

Peru's Llamas come very close to upsetting Division 3 champions Brazil

New Division 3 champions are pushed hard by ever-improving Peru in a 17 run victory to register three wins out of three

Belize snatch second place from hosts Chile in an exciting comeback triumph by 2 wickets

On a beautiful sunny day in Santiago, Chile, the ICC Americas Division 3 championship ended on a high note as two absorbing and entertaining matches were played out in front of a beautiful backdrop of the snow-capped Andes Mountains.

With Brazil already installed as Division 3 champions, major interest focused on the second place shootout between hosts Chile and Belize. The two pre-tournament top seeds, having been upstaged by outsiders Brazil, were both determined to end the event on a high note and claim the silver medal position.

Having won the toss and electing to bat, the Chilean top-order clicked into gear and dominated the early stages of the contest. Promising young all-rounder Tristan Bradbrook batted sublimely for his 48, off 57 balls, with 4 fours and 2 sixes, until lazily pushing a catch to cover. Captain Simon Shalders looked set for another big innings until he was bowled by opposite number Dirk Sutherland for 59, scored off 62 balls, including 9 fours, and Guy Hooper was his customary solid self in compiling a 71-ball innings of 40, with 3 fours.

At 176 for 2 in the 39th over, Chile were strongly set to push on beyond the 250 mark. But right-arm seamer Dirk Sutherland had other ideas, and leading from the front bowled intelligently to end with 5 for 32 in 9 overs, and Chile were perhaps ultimately a little disappointed to end their 50 overs at 223 for 9. Kenroy Roca, the 7 wicket hero of the previous day, again bowled well to take 2 for 36 off his 9 overs.

Although Belize batted brightly, and stayed up with the required run rate, their chase was punctuated with falling wickets, and after 40 overs, they had their backs to the wall at 157 for 8 after 40 overs. Only opener Robert Casasola had provided any resistance with a fine innings of 60, off 120 balls, with 6 fours and 2 sixes.

All the Chilean bowlers had chipped in, with Bradbrook possibly the pick of the bunch, taking 2 for 24 in 8,3 overs, while off-spinner Pablo Mejias was again his usual consistent self, taking 2 for 37 in 10 overs.

Once again however the Belize skipper Dirk Sutherland provided the stubborn resistance to turn the game around, and together with able support from Dorian Gabb, an electric ninth wicket partnership of 67 in only 7 overs turned the game around completely for Belize to grab a 2 wicket win by reaching 224 for 8 in 46,3 overs.

Man of the match Sutherland ended unbeaten on 39, scored off only 24 balls, including 3 fours and 2 sixes, while Gabb was not out on 24, off 20 balls, with 3 fours. Belize thus finished in second place, while hosts Chile had to be content with third.

Although already confirmed as Division 3 winners after their superb triumph against Chile yesterday, Brazil were determined to end the tournament unbeaten as true champions, and not to claim the title on the basis of their head-to-head win the previous day.

Batting first and after winning the toss, Brazil were again indebted to Greigor Caisley and skipper Matt Featherstone for a solid start, putting on 70 runs for the second wicket. After Caisley's departure for 48, scored off 68 balls, with 4 fours and a six, all-rounder Rubabul Islam joined Featherstone to continue their batting dominance in a third wicket partnership of 107.

Featherstone was eventually brilliantly caught on the boundary by veteran John Bell for a man of the match innings of 77, including 6 fours and 2 sixes, while Islam made 39, off 66 balls, with 6 fours. Deodat Randolph added a bright undefeated 38 off only 36 balls, with 3 fours, and Brazil eventually posted 250 for 6 in their 50 overs.

Off-spinner Tony Sanford continued his good bowling form of the tournament, by taking 2 for 51 in his 10 overs, while captain Miles Buesst bowled his seamers with economic effect to finish with 1 for 27 in 9 overs.

Peru immediately showed their customary fighting qualities as Mike Soulsby and Buesst compiled a 99 run second wicket partnership to set the stage for a Peruvian run chase. Buesst made 36 off 62 balls, with 3 fours and a six, while Soulsby completed a deserved half-century, making 57 in 109 balls with 8 fours.

With Chris Abbott chipping in with 24, off 36 balls with 1 four, and Nadeem Ahmed Ansari smashing 29 in only 14 balls, including 4 fours and one huge six, the game was definitely going down to the wire.

But the Brazilian bowlers and fielders kept their heads in a tight finish, and eventually pressured the lower order Peruvian batting into submission and a 17 run victory as Peru ended their 50 overs on 233 for 9. This gave Brazil a second trophy in fact, as they claimed the Copa Amistad (Friendship Cup) in this head-to-head clash between the two countries.

Vince Bastick's gentle left-arm medium returned 4 wickets, for 59 runs in 8.4 overs, while Islam took 2 for 40 in 10 overs, and off-spinner Daniel Miziara bowled excellently to finish with 2 for 45 in 9 overs.

An unsung hero of the triumphant Brazil team was perhaps Daniel Miziara, a 28 year old Brazilian who only picked up the game a few years ago through the Brazil Cricket Association development program. Batting at number eleven on the first day

against Belize, his heroics saw his team to a crucial one wicket victory, while his bowling today against Peru, bowling all of 9 overs and taking 2 for 45 during a critical period of the game, shows just how much potential there is.

Thus Brazilian celebrated their Division 3 triumph in perfect fashion, and the team that entered the four team event as fourth seeds secured a deserved division title against the odds by finishing the event unbeaten.

The Chilean Cricket Association did a wonderful job as hosts, and Chile is a country that will undoubtedly host many more international cricket events in the future. A memorable tournament thus draws to a close, and everyone will surely now be following Brazil's progress at next year's Americas Division 2 event with great interest.

Brief scores:

At Craighouse (B Field): Peru v Brazil

Brazil 250-6, 50 overs (Matt Featherstone 77, Greigor Caisley 48, Rubabul Islam 39, Deodat Randolph 38 not out; Tony Sanford 2-51)

Peru 233-9, 50 overs (Mike Soulsby 57, Miles Buesst 36, Nadeem Ahmed Ansari 29, Chris Abbott 24; Vincent Bastick 4-59, Rubabul Islam 2-40, Daniel Miziara 2-45)

Brazil won by 17 runs

At Craighouse (A Field): Chile v Belize

Chile 223-9, 50 overs (Simon Shalders 59, Tristan Bradbrook 48, Guy Hooper 40; Dirk Sutherland 5-32, Kenroy Roca 2-36)

Belize 224-8, 46.3 overs (Robert Casasola 60, Dirk Sutherland 39 not out, Dorian Gabb 24 not out; Tristan Bradbrook 2-24, Pablo Mejias 2-37)

Belize won by 2 wickets