

Virat powers India into Champions Trophy final

Kohli's master-class secures India 4-wicket win over Australia

PTI, DUBAI: Virat Kohli did not finish the chase for once but his measured 84-run knock steered India into their fifth Champions Trophy final with a clinical four-wicket win over an under-strength and profligate Australia in the first last-four clash, here, on Tuesday.

The Indian triumph ensures that the final of the eight-team competition will now be held here instead of Lahore, the original host of the marquee clash, as Rohit Sharma's men will not travel there owing to security concerns.

Player of the match Kohli (84, 98 balls, 5x4) was the fulcrum of Indian batting as they scaled down 265 in 48.1 overs after Steve Smith (73) and Alex Carey (61) led the Aussies to 264.

Now, India will await the winner of the second semi-final between South Africa and New Zealand at Lahore on Wednesday.

Kohli had wonderful support from Shreyas Iyer (45) with whom he realised 91 runs for the third wicket, and steadied the ship after the early departures of skipper Rohit Sharma (28) and Shubman Gill (9).

Australia were weakened by the absence of some of their premier stars, but India had not beaten them in the knockouts of an ICC tournament since the quarterfinal of the 2011 World Cup.

However, Kohli was determined to correct that anomaly. The pitch used for the semifinal was fresh but much smoother than the ones on which the previous



Australia's captain Steve Smith greets Virat Kohli as Hardik Pandya watches at the end of the ICC Champions Trophy One-Day International semi-final match against India at the Dubai International Stadium in Dubai on Tuesday

matches were played.

Kohli does not need a second invitation to exploit such conditions and a near-perfect control helped him keep pace with the asking rate.

Kohli's struggle point in an ODI innings is his inability to force the pace against spinners, but here the champion batter negated leg-spinner Adam Zampa, who had his number on a few occasions in the past, quite effectively.

The 36-year-old used the pull and drives, two of his most productive shots, to optimum effect. He placed him in the wide arc between sweeper cover and mid-wicket for easy, risk-free runs.

He lost the company of both Iyer, who played some delectable shots, and Axar

Patel (27) in rather quick succession but Kohli went past his 50 in 53 balls.

Glenn Maxwell dropped him on 51 off left-arm spinner Cooper Connolly, a per-

ceived early signal of an inevitable Kohli hundred.

But it did not arrive as an ugly hit off Zampa ended in the hands of Ben Dwarshuis near long-on when India were 40 runs away from victory.

KL Rahul (42 not out) and Hardik Pandya (28) played some smart and aggressive cricket as India cantered home without much ado.

However, the Indian bowlers too deserve some credit as they kept the Aussies batting on a tight leash despite well-paced fifties from Smith and Carey.

Australian skipper Smith (73, 96b, 4x4, 1x6) won a good toss, but the batters could not exploit fine batting conditions, throwing their wickets away through silly shots.

SCOREBOARD

Australia: Travis Head c Gill b Chakravarthy 39, Cooper Connolly c Rahul b Shami 0, *Steven Smith b Shami 73, Marnus Labuschagne lbw b Jadeja 29, Josh Inglis c Kohli b Jadeja 11, Alex Carey run out (Iyer) 61, Glenn Maxwell b Patel 7, Ben Dwarshuis c Iyer b Chakravarthy 19, Adam Zampa b Pandya 7, Nathan Ellis c Kohli b Shami 10, Tanveer Sangha not out 1. **Extras:** 7. **Total:** 264-10. **Fall of wickets:** 4-1 54-2, 110-3, 144-4, 198-5, 205-6, 239-7, 249-8, 262-9, 264-10. **Bowling:** Mohammed Shami 10-0-48-3, Hardik Pandya 5.3-0-40-1, Kuldeep Yadav 8-0-44-0, Varun Chakravarthy 10-0-49-2, Axar Patel 8-1-43-1, Ravindra Jadeja 8-1-40-2.

India: *Rohit Sharma lbw b Connolly 28, Shubman Gill b Dwarshuis 8, Virat Kohli c Dwarshuis b Zampa 84, Shreyas Iyer b Zampa 45, Axar Patel b Ellis 27, KL Rahul not out 42, Hardik Pandya c Maxwell b Ellis 28, Ravindra Jadeja not out 2. **Extras:** 3. **Total:** 267-6. **Fall of wickets:** 30-1, 51, 43-2, 134-3, 178-4, 225-5, 259-6. **Bowling:** Ben Dwarshuis 7-0-39-1, Nathan Ellis 10-0-49-2, Cooper Connolly 8-0-37-1, Adam Zampa 10-0-60-2, Tanveer Sangha 6-0-41-0, Glenn Maxwell 6.1-0-35-0, Travis Head 1-0-6-0.

Man-of-the-match: Virat Kohli

Strike rotation was the most pleasing part: Kohli

PTI, DUBAI: India's batting mainstay Virat Kohli on Tuesday likened his match-winning effort in the Champions Trophy semifinal against Australia to the unbeaten hundred against Pakistan and singled out strike rotation as the most important aspect to succeed in the prevailing conditions here.

Just like the game against Pakistan, quick singles and doubles formed the basis of his innings comprising only five boundaries.

"It (his innings) was pretty similar to the other day against Pakistan. It is about understanding the conditions and rotating the strike because partnerships on this pitch are important," said Kohli after receiving the player of the match award.

Kohli's fluent effort included 56 singles and four twos, indicating his exemplary fitness level.

"It all depends on the conditions and then I play my innings. My timing, my composure at the crease, I wasn't rushed. The singles that I took was the most pleasing part for me.

"This game is all about pressure. If you go deep into the game, the opposition usually give in. It is important to control your impulses. Even if the run rate is six an over, I am not bothered," said the Indian superstar.

Arguably the greatest ODI player of all time, Kohli was asked if he is in the best phase of his 50-over career.

"I don't know. That is up to you guys to break down. I have never focused on those things. When you don't think of those milestones, they happen. If I get to the three-figure mark, great, but the win is important. For me, those things don't matter anymore," added the former India captain.

New Zealand, SA look to shed underachievers tag

PTI, LAHORE: Loaded with world-class talent but haunted by the underachievers' tag at ICC events, New Zealand and South Africa will square off in an evenly-matched second semi-final of the Champions Trophy, here, on Wednesday.

South Africa and New Zealand have won the Champions Trophy once each in 1998 and 2000 respectively but the tournament was called the ICC Knockout Trophy at that time and didn't carry the significance which it has now.

While South Africa would look to shed their big tournament "chokers" tag, the Kiwis will also be desperate to lay their hands on a title after having finished second best twice in the ODI World Cup (2015 and 2019) and once in the T20 World Cup (2021).

Led by Mitchell Santner, New Zealand finished behind India in Group A, while South Africa topped Group B ahead of Australia.

But there is little to separate the two sides. Both are evenly-matched in most departments but the Proteas look to be slightly ahead on the bowling front because of variety.

The two teams have enough firepower in their batting line-ups and have quality fielders but the contest is expected to be

decided by the spinners. Although the pitches here are a bit on the slower side but they haven't spun as much as the surfaces in Dubai and it will be interesting to see how the spinners of both the teams fare.

The 44-run loss to India in their last group match notwithstanding, New Zealand will take confidence from their win over South Africa in the tri-series here last month. Recently, New Zealand successfully chased 305 against South Africa here and then went on to win the tri-series, beating Pakistan in the final, and senior batter Tom Latham feels those experiences will hold them in good stead.

"Yeah, the (South Africa) team that we played potentially will be slightly different, they had a lot of guys that weren't in that side. They were still playing in their SAT20 back in

South Africa so will be slightly different. "But I guess from our point of view, we'll lean back on those experiences of Lahore in playing against South Africa," Latham had said.

"We'll do everything that we do leading up to a game. It's obviously going to be a reasonably quick turnaround, but it is what it is. And, we'll be looking forward to the challenge of a semis."

TEAMS

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.

South Africa: Temba Bavuma (c), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen, Corbin Bosch.

Match starts at 2.30 pm IST





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