

Van der Dussen steers South Africa to victory as Afghanistan exit

Proteas secure a comfortable World Cup win as Afghanistan's semi-final hopes dashed in final group game

● **Rassie van der Dussen hit an unbeaten 76 to lead the Proteas home with 15 balls to spare**

AFP | Ahmedabad

Rassie van der Dussen hit an unbeaten 76 to lead South Africa to a comfortable five-wicket win over Afghanistan in their last World Cup group game yesterday as their opponents were eliminated from the semi-final race.

Chasing 245 for victory, Van der Dussen steered the Proteas home with 15 balls to spare in a tune-up for their semi-final against Australia next week.

Azmatullah Omarzai hit an unbeaten 97 to guide Afghanistan to 244 all out in a match where they needed an unlikely 438-run win to make the last four.



Rassie van der Dussen

New Zealand look all set to meet hosts India in the other semi-final unless Pakistan pull off a huge win against England on Saturday.

Playing for pride, Afghanistan's spinners checked South Africa's strong start of 64-0 after Mujeeb Ur Rahman dismissed skipper Temba Bavuma for 23

and fellow spinner Mohammad Nabi trapped Quinton de Kock lbw on 41.

Bavuma's hamstring troubled him throughout the match while fielding and batting in a worrying sign ahead of their semi-final.

De Kock, who will quit one-day internationals when this

Scorecard

South Africa 247 for 5 (van der Dussen 76*, de Kock 41, Nabi 2-35, Rashid 2-37) beat Afghanistan 244 (Omarzai 97*, Coetzee 4-44, Maharaj 2-25) by five wickets

World Cup is over, overtook New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra (565) to reclaim his top spot in the tournament batting chart with 591 runs including four centuries.

The Proteas put their chase back on track in a third-wicket stand of 50 but leg-spinner Rashid Khan broke through with the wicket of Aiden Markram for 25.

South Africa looked in trouble when Rashid bowled Heinrich Klaasen for 10 but Van der Dussen stood firm to build partnerships including an unbeaten 65-run stand with Andile Phehlukwayo, who hit the winning six in an unbeaten 39.



Quinton de Kock surpasses Rachin Ravindra to reclaim the top spot in the tournament batting chart with 591 runs

Earlier Afghanistan slipped to 116-6 before Azmatullah hit his ODI best to lift the team to a competitive total.

South Africa fast bowler Gerald Coetzee took four wickets while spinner Keshav Maharaj returned impressive figures of 2-25.

De Kock played a key part with his six wicketkeeping dismissals to equal a World Cup record

of Australia's Adam Gilchrist (v Namibia - Potchefstroom, 2003) and Pakistan's Sarfaraz Ahmed (v South Africa - Auckland, 2015).

Openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran started aggressively before Maharaj struck with his first ball to have Gurbaz caught for 25.

Coetzee sent back Ibrahim in the next over to check the batting surge and Afghanistan slipped from 41-0 to 45-3 when Maharaj had skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi caught behind for two.

Afghanistan lost three more wickets to be in danger of getting bowled out in less than their quota of 50 overs but Azmatullah stood firm to play out the innings.

Afghanistan, led by Hashmatullah Shahidi, ended a strong campaign after they beat defending champions England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Netherlands.

'No pressure' Azam blasts critics as World Cup dream slips away

AFP | Kolkata

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam blasted his critics yesterday, telling them "it's easy to give advice on TV" as he refused to surrender his World Cup dreams.

Pakistan have to defeat defending champions England by at least 287 runs on Saturday to oust New Zealand as the fourth and last semi-finalist on net run rate.

Failure to do so will spark more questions over Azam's captaincy, a position he has held for three years.

"I have not performed the way I should have in the World Cup, that's why people are saying that I am under pressure. I am under no pressure," insisted the 29-year-old.

"Everyone has their own point of view, their own way of thinking. Everyone is saying something different. He should be like this, or like that.

"If someone has to give me advice, everyone has my number. It is easy to give advice on



Pakistan captain Babar Azam during a practice session in Kolkata

TV. If you want to give me some advice, you can message me."

Azam has made 282 runs at the tournament with an average of just over 40 and four fifties.

However, as captain, he has overseen four defeats in eight games including a shock loss to Afghanistan and a shattering one-wicket defeat to South Africa.

They stayed alive in the tournament last weekend when Fakhar Zaman's unbeaten

81-ball 126 not out inspired a rain-hit win over New Zealand despite the Black Caps having piled up 401-6.

Azam insisted his team has not given up hope of pulling off victory over England despite the huge margin required.

"It's not like this matter is not in the back of the mind. It's in our mind and we will try to do it," said Azam.

"But we can't just go in and start firing blindly - we want



Pakistan have never scored more than 361 against England, which they achieved at Southampton in 2019. Their biggest victory over the English is 108 runs 22 years ago

that but with proper planning, how we want to play the first 10 overs, then the next 20 - how we have to achieve that target.

"There are a lot of things in this, like partnerships, which player will stay in the pitch for how long. I would say if Fakhar is in the match for 20 or 30 overs, we can achieve that. We can do this and we have planned for this."

Title-chasing Martin second-fastest in Malaysian MotoGP practice



Jorge Martin leaves the pit lane during the second practice in Sepang

AFP | Sepang

Title-chasing Jorge Martin was second in Malaysian grand prix practice yesterday at Sepang behind Alex Marquez, with MotoGP championship leader Francesco Bagnaia eighth.

Spain's Martin, who is just 13 points behind the Italian Bagnaia with three races to go in the season, clocked a lap of one minute and 57.997 seconds

on his Ducati.

But the Prima Pramac rider, who topped the timesheets in free practice in the morning, was outshone by compatriot Marquez after the Gresini racer finished 0.174 seconds faster.

Bagnaia is chasing a second world title in a row but he has made an unspectacular start in Malaysia, ending 15th in the morning on a cloudy but dry day outside Kuala Lumpur.

Maxwell doubtful for Bangladesh after double-century heroics

AFP | Pune

Glenn Maxwell is still feeling the effects of his stunning World Cup double century and could now miss Australia's final group match against Bangladesh in Pune on Saturday.

Australia will also look at calling up fast bowler Sean Abbott in a bid to rest one of their front-line pace trio, given captain Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood have featured in all eight matches so far in the tournament.

The Bangladesh game is a 'dead' fixture for Australia, given they have already qualified for the semi-finals after Maxwell's astounding innings ensured they defeated Afghan-



Australia's Glenn Maxwell celebrates after his double century against Afghanistan (file photo)

istan by three wickets, having collapsed to 91-7 chasing 292, in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Five-time champions Aus-

tralia are now set to play South Africa in a Kolkata semi-final on Thursday, having won six games in a row after starting the

tournament with two defeats.

"He's definitely been in full recovery mode the last few days," Australia assistant coach Daniel Vettori said of Maxwell.

"We all saw the effects of the innings and in particular the heat, so I think today (Friday) is a big day," the former New Zealand captain added.

"Obviously, we've had a couple of days off, so there's been no training. He's not here today but we'll just see how he feels as the day continues."

Maxwell, while completing his 147th run, suffered severe cramp in both legs and then underwent a back spasm as he collapsed to the turf at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

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