Pooran shines as West Indies beat South Africa in T20i

AFP- Nicholas Pooran smashed an unbeaten 65 from 26 balls as the West Indies defeated an experimental South Africa side by seven wickets in their T20 international at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy Stadium on Friday.
West Indies put the visitors in to bat, in the first of the three match series, and made a strong start with the bowl.

The Caribbean side limited South Africa to 42-5 from the opening eight overs, with seamer Matthew Forde picking up the wickets of Ryan Rickelton (4) and skipper Aiden Markram (14).

But Tristan Stubbs led the fightback with a superb 76 from 42 balls including three sixes.

Stubbs was well supported by Patrick Kruger who struck 44 from 32 balls as South Africa recovered to 174-7 from their 20 overs.

The game had been delayed for over an hour by heavy rain but as the game went on conditions for batting improved and the home side took full advantage.

West Indies went on the attack from the outset with the opening pair of Alick Athanaze (40) and Shai Hope (51) putting on 84 from the opening wicket before Athinaze was removed in the eighth over, caught by keeper Markram off Ottneil Baartman.

Pooran then took the game away from the Proteas with a brilliant display of power hitting, including smashing Burger for four sixes in a row in the 12th over.

Although South Africa gave themselves some chance with the removal of Hope and skipper Rovman Powell (7) the outcome was never in doubt as the home side passed the target with 13

balls to spare.

The positive note for South Africa was the sight of left-arm seamer Kwena Maphaka – the youngest man to make his international debut for the country at 18 years and 137 days – taking the wicket of Powell.

“He has a lot of X-factor and is really young,” said Markram.

“He has hunger when you speak to him off the field and he wants to win games for South Africa,” he added.

The West Indies opted to field a strong side, against the team that eliminated them from this year’s T20 World Cup, with the aim of building a consistent unit ahead of the next World Cup in 2026 in India and Sri Lanka.

But Powell said the focus needed to remain on the shorter term.

“To be honest, a lot of talk is around the next T20 World Cup but we have to play one game at a time and see different players. We have to stay in the process and the next World Cup is too far away for us,” he said.

The second game in the series will be held at the same venue on Sunday

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