik Pandya 4-0-22-1, Axar Patel 10-0-32-1, Varun Chakravarthy 10-0-42-5, Kuldeep Yadav 9.3-0-56-2, Ravindra Jadeja 8-0-36-1.

Man-of-the-match: Varun Chakravarthy

slightly fuller and slanted delivery, and Rahul just had to remove the balls from the stumps. The dismissal effectively sealed the match in favour of India.

Earlier, Iyer shared a well-paced 98 runs alliance with Axar (42 off 61 balls) for the fourth wicket and Hardik (45 off 45) played a quick-fire innings towards the end to help India survive a top-order meltdown.

It was a slightly different situation for Iyer as in the last few matches, the top three batters had given him the cushion of runs. It had enabled him to bat with some degree of freedom in those matches. But here he had to build the innings from the scratch and he did that job with perfection while making fifty off 75 balls with

CAPTAIN TALK

“Varun Chakravarthy has got something different about him, so wanted to try and see what he had to offer. We got to think a little about what to do for the next game, it's a good headache. If he gets it right, it's very difficult to read him. Semi-final will be a good game, Australia has a rich history of playing well in ICC tournaments, but is about us and what we want to do on that particular day. It will be a great contest, looking forward to that. Hopefully we can stitch one towards us

– Rohit Sharma, India skipper

“The wicket turned a bit more when they were batting and India's four quality spinners exploited it to the hilt

– Mitchell Santner, New Zealand captain

a single off Ravindra. The natural flair was on show on occasions as Iyer once lofted pacer Will O'Rourke for a six over long on and Axar gave him excellent company on a rather slow pitch.

Kohli's fighting spirit, energy & passion make him great: Viv

PTI, MUMBAI: West Indies legend Sir Vivian Richards on Sunday said Virat Kohli's fighting spirit, energy, and passion put him in the category of cricket's "great" and "legendary" players.

Richards, a long-time admirer of Kohli's indomitable spirit and passion for the game, also hailed the India batter for silencing critics through performances on the field. "Well, I think he answers all of us, really. Before the World Cup for the ODIs, where he wasn't doing that well and then he came back in magnificent form, so, that is true testament to the character that we are speaking about," said Richards, a governing council member for the International Master League, during a virtual interaction.

"This is why I put him in the category of being great and legendary... Not all the time that you get players who can come back when they're down. His fighting spirit, energy and passion to do well make him stand out."

Richards said if he was still playing, he would love to have Kohli's energy on the field. "His energy reflects his pas-



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sion. He goes to show you that his involvement in the game all the time. There's a passion for that. There's not a moment that goes on that field that Virat Kohli doesn't miss. He's just magnificent in that way," he added.

Asked about batters he admires, the former West Indies captain said Kohli reminds him of himself. "A lot of batsmen... Before you had

people like Sachin Tendulkar, who has retired," he said.

"But presently, Virat Kohli. He reminds me of myself. He who dares, win. He believes in himself, 120 per cent confident at all times and whenever it needs to be aggressive, and confront opponents, you need guys like that."

"I appreciate seeing guys who, especially when you're a captain,

you defend your team and defend the people who you are representing so Virat Kohli, the modern day guy, I love," he added.

Richards said given his fitness and hunger, Kohli can go on to play ODIs for a long time.

"I'll tell you something. Just the way he is and the way how fit he is and the way he still believes, very passionate about the game. You never know. He could still play when he's 50," he said.

"You never know. But it's just magnificent to see. Sometimes we see guys go on and maybe they come to an age and sometimes you look and you say, 'wow, he doesn't look as good as in the past'."

"But he just scored 100 just recently against Pakistan in Dubai so that says that, and this has just happened. This suggests that he's still very much at the very best, in the best of form," he added.

Richards, however, declined to compare Kohli with Tendulkar. "I don't believe in that. We should be quite thankful that the periods that everyone would have passed through, that the folks who saw these guys then benefited from

the fact that they saw some very good player," he said.

"I will never make comparisons. They all did their time, their work for the time that they represented their countries. And we should appreciate that time because it's not just us alone who would be giving the answer, but all the folks, the fans who would be watching would pay tribute to that."

Richards said India should be patient with the form of their skipper Rohit Sharma, who has blown hot and cold with his form.

"You've got to give him all the opportunity. He would have failed in the past. I just believe that let's wait and see when we get to the semi-finals and hopefully when you get to the semi-finals, you're hoping to get to the finals," he said.

"Let's see, because sometimes some guys leave it a little late. I still believe that Rohit is still a magnificent player."

"Players go through bad times. It depends now on how well he comes through this and if he comes through this, certainly he's going to be all for the better," he added.

Vidarbha clinch third Ranji Trophy title, emerge champions after taking first-innings lead against Kerala

PTI, NAGPUR: A magnificent run in domestic cricket this season culminated in a third Ranji Trophy title for Vidarbha, who emerged champions on the basis of their first-innings lead in the summit clash, which ended in a draw at their home ground on Sunday.

RANJI TROPHY

The fate of the contest was all but sealed on the third evening when Vidarbha edged ahead with a slender lead of 37 runs in the first innings, having dismissed a doughty Kerala for 342 after putting on 379 runs batting first.

Kerala, the first-time finalists, fought hard but Vidarbha were rewarded for their incredible hard work and discipline throughout a season in which they not only clinched the Ranji Trophy but also ended as the run-

ner-up in the 50-overs Vijay Hazare Trophy.

It is for the third time that Vidarbha have won the Ranji Trophy title, having done so earlier with their two consecutive wins in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons. Vidarbha's win now also makes them one of the strongest outfits in the Indian domestic cricket, for they had also finished as the runner-up in the Ranji Trophy last season.

The team under the captaincy of Akshay Wadkar and head coach Usman Ghani produced dominant performances throughout the Ranji Trophy season which was, for the first time in its 90-year history, split into two halves. Vidarbha emerged as the best team across all the four groups in the league stage with six wins in seven matches giving them 40 points.

On Sunday, Vidarbha did what they had planned to



Vidarbha players celebrate after winning the Ranji Trophy 2025 over Kerala, in Nagpur, Maharashtra, on Sunday

bat, bat and bat and reached 375 for nine with Karun Nair making 135 (295 balls, 10x4s, 2x6s), Danish Malewar scoring 73 and Darshan Nalkande chipping in with a 51 not out.

Vidarbha resumed the final day's play with the

contest completely in their control, having an overnight lead of 286 runs.

Even though Nair could only add three more runs to his overnight tally, Vidarbha batted for long enough close to the tea break taking their overall lead to 412

runs, far beyond the reach of Sachin Baby's side.

The triumph was achieved on the back of all-round performances, which had two of Vidarbha's youngest players taking charge of their team's showings on the field.

VCA announces cash reward

PTI, NAGPUR: The Vidarbha Cricket Association (VCA) on Sunday announced a cash reward of Rs 3 crore for its Ranji Trophy winning side, apart from separate cash incentives for the support staff and some of its players after they won the title for the third time.

The VCA also felicitated Akshay Wadhare on his retirement.

Vidarbha forced a draw against Kerala in the summit clash and clinched the title on the basis of their first innings lead of 37 runs at the VCA Stadium in Jamtha.

Vidarbha had earlier won titles in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons.

The 22-year-old left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey, who broke the record of most wickets in a Ranji Trophy season with 69 dismissals, was awarded with Rs 25 lakh.

sportspopup

Coe says India has 'strong case' in 2036 Olympics bid, but competition tough

NEW DELHI: International Olympic Committee (IOC) president's post contender Sebastian Coe feels India's bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games is a "strong case" but competition will be tough with several other countries throwing their hats in the ring. India has already submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to host the 2036 Olympics and Paralympic Games to the IOC's Future Host Commission, taking the first concrete step in an ambitious plan after months of informal dialogue with the global sport's apex body. "Well, you won't be surprised given my background to say that I'm obviously very happy that India is committed to global sport and particularly the Olympic movement. I'm very happy to hear that. And look, it will be very competitive. It won't be the only bidder, but the case that (India) can make is a very strong case," Coe told PTI in an exclusive interview. Poland, Indonesia, South Africa, Qatar, Hungary, Turkey, Mexico and Egypt are among other countries which have expressed a desire to host the 2036 Olympics.

Man City survive Plymouth scare, Palace's Mateta hospitalised in Millwall win

MANCHESTER: Manchester City survived a scare to beat giant killers Plymouth 3-1 and progress to the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday, after Crystal Palace striker Jean Philippe-Mateta was hospitalised in the Eagles' 3-1 win over Millwall. Plymouth had shocked Premier League leaders Liverpool in the previous round and were on course for another stunning upset at the Etihad when Maysym Talovierov headed them in front on 38 minutes. Argyle boss Miron Muslic said it would be the "biggest honour" of his life to go head-to-head with Pep Guardiola. With FA Cup glory City's only realistic hope of silverware this season, Guardiola surprisingly rotated his side with Erling Haaland among those left on the bench. However, it was one of City's youngsters who took his chance to shine as Nico O'Reilly turned the tie around. Muslic will be furious at the manner of both the 19-year-old's goals as he twice headed in from set-pieces under little pressure. English FA Cup results: Bournemouth 1 (Evanilson 30) Wolves 1 (Cunha 60) aet, Bournemouth won 5-4 on penalties. Crystal Palace 3 (Tanganga 33-og, Munoz 40, Nketiah 81) Millwall 1 (Harding 45+3), Manchester City 3 (O'Reilly 45+1, 76, De Bruyne 90) Plymouth 1 (Taloverov 38), Preston 3 (Brady 31, Osmajic 44, Keane 73) Burnley 0. Friday: Aston Villa 2 (Asensio 68, 80) Cardiff 0.

Atletico go top after Real Madrid stumble at Betis

BARCELONA: La Liga champions Real Madrid suffered a 2-1 defeat at Real Betis on Saturday, which coach Carlo Ancelotti said was a "big blow" to their title defence, while Atletico Madrid took advantage to move top of the table. Diego Simeone's side scraped a nervy 1-0 win against Athletic Bilbao, fourth, to lead Barcelona and Real Madrid by two points. For Betis, Isco scored the winner from the penalty spot against his former side Madrid, third, with Barca in action on Sunday against Real Sociedad and able to reclaim top spot with a win. Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti picked a strong line up, with no breathing room in the title race, despite the impending Champions League clash against rivals Atletico. Atletico Madrid held their nerve at the Metropolitan stadium to take a provisional lead in the title race. Spanish La Liga results: Girona 2 (Tsygankov 21, Herrera 68) Celta Vigo 2 (Losada 36, Alonso 51-pen), Rayo Vallecano 1 (Ratiu 55) Sevilla 1 (Lukebakio 81), Real Betis 2 (Cardoso 34, Isco 54-pen) Real Madrid 1 (Diaz 10), Atletico Madrid 1 (Alvarez 66) Athletic Bilbao 0.



American tennis player Brandon Holt, winner of the Bengaluru Open 2025 and Japan's Shintaro Mochizuki, runner-up, pose with their trophies on Sunday

We managed workload of pitches well ahead of CT: Emirates Board COO

DUBAI: The slow pitches at the Dubai International Stadium has given the Champions Trophy matches a unidimensional look, but Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) COO Subhan Ahmed on Sunday said that the "workload" of the decks was carefully managed during the preceding ILT20 tournament. The gradually tiring wickets have made the matches at the DICS here an invariable middle-over battle, where teams struggled to score off freely when spinners were in operation. "The moment we learned that we are going to be the host (of the CT), we started preparing (the pitches) even during the ILT20 tournament for these matches. We complied with all the ICC requirements," said Ahmed during an interaction with a select group of media. "We gave the required rest to the pitches (during the ILT20) that we were going to use for the Champions Trophy. We managed the pitch's workload as soon as we got to know that there was going to be an ICC event. So far the pictures here have played out really well," he added.

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