

## Sports

# West Indies stay alive at T20 WCup as Ireland celebrate

## Windies storm past Zimbabwe; Ireland upset Scotland

**HOBART:** A fiery four-wicket spell from pace bowler Alzarri Joseph helped the two-time champion West Indies storm past Zimbabwe by 31 runs to keep their Twenty20 World Cup dreams alive on Wednesday, while Ireland upset Scotland. After being shocked by Scotland in their opening match on Monday, the West Indies had no margin for error if they wanted to stay in the hunt for a place in the Super 12 stage.

And they accomplished the feat at Bellerive Oval in Hobart with 10 balls to spare, dismissing Zimbabwe for 122 after setting them 154 to win. The dangerous Joseph was instrumental, taking 4-16 while Jason Holder chipped in with 3-12 to rescue them after another batting collapse after they won the toss and chose to bat.

"We are learning together and that's what's important," said West Indies skipper Nicholas Pooran. "Jason put his hand up as our most experienced bowler here so it's nice to see him performing the way he is. Alzarri Joseph, it's not just now but since the beginning of the year he's been our best bowler in T20 cricket." The victory means they meet Ireland on Friday with the winner going through to the next round when the big guns join the tournament, while Zimbabwe face Scotland in a

winner-takes-all tie.

Ireland stayed in contention with a stunning six-wicket upset of the Scots with George Dockrell and Curtis Campher starring in a 119-run partnership after they looked out for the count. Zimbabwe were without captain Craig Ervine who suffered a "mild asthmatic attack" before the game and the West Indies were aggressive early on. But they paid the price with Kyle Mayers (13) top edging Blessing Muzarabani to wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva, who was deputising as skipper.

Johnson Charles unleashed in the ninth over, hitting 6-4-4 off Ryan Burl to get the scoreboard moving before Evin Lewis (15) was out and Pooran (7) fell soon after. When Charles was comically run out for 45 in a mix-up with Rovman Powell, they were reeling. Zimbabwe kept the pressure on and Sikander Raza trapped Shamara Brooks lbw then caught and bowled Holder with the West Indies losing four wickets for 11 runs in 12 balls to leave them on 101-6. Powell (28) and Akeal Hosein (23 not out) threw the bat in a late flourish to ensure they set a competitive target.

### Great cricket

In reply, Zimbabwe slammed 18 in a nightmare

first over from Mayers. Undeterred, the Caribbean side made a breakthrough in the third over when Regis Chakabva dragged the ball onto his stumps off Joseph. Joseph took his second with a lightning delivery to remove Tony Munyonga and Sean Williams fell two balls later as the pressure began building.

Allrounder Raza slammed 82 off 48 balls in Zimbabwe's first match on Monday, but he was out for 14 and when Joseph came back in the attack he shattered the stumps of Richard Ngarava and Luke Jongwe to end any hope they had. In the earlier game, Scotland powered to 176-5 — the tournament's highest score so far on the back of 86 from Michael Jones — for what looked like a winning total.

When they reduced the Irish to 65-4 after 10 overs it looked all over. But Campher (69 off 32 balls) and Dockrell (39 off 27) came to the crease and unleashed some fireworks to steer them home against the odds with an over to spare. "Pretty special. I can't remember a more important partnership," said Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie after their highest ever successful run chase at a World Cup. "We have played some great cricket throughout the year, only to fall away towards the end, but credit to the guys for the partnership." — AFP



Alzarri Joseph of West Indies

## Things to know about World Cup host Qatar

**PARIS:** Qatar, the controversial host of the football World Cup, is a key US ally in the Middle East that is rich in gas and oil. Here are five things to know about the desert peninsula:

### Small but powerful

Qatar is one of the smallest Arab states with a population of 2.9 million, most of whom are foreign workers. The country was a British protectorate for 55 years until 1971. It has been ruled by a monarchy, the Al-Thani family, since the mid-19th century. The current emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, rose to power in 2013 after his father Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani abdicated. The country's first ever legislative elections were held in October 2021. None of the 26 women candidates won a seat in the 45-member Shura Council.

### Owner of the Shard

Qatar is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of liquefied natural gas. It has one of the highest per capita GDPs in the world at \$61,276 in 2021, according to the World Bank, two-and-a-half times that of Saudi Arabia. The Qatar Investment Authority, one of the biggest sovereign wealth funds in the world, has spent lavishly to snap up key landmarks and luxury brands in Europe, including Britain's luxury store Harrods, London's Shard skyscraper and France's Balmain fashion house.

### Showdown with Saudi

Qatar weathered a major diplomatic crisis and a three-and-a-half year blockade by its Gulf neighbors between June 2017 and January 2021 with only limited damage to its economy. Tensions had been brewing since the Arab Spring of pro-democracy movements, which Doha had supported but fellow Gulf monarchies had not. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Doha, accusing it of supporting terrorism and fostering close ties with their regional rival Iran — charges Doha denied.

Riyadh and its allies made a number of demands of Qatar in return for ending its isolation, including that it close down Al Jazeera, its pioneering pan-Arab news channel which was accused as acting as a megaphone for the Arab Spring protests, and end economic cooperation with Iran. Qatar rejected the demands and rode out the blockade, which was eventually lifted, under pressure from the United States, which sees both Saudi Arabia and Qatar as key allies.

### Spending big on Neymar

Qatar has poured billions of dollars into sports at home and abroad, snapping up France's leading football club Paris Saint-Germain in 2011, which famously spent a mindboggling 222 million euros to acquire Brazilian Neymar in 2017. Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) also owns Belgian first division club KAS Eupen and announced on October 10 that it will acquire nearly 22 percent of the Portuguese club Sporting Braga. The Gulf state has hosted a string of international sports competitions in order to try boost its global standing, including the Asian Games in 2006, the Asian Cup of Nations in 2011 and the world athletics championships in 2019.

### Skewed over rights

Ever since Qatar's shock win in the race to host the World Cup, the spotlight has been on its human rights record, particularly its treatment of migrant workers. Reports of high numbers of deaths and injuries on Qatar's giant construction projects — strongly denied by Qatari authorities — as well as accusations of punishing hours, grim living conditions and workers being deported for protesting unpaid wages have caused controversy. The Qatari government has responded to the criticism by introducing a minimum wage, dismantling a scheme that gave employers stringent controls over laborers and imposing stricter rules on working in the summer heat. — AFP

## Warriors thump Lakers in season opener

**LOS ANGELES:** Stephen Curry scored 33 points as the Golden State Warriors launched the defense of their NBA crown with a season-opening 123-109 rout of the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday. After being presented with diamond-encrusted rings and watching their championship banner being hoisted at a pre-game ceremony at San Francisco's Chase Center, the Warriors put on a dazzling performance to overpower LeBron James and the new-look Lakers.

The Warriors' pre-season had been overshadowed by a practice court bust-up that saw Draymond Green floor teammate Jordan Poole with a sucker punch — sparking what coach Steve Kerr described as the "biggest crisis" of his eight-year reign. But Golden State served notice they have already put the episode behind them with a commanding performance that suggests they are more than capable of mounting a successful title defense.

Significantly, Green and Poole played without any hint of lingering tension, notably when Poole engineered a lay-up for Green with a clever pass midway through the third quarter. The Lakers, in their first competitive game under new coach Darvin Ham, showed signs of being a more disciplined defensive unit, but ultimately were run ragged by the Warriors.

The 37-year-old James weighed in with 31 points



SAN FRANCISCO: Patrick Baldwin Jr #7 of the Golden State Warriors and Juan Toscano-Anderson #95 of the Los Angeles Lakers compete for a loose ball during the 3rd quarter of the game at Chase Center on October 18, 2022. —AFP

while Anthony Davis contributed 27 points with Russell Westbrook adding 19. But the Warriors were never seriously threatened after a trademark third-quarter eruption, outscoring the Lakers 32-19 to race to a 27-point lead at one stage. "The ceremony was an amazing celebration, to take time to reflect on what you accomplished, watching the banner go up, looking at the highlight tapes and all that," Curry said afterwards.

"It's really hard to turn the page and go and play

a game of basketball, but we figured how to do it. Now we can look forward to the rest of the year." James said the Lakers were still a work in progress. "We were what I expected — some great moments, some not so great moments," James said. "That comes from a team coming together for the first time. "Once we start getting on the same page, it will get better with time. But it was kind of what I expected — we had some good times, but some other times we weren't as good as I'd like." — AFP



Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia

## Bagnaia on brink of world title; MotoGP returns to Malaysia

**SEPANG:** Italy's Francesco Bagnaia can win his maiden MotoGP world championship crown this weekend when motorcycle-mad Malaysia hosts its first grand prix since 2019, as a thrilling title fight reaches its climax. The Ducati rider usurped Fabio Quartararo at the top of the standings on Sunday in Australia when the Frenchman crashed out, putting a huge dent in his hopes of retaining his title.

At one point during this topsy-turvy season, Yamaha's Quartararo enjoyed a gaping lead of 91 points on his rival. But Bagnaia now leads the championship by 14 points with two races left and can clinch the world title on Sunday if he wins at Sepang and Quartararo finishes fourth or lower. "I don't want to say now, I just want to be calm," the 25-year-old Bagnaia, who finished second last season in the title race behind Quartararo, said after finishing third at Phillip Island.

"We just focus on the next race, without thinking about the championship. Be smart." "Keep going, keep going, I don't want to think about the championship," the Italian added. The permutations are complicated, but Spain's Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia) and Italy's Enea Bastianini (Gresini Racing) are

mathematically also still in the title hunt.

Espargaro, though, has dismissed his hopes. "I think that in the last three races, we proved that we are not together as a team," Espargaro, third in the standings, said after coming a distant ninth last weekend in Australia.

"We are not at the level to fight for this title," Quartararo, 23, has been left to reflect on how — coupled with Bagnaia's form in the second half of the campaign — his defense has fallen apart. The title is now out of his hands going into Sepang and the season finale in Valencia, Spain on November 6.

Quartararo's last win came in Germany in June and the Frenchman has failed to score in the last two grands prix. Rival Bagnaia, meanwhile, has triumphed in four of the eight races since Germany to turn the title race on its head. And he has tasted success before at Sepang, taking the chequered flag in 2016 in Moto3. But Quartararo says the championship tussle could change yet again — and in his favour this time. "I feel that we can make two great last races. We need to be focused, work well and then we'll see," he said.

"We go to Malaysia with full motivation. I want to enjoy these last two races, that will be the most important, because when I enjoy the races, I know we can be fast." MotoGP is back in Malaysia for the first time since 2019 after recent races were cancelled because of COVID-19. Organizers are hoping that 170,000 spectators will turn out across three days of racing, starting with practice on Friday. Qualifying is on Saturday. —AFP

## Asia Cup no-show could 'split' cricket, Pakistan warns India

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistani cricket authorities hinted Wednesday they may pull out of next year's World Cup in India, a day after officials there said they would not send a team to the 2023 Asia Cup in Pakistan. Indian cricket board secretary Jay Shah — who is also president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) — said Tuesday that India "can't" send a team to Pakistan, adding the tournament would be moved to a neutral venue.

This announcement caught Pakistan by surprise, with officials warning it could "split" the international cricket community. Despite being considered one of sport's greatest rivalries, India and Pakistan have not met on home soil in any version of the game since 2012, and only play each other in multinational tournaments on neutral grounds.

The two nations have fought three wars since being carved out of the subcontinent's partition in 1947 and are bitter political rivals. "The Asia Cup will be held at a neutral venue," Shah told reporters in Mumbai Tuesday following a meeting of the Board for Control of Indian Cricket (BCCI). "I am saying this as ACC president. We can't go there (to Pakistan), they can't come here."

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) reacted angrily on Wednesday. "The PCB has noted with surprise and disappointment yesterday's comments made by the ACC President Mr Shah with regards to shifting of next year's Asia Cup to a neutral venue," it said. "The comments were made without any discussion or consultation with the board of the ACC or the PCB, and without any thoughts towards their long-term consequences and implications." "The overall impact of such statements have the potential to split the Asian and international cricketing communities," the PCB added.

The Pakistan board said it has not received any official communication from the ACC, and noted that hosting rights for the 2023 Asia Cup had been given to Pakistan under Shah's leadership. "Mr Shah's statement of shifting of the ACC Asia Cup has clearly been made unilaterally," the PCB said, and called for an emergency meeting of the Asian Board "as soon as practically possible on this important and sensitive matter". The PCB said Shah's comments "can impact Pakistan's visit to India for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 and future ICC Events in India in the 2024-2031 cycle". — AFP