

## Sports

# Finch, Ellis help world champions Australia thump Pakistan in T20I

LAHORE: Skipper Aaron Finch returned to form with a half century and pace bowler Nathan Ellis took four wickets as world champions Australia beat Pakistan by three wickets in the only Twenty20 international in Lahore on Tuesday. Finch scored a 45-ball 55 to anchor Australia's chased a 163-run target after Ellis took 4-28 kept Pakistan down to 162-8 in their allotted 20 overs.

Pakistan failed to reach a big score despite skipper Babar Azam's brisk 46-ball 66 with six fours and two sixes. Finch, who had not scored a half century in the last 13 T20Is, ensured he not only removed doubts over his batting but also helped Australia overhaul the target in 19.1 overs for the loss of seven wickets.

When Finch holed out Australia needed just four runs and despite Sean Abbott fell for nought in the same Shaheen Shah Afridi over, Ben McDermott hit the winning boundary in his 19-ball 22 not out to achieve Australia's fourth successive win in T20Is against Pakistan. Finch, who hit six boundaries, put on a brisk 40 for the opening stand with Travis Head (14-ball 26 with three fours and a six) and another 44 for the second with Josh Inglis who made 15-ball 24 with two fours and a six.

Pakistan did pull back with leg-spinner Usman Qadir (2-33) and pacer Mohammad Wasim (2-30) brought the home team back in the game. But

Marcus Stoinis (nine-ball 23 with five boundaries) and McDermott ensured they supplement their skipper to achieve the chase. "I thought the way our bowlers attacked that game were fantastic," said Finch. "Nathan Ellis had a tough start but showed real character and we took wickets upfront."

Pakistan skipper Azam rued loss of wickets after a good start. "We had a very good start but then lost couple of wickets that took away the momentum," said Azam. "We lost momentum and in the end were 20-30 runs short." Pakistan made a brisk start. Azam, who hit back to back hundreds in Pakistan's 2-1 win in the one-day international series, put on 67 for the opening wicket with Mohammad Rizwan (23) after Australia sent the home team in to bat at Gaddafi Stadium.

But Green dismissed Rizwan with the fourth ball of his first over and Fakhar Zaman off a full toss next ball to pull things for Australia. Azam drove Green for a four to bring up his 26th T20I fifty off just 33 balls. He smashed spinner Adam Zampa for a six but next ball holed out at deep cover. Khushdil Shah chipped in with 21-ball 24 and Usman Qadir six-ball 18 not out as Pakistan managed 50 runs in the last five overs, losing five wickets. Marnus Labuschagne, Ben Dwarshuis and Green were handed Twenty20 international debuts by Australia. — AFP



LAHORE: Australia's players pose with the trophy after winning a Twenty20 international cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium on April 5, 2022. —AFP

## Alshaya & Alsagar hails Mobil, Red Bull victory at 2022 Saudi Arabian GP

KUWAIT: Mobil 1, along with Red Bull Racing, is one of the most successful teams in recent Formula One history, winning 63 Formula One Grand Prix races, four Drivers' and four Constructors' World Championships during the last 16 years. The vast knowledge and expertise needed to succeed in Grand Prix Racing fit perfectly with the Mobil 1 team's approach: Clear thinking, extensive research, and a combined effort of technology and creativity.

Commenting on the upgraded fuel, Red Bull Racing Honda Team Principal, Christian Horner, said: "Winning in Formula One comes as a result of an incredibly intricate process whereby competitive advantage is assembled from a huge variety of elements, all the way from aerodynamics through to horsepower and creating the optimum fuel for the power unit."

Max Verstappen's 2022 charge roared into life in Jeddah as the defending World Champion passed Ferrari's Charles Leclerc in a nail-biting finish to win the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. Sergio Perez was forced to settle for fourth place behind Ferrari's



Carlos Sainz after the pole-sitting Mexican was disadvantaged when the safety car was released almost immediately after he had made his first pit stop from the race lead.

The cat and mouse game began, and at the end of the lap, Max attacked again on the next lap, once more closing under DRS ahead of turn 27, but this time he locked up, and Leclerc held the lead as they began lap 44. With five laps to go, Max attempted to make a move into turn one. Leclerc positioned his car well, though the World Champion had to back out of the attempt. However, he closed again rapidly and put his vehicle almost alongside the Ferrari at the end of the lap. That gave him the perfect opportunity at the

start of lap 47, and with the aid of DRS on the main straight, he swept past the Ferrari to take the lead.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of KAICO (Kuwait Automotive Imports Co WLL - Alshaya & Alsagar) stated, "We are thrilled to see Mobil along with Red Bull racing winning the 2022 Saudi Arabian GP". Jayan O S, Divisional Manager of Mobil stated, "We are proud to see the Mobil team along with red bull achieving such success".

KAICO, the only authorized distributors of Mobil 1 oil since 75 years in Kuwait, has always been proactive in providing the best facilities in the Kuwait market, which is a component in the company's strategy that the customer's satisfaction always comes first.

## Technology boosts pitchers for new baseball season

LOS ANGELES: Pitchers and catchers will be given the option of using new technology to prevent sign-stealing as Major League Baseball looks to move on from its scandal-plagued recent past when the delayed new season finally gets under way on Thursday. Five years after the Houston Astros claimed a controversial World Series victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers, baseball chiefs said Tuesday that clubs will be allowed to use new "PitchCom" equipment that has been successfully tested during Spring Training.

PitchCom is wearable technology that allows catchers and pitchers to communicate directly without needing to use hand signals - the traditional method of signaling what kind of pitches a batter will

face. Under the new technology, catchers wear a sleeve on their forearm with nine buttons that represent different pitches and the location where they will be thrown. Messages from the catcher's device are transmitted to a receiver fitted in the pitcher's cap.

The Astros were fined \$5 million and manager AJ Hinch was suspended for a season after the MLB found the club had been using a camera hidden in the outfield to decode the signs being used by the Dodgers in the 2017 World Series. The new technology - which is also aimed at speeding up the pace of play - has received broad support since being tested. "Anything that can help the pitcher get the sign without anyone knowing what the sign is, we're moving in the right direction," was the verdict of Colorado Rockies director of pitching Steve Foster.

New York Yankees ace Luis Severino tested the system for the first time last weekend and was impressed. "I think it was great," Severino told reporters. "I was a little doubtful at the beginning, but when we started using it, it was really good. You know what pitch you're going to throw right

away." Thursday's opening round of regular season fixtures comes after an acrimonious off-season dominated by the labor dispute between MLB owners and players.

The season had been due to start on March 31 but was delayed after negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement became deadlocked. The dispute came to an end last month after both sides reached agreement on a new deal that includes increased minimum salaries, a pre-arbitration bonus pool to reward top young players before they can negotiate new deals and a boost to the league's luxury tax thresholds.

Designated hitters will replace batters in the National League, as they have for many years in the American League. An expanded playoff format will see 12 teams advance, six from each league, adding two clubs to the post-season championship chase. The two top division winners in each league would receive first-round byes. Bookmakers have installed the Dodgers as early favorites to repeat their World Series triumph from the pandemic-shortened 2020 season. — AFP

## Ageless cricketer Stevens 'buzzing' ahead of 26th season

CANTERBURY, United Kingdom: Kent cricketer Darren Stevens made his debut in first-class cricket before Tony Blair became British prime minister. A quarter of a century later he shows no signs of slowing down. Stevens, 46 later this month, is bouncily optimistic as he prepares for the start of his 26th season in the English county game on Thursday, despite icy spring temperatures and snow flurries.

The all-rounder, who began his career with Leicestershire in 1997, has enjoyed some of his finest moments in recent years with both bat and ball. He hit a career-best 237 against Yorkshire in 2019 and the following season took 29 wickets at an eye-catching average of just over 15.5 in the inaugural Bob Willis Trophy. Cricketing "bible" Wisden recognized his feats in 2021, naming him as one of its cricketers of the year.

The ageless Stevens showed he had lost none of his magic touch last year-smashing 15 sixes in a barnstorming innings of 190 and later in the season helping Kent win the Twenty20 Blast for a second time. So what motivates the Leicester-born player, who narrowly missed out on winning an England cap? "The game itself," he tells AFP, sitting on a bench at Kent's Canterbury home ground dedicated to his late father, Bob Stevens.

"It's a beautiful game, it's an amazing game. For us, we're classed as entertainers so you put on a show. Who doesn't love putting on a show? I'm passionate about the game and I just love batting and I love bowling." Stevens enjoyed a successful stint with England's second-tier Lions team in a 2010 triangular series against India A and West Indies A, averaging nearly 80 with the bat.

But he never received a full international cap whereas other players alongside him in that team, including Alastair Cook and Chris Woakes, went on to enjoy successful England careers. "It's frustrating when you see a lot of people that have played or are playing," he said. "It's like you mirror yourself to their job and what they do and it's a bit frustrating but it is what it is."

But Stevens' sanguine approach belies a fierce competitive edge. He had to fight his way back into Kent's T20 plans after he was told he was surplus to requirements, proving his worth last year as they beat Somerset in the final. Although he is a cult hero in the county game, Stevens' name has also been invoked in the debate over the weak state of English cricket after the recent disastrous Ashes defeat against Australia.

Former captain Michael Vaughan argued that success for the 45-year-old illustrated a lack of competitive edge in the English county game. But the all-rounder, who bowls right-arm medium pace, shrugs off the criticism. "It doesn't bother me," he said. "He can have his opinion. Everyone can have their own opinion. My job is to get wickets for Kent."

### "Stevo's gonna get ya"

Stevens may have missed out on an international cap but he is certainly on the radar of the Australian internationals who have plied their trade in the English county game - they even set up a WhatsApp group called "Stevo's gonna get ya". "It's funny. I played golf with (Australian Test player) Travis Head last year. "He's a good mate and we were on the course and he showed me a text from one of the lads saying 'Stevo's going to get you, ha, ha' and I got him (when playing against Sussex)."

The evergreen all-rounder cannot wait for the new season to start, saying he is "more buzzy" now than when he was a young player. "As everybody says and as all the old pros that coach now when I go and play against teams and I have a good catch-up with them - all of them are 'long-time retired mate, don't do it.'" So how much longer can he resist the march of Father Time? "I can see myself playing next year, because if I don't think like that my body will shut down and I'll probably finish tomorrow, so my mindset is I'm still ready to play next year," he said. "In my mind there's no reason why I should finish." — AFP



Darren Stevens

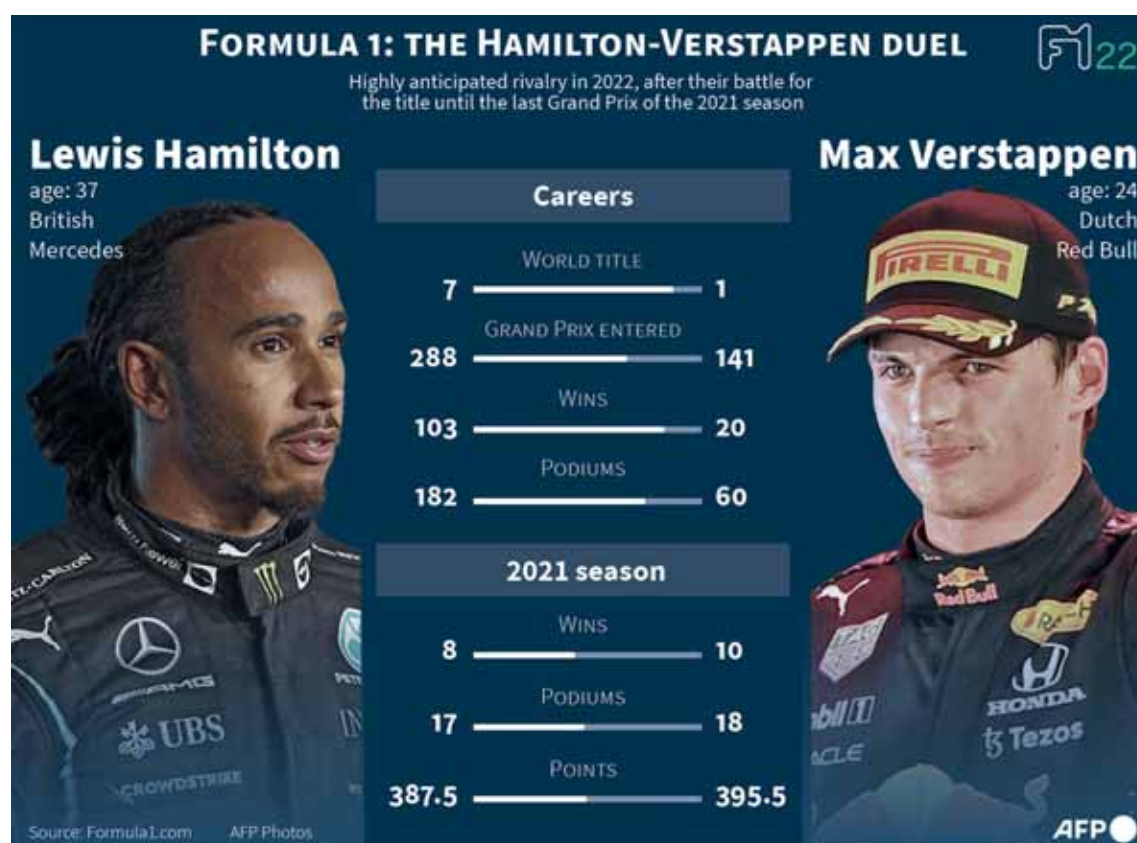
## Mercedes, Hamilton's struggles put to the test in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: An uncompetitive Mercedes and admission that he is "struggling mentally and emotionally" have put Lewis Hamilton's remarkable record at the Australian Grand Prix under severe threat this weekend. Britain's deposed seven-time world champion is bidding to make it an incredible seven straight pole positions in Melbourne.

But Hamilton has endured a torrid start to the season with Mercedes alarmingly adrift of pace-setters Red Bull and Ferrari, unable to challenge for grid position or victory in both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The once-dominant German manufacturer has had problems with porpoising - bouncing at high speed - after a radical design overhaul in the off-season to meet new technical regulations designed to promote closer racing.

"Hard some days to stay positive," the 37-year-old Hamilton said on Instagram last week. "I have struggled mentally and emotionally for a long time, to keep going is a constant effort but we have to keep fighting. We have so much to do and to achieve." Hamilton, who was demoralized at the messy way his world crown slipped from his grasp last year in the final race at Abu Dhabi, described his car as "undriveable" after qualifying only 16th in Saudi Arabia a fortnight ago.

It was the first time since the 2017 Brazilian Grand Prix, where he crashed, that the Briton had failed to progress from the Q1 section of qualifying. Things didn't improve much during the race, ending



10th to earn a solitary point, some 1:13.948 secs adrift of winner, world champion and rival Max Verstappen of Red Bull. While Hamilton managed third in the opening round at Bahrain, it was only after both Red Bull drivers - Verstappen and Sergio Perez - retired in the closing stages.

After those back-to-back races to open the sea-

son, Mercedes have had an extra week to dissect the data and work on their problems heading to Albert Park. Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko has no doubt Mercedes, who have claimed eight straight constructors' championships, will fix their issues, denying their early form spelt an end to their dominant era. — AFP