

## Sports

# Rain-hit draw hands India T20 series win in N Zealand

## India seal Twenty-20 series victory

**NAPIER:** India sealed a Twenty-20 series win over hosts New Zealand after Tuesday's rain-hit third match finished in a draw in Napier. The Black Caps were bowled out for 160 in their innings. India then labored to 75 for four wickets in their nine overs before the rain started. Under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method, the match was a rare draw in Twenty-20 cricket. India took the series having won the second tie on Sunday at Mount Maunganui, where morning rain threatened to delay the start before Suryakumar Yadav smashed 111 off 51 balls in a 65-run win.

The first tie was washed out by heavy rain in Wellington on Friday. "We would have liked to have won by playing the full overs, but it's how it is. We don't mind getting the trophy and the win," said India captain Harkish Pandya. Fast-bowler Mohammed Siraj was the man-of-the-match after restricting New Zealand to just 17 runs for four wickets, supported by Arshdeep Singh's 4-37. "All three matches were affected by the weather, but we are happy to have won the series," said Siraj.

After setting India 161 to win, the Black Caps' bowlers struck early with India's openers Ishan Kishan and Rishabh Pant dismissed to leave the visitors on 21-2. With Kane Williamson sitting out due to a medical appointment, New Zealand's stand-in skipper Tim Southee took the wickets of Pant and then Shreyas Iyer in successive balls. India were in trouble at 23 for three before Suryakumar Yadav went for just 13.

Pandya steadied the ship with a solid 30 off 18 balls to steer his side to 75 for four from nine overs when rain stopped play. Having won the toss and elected to bat, New Zealand made a strong start with Glenn Phillips smashing 54 off 33 balls. Devon Conway hit 59, including five fours and two towering sixes. The Black Caps were cruising at 146 for three when Conway was caught by Kishan in the deep before New Zealand collapsed to lose their last seven wickets for just 14 runs. The teams meet again in Auckland on Friday, when Eden Park hosts the first of three one-day internationals. —AFP



**NAPIER:** India's Yuzvendra Chahal (left) bowls to New Zealand's Glenn Phillips (right) during the third Twenty20 cricket match between New Zealand and India at McLean Park in Napier on November 22, 2022. —AFP



**MELBOURNE:** England's James Vince (rear) watches Australia's Sean Abbott (left) dive to stop the ball during the third one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Australia and England on November 22, 2022. —AFP

## Australia thrash England in final ODI

**MELBOURNE:** Dominant centuries from Travis Head and David Warner helped Australia thrash a tired England by 221 runs Tuesday in the third and final one-day international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to sweep the series 3-0. After a six-wicket loss in Adelaide and a 72-run defeat in Sydney, England's long tour ended with a crushing defeat at the same venue where they won the Twenty20 World Cup this month.

Australia made a formidable 355-5 on the back of Head's 152 and Warner's 106 in a rain-hit game reduced to 48 overs, with the pair's 269-run stand the ninth-highest opening partnership in 50-over cricket and the biggest at the MCG. It left England needing 364 to win under a DLS-adjusted target, an ominous score they never looked like getting against a disciplined attack led by pacemen Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood and Adam Zampa's spin.

"It's been fantastic, all three games," said Australian skipper Cummins. "Everything has really clicked. Good to finish it off here, that's just about the best ODI I've been a part of. Everything was perfect." With Phil Salt sidelined for a concussion check after hitting his head while fielding, Dawid Malan was elevated to open for England with Jason Roy but he fell for two to Hazlewood. It didn't get any easier for the batsmen, who were restricted to just 49-1 off the opening 10 overs, already well behind the required run rate.

Cummins accounted for Roy (33) and Sam Billings (7) in quick succession, while James Vince ground out 22 off 45 balls before Sean Abbott broke his resistance. When Zampa removed skipper Jos Buttler (4) and Chris Woakes in successive balls, then Moeen Ali (18) in his next over, England were 95-7 and their hopes over. Zampa ended with 4-31. "We tried our best, fell a long way short. Australia outplayed us in every department," said Buttler. "But lots to be proud of. You don't need long memories to remember the scenes here last week," he said of the World Cup victory.

Buttler, back after missing the Sydney game, won the toss and asked Australia to bat, only to watch an exhibition from Head and Warner. Head made his third one-day century and highest score, off 130 balls with 16 fours and four sixes, as he solidified his place at the top of the order after the retirement of Aaron Finch. With conditions overcast and cool, the England bowlers extracted early swing and Head survived a missed catch on four and being given out lbw on nine, which he successfully challenged.

But he settled as he and Warner assumed full control, bringing up their second 100-run partnership in three matches. Rain interrupted play for 30 minutes but the pair resumed where they left off with Head racing to his century, bringing up the milestone with a four from Chris Woakes. Warner soon followed, crunching Ollie Stone to the ropes for his 19th ODI ton. The partnership was finally broken by the persistent Stone, who bagged both Warner and Head in the same over and finished with 4-85 after removing Mitchell Marsh for 30 and Steve Smith for 21. —AFP

## Saudi football academies eye WCup boost

**RIYADH:** As the World Cup brings some of the best-known names in sports to Qatar, youth football academies in neighboring Saudi Arabia expect a spike in registrations but urge more investment. The Gulf kingdom has long been obsessed with football, but interest in playing - not just watching - has surged in recent years amid a government push to promote physical activity under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform agenda.

Among the wannabe Messis and Neymars is 11-year-old Abdulrahman Al-Ghamdi, who first put on cleats two years ago, encouraged by an uncle who once played for the prestigious local club Al Nassr. "One day I stepped on the pitch and I started loving it," Ghamdi told AFP during a recent practice. But Ghamdi fears he has already fallen behind peers in other countries with more advanced training pipelines.

"I don't really think I'm going to be a high-level football player because in England they have better advantages... and professional people" as coaches, he said. "There are young kids that are way better than me." Even before World Cup fever descended on the region with its first edition in the Arab world, local academies were struggling to accommodate the needs of youngsters taking to the pitch.

Leveling the playing field should be a top priority as Saudi Arabia develops its youth teams and potentially vies for World Cup hosting rights in 2030, said Karim Ziane, general manager of the kingdom's French Football Federation Academy. Saudi Arabia is "definitely" a country of football, he told AFP. "They love to play, they love to watch, they love to cheer and support. This passion is no different than any other place," Ziane said. "The only difference is whether they have access to it or not."

### Room to improve

The French academy opened its first facility in the capital Riyadh in January and has since added five more including in Jeddah and Dammam, training 500 young players in total. During a recent evening training session in Riyadh, more than 20 teenagers ran passing drills and took shots on mini-goals before a short scrimmage, their parents cheering them on from the sidelines.

The field, on a residential compound, is something of a rarity in the Saudi capital: made of natural grass and large enough for an 11-a-side match, as opposed to smaller fields of artificial turf. "You have to take into consideration that it's definitely not going to be the same as in Europe or in France, for example, so you have to forget about what you know and adapt to what's in front of you," Ziane said. Wilfried Louisy-Daniel, a former professional player in France now coaching in Saudi Arabia, said he has been impressed by the level of enthusiasm for the sport but that "some things need to be developed."

Specifically, more youth teams are required so players can compete closer to home instead of having to travel hundreds of kilometers for a game, he said. Demand is only going to increase during and after the World Cup, he assessed, especially if the Saudi team makes a deep run. The Green Falcons have qualified for six World Cups but advanced to the knockout stage just once, during their 1994 debut. "If we have a good campaign, on top of the fact that it's the first World Cup in the Middle East, surely that will bring a lot of fervor," Louisy-Daniel said.

Challenges aside, several Saudi players told AFP they were determined to attain football stardom, recognizing that other players have come from much poorer backgrounds to reach the elite stages. "Most of the football players in the World Cup, they had to train like me, and they had to train really hard, and some people had it a little more harder," said 11-year-old Nawaf Al-Jaser. "I really want to train more so I can be like them."

If all goes well, Jaser could one day



**RIYADH:** Karim Ziane (left), general manager of Saudi Arabia's French Football Federation Academy, gives instructions to young players, in the capital Riyadh's Ishbilila compound. —AFP photos



**RIYADH:** Young football players train at the Ishbilila compound, one of the locations of the French Football Federation Academy, in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

get the chance to play in a World Cup match before a home crowd. An Egyptian official said in September that Egypt, Greece and Saudi Arabia were in talks on a joint proposal to host the tournament in 2030. But even if that

doesn't happen, Jaser is eager to put Saudi football on the map. "In most of the really good teams in Europe, there's not many Saudi players, and I hope I can change that" and "change the football world", he said. —AFP



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Cricket Club and Friendi mobile officials pose for a group photo.

## Kuwait Cricket Club, Friendi mobile seal partnership deal

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Cricket Club and Friendi mobile officially launched their partnership at an event held at the Olympic Council of Asia in the presence of senior officials from both sides. "It is a great day for us as we are starting our future events for the coming season with a new partner Friendi, which will join us all the way for the next season. We will experience each other and will know exactly where we stand, as we both work for the interest of cricket," Chairman of KCC Haidar Farman said.

Farman announced there will be a meeting for building a new venue and new grounds for Kuwait cricket. "With Friendi being with us, I do not think Kuwait cricket will be the same from today onwards. All what we are doing is in

the interest of our players, not only for the national team, but for the 140 teams who are members of KCC," he said.

Friendi CEO Benoit Janin congratulated the Kuwait national cricket team on their win over UAE. "We are here to celebrate to launch the partnership between Friendi and KCC. Friendi is a brand already in the region, in Oman and Saudi Arabia, and have over 2 million customers. We are all excited about this partnership and hope to go further on new levels," he said. KCC Director General Shahid Ashraf said Kuwait Cricket Club is the sole official governing body for the game of cricket in Kuwait, affiliated with the Public Authority for Sport, Kuwait Olympic Committee, International Cricket Council and Asian Cricket Council.

He said Kuwait men's team is currently ranked 25th in the ICC T20 out of 104 countries, adding that ICC will have 20 teams participating in the world cup that will take place in the West Indies and US. Shahid Ashraf said Kuwait men's team for the first time beat UAE, which is ranked 12th in the ICC T20 rankings, in the final leg of Asia qualifiers recently, and this will help improve their ranking. "With this partnership, all events will be named after Friendi mobile. The entire international calendar year all events will be branded as Friendi," Ashraf said.

Speaking exclusively to Kuwait Times, Farman said a

Kuwaiti team played in two Asian Games in Guangzhou 2010 and Incheon 2014, but in 2018 the game was not included. In 2022, Kuwait Olympic Committee did not think that there is the possibility of positive participation in the games. "We think otherwise. This hurt the Kuwait team spirit that longed for participating in the Asian Games," he said.

Farman said this took place while the game is developing and reached an advanced stage. "We suddenly received an unfavorable answer from Kuwait Olympic Committee for not participating, and this is not in the interest of the game. We hope KOC reconsiders future participations, because it is a game that has proved itself," he said.

Farman said cricket began in Kuwait with a committee at KOC in 1998, then in 2009 the KCC was approved by the Public Authority for Sport as a specialized club. "This recognition gave us a strong push to take our role to new levels as far as work and development are concerned, and we are looking to establish an academy to care of young players. We are in the development stage, as Kuwait can reach at highly advanced levels, but the game requires much investment and work with a team spirit to fulfill the plan," he added.