

Australia has the edge, India the momentum

It will be the defending champion's sixth successive final while the Women in Blue haven't lost a game in this edition

T20 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MELBOURNE
India Women will have to overcome big-match pressure as it aims to exorcise the ghosts of the past in the T20 World Cup final against Australia in front of a record crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground here on Sunday.

Group topper
India goes into the final unbeaten after topping the group stage where it beat four-time champion Australia in the tournament opener. The refreshing firepower of 16-year-old Shafali Verma at the top and consistency of India's spin-heavy bowling attack has contributed massively to the team's success so far.

However, much more is needed from star batters Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur to win its maiden ICC trophy. The brittle middle-order too needs to deliver. And besides doing the right things on the field, India will also have to win the battle of nerves.

Australia, having beaten India in the preceding tri-series final, finds itself in familiar territory having made its sixth successive final in seven editions.

The Australians know how to win the big moments in high-pressure games, while the Indians have been found wanting on that front. India



Say cheese! Pop star Katy Perry may have just inspired the Indian women to go into the final skirmish with a song on their lips. *GETTY IMAGES

capitulated to England in the 2017 ODI World Cup final and 2018 World T20 semifinal.

India will expect Shafali to provide another flying start and hope this time the experienced Smriti also fires. There can't be a bigger stage for Harmanpreet to be back amongst the runs.

If it was not for Shafali, India would have struggled to

post competitive totals. Leggie Poonam Yadav has made a sensational comeback from a finger injury and is the tournament's leading wicket-taker with nine alongside Australia pacer Megan Schutt.

Pacer Shikha Pandey, too, has been impressive, while the left-arm spin duo of Radha Yadav and Rajeshwari

Gayakwad has kept things tight. It will be interesting to see how the Australians play Poonam on Sunday as the leggie was all over them in the opener.

Australia, led by Meg Lanning, will be backing itself to win in front of the home fans, though a sizeable number of Indian fans too is expected at the MCG.

The teams (from): Australia: Rachael Haynes, Megan Schutt, Alyssa Healy, Meg Lanning (Capt.), Jess Jonassen, Delissa Kimmince, Beth Mooney, Nicola Carey, Ashleigh Gardner, Sophie Molineux, Georgia Wareham, Erin Burns, Molly Strano and Annabel Sutherland.

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Shikha Pandey, Poonam Yadav, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Veda Krish-

Good luck girls for the big final tomorrow! Wishing you all the best & have a very good game. #T20WorldCup
JHULAN GOSWAMI

Good wishes to the Indian women's cricket team for the finals tomorrow... They have made the country proud... @BCCI
SOURAV GANGULY

Grand grand day for Indian cricket tomorrow, the support the girls have got so far in the tournament has been just fantastic and tells a story about the change the girl's game has gone through. Many best wishes for tomorrow. We love you @BCCIWomen @ImHarmanpreet #T20WorldCup
REEMA MALHOTRA

The story of the Finals

Here's how the summit clashes of the T20 World Cup have panned out:

2009: New Zealand 85 in 20 overs (Katherine Brunt 3/6) lost to England 86/4 in 17 overs (Claire Taylor 39 n.o.)
Player-of-the-match: Katherine Brunt

2010: Australia 106/8 in 20 overs bt New Zealand 103/6 in 20 overs (Sophie Devine 38 n.o., Ellyse Perry 3/18)
Player-of-the-match: Ellyse Perry

2012: Australia 142/4 in 20 overs (Jess Duffin 45) bt England 138/9 in 20 overs (Jess Jonassen 3/25)
Player-of-the-match: Jess Duffin

2014: England 105/8 in 20 overs (Sarah Coyte 3/16) lost to Australia 106/4 in 15.1 overs (Meg Lanning 44, Ellyse Perry 31 n.o.)
Player-of-the-match: Sarah Coyte

2016: Australia 148/5 in 20 overs (Elyse Villani 52, Meg Lanning 5/2) lost to West Indies 149/2 in 19.3 overs (Hayley Matthews 66, Stafanie Taylor 59)
Player-of-the-match: Hayley Matthews

2018: England 105 in 19.4 overs (Danni Wyatt 43, Ashleigh Gardner 3/22) lost to Australia 106/2 in 15.1 overs (Ashleigh Gardner 33 n.o.)
Player-of-the-match: Ashleigh Gardner

THE HONOURS BOARD

- 2009: England
 - 2010: Australia
 - 2012: Australia
 - 2014: Australia
 - 2016: West Indies
 - 2018: Australia
 - 2020: ?
- It will be the Aussies' sixth straight appearance in a final
 - Its only loss in a final came against West Indies in 2016
 - In 2010 and 2012, it pipped New Zealand and England by the thinnest of margins (three and four runs respectively)

HOW THE TEAMS REACHED MELBOURNE

INDIA	AUSTRALIA
GROUP STAGE: Beat Australia by 17 runs, Sydney	GROUP STAGE: Lost to India by 17 runs, Sydney
Beat Bangladesh by 18 runs, Perth	Beat Sri Lanka by five wickets, Perth
Beat New Zealand by three runs, Melbourne	Beat Bangladesh by 86 runs, Canberra
Beat Sri Lanka by seven wickets, Melbourne	Beat New Zealand by four runs, Melbourne
SEMIFINAL: Match against England washed out, India progressed by virtue of topping group (England had finished second in its group)	SEMIFINAL: Beat South Africa by five runs (DLS method)

COMPILED BY G. PRASAD

The swing factor

As India gears up to face Australia in its maiden T20 World Cup final, a look at who has chipped in and who hasn't for Harmanpreet Kaur's side and Meg Lanning's team

INDIA

The positives

- Shafali has blazed away at the top of the order (161 in four outings at a strike-rate of 161.00)
- Poonam has turned on the magic in the middle-and end-overs (nine wickets at an economy rate of 5.56 and a strike-rate of 10.6)
- Seamer Shikha Pandey (seven scalps), and spinners Radha Yadav (5), Rajeshwari Gayakwad (5) and Deepti Sharma (2) - have complemented Poonam
- Taniya Bhatia's big gloves have been involved in nine dismissals (six catches and three stumpings), the highest in this edition

The negatives

- Harmanpreet Kaur (26 runs in four innings with a highest of 15) and Smriti Mandhana (38 in three with 17 her highest) are yet to click into gear
- No Indian batter has made a half-century so far, with Deepti Sharma's unbeaten 49 against Australia being the best

AUSTRALIA

The positives

- Playing in its sixth consecutive final, the team has the experience to handle the big occasion and the home advantage
- Ever since they lost to India in the opener, it has been a tough ride for the hosts. They came back from the dead in the group phase, edging New Zealand by four runs in a virtual quarter-final, before overcoming South Africa by five runs in the semifinal. Come Sunday, the players will be battle-hardened
- The bowlers have made their presence felt, Georgia Wareham in particular. The leggie spun it the hosts' way in the hum-dinger against the Kiwis

The negatives

- The absence of Ellyse Perry, arguably the most influential all-rounder of this generation, will be a big blow to the side
- The presence of too many strokemakers can be counterproductive at times, as the opening game against India showed. From a dominant position, Australia slid to defeat

COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN



SHAFALI

TANIYA



GEORGIA WAREHAM

Harmanpreet's words stirred me up: Poonam



Get it right! Poonam Yadav has not looked back since drawing skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's displeasure during the opener against Australia. *AFP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MELBOURNE

It was a stinging rebuke from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur during the tournament opener against Australia that fired up Poonam Yadav, who eventually played an instrumental role in India's march to its maiden Women's T20 World Cup final.

The 28-year-old Indian has emerged as India's wrecker-in-chief with nine wickets, including a four-wicket haul in the opening match.

"When I got hit for a six in the first over, she (Harmanpreet) came to me and said,

"Poonam, you're one of the most experienced players in the team, and we expect better from you," Poonam was quoted as saying by the ICC.

"So, that kind of stirred something within me. I told myself if my captain has that much faith in me, I should be able to make a comeback. I took a wicket off the very next ball, and haven't looked back since.

"Now when I look back at that moment, it means so much in the context of my individual performance and run to the Final," said the bowler from Agra.

Forced break playing on captain's mind

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MELBOURNE

A forced eight-day break has affected India's preparations going into the T20 World Cup final on Sunday, but the team is ready to rise to occasion, said skipper Harmanpreet Kaur.

India had defeated Sri Lanka in its last game on Saturday, followed by a semi-final washout, which meant the visitors haven't played for the last eight days and Harmanpreet conceded her team had been 'restless'.

"We haven't been outdoors much and we didn't play the important game against England," said Harmanpreet on the eve of the

final. "We were all in touch and doing indoor training, but it doesn't give you full confidence because the surface is totally different.

"We did get some rest too, because when you're playing for a long time, you need a break."

Harmanpreet said her team would look to enjoy the big stage and play positive cricket.

"It's the first time we're going to see 90,000 people in the stadium and we're really looking positive for that," said Harmanpreet, who played in front of a sold-out crowd in the 2017 World Cup final against England at Lord's.



Eye on the ball: Coach W.V. Raman has some words of advice for Smriti Mandhana. *AFP

A Nawab who stood out from the rest

Wasim Jaffer carried on in the domestic circuit long after ending his international stint

BIDDING ADIEU

AMOL KARHADKAR MUMBAI

More than 24 years ago even as Saurashtra's batsmen were pounding the Mumbai bowlers on a placid Rajkot track in a Ranji Trophy league game, a Mumbai senior asked a rookie - playing his second First Class game - to egg the bowlers on and pressurise the batsmen a bit. The novice replied: "Woh sab theek hai but apna batting aayega kya (that's fine but will we get to bat at all?)"

Appetite for runs

After Saurashtra declared at a gargantuan 595 for four, the rookie came out to open and scored an unbeaten 314. Wasim Jaffer had well and truly arrived, taking his appetite for runs from Mumbai's maidens to the bigger stage.

Since then - and till he



Inspirational: Wasim Jaffer's commitment and drive over a long period is unparalleled. *VIVEK BENDRE

announced his retirement on Saturday after a glittering career turning out for Mumbai, India and Vidarbha -

Jaffer has continued in the same vein. But more than the plethora of records he has notched up - especially

in the Ranji Trophy - Jaffer has inspired both his contemporaries and the next generation, especially those

Wasim's journey in numbers

	M	I	R	Avg.	HS	50s	100s
Test	31	58	1944	34.10	212	11	5
First Class	260	421	19410	50.67	314*	97	51
ODIs	2	2	10	5.00	10	0	0
List A	118	117	4849	44.08	178*	33	10

156 Appearances in Ranji Trophy, the most in the tournament so far. Devendra Bundela is second with 145

12,038 Run tally in Ranji Trophy, the most in the tournament's history. Amol Muzumdar is a distant second (9,202)

89 Fifties in Ranji Trophy, the highest. Bundela, with 74, is second

1,294 Runs in Irani Cup, the most in the annual fixture between the Ranji champion and Rest of India. G.R. Viswanath (1,001) is the only other player to have a four-digit tally in Irani Cup

1 Jaffer is the only batsman to have twice tallied more than 1,000 runs in a Ranji Trophy season. He scored 1,260 in 2008-09 and 1,037 in 2018-19

40 Hundreds in Ranji Trophy, the most by a batsman. Ajay Sharma is second with 31

who worship the purest form of cricket.

Jaffer's rise in itself is an inspirational tale. The son of

a bus driver, he grew up in a transit camp near the Bandra reclamation. Jaffer would bat for endless hours

on an open plot off the sea-side.

His rise to being an opener for India - and also be a

part of nine Ranji titles - may seem seamless but that is the result of astonishing hardwork put in over the years to be at his best.

End of an era

With Jaffer's retirement, perhaps, comes the end of an era of domestic giants. He may well be the last of those who continued to ply their trade on the domestic circuit for years after ending their international sojourn.

He persisted with what he loved doing the most - battling long hours and passing on his work ethic to youngsters - for more than a decade since his last international appearance.

Seldom will you see any cricketer from the IPL generation returning to domestic cricket after being dropped from the national team. That is where Nawab - as Jaffer is fondly called by teammates - stood out from the rest.