

India withstand Bethell heroics to reach T20 World Cup final

India moved one step closer to successfully defending their T20 World Cup crown after defeating England in a high-scoring semifinal on Thursday (March 5) in Mumbai. India's famed batting unit, led by Sanju Samson (89 off 42) again, fired in unison to post an imposing 253 on the board on the big night. England, despite making a false start, went toe-to-toe with young Jacob Bethell leading the charge with a fine century (105 off 48). However, some excellent bowling at the death, led by Jasprit Bumrah proved to be the difference as the hosts prevailed by seven runs to reach the World Cup final where New Zealand wait for them.

On a belter of a surface at the Wankhede, India once again bossed the Powerplay with the willow after being asked to bat, hammering 67 runs despite losing Abhishek Sharma early yet again. The misfiring opener failed to get past his match-up when Harry Brook introduced Will Jacks as early as the second over. Looking to clear the ropes, Abhishek mistimed his stroke and was caught in the deep.

The Powerplay could have taken a very different turn for the hosts had Brook then held onto a regulation chance in the very next over to send Samson back on 15. Instead, Samson made England pay. Taking full toll of the fielding restrictions, he went after Jofra Archer before rounding off the phase with a couple of more boundaries off Sam Curran.



Jasprit Bumrah's 18th over in which he conceded just 6 runs was key in India's win.

Samson continued to make merry by slamming Adil Rashid through the covers before effortlessly launching Liam Dawson over long-off for a six to

bring up back-to-back fifties. Ishan Kishan kept the tempo up at the other end. The left-hander struck Jamie Overton for a couple of boundaries and cleared the ropes off Dawson as well, ensuring the spinner conceded 19 in his first over. The two batters put on a show in front of a packed Mumbai crowd before Rashid finally struck against the run of play when Kishan miscued one to get caught at the halfway mark.

That did little to stop the onslaught though as Samson welcomed Overton back into the attack with a six before Shivam Dube launched a couple of deliveries into stands off Rashid as India appeared to be heading towards a daunting total. Samson then managed to add to his six tally by taking on Archer but in his attempt to clear the ropes again off Jacks, the opener finally mistimed one to depart for 89.

Rashid did give England some hope when he bagged the big wicket of Suryakumar Yadav but India still managed to plunder 63 runs from the final four overs. Hardik Pandya got into his groove by fetching three boundaries off Overton but it was an erratic over from Archer who consistently erred in his length that cost England as Tilak Varma hammered him for three sixes.

Hardik, who finished the innings with two more sixes in the final over to power India past 250, managed to draw first blood with the ball as well. Phil Salt miscued one quite badly before Jasprit Bumrah came into the attack and delivered a crucial blow by outfoxing Brook with a slower ball that he went early at, after which Axar Patel completed a terrific catch running backwards. Bethell dragged England back into the chase by welcoming Varun Chakaravarthy into the attack with three sixes off

the first three balls but their joy was short-lived as the spinner had the last laugh by casting Jos Buttler to ensure the top three were back in the pavilion inside the Powerplay.

Tom Banton threatened briefly with two sixes off Axar but an attempt at making it three in a row saw his stumps getting rearranged. England still managed to make 119 runs at the halfway mark and that was largely thanks to Bethell's efforts. The left-hander continued to toy with the Indian attack, consistently switching his stance to good effect. England were still up against it though given they needed another 135 in the second half of the innings with Bumrah alone having three overs left. One of those overs came very early in which England not only came out unscathed but also knocked off 12 runs.

Over the next three overs, England were right back in the hunt with Bethell and Jacks going berserk. Chakaravarthy endured a hard time (1 for 64) and Axar leaked boundaries as well. Just when it looked like the momentum was slowly shifting, Axar once again pulled off a great effort near the boundary that resulted in a catch that broke the flourishing partnership.

With overs trickling, England were consistently ahead of India in terms of runs but the threat of Bumrah's two overs derailing the chase consistently hung over their heads. The first of those came in the 16th over that cost India just eight runs which meant England had to compensate for that elsewhere. A near-perfect over from Arshdeep was ruined right at the end with Bethell fetching a six and a four which brought the equation down to 45 off 18.

The game that was tantalisingly poised finally shifted direction with Bumrah nailing a terrific over, conceding just six runs in the process to set up the game for India. Bethell made an attempt to inject life into the chase with a six off the first ball in the penultimate over that also brought up his century. However, Hardik staged a strong comeback, conceding only three more runs off the next five deliveries. This left Dube with 30 runs to successfully defend in the final over and confirm India's place in the final for the second consecutive edition.

Brief scores:

India 253 for 7 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 89, Ishan Kishan 39, Shivam Dube 43, Suryakumar Yadav 11, Hardik Pandya 27, Tilak Varma 21; Jofra Archer 1-61, Will Jacks 2-40, Adil Rashid 2-41) beat **England** 246 for 7 in 20 overs (Jos Buttler 25, Jacob Bethell 105, Tom Benton 17, Will Jacks 35, Sam Curran 18, Jofra Archer 19*; Arshdeep Singh 1-51, Hardik Pandya 2-38, Jasprit Bumrah 1-33, Varun Chakaravarthy 1-64, Axar Patel 1-35) by **seven runs**

(Cricbuzz)

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