

Phillips, Santner shine as New Zealand crush Pakistan in Tri-Series opener



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LAHORE: Glenn Phillips' explosive maiden century and Mitchell Santner's spin magic powered New Zealand to a commanding 78-run victory over Pakistan in the opening match of the tri-nation series on Saturday.

Phillips smashed an unbeaten 106 off 74 balls, blasting seven sixes and six boundaries, as New Zealand posted an imposing 330-6 in 50 overs. He found solid support from Daryl Mitchell (81) and Kane Williamson (58), while Michael Bracewell chipped in with a quick 31 off 23 balls. The visitors hammered 123 runs in the final 10 overs, including 84 in the last five, with Phillips taking 25 off Shaheen Shah Afridi's final over to complete his century.

Shaheen (3-88) struck early, removing Will Young for four, while spinner Abrar Ahmed (2-52) dismissed Rachin Ravindra (25) and later broke Mitchell's dangerous stand. However, New Zealand's middle order ensured a massive total.

In response, Pakistan's chase faltered despite Fakhar Zaman's valiant 84 off 69 balls. Babar Azam, promoted to open, departed early for 10, while Santner's (3-41) spin turned the game on its head, dismissing Kamran Ghulam (18), Mohammad Rizwan (3), and Khushdil Shah (15).

Salman Agha (40) and Tayyab Tahir (30) added 53 for the fifth wicket, but Matt Henry (3-53) and Bracewell (2-41) wrapped up the innings, dismissing Pakistan for 252 in 47.5 overs.

Pakistan also suffered a setback as pacer Haris Rauf left the field with a side strain after bowling just 6.2 overs.

South Africa is the third team in the series, a crucial warm-up ahead of the Champions Trophy starting February 19.