

## Cricket World Cup: England and India in thrilling tie

England tied an extraordinary World Cup game against India in Bangalore thanks to Andrew Strauss' brilliant 158. The co-hosts set an intimidating 339-run victory target after a superb 120 from Sachin Tendulkar. Strauss and Ian Bell (69) put England in command with a 170-run third-wicket stand before Zaheer Khan dismissed both batsmen in successive balls. The tail set up a grandstand finish but England fell one run short of victory after needing 14 from the final over. England wanted 29 from the last 12 balls, having earlier faced a much easier equation of 67 from the last 60, and then two off the final ball but Graeme Swann could only manage a single from Munaf Patel's delivery. The late drama finished off the most enthralling match of the 2011 tournament so far, a game which both teams will feel they should have won.

The much-anticipated, sell-out Group B encounter featured two superbly crafted centuries and a maiden five-wicket limited-overs haul by Tim Bresnan, fast becoming England's most reliable one-day bowler. The tourists' riposte had been constructed around an inspirational individual innings from Strauss, who made the joint-second highest individual score by an England player in a limited-overs international. The England captain, dropped on 22 by Harbhajan Singh, was in imperious form, smashing 13 boundaries and a six in a ruthless 145-ball innings, silencing the fiercely partisan crowd inside the capacity M Chinnaswamy Stadium. But Zaheer struck just when England were about to accelerate their run rate after taking the batting powerplay in the 43rd over. Bell was the first to fall for 69 when he top-edged an off-side scythe to Virat Kohli at extra cover and the very next ball - a brilliant inswinging yorker - trapped Strauss leg before wicket.



The double strike deflated England's innings, but late lower-order hitting from Bresnan and Swann, who each struck timely sixes, left England requiring 14 from the final over of the match. Ajmal Shahzad shifted the odds in England's favour when he struck a six straight back over bowler Munaf Patel's head with the third delivery of the over. A leg-bye, followed by a two from Swann left the same batsman needing two runs from the final delivery of the match - but his off drive could not beat Yusuf Pathan at mid-off, leaving the ninth-wicket pair to run through for the single which tied the match.

The gritty performance against the pre-tournament favourites contrasted vividly with England's uninspired six-wicket victory over the Netherlands on Tuesday. England had only won one of their previous 13 encounters against Sunday's opponents in India - and another defeat looked on the cards when Mahendra Dhoni opted to bat on what appeared to be good wicket, despite the persistent heavy showers which had engulfed Bangalore and the lush green outfield in the previous 48 hours. England made two changes, dropping Ravi Bopara for Michael Yardy while Shahzad was summoned in place of the ill Stuart Broad, and India swapped seamer Sreesanth for leg-spinner Piyush Chawla. The capricious Sehwag (35) gave India a typically ballistic start before an audacious late cut from Bresnan's first over was too close to wicketkeeper Matt Prior, who took an excellent diving one-handed catch to his right in the eighth over at 46-1. New-man Gautam Gambhir, an astute player of spin, maintained Sehwag's

tempo while Tendulkar had been relatively restrained with 24 from 43 deliveries. But a change of bat in the 17th over soon changed matters and 'The Little Master' thumped the first six of the match before bringing up his 94th half century with yet another imperious maximum off Paul Collingwood.

The onslaught was relentless - two successive leg-side sixes off the returning Swann, lofting the first over long-on before dispatching the second with a brutal slog-sweep high over deep midwicket and into the stands as the second-wicket partnership stretched to over 100. An unplayable Swann delivery from around the wicket accounted for Gambhir (51), pitching on middle before gripping and clipping the edge of the left-hander's off stump. But the dismissal caused minimal disruption to Tendulkar's nerves, bringing up his 47th one-day century with a glance off his hip. To put Tendulkar's career achievements in perspective, the entire England XI have 22 one-day centuries between them - and he soon took his tally of sixes to five with a stand and deliver smear over long-on.

The 37-year-old's fine knock came to an end in the 39th over but Yuvraj (58) and Dhoni (31) took India beyond the 300-run mark before the impressive Bresnan cleaned up the lower-middle order as the co-



hosts were dismissed for 338. Facing a required run-rate of 6.78, England openers Strauss and Kevin Pietersen took full advantage of some bizarre field placements by Dhoni, smashing nine boundaries in an exhilarating start. Strauss, given an early lifeline by Harbhajan when he misjudged a tough chance at mid-on, was in particularly belligerent mood square of the wicket. A huge slice of fortune accounted for Pietersen, whose ferocious drive straight at Patel's head was parried in the air before the fast bowler completed a simple one-handed catch while sitting on the ground. With his fast bowlers unable to exert any control, Dhoni turned to spinners Harbhajan and Piyush Chawla to apply the brakes as Strauss notched a run-a-ball 50.

Bell looked at ease alongside Strauss at the wicket, although the number four was fortunate to survive a close lbw call turned down by umpire Billy Bowden at 163-2. India immediately referred the decision and the ball-tracking device available to the third umpire suggested the ball had made contact with Bell's front pad in line with the stumps - but more than 2.5m down the wicket, which saved Bell's wicket even though the ball was predicted to hit middle. That let-off allowed Bell to play an excellent foil as Strauss scored a quite brilliant century from only 99 deliveries, his sixth one-day international three-figure score. Bell launched a laconic sweep over deep midwicket for six to bring up his half century from just 45 deliveries as England dominated. But the match turned in the 43rd over as Zaheer hit back. Collingwood, Prior and Yardy soon followed as England's run chase looked to have faltered, but lusty sixes from the lower-order batsmen ensured England were in contention through the final over. They just could not find that extra run which would have sealed a quite remarkable victory.

## Reflection

I think England had batted beautifully and played competitively well against India. India could have lost the whole match if Graeme Swann could have managed two more runs in the last delivery bowled by Munaf Patel. But unfortunately the match was a tie and both India and England won the game. I am actually quite disappointed at India, and not only me but maybe the whole country of India is because they didn't play up to the expectations. In my opinion, India could have made a bigger total if Sehwag had managed to stay on the pitch and if they bowled well in the second innings then maybe they could have won. But everyone has their bad days and it wasn't all bad for India, so I wish them good luck for their next match! India right now has already won two matches, one against Bangladesh and a draw with England. If they win the next match also, it will be a huge advantage for India in ICC World Cup. According to my knowledge of cricket, I think India batted quite well, but they have to brush up on their bowling skills. The spinners are doing well, but the fast bowlers can't get their ball to swing in the previous and present pitch- in Bangladesh and Bangalore. I think this is a matter of concern to India and MS Dhoni, the captain of the Indian team, did say in a match review that they have to work on their bowlers' bowling more. To me, India did not play well at all in this match and the competition is getting tougher. Every team is making more than 300 runs in less than 50 overs and India has to keep that pace going. Play for your nation, play for your country, play for your nationality and bring the cup back home to where it belongs- in India! Play for that passion and determination inside you, play for those million hopes that are on you and don't disappoint them! Try and fail, but without trying how will you know if you are going to win or fail? Bring the cup back home to where it belongs, and win us the ICC World Cup 2011!