

KulCha and Shami prove too good for New Zealand

India rides on Dhawan's delightful knock, romps home with plenty to spare



Spin twins: Kuldeep Yadav, right, and Yuzvendra Chahal spun a web around the New Zealand batsmen. ■ AFP

INDIA IN NZ

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NAPIER

A match billed as a runfest was turned upside down by India's spin twins Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal – KulCha – as New Zealand was crushed by eight wickets in the first ODI on Wednesday.

India arrived at the ground with captain Virat Kohli expecting 300-plus to be a par score but when his bowlers rolled over New Zealand for 157 the outcome be-

came a formality. Yadav and Chahal delivered a spin bowling masterclass, mesmerising the New Zealand batsmen and sharing six wickets between them, while Mohammed Shami claimed three as the Kiwis were bundled out with 12 overs remaining.

India's target was reduced by two runs and one over following a 30-minute break when the setting sun blinded the eyes of players and umpires. But the interruption made no difference to Shikhar Dhawan who remained on 75 as India chased down

the target in 34.5 overs. The New Zealand innings folded so quickly that India had time to bat for nine overs before the scheduled break. Rohit was dismissed off the second ball after the interval, with Doug Bracewell making the breakthrough, before the players left the field again when the setting sun reached a dangerously low angle.

When the match restarted, Dhawan, on 31, was dropped by wicketkeeper Tom Latham. It proved a costly error as the left-hander, who passed 5,000 ODI

runs during the course of the innings, went on to make his 26th half-century and take India home.

Early strikes

In the morning, when New Zealand opted to bat, it took Shami only eight deliveries to send back openers Martin Gupthill and Colin Munro before Kuldeep and Chahal worked their magic.

Williamson, often saddled with the task of rescuing his side, reached 64 before falling to Kuldeep who finished with four for 39. Chahal took two for 43, while Shami had

three for 19 off six overs.

Kohli rested

According to a BCCI release on Wednesday, Kohli has been rested for the last two games of the ODI series as well as the T20I series owing to his "workload in the last few months."

Vice-captain Rohit Sharma will lead in his absence.

■ The second ODI will be played on Jan. 26 (Saturday) at Mount Maunganui

Stat attack

India registered its first ODI victory against the Kiwis in New Zealand after 10 years

- Shami is the fastest Indian to reach 100 wickets in ODIs (56 matches), bettering Irfan Pathan who got to the landmark in 59 games. The other Indians to follow are: Zaheer (65), Agarkar (67) and Srinath (68)
- This is Dhawan's first 50-plus score in nine ODIs and, in the process, he became the second fastest Indian to 5000 runs (118 innings) after Kohli (114) in the format
- Kuldeep's figures of 4/39 is the third best by an Indian in ODI in New Zealand, after Kumble (5/33) and Srinath (4/23)
- Kohli (10430, 212 innings) broke into the top-10 in the list of highest ODI scorers, surpassing Lara (10366, 289). For the record, Tendulkar (18426, 452) leads the chart

Shikhar dhawan

SCOREBOARD NEW ZEALAND VS INDIA, FIRST ODI

New Zealand: M. Guptill b Shami 5 (9b, 1x4), C. Munro b Shami 8 (9b, 2x4), K. Williamson c Vijay Shankar b Kuldeep 64 (81b, 7x4), R. Taylor c & b Chahal 24 (41b, 3x4), T. Latham c & b Chahal 11 (10b, 1x4), H. Nicholls c Kuldeep b Jadhav 12 (17b, 1x4), M. Santner lbw b Shami 14 (21b, 1x4, 1x6), D. Bracewell b Kuldeep 7 (15b, 1x4), T. Southee (not out) 9 (12b, 1x6), L. Ferguson st. Dhoni b Kuldeep 0 (3b), T. Boult c Rohit b Kuldeep 1 (10b); Extras (w-2): 2; Total (in 38 overs): 157.

Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Guptill, 1.5 overs), 2-18 (Munro, 3.3), 3-52 (Taylor, 14.3), 4-76 (Latham, 18.5), 5-107 (Nicholls, 23.6), 6-133 (Santner, 29.4), 7-146 (Williamson, 33.1), 8-146 (Bracewell, 33.5), 9-148 (Ferguson, 35.2).

India bowling: Bhuvneshwar 5-0-20-0, Shami 6-2-19-3, Vijay Shankar 4-0-19-0, Chahal 10-0-43-2, Kuldeep 10-1-39-4, Jadhav 3-0-17-1.

India (revised target: 156 in 49 overs): Rohit Sharma c Guptill b Bracewell 11 (24b, 1x4), Shikhar Dhawan (not out) 75 (103b, 6x4), Virat Kohli c Latham b Ferguson 45 (59b, 3x4), A. Rayudu (not out) 13 (23b, 2x4); Extras (lb-5, w-7): 12; Total (for two wickets in 34.5 overs): 156.

Fall of wickets: 1-41 (Rohit, 9.2), 2-132 (Kohli, 28.4).

New Zealand bowling: Boult 6-1-19-0, Southee 6-5-0-36-0, Ferguson 8-0-41-1, Bracewell 7-0-23-1, Santner 7-0-32-0.

Toss: New Zealand.

Man-of-the-Match: Shami.

India won by eight wickets with 85 deliveries to spare (D/L method) to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

When Sun stopped play

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAPIER

After dinner, sun stops play. Sounds bizarre? But this is what happened in the first India-New Zealand ODI at the McLean Park on Wednesday.

India captain Virat Kohli said he had never experienced a sun-induced stoppage in his life.

"Never in my life," he said when asked about the halt due to which the target was revised by two runs and the match shortened by an over.

"It was funny. In 2014, I got out once with the sun in my eyes and this rule wasn't there then," Kohli said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

The decision to halt proceedings was taken after the dinner break of the day-night match, keeping the players' safety in mind, on-field umpire Shaun George said.

"The setting sun was in the eyes of the players and we need to think of their safety. There was an awareness of it by the players (they didn't appeal)."

Normally, the cricket pitches are positioned in the North-South direction to avoid this scenario, but at McLean Park, the pitch is East-West facing.

I am back to my best: Shami

The confidence level is very high, says the India pacer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAPIER

Mohammed Shami has emerged as a strong contender for a World Cup spot and the in-form India pacer on Wednesday attributed his successful ODI comeback to his stellar Test performances over the last 12 months.

Shami had earned a recall to the ODI squad in the home series against the West Indies in October.

Following a brilliant run in the Tests and ODIs in Australia, he carried his form into the opening ODI in New Zealand, taking three wickets for 19 runs.

The 28-year-old has overcome fitness and personal issues to give his best for India.

"It has been a long journey. I played the 2015 World Cup, then got injured and it took me two years to recover.

"After the rehab, I made it to the 2016 World T20 squad. Then after a while, I got full confidence and felt



Cutting through: Mohammed Shami's incisive spell pushed New Zealand on to the backfoot. ■ KERRY MARSHALL/GETTY IMAGES

like I was back on track," said Shami after becoming the fastest Indian to 100 wickets in ODIs.

He may have hit top form but Shami is not losing sleep over a World Cup berth. The big-ticket event is scheduled

to be held in England from May 30. "I am not thinking too far ahead. It depends on my fitness and performance when the team is picked.

"As I said, we have the best bowling unit. They can pick anyone," said Shami.

Karan Johar apologises

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Breaking his silence on the controversy following comments by cricketers Hardik Pandya and K.L. Rahul on his chat show, filmmaker Karan Johar has apologised for what happened and admits the conversation "may have crossed boundaries".

"I'm not justifying the conversation that happened on the episode.

"I'm saying that perhaps things were said that may have crossed boundaries and I apologise because it was my platform where it happened... the ramifications and repercussions of the show are my responsibility," Johar told ET Now in an interview.

"I have had so many sleepless nights, just wondering about how I can undo this damage.

"Who is going to listen to me? It has now gone into a zone that is beyond my control," said Johar.

India-A draws first blood against Lions

Rahane and Ishan help the host get past a challenging total

A. VINOD
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India-A, with its batting depth, made light of a challenging total posted by England Lions to go 1-0 up in the five-match one-day series at the Sports Hub, Kariyattom, on Wednesday.

The three-wicket win that came off the first ball of the final over, chasing 286, was made possible by a solid effort from skipper Ajinkya Rahane's who held the innings together in the early part of the innings, an aggressive innings from Ishan Kishan and cameos from Shreyas Iyer, Anmolpreet Singh and Krunal Pandya.

This, after the visitors were boosted by Lions' skipper Sam Billings' unbeaten 108 after being asked to bat.

Entertaining cricket

The flat wicket, which gave batsmen of either side the opportunity to showcase their skills, provided entertainment all along before the Indians established



Guiding force: Ishan Kishan steered India-A home.

their supremacy. The Englishmen made a positive start, thanks to Alex Davies, Ben Duckett and Sam Hain.

Davies worked his way to a half-century before Billings took over, providing momentum to the innings and reaching a well-deserved century with a heave off Shardul Thakur over long-on. His 108 came off just 104 deliveries and was studded with five boundaries and four beyond it.

As India's reply got underway, Anmolpreet outscored his skipper and kept the side well in control before being dismissed for 33 with the score on 66.

Shreyas kept up the tempo, contributing 45 and adding 73 for the second wicket with Rahane.

The India-A captain was sedate in his approach which only helped the team's cause. However, after he was sent back for 59, the hosts slumped to 166 for four.

But Ishan was his usual self, never pressing the panic button and leading the Indian charge. His stroke-filled unbeaten half-century took the team home.

The second match will be played on Friday.

The scores:

England Lions 285 for seven in 50 overs (Sam Billings 108 n.o., Alex Davies 54, Siddarth Kaul three for 54) lost to India-A 288 for seven in 49.1 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 59, Shreyas Iyer 45, Ishan Kishan 57 n.o., Zak Chappell three for 84).



Remarkable: Staring down the barrel, Pliskova spectacularly turned it around to end Serena's campaign. ■ AFP

Pliskova prevails as Serena stumbles

Osaka storms on; Pouille to meet Djokovic in his first Major semifinal



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Serena Williams's bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title was brought to a halt in sensational style on Wednesday by Karolina Pliskova, even as Lucas Pouille reached his first ever Major semifinal.

The American great folded against the tall Czech seventh seed, who saved four match points before winning 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 under the hot Melbourne sun.

Her reward is a clash against Japan's Naomi Osaka for a place in the final, after the Japanese fourth seed brutally swatted aside the injured Elina Svitolina 6-4, 6-1.

World No. 1 Djokovic enjoyed an early night when Kei Nishikori retired with a thigh

strain, trailing 6-1, 4-1. It kept the Serb's bid for a record seventh Australian title on track and he will now meet French 28th seed Lucas Pouille, who beat power-serving Canadian Milos Raonic 7-6(4), 6-3, 6-7(2), 6-4.

Blowing away match-points

It was a gut-wrenching defeat for Serena, who battled back from a set down and was leading 5-1 in the third and serving for the match, only to throw it away with some wild shots as frustrations bubbled to the surface.

"There's nothing I did wrong on those match points. I stayed aggressive. She just literally hit the lines on some of them," said the dumbfounded 37-year-old, who rolled an ankle but refused to blame it for the defeat.

Since returning last year from giving birth, Serena has made four unsuccessful attempts to match Margaret Court's long-time standing 24

Grand Slam titles.

For Pliskova, it is only her third semifinal at a Major.

She made the last four at Roland Garros in 2017 and the US Open a year earlier, where she beat Serena before losing the final to Angelique Kerber.

"I was almost in the locker-room but now I am standing here as a winner. It is a very good feeling," she said.

Asked about facing Osaka next, Pliskova replied: "She's dangerous but nobody is more dangerous than Serena."

A focused Osaka rolled past Ukraine's Svitolina, who was troubled by neck and shoulder problems. "I tried to be consistent, it's unfortunate that she got injured but playing against her even when she was injured was still really tough," said the 21-year-old.

The win ensured she became the first Japanese woman in the final four since Kimiko Date in 1994.

Djokovic, who is targeting

a 15th Grand Slam title, said he was glad to get off court early.

"As they say, this is exactly what the doctor ordered for me after the match two nights ago," he said. "Not to spend too much time on the court."

A new adventure

Pouille has never won a match in Melbourne before this year but recruiting 2006 champion Amelie Mauresmo is paying off.

"I started a new adventure with my team, with Amelie. I enjoy being on the court again and that is most important," he said.

THE RESULTS

Quarterfinals: Men: 28-Lucas Pouille (Fra) bt 16-Milos Raonic (Can) 7-6(4), 6-3, 6-7(2), 6-4; 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt 8-Kei Nishikori (Jpn) 6-1, 4-1 ret'd.

Women: 7-Karolina Pliskova (Cze) bt 16-Serena Williams (USA) 6-4, 4-6, 7-5; 4-Naomi Osaka (Jpn) bt 6-Elina Svitolina (Ukr) 6-4, 6-1.

Stat attack

The defeat in the quarterfinal was just Serena's second since 2014 at Melbourne Park where she is a seven-time champion, including her most recent triumph in 2017

Serena	Match stats	Pliskova
12	Aces	9
4	Double faults	0
65%	1st serve	79%
4/8	Break points won	5/11
54	Winners	32
37	Unforced errors	15
95	Total points won	102
189 kmh	Fastest serve	182 kmh

4 Number of match points Serena squandered while losing to Pliskova

5-1 The score-line when the American served for the match in the third set

I literally did everything I could on those match points. I can't say that I choked. She literally played her best tennis ever on those shots

SERENA