



# THE T20 WORLD CUP

Past and Present

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**T**20 cricket embodies the tastes and traits of both Millennials and Generation Z, in terms of being unpredictable, adept at quick changes and extravagance displayed, and precisely it is what drives the rising popularity of the shorter format of the game. No time wasted, like fast food made and digested in no time, T20 cricket gives close contests, a flurry of towering sixes and scintillating fours, trembling of wickets, and most importantly, the billions of bucks that it generates in just four hours due to its increasing viewership. The Pakistan-India clash in the semi-final of the 2021 T20 World Cup (WC) garnered a record 167 million TV viewership and around 10,000 hours of live coverage on TV and other digital platforms. T20 as a format in international cricket is just 17 years old, and we are already into the 8th edition of mega-events in this format. The 12-team tournament started in Australia on the 22nd of September, Pakistan wrestled with its arch-rival India, and England locked horns with its traditional opponent, the Aussies, in the first week of the event. More nail-biting contests are expected in the next

two weeks, with the final of the tournament scheduled to be played in Melbourne on the 13th of November.

England, Australia, Pakistan and India appear to be the tournament favorites and the forces to be reckoned with. England, the current ODI champions, have the best batting lineup, while Pakistan's bowling has express pace guiled with deceptive slower balls. India's batters can compete with England's but their bowling is an area of concern that will haunt them as the tournament progresses. The strengths of all other teams are kept aside, it is the host country, the defending champion, Australia, which will be a hard nut to crack in this tournament.

Team Pakistan is dependent on the fortress of dependable openers, Babar Azam and Muhammad Rizwan, the most successful opening pair in T20I's history, while its middle and lower order has failed to click since the Asia Cup 2022 despite numerous experiments. The Pakistan Cricket Team

fans have all hopes pinned on the bowling lineup consisting of Shaheen, Harris, Shadab, Nawaz and Naseem, and if the batters support our bowlers, the mercurial boys in green can stun the pundits by lifting the coveted trophy.

If we look at the history of the T20 World Cup, the Caribbean team appears at the top of the table, winning both the 2012 and the 2016 editions of the mega event under Daren Sammy's leadership. The current West Indian team looks like a shadow of its former self from the golden era of West Indian T20 cricket (2012-16) when their lineup had multiple superstars. Sammy, Gayle, Russel, Bravo, Narine, Pollard, Samuels, and others who were instrumental in lifting the trophy twice are not part of the squad anymore.

England won their sole title in 2010 under Paul Collingwood by defeating Australia in the final by seven wickets. Pakistani fans would remember this tournament for the 20th over onslaught against Saeed Ajmal by Aussie southpaw Michael Hussey in the semifinal where the Australian batter belted Ajmal to score 23 when 19 was required off 6 balls. Sri Lanka is another team with a trophy under their belt, winning the mega-event in 2014 under Lasith Malinga by defeating MS Dhoni's India in the final.

Pakistan cricket team was at its cruel best in the first two editions of the T20 WC, played in 2007 and 2009, winning the latter and narrowly losing the final in the former. In the first-ever T20 megaevent in 2007, Pakistan came close to winning the event but that mistimed scoop by Misbah shattered all dreams. Having carried the burden of Pakistan's batting throughout the World Cup, Misbah faltered just 5 runs shy of the target. Pakistan compensated for its nail-biting defeat in the 2007 T20 WC with a rejuvenated performance in the 2009 WC

under Younus Khan to lift their only title. If we look at the standout performers of the T20 World Cups, Asian players seem to dominate. Boom Boom Afridi won the Player of the Tournament award in the 2007 WC and while he won player of the match in the 2009 WC final, he narrowly missed the Player of the Tournament award in 2009. Pakistan's Umer Gul was the leading wicket-taker in the first two editions of the tournament while Misbah and Dilshan were standout batters. England's Kevin Peterson, Pakistan's Babar Azam, Australia's David Warner, West Indies' Marlon Samuels, and Australia's Shane Watson excelled for these respective countries in the upcoming editions. Interestingly enough, India's modern-day great Virat Kohli grabbed Player of the Tournament in both the 2014 and 2016 editions of the WC, while West Indies' Marlon Samuels won Player of the Final in both the 2012 and 2016 World Cups.

Mahela Jayawardene, Gayle, Dilshan, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are the top run-scorers in T20 World Cup history, and it is expected that by the end of the ongoing event, the experienced Indian duo will surpass others ahead of them. The wicket charts are led by Shakib, followed by Shahid Afridi, Malinga, Ajmal, Mendis, and Umer Gul. This list is unlikely to change as Shakib is the only active player from this elite list.

The T20 WC this year so far has been full of action, thrill, glitz and drama, just like the previous editions, and it is hoped that cricket fans get to see high-class performances and close contests. While it is almost impossible to accurately predict champions in cricket, especially in the T20 format, where a bad or good over can change the game in your favor or against you, I feel that Australia and England will be the strongest contenders to lift the 8th edition of T20 WC.