

## Salman Agha to lead T20s, Babar and Rizwan dropped



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The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced the squad for the upcoming tour of New Zealand, with Salman Ali Agha named captain of the T20 team, replacing Babar Azam, while Mohammad Rizwan remains as captain for the One Day International (ODI) format.

The decision comes after widespread criticism following Pakistan's early exit from the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, with losses to India and New Zealand. As part of the strategy for

upcoming tournaments like the ACC Men's T20 Asia Cup 2025 and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, the PCB aims to inject new energy into the T20 side.

T20I captain Salman Agha emphasized the team's shift towards a youthful approach, focusing on fearless, high-risk cricket with a modern mindset. Shadab Khan returns to the T20 squad as vice-captain. The squad features three uncapped players: Abdul Samad, Hasan Nawaz, and Mohammad Ali, all of whom impressed in domestic competitions.

While Babar Azam and Rizwan's exclusion raised eyebrows, interim head coach Aqib Javed stressed the need to embrace a new style of play. He acknowledged the performance issues in the Champions Trophy but affirmed that Babar and Rizwan remain part of the long-term plans.

Injury concerns kept openers Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub out of the tour, though they are expected to be fit for the Pakistan Super League in April. Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf are also absent from the ODI squad.

The teams will compete in five T20s and three ODIs during the tour.