Champions: How the White Ferns stunned South Africa and the world NZ went from a losing streak to World Cup champions – Aiden McLaughlin charts the path to an unlikely triumph and rates our champions

Theme:
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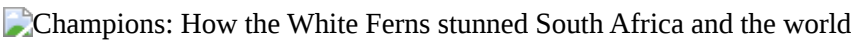

Co-authored by Aiden McLaughlin, LockerRoom

Overview:

NZ win their first T20 World Cup by posting a huge total of 158-5 and knocking over the favoured South Africa for 126-9

Amelia Kerr named player of the match and the tournament

Greats including captain Sophie Devine, Suzie Bates and Lea Tahuhu finally world champions

The Ferns share the winning prize pool of NZ $3.85m or about $250,000 each

It had threatened to be an *annus horribilis* for the White Ferns. Just two competitive wins in 2024 from 19 games. A run of 11 defeats in a row across both T20 and 50-over formats.

England and Australia had been the opposition, arguably the two best teams in the world. But all along captain Sophie Devine was consistent when asked about her side's form. The side were working hard behind the scenes. Many of the individuals were building experience. They just needed a few players to click and the wins would come.

Here we record that phenomenal final, find out how the White Ferns broke through in Dubai, and rate the performances of a special group of champions:

How the final played out

New Zealand are the T20 World Champions after an emphatic, all-round performance in Dubai.

Whatever happened over the course of this final, a new name would be on the trophy, with South Africa and the White Ferns surprising almost all observers to make the big dance.

It was South Africa who won the toss, captain Laura Wolvaardt deciding to bowl first and back her side to chase down whatever total the White Ferns could manage. Importantly, Devine said she would have batted first anyway, a method which has been successful for the White Ferns throughout the competition.

Openers Suzie Bates and Georgia Plimmer looked to make the powerplay count as they have so many times in this World Cup, but Ayabonga Khaka made an early breakthrough, taking the wicket of Plimmer, caught at long-on by Sune Luus to make the score 16-1.

Melie Kerr came in at three and the pair not only steadied the ship, but got to 43-1 at the end of the powerplay, the highest score against South Africa over the first six overs in the tournament.

Bates was next out, bowled by Mlaba while attempting a sweep. She'd hit a valuable 32 off 31 and her dismissal brought Devine out towards the end of the eighth over, but the skipper could only make six before being given out on review, lbw to Nadine de Klerk in the 11th over.

A vital partnership grew between Kerr and new batter Brooke Halliday, bringing up their combined 50 off 37 balls.

Halliday and Kerr fell for 38 and 43 respectively, and the White Ferns were 141-5 with seven balls remaining. Maddy Green hit 12 from six balls including a huge six to bring the team up to 158-5, their second highest total of the tournament.

Openers Wolvaardt and Tazmin Brits were the top two run scorers in the tournament even before they came out to bat and started strongly again, reaching 47-0 at end of the powerplay. It was also the first time the White Ferns hadn't picked up a wicket in the first six overs of this World Cup.

Finally, the breakthrough came in the seventh over, with Brits caught in the deep by Green off Fran Jonas for 17 off 18 balls, the score now standing at 51-1.

Although she didn’t take a wicket, Lea Tahuhu’s second over, the ninth of the innings, was crucial because only one run was scored, suddenly raising the pressure on the South African run rate as they reached the halfway point of their innings.

The dangerous Wolvaardt was out at the start of the next over, Kerr’s second, caught comfortably by Bates at extra cover and there was another huge moment just four balls later. Bosch, the matchwinner against England in the semi-final, out for just nine off 13 balls. She was caught behind by Gaze, after an excellent review to make it 64-3 off 10 overs.

The big hitting Kapp was next to go, caught on the boundary by Plimmer, sweeping Carson. Next ball, de Klerk was out to Mair, 77-5 and the momentum had swung hugely to Devine’s side.

Needing 63 off the last five overs, Devine brought Halliday on for the 16th over and they rewarded with a wicket with her first legal delivery, taking the wicket of Luus and the scoreboard read 97-6.

The tail was unable to wag for South Africa as New Zealand controlled the closing stages, and although the 11 players wouldn’t afford themselves a smile until the last couple of balls, the total of 126-9 was a margin of which they were well in control.

A decisive, convincing 32-run victory in the biggest game of their lives. These White Ferns have climbed their Everest against all the odds and made their country proud.

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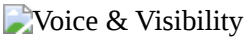

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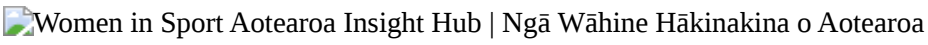
Close panel 

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