



ABU DHABI: New Zealand's Devon Conway plays a shot as England's wicketkeeper Jos Buttler watches during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup semifinal at the Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium yesterday. — AFP

## New Zealand reach T20 World Cup final

### Mitchell, Neesham star as Kiwis beat England by five wickets

ABU DHABI: Daryl Mitchell smashed an unbeaten 72 to lead New Zealand into their first ever Twenty20 World Cup final with a thrilling five-wicket victory over England yesterday. Chasing 166 for victory, New Zealand were in trouble at 13-2 and 107-4 when Jimmy Neesham turned the semifinal on its head with an 11-ball 27 to help achieve the target with one over to spare in Abu Dhabi. With 20 needed off the final 12 balls, Mitchell smashed Chris Woakes for two sixes and a four before his 47-ball blitz triggered wild celebrations in the New Zealand dug out.

"We've played each other on a number of occasions, so we knew it would be a great game of cricket," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson whose team lost the 50-over World Cup to England on a Super Over in 2019. "I am really chuffed with the heart that was shown throughout that performance." New Zealand will face either Australia or Pakistan in

Sunday's final. "It was outstanding from Mitchell at the top. His character stood out, an incredible knock," added Williamson. "T20 cricket is a game of small margins. Jimmy came out and hit the ball hard, and changed the momentum of the game. Ultimately the deciding factor."

Mitchell, the son of former All Blacks rugby coach John, said he was delighted to reach the final. "It was a bit of a whirlwind, but nice to get the job done and move onto the big dance," he said. They suffered early blows after Woakes struck on the third ball to send Martin Guptill trudging back to the pavilion for four. The fast bowler then got skipper Kane Williamson's prized scalp for five after the batsman attempted a scoop shot to be caught at fine-leg.

Mitchell and Devon Conway put on 82 runs for the third wicket but Liam Livingstone struck with his leg spin to have Conway stumped for 46. New

man Neesham took the bowling head on as he smashed Chris Jordan for two sixes - one of them nearly caught at the boundary by Bairstow but his knee touched the rope - and a four to get 23 runs from the over.

He finally fell to Adil Rashid's googly with skipper Eoin Morgan holding on to a catch at extra cover. "Full credit to Kane and his team, they outplayed us today," said Morgan. Earlier Moeen Ali smashed an unbeaten 51 to steer England to 166-four after being invited to bat as Kiwi skipper Williamson won an all-important toss. England lost their openers including Jos Buttler for 29, lbw off Ish Sodhi.

#### In-form Moeen

But Moeen hit back with his 37-ball knock and put on a key partnership of 63 with Dawid Malan, who hit 41, for the third wicket. Pace bowlers Tim

Southee and Trent Boult kept a tight leash in the first three overs before Buttler smashed two successive boundaries. In-form Buttler tried to rebuild but an attempt to reverse sweep leg-spinner Sodhi got him trapped lbw for 29 off 24 deliveries.

The opener, who moved past Pakistan's Babar Azam as the leading batsman in the tournament with 269 runs, reviewed the call but replays suggested the ball would have hit his off stump. The left-handed Malan, who was dropped on 10 by wicketkeeper Conway off Neesham, hit the first six of the innings off Southee in the 16th over but departed next ball caught behind.

But Moeen launched an attack as he hit Sodhi for a six and then smashed Milne for two hits over the fence. Livingstone hit 17 off 10 balls before departing and Moeen completed his first fifty of the tournament with a boundary off Neesham. — AFP

## Australia look to halt Pakistan juggernaut in World Cup semifinal

DUBAI: Australia are looking to their top-order batting led by the explosive David Warner as well as Adam Zampa's bag of leg-spin tricks to get past a red-hot Pakistan in today's second semifinal of the Twenty20 World Cup. The Aussies made their first semifinal of the tournament since 2012 with four wins and a better run-rate than South Africa. But they are up against an unbeaten Pakistan who stormed into the final four with five wins in the Super 12 stage including their first ever in the tournament against rivals India.

Australia have won five 50-over World Cup crowns, including three in a row, but still await a T20 world title in six attempts. The left-handed Warner has led the charge with 89 not out in Australia's win over West Indies and a quickfire 65 against Sri Lanka, an innings that silenced his critics. He now has 187 runs for the tournament.

"I was never worried one bit about Dave's form. He's one of the all-time great batsmen of our era," said captain Aaron Finch of his opening partner who came into the World Cup on the back of being dropped from his IPL team. All-rounder Glenn Maxwell said the Australian batsmen will not hold back and

go for the runs to unsettle the Pakistan attack led by left-arm quick Shaheen Shah Afridi.

"I've seen teams go the other way and try and hold wickets back to make sure they get to go at the back end," said Maxwell. "But for us it's probably that playing with freedom at the start and really trying to make the most of the powerplay and put the opposition on the back foot."

Zampa is the tournament's joint second-highest wicket-taker with 11 victims but the 29-year-old has gone about his business under the radar. "I don't think that anyone has underrated him," insisted Finch of Zampa who claimed a tournament-best return of 5-19 against Bangladesh in Dubai. "He's someone who loves the competitiveness, loves the fight."

#### 'Renewed focus'

Inside the Pakistan camp is Matthew Hayden, the former Australia opener who is the team's batting coach. Hayden sees the partnership between skipper Babar Azam, the leading run maker at the World Cup ahead of the semifinals with 264, and Mohammad Rizwan as key. "They are very

independent players with their own styles but that blend and mix make for the perfect combination. They are unique," explained Hayden.

Babar and Rizwan hit the ground running at the World Cup with an unbroken 152-run stand as Pakistan trounced India in Dubai by 10 wickets - their first win over their archrivals in 13 World Cup matches. "We will try to continue with the kind of consistency that we have shown in the tournament so far and hope to play good cricket in the semifinals," said Babar who has four half-centuries in five innings.

On facing Australia, Babar said: "You can't take any team lightly in T20 cricket. You have to play good cricket on that day." Pakistan have got a finisher in Asif Ali who hit four sixes off Afghanistan bowler Karim Janat to get his team the required 25 runs in the penultimate over of their Super 12 clash.

Veteran batsmen Shoaib Malik, who hit an 18-ball 54 in his side's last pool win over Scotland, and Mohammad Hafeez add experience to the batting order. And with Afridi in threatening form with the new ball, the 2009 champions seem to have their bases covered. But former Pakistan speedster Shoaib Akhtar warned the side of complacency in their knockout contest. "Forget the Super 12 now, just use the momentum but go into semis with a renewed focus," Akhtar wrote on Twitter. — AFP

## Man arrested over threats to Indian cricketer's toddler

MUMBAI: Indian police arrested a software engineer yesterday for allegedly threatening to rape the infant daughter of cricketer Virat Kohli following India's defeat to archrival Pakistan in the T20 World Cup. Indian cricketers have faced a barrage of online hate and threats after crashing out of the Twenty20 international tournament.

Police said investigators from the Mumbai Police Cyber Cell arrested Akubathini Ramnagesh after his tweet targeting the cricketer's 10-month-old daughter went viral. The 23-year-old suspect is facing charges of sexual harassment, criminal intimidation, defamation and publishing obscene material. "He has been detained and is being brought to Mumbai," a police officer told AFP.

Kohli is married to Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma and the couple welcomed their first child in January. Ramnagesh is alleged to have issued the threats from his Twitter account following India's first-ever World Cup defeat to Pakistan in the opening game of the tournament on Oct 24.

The humiliating, 10-wicket loss prompted trolling of the Indian team, including the side's only Muslim player, Mohammed Shami, who was subjected to a storm of social media abuse. Several former cricketers and Shami's teammates, including Kohli, denounced the hateful outpouring against the bowler. — AFP