

Pakistan, Sri Lanka in T20 Canada Cup final

Canadian opener Rizwan Cheema almost took the match away from the mighty Sri Lankans in the T20 Canada Cup here Sunday.

The Pakistani-born batsman was blazing away with 68 off just 43 balls when Ajantha Mendis removed him to save the match. Chasing 154, Canada fell short by 15 runs in the end, with Mendis claiming four for 17 and winning man of the match.

In another match of the day, Pakistan restricted Zimbabwe to 107 for eight and then leisurely reached their target, winning by seven wickets.

They will meet Sri Lanka in the final, while Canada take on Zimbabwe for the third spot Monday.

Set a target of 154 by Sri Lanka, Canada made a disastrous start, with Dilhara Fernando reducing them to three for 14 in the first three over.

However, Cheema took the attack to Fernando, hammering him for a four and a six in his third over.

To checkmate Cheema, Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene introduced Ajantha Mendis in the fifth over of the innings. But the batsman was unstoppable.

He hoisted Kaushalya Weeraratne for a huge six in his first over. Jayasuriya too came in for similar treatment, conceding three sixes in as many overs as the Canadian opener raced to his 50 in just 34 balls.

As wickets fell at the other end, Cheema kept Canadian hopes alive till he was removed by Mendis for 68.

With Canada at 121 for seven at that stage, Mendis and Dilhara removed the last three wickets for additional 17 runs on the scoreboard.

For Sri Lanka, Jayasuriya again failed to click. But some big hitting by captain Mahela Jayawardene, Dilhara and Kulsekara helped them post 154.

In the other match, Zimbabwe were never a threat to Pakistan except when openers Hamilton Masakadze and Cephaz Zhuwawo were at the crease.

With heavy hitting by Masakadze, the two quickly took the score to 63 when Zhuwawo was removed by Shoaib Malik for 12 in the seventh over.

At the score of 81, Masakadze was run out for 53 in the 12th over. Zimbabwe could only 26 more runs in the next eight overs as Zawad Alam, Shahid Afridi and Umar Gul snapped wickets regularly.

Chasing an easy target of 107, Pakistan lost Shahid Afridi in the second over as the swashbuckling batsman again failed to get going and fell for five.

After this, Shoaib Khan Jr and Salman Butt took the team to the verge of victory when the Pakistan

opener fell for 50 in the 18th over.

With six runs needed of 17 balls, Pakistan reached the target, losing another wicket - Khalid Latif - in the same over.

Shoaib Khan Jr was declared man of the match for his 50.

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