

India holds the aces in its opener against a wounded South Africa

Kohli's men, rested and refreshed, will be keen to hit the ground running; the Proteas are in a predicament after two defeats and injuries to Steyn and Ngidi



PREVIEW

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
SOUTHAMPTON

It's been a week since the ICC World Cup commenced with the game involving England and South Africa at the Oval. The last few days witnessed a medley of lop-sided clashes and nerve-shredding upsets but India, cricket's commercial heart, was yet to stride onto the turf.

After the Indian Premier League concluded on May 12, Virat Kohli's men rested a bit, jetted to holiday destinations and a few of them lit up their Instagram accounts.

Mixed bag

Once they assembled back in the United Kingdom, two warm-ups were played. The mixed bag featured a defeat against New Zealand and a triumph over Bangladesh.

Finally, India will turn up at the World Cup when it

takes on South Africa at the Hampshire Bowl here on Wednesday.

Interestingly when Kohli addressed the media on Tuesday afternoon, a conch being blown could be briefly heard.

Obviously a fan had sounded out the battle call and the expectations are bound to quadruple.

India holds the aces against a rival that is coping with its present predicament

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THE FACE-OFF					
South Africa vs India					
SOUTHAMPTON					
HEAD-TO-HEAD					
	Matches	SA	Ind	Tied	NR
Overall	83	46	34	0	3
World Cup	4	3	1	0	0

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & SELECT 1 (SD & HD), 3 P.M.

The absence of the injured duo of Dale Steyn and Lungi Ngidi will further hurt the Proteas while Kohli's men step in with added confidence.

Ranked second in the ODI rankings, India is in the top-matrix but it has some worries. In the two practice games, the opening alliance of Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan yielded a mere three and five.

A lot depends on the kind of starts that Rohit and Dhawan can bequeath and the two have it in them to strike big.

Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri would be hoping that the warm-ups were a blip from an otherwise solid pair.

Rahul at No. 4

K.L. Rahul has seemingly cemented himself at the No. 4 spot after scoring 108 against Bangladesh in the practice

game. But he has to do more. With Kohli and perhaps M.S. Dhoni, flanking him on either side at three and five, Rahul has to be both the glue and the spicy sauce.

The all-rounders' quotient is sure to have Hardik Pandya while others like Vijay Shankar and Ravindra Jadeja may get a look-in based on the conditions.

Bumrah's role

Speedster Jasprit Bumrah's role will be huge and India would like to believe that its seamers and wrist spinners are better than what South Africa could fling.

For the Proteas, veteran Hashim Amla, declared fit for the clash, and Faf du Plessis have to excel while Kagiso Rabada helms an attack that is relatively anaemic despite the presence of a wily Imran Tahir.

In England, eyes are equally cast on the pitch and the skies.

The surface here recently ushered in the host's 373 for three and Pakistan's 361 for seven. Yet, with clouds being constant sentinels, the speed merchants can gain additional venom.

Mild drizzle forecast

The forecast hints at mild drizzle and both Kohli and his counterpart du Plessis will gaze at the weather-gauge, when they pick their resources.

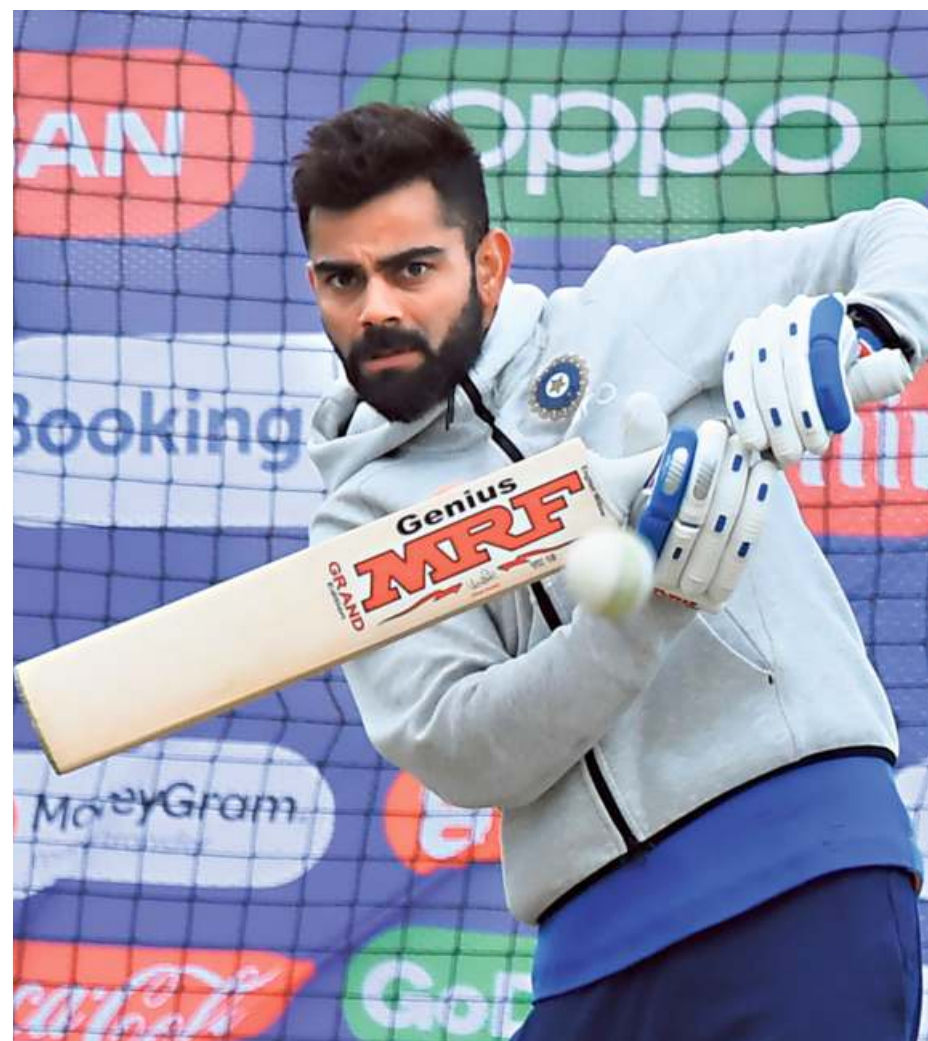
The teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, M.S. Dhoni, K.L. Rahul, Ravindra Jadeja, Kedar Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Hardik Pandya, Vijay Shankar, Jasprit Bumrah, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Shami, Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav.

South Africa: Faf du Plessis (Capt.), Hashim Amla, Quinton de Kock, J.P. Duminy, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Chris Morris, Beuran Hendricks, Imran Tahir, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen and Lungi Ngidi.

Umpires: Richard Kettleborough and Michael Gough; **Third umpire:** Richard Illingworth; **Match referee:** Ranjan Madugalle.

Match starts at 3 p.m. IST.



The battle begins: India skipper Virat Kohli will go into the contest against South Africa with added confidence. •AFP

Happy we are finally going to play, says Kohli

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
SOUTHAMPTON

There was an air of calmness around Virat Kohli. He walked in confidently, took his time to settle down, wore his spectacles and patiently answered the questions. Ahead of the World Cup clash against South Africa, Kohli struck an optimistic note in the pre-match press-conference at the Hampshire Bowl here on Tuesday.

First-up he said: "We are very happy that finally we are going to start playing." And then when asked about South Africa being plagued by injuries, he refused to take the opposition lightly:

"South Africa is very talented, a very dangerous side on their day and even with the replacements, they will be a very strong side."

Fringe benefits

The Indian captain admitted that his unit's late start in the World Cup comes with its share of fringe benefits: "It is a bit of an advantage, I have

of having suffered two losses. The result against England was on expected lines, but the defeat to Bangladesh was a hope-snuffing one.

South Africa has to play remarkably well in the remaining fixtures to stay in contention for a knock-out berth.



Huge responsibility: India's bowling will rest on Jasprit Bumrah's shoulders. •AP

to say, in terms of understanding how the games have gone, what the conditions have to offer, what the over-cast conditions bring into play or when the sun is out.

"It's a totally different ball game altogether (especially) what the conditions are at 10.30 in the morning compared to afternoon. We have had a lot to absorb."

Kohli lauded his squad's

Important to stay strong: du Plessis

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SOUTHAMPTON

World Cup press-conferences may seem as ritual inquiries for South African captains.

In the 2011 edition, Graeme Smith had wet eyes at Dhaka. And on Tuesday, after leading his side to two defeats in the latest championship's opening rounds, and then coping with the update on Dale Steyn being ruled out, Faf du Plessis kept grace as his second skin while the queries probed into his squad's foibles.

The South African skipper said he has to enhance his men's confidence: "It's important to stay strong. The team will feed off my energy and they will look up to the leadership group in the team. But I am at the top of that so it is important that I stay positive."

Ruing the absence of



Faf du Plessis. •AFP

Steyn and Lungi Ngidi, du Plessis said: "We haven't had one game where we have had our strongest II playing on the field yet."

"You still have to make sure your squad is strong and have back-up plans."

The Proteas leader hoped for a turnaround starting with Wednesday's game against India: "I said (winning) six games is the target, so with seven games left, it would be great if we can start that (against India)."

Steyn out of World Cup

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SOUTHAMPTON

Ahead of its crucial game against India, South Africa woke up to the bad news of Dale Steyn being ruled out of the rest of the World Cup.

The ICC's event technical committee through a press-release stated: "Steyn has suffered a second shoulder injury which has not responded to treatment and has ruled him out of bowling for the foreseeable future. His replacement (Beuran Hendricks is a left-arm fast bowler."

Later, the South African team manager Mohammed Moosajee explained: "Dale's case has been unique. We know that upon his return from the IPL, due to shoulder discomfort he had numerous scans done which didn't reveal anything of significance, aside from chronic,

inflammatory changes.

"However, upon our arrival into the United Kingdom, once he started bowling, a different problem emerged, what we call a shoulder impingement syndrome.

"He consulted an orthopaedic specialist in London, had an injection in the problematic area which unfortunately did not resolve the symptoms. So a decision was made to replace him."

Steyn has battled various injuries over the last two years and at 35, another round of rehabilitation and recovery, can be gut-wrenching. He did bowl in the nets at the Hampshire Bowl here on Monday evening, but with doubts persisting about his ability to sustain intensity during a second spell, the team management had no other choice but to seek a replacement.

Buoyant Bangladesh meets New Zealand

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has set his sights on a memorable 200th ODI as his side chases a second successive win when it takes on New Zealand on Wednesday.

Shakib was the key man when Bangladesh upset South Africa by 21 runs in its opening match on Sunday. His 75 helped steer Bangladesh to its highest ODI score (330 for six).

THE FACE-OFF					
Bangladesh vs New Zealand					
THE OVAL					
HEAD-TO-HEAD					
	Matches	Ban	NZ	Tied	NR
Overall	34	10	24	0	0
World Cup	4	0	4	0	0

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 3, 6 P.M.

Sri Lanka survives Afghan scare

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CARDIFF

Sri Lanka recovered from a dramatic batting collapse to knock over Afghanistan for 152 and seal a 34-run win for its first victory on Tuesday.

The Sri Lankans imploded from 144 for one to 201 all out in an innings delayed by nearly three hours because of rain at Sophia Gardens in the Welsh capital.

Chasing a revised target of 187 from a maximum 21 overs, Afghanistan slumped from 34 for no loss to 57 for five and battled back through a 64-run stand between Gulbadin Naib (23) and Najibullah Zadran (43).

Next assignment

AFGHANISTAN: June 8 vs New Zealand, Taunton, 6 p.m.

SRI LANKA: June 7 vs Pakistan, Bristol, 3 p.m.

Sri Lanka again responded and took the final five wickets for 31 runs, with recalled seamer Nuwan Pradeep taking four for 31.

The 1996 World Cup winner had lost its opening group game to New Zealand by 10 wickets.

Afghanistan has two defeats from two matches, after a loss to Australia on Saturday. The error-strewn match

on Tuesday featured 52 extras - Sri Lanka's 35 was the second-highest scorer in its innings - to strengthen the feeling this was a contest between the two teams likely fighting to avoid last place in the 10-team group.

The Afghans' only win at a World Cup remains the one over Scotland in 2015 but they'll feel this match slipped from their grasp, especially when Sri Lanka was reeling at 159 for three after three wickets in an over from Mohammad Nabi.

Sri Lanka, which made the fastest 10-over start of this edition by racing to 79-0, lost its last nine wickets for 57 runs in 15.4 overs.

SCOREBOARD		SRI LANKA VS AFGHANISTAN	
SRI LANKA	159 (Thisara Perera, 25.4), 7-178 (Udana, 31.3), 8-180 (Kusal Perera, 32.2), 9-199 (Malinga, 35.6).	AFGHANISTAN BOWLING	Dawlat 6-0-34-2, Hamid 7-0-53-1, Mujeeb 3-0-19-0, Nabi 9-0-30-4, Naib 4-0-38-0, Rashid 7.5-1-17-2.
AFGHANISTAN	Mohammad Shahzad c Karunaratne b Malinga 7 (12b, 1x4), Hazratullah Zazai c Thisara Perera b Pradeep 30 (25b, 3x4, 1x6), Rahmat Shah c Mathews b Udana 2 (11b), Hashmatullah Shahidi c Kusal Perera b Pradeep 4 (77b), Mohammad Nabi b Thisara Perera 11 (16b, 1x4), Gulbadin Naib lbw b Pradeep 23 (32b, 2x4), Najibullah Zadran run out 43 (56b, 6x4), Rashid Khan b Pradeep 2 (4b), Dawlat Zadran b Malinga 6 (18b, 1x4), Hamid Hassan b Malinga 6 (5b, 1x6), Mujeeb Ur Rahman (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (b-1, w-15, nb-1): 17; Total (in 32.4 overs): 152.	FALL OF WICKETS	1-34 (Mohammad Shahzad, 4.4 overs), 2-42 (Rahmat, 7.5), 3-44 (Zazai, 8.4), 4-57 (Shahidi, 12.5), 5-57 (Naib, 13.4), 6-121 (Naib, 24.5), 7-123 (Rashid, 26.1), 8-136 (Dawlat, 30.4), 9-145 (Najibullah, 31.6).
SRI LANKA BOWLING	Malinga 6-0-27-0, Udana 6-0-28-1, Pradeep 9-1-31-4, Thisara Perera 4-0-19-1, Dhananjaya de Silva 1-0-7-0.	SRI LANKA WON BY 34 RUNS	(DLS method). Toss: Afghanistan. MoM: Nuwan Pradeep. Match reduced to 41 overs.

The India lens

As Kohli's men start their campaign, hoping to win India's third title in 12 editions, a look at some iconic moments from the past World Cups. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

<p>1975 Played 3 Won 1</p> <p>Gavaskar remained unbeaten on 36 runs off 174 balls in reply to England's mammoth 334 in India's first ever World Cup match</p> <p>Top batsman: Gavaskar Runs 113 Avg. 113 S.R. 41.24</p> <p>Top bowler: Abid Ali Wkts 6 Avg. 19.16 Econ. 3.19</p>	<p>1979 Played 3 Won 0</p> <p>G. Viswanath's 75 against West Indies in the first match was the individual top score for an Indian in that tournament</p> <p>Top batsman: Viswanath Runs 106 Avg. 35.33 S.R. 51.45</p> <p>Top bowler: Amarnath Wkts 4 Avg. 28.5 Econ. 3.61</p>	<p>1983 Played 8 Won 6</p> <p>Kapil Dev played a majestic knock of 175 off 138 balls against Zimbabwe after India was reduced to 17 for 5. The knock played a key role in inspiring the team to go on and win the tournament</p> <p>Top batsman: Kapil Dev Runs 303 Avg. 60.6 S.R. 108.99</p> <p>Top bowler: Binny Wkts 18 Avg. 18.66 Econ. 3.81</p>	<p>1987 Played 7 Won 5</p> <p>Chetan Sharma became the first batsman to claim a hat-trick in the World Cup. From 181 for 5, New Zealand was reduced to 181 for 8 after his spell</p> <p>Top batsman: Gavaskar Runs 300 Avg. 50 S.R. 79.15</p> <p>Top bowler: Maninder Singh Wkts 14 Avg. 20 Econ. 4</p>	<p>1992 Played 8 Won 2</p> <p>The More-Miandad spat, where the Pakistani batsman imitated the Indian keeper's appeals, was a much-talked about incident</p> <p>Top batsman: Azharuddin Runs 332 Avg. 47.42 S.R. 78.11</p> <p>Top bowler: Prabhakar Wkts 12 Avg. 20.41 Econ. 4.28</p>	<p>1996 Played 7 Won 4</p> <p>India's collapse in the semifinals led to an angry crowd misbehaving. The referee offered the contest to Sri Lanka. Vinod Kambli left the ground in tears</p> <p>Top batsman: Tendulkar Runs 523 Avg. 87.16 S.R. 85.87</p> <p>Top bowler: Kumble Wkts 15 Avg. 18.73 Econ. 4.03</p>	<p>1999 Played 8 Won 4</p> <p>Sourav Ganguly (183) and Rahul Dravid's (145) partnership for the second wicket against Sri Lanka remains fresh in memory</p> <p>Top batsman: Dravid Runs 461 Avg. 65.85 S.R. 85.52</p> <p>Top bowler: Srinath Wkts 12 Avg. 26.08 Econ. 4.26</p>	<p>2003 Played 11 Won 9</p> <p>The crushing defeat in the final against Australia broke many hearts. Despite a first over dismissal in the last match, Tendulkar was adjudged player of the tournament</p> <p>Top batsman: Tendulkar Runs 673 Avg. 61.18 S.R. 89.25</p> <p>Top bowler: Zaheer Khan Wkts 18 Avg. 20.7 Econ. 4.23</p>	<p>2007 Played 3 Won 1</p> <p>Arguably one of the worst World Cup performances by India, which crashed out in the league stage after crushing defeats against Sri Lanka & Bangladesh</p> <p>Top batsman: Sehwag Runs 164 Avg. 54.66 S.R. 117.98</p> <p>Top bowler: Zaheer Khan Wkts 5 Avg. 24.4 Econ. 4.2</p>	<p>2011 Played 9 Won 7</p> <p>Gautam Gambhir steadied the ship after initial jolts but it was Captain Dhoni's unbeaten 91 and the six to seal the victory in the final against Sri Lanka that stood out</p> <p>Top batsman: Tendulkar Runs 482 Avg. 53.55 S.R. 91.98</p> <p>Top bowler: Zaheer Khan Wkts 21 Avg. 18.76 Econ. 4.83</p>	<p>2015 Played 8 Won 7</p> <p>India won all the league games but could not get past the hosts Australia in the semifinals. Dhoni's dream to win two titles-in-a-row were dashed</p> <p>Top batsman: Dhawan Runs 412 Avg. 51.5 S.R. 91.75</p> <p>Top bowler: Umesh Yadav Wkts 18 Avg. 17.83 Econ. 4.98</p>
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IN BRIEF



Archer and Roy fined for dissent

NOTTINGHAM
England pacer Jofra Archer and batsman Jason Roy have been fined 15% of their match fee for showing dissent towards the umpire and using audible obscenities respectively during their World Cup match against Pakistan at Trent Bridge. Pakistan captain Sarafraz Ahmed has also been fined 20% for a minor over rate offence in the same game. AFP



Root urges England to keep calm

NOTTINGHAM
Joe Root urged England to keep calm and carry on after a surprise 14-run loss to Pakistan on Monday. "The most important thing now for us as a group is not to panic," he told reporters. "We know what works for us as a formula, and as a team, but other sides are allowed to play well and we've got to make sure we learn quickly and bounce back at Cardiff." AFP

Hasan Ali hails coach Arthur for turnaround

NOTTINGHAM
Hasan Ali said Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur's ongoing faith in the side was behind a stunning reversal of fortune that saw it end a long losing streak. "We were very disappointed we lost 11 games in a row but one thing is very important, we believed in ourselves," he said. "We needed just a little bit of kick and then we will click. We got that kick. But one thing is very important, which is our coach is always backing us. That moment turned us as everyone was confident." AFP

'India, England are favourites'

Desmond Haynes says the present Windies team can be a major threat



Expert'speak: Desmond Haynes says Jason Holder's squad has the batting wherewithal to go far. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

WC EXTRAS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

Former West Indian opener Desmond Haynes believes India and England are the two favourites to win the World Cup. In an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*, the 63-year-old, in India as an expert on the Power Sportz TV (Delhi), India's first digital sports news channel, shares his thoughts on the World Cup. **Present West Indies team as compared to the teams of the golden era:** It's difficult to compare, but I think that the 1975 team and the team I was involved with in the 1979 World Cup under Clive Lloyd were the best teams the world has ever seen.

West Indies' chances: I would like them to win. My doubts are about the bowling. But, the best part is this team is not thinking in terms of containing but taking wickets in the early part of the game. And, they can chase big totals too with the kind of batting line-up they

have. A team which can be a major concern for other contenders.

On Chris Gayle: He has made a big difference to the side and can be a game-changer. I believe the dressing room is in good spirits as well. A lot more guys might make sure that they just give Chris Gayle a 'going away package' and celebrate in West Indies style.

Top three contenders: England is a very good side with a strong batting line-up and in familiar conditions. Aussies are always going to be in contention. And India is a very strong team. Both England and India are the favourites with the dark horses being New Zealand and Pakistan, who are so unpredictable.

Your most memorable World Cup... My first one in 1979 because we won! **...and most disappointing?** I think the 1983 edition. When we were chasing 183 runs against India and we lost. And, since then, every person I know from India has never let me forget that!

Federer and Nadal to square-off for the 39th time

Konta becomes first British woman in 36 years to make the last four, meets Vondrousova

ROLAND GARROS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Roger Federer set up a mouthwatering French Open semifinal clash with Rafael Nadal on Tuesday when he defeated Stan Wawrinka in four sets to become the oldest men's Grand Slam semifinalist in 28 years.

The 37-year-old Swiss beat his compatriot 7-6(4), 4-6, 7-6(5), 6-4 to reach his 43rd Major semifinal and eighth at Roland Garros.

Defending champion Nadal, bidding for a 12th title at the French Open, blitzed a weary Kei Nishikori 6-1, 6-1, 6-3.

Stranglehold

Federer trails his head-to-head record with Nadal 23-15 - despite winning their last five matches - and 13-2 on clay. The Spaniard has a 5-0 stranglehold over Federer at Roland Garros with Nadal winning their most recent Paris clash in the 2011 final.

"The complete dream would be to win the tournament," said Federer. "Other players won't agree. It will be difficult, but I believe it anyway."

"It was hard, really, really hard. Stan played a really good match, I'm very happy to play him here at Roland Garros," said Federer.

Oldest since Connors

The 20-time Grand Slam champion is the oldest man to make the semis at one of the big four tournaments since Jimmy Connors at the 1991 US Open aged 39. It will be Federer's first semifinal here since a defeat by Novak Djokovic in 2012.

Wawrinka saved 16 of 18 break points in a thrilling encounter, but Federer quickly finished off the match after a rain delay to progress.

It is the third seed's first appearance at the French Open since 2015 after taking time away from clay to focus



Pulling through: Roger Federer, right, came through his first serious test on his return to the French Open as he subdued some fierce Stan Wawrinka resistance on Tuesday. ■AFP

on Wimbledon, but he has been in fine form in Paris and has only lost one set so far - as has Nadal.

Nadal, who turned 33 on Monday, is three behind Federer in the all-time list of Grand Slam singles titles heading into their 39th career clash.

Nadal took his record in Paris to 91 wins and just two defeats in a one-sided contest with Nishikori to reach his 31st Slam semifinal.

"It's a great satisfaction to be in another semifinal,

there are lots of emotions," said Nadal. "My level has been very good throughout the tournament and I am happy to be able to come back and play another day."

Tuesday's win was Nadal's 11th in 13 meetings against the Japanese seventh seed who had played back-to-back five-setters to reach his third quarterfinal here.

Tired out

He had spent four more hours on court than Nadal and the efforts took their toll

as he needed treatment on an upper right arm injury after the second set.

Emulating Durie

Earlier, 26th seed Johanna Konta became the first British woman since Jo Durie in 1983 to reach the Roland Garros semifinals when she swept past Sloane Stephens of the United States 6-1, 6-4.

The 28-year-old Konta, who had not won a match here in any of her previous four visits, now finds herself in her third semifinal at a



Relentless: Johanna Konta reeled off more than twice as many winners as Sloane Stephens in her quarterfinal victory. ■REUTERS

The complete dream would be to win the tournament. It will be difficult, but I believe it anyway.

- ROGER FEDERER

Slam after runs to the last-four at the 2016 Australian Open and Wimbledon in 2017.

"To play on the new Charrier court for the first time was wonderful especially against one of the world's best players," said Konta after her third win in 2019 over Stephens.

Konta made sure of emulating Durie by breaking former US Open champion Stephens in the fourth and sixth games of the first set. The Briton fired four aces and 12 winners past her 26-year-old opponent in the 35-minute opener.

The 26th seed tightened her grip with a break in the opening game of the second set and that proved more than enough.

Such was Konta's domination that she allowed Stephens just one point on her serve in the entire second set which ended with a whimper when the American sent a groundstroke wide of the mark.

I'm always going to have a shot. I don't think any player can go on court against me and feel like they've definitely got it. I definitely back myself.

- JOHANNA KONTA

THE RESULTS

Quarterfinals: Men: 3-Roger Federer (Sui) bt 24-Stan Wawrinka (Sui) 7-6(4), 4-6, 7-6(5), 6-4; 2-Rafael Nadal (Esp) bt 7-Kei Nishikori (Jpn) 6-1, 6-1, 6-3.

Women: 26-Johanna Konta (GBr) bt 7-Sloane Stephens (USA) 6-1, 6-4; Marketa Vondrousova bt 31-Petra Martic 7-6(1), 7-5.

Six lessons for India from the Pakistan-England match



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

Whether or not India flexed considerable muscle to ensure their inaugural match would be played nearly a week into the World Cup matters little now.

England, South Africa and Pakistan have already played twice each, and if the International Cricket Council bent over backwards to ensure that India had the Lodha-mandated number of 15 free days between the IPL and the World Cup, then that is something for the ICC to deal with. India are, after all, the ICC's favourite child, and being in-

cluded is nothing new.

As it happened, the IPL final was held on May 12, but the original date of May 19 would have caused problems. Schedules are worked out months in advance, and so are possible roadblocks. The governing body's role before a major tournament is to keep the team free of all distractions.

England's nerves might have let them down against Pakistan on Monday; fielding is usually the first to go, and England's fielding was appalling. There are lessons from that match for India as they prepare to play their first in the tournament.

Most people who thought a total of 500 would be breached for the first time in an ODI had picked England as the team most likely to get there at this World Cup. Virat Kohli did so too, as he indicated when the captains met before the tournament began. But making 500 (if one assumes England are going to,

for the sake of argument) in the first innings is vastly different from chasing 350, a total England couldn't get to despite two of their batsmen making centuries.

No Pakistan batsmen played with either the simple elegance of Joe Root or the authority of Jos Buttler. It didn't matter. The scoreboard is a great leveller, telling us how much rather than how, and what happened rather than what might have been.

Lesson No. 1: Quantity is better than quality.

According to England's analyst, they saved 64 runs against South Africa in the opening match, but conceded 17 extra runs in the field against Pakistan (they lost by 14 runs). Fielding statistics are still evolving, but misfields are being plotted by analysts.

Then of course there was Jason Roy's dropped catch when Mohammad Hafeez was on 14; he added another 70

runs. Pakistan did drop Root on nine, and had England won, that might have been the focus. Games are played forward, however, while analysts join dots in retrospect. Teams will drop catches, misfield, even concede overthrows - but winning teams usually do fewer of these.

Lesson No. 2: Close matches will hinge on fielding.

Pakistan's best bowler went for 53 in 10 overs while claiming two wickets. This was Hafiz or Maleez, a combination of (Mohammed) Hafeez and (Shoaib) Malik, two off spinners in a format that apparently has little time for the type.

More importantly, both are batsmen who bowl, a hint for India perhaps that playing Ravindra Jadeja ahead of Kuldeep Yadav might pay greater dividends because of the former's batting.

Lesson No. 3: Sometimes two half-bowlers who can bat are better than one full

bowler who cannot.

England's last five batsmen added 54 (Pakistan's scored 46), which is below par in a 300-plus chase. Teams tend to lose wickets in a bunch in such a situation, and the lack of a big hitter in the lower half of the batting told. Hardik Pandya apart, India do not have a consistent six-hitter lower down, which might have a bearing in a chase.

Lesson No. 4: Teams who have a designated slogger in the bottom half can sometimes make up for weaknesses in the middle order.

Both teams played at least two spinners. It is usually a good idea to follow what a host country does simply because they know the conditions best. It may not be the ideal plan, even in England, to play four medium pacers and a single spinner.

India's handicap is that no one in the top five bowls. Pakistan had Mohammed Hafeez, England Ben Stokes.

India might play Kedar Jadhav at five which seems a bit too high in the order for him. Mahendra Singh Dhoni might be the better fit there.

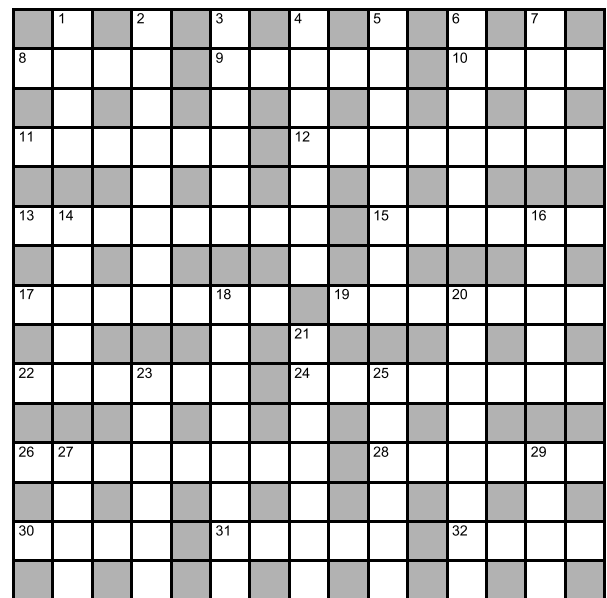
Lesson 5: Balance is the key in team selection.

There are very few batsmen in the world - Virat Kohli is one, Joe Root another, Kane Williamson a third - whose batting is so well organised that they do not have to be overtly aggressive in the white ball game. They find gaps, they run smartly, they hit the odd six, they keep pace with the run rate without too much effort.

But among 150 players at the World Cup, they are the exceptions. For the rest, the well-practised heave-ho is a necessary part of the armour. The Indian lower order will have to practise their six-hitting skills, something batsmen in the IPL do routinely.

Lesson 6: Six appeal can be cultivated.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12644



- (set by Incognito)
- 12 Dreams about one gas mine explosion (8)
 - 13 Queen was winner: Number one at first (8)
 - 15 Singes metamorphosed rock (6)
 - 17 Write stories about a book on special abilities (7)
 - 19 A shrink destroyed a flower (7)
 - 22 Decorative ball made by two Englishmen in Australia (3-3)
 - 24 Record FIR about theft of furniture (8)
 - 26 Couple permitted to get ornament (8)
 - 28 Team's mid-morning snack time (6)
 - 30 Fencing weapon initially possessed by French or Italian legionnaire (4)
 - 31 Eels left undulating shoreline for large animal (5)
 - 32 Pearl S. Buck's captive nobleman (4)
 - 3 Cradle snatching lady's large cat (6)
 - 4 Prayer I composed for river (7)
 - 5 After losing money, the Boston criminal became an unknown person (8)
 - 6 Nothing is hidden in the military airfield (6)
 - 7 Little Michael's little microphone (4)
 - 14 State identity before first appointment in front of Head Office (5)
 - 16 Remits small tips (5)
 - 18 Drunk butlers carry money in drinking glasses (8)
 - 20 Doctor seeks coy fishes (8)
 - 21 Sailors and reserves lead Indian refrain (7)
 - 23 Select the French condiment (6)
 - 25 Mineral not fully exhausted in the US state (6)
 - 27 King follows Australian animal/bird (4)
 - 29 Money possessed by neurologists (4)

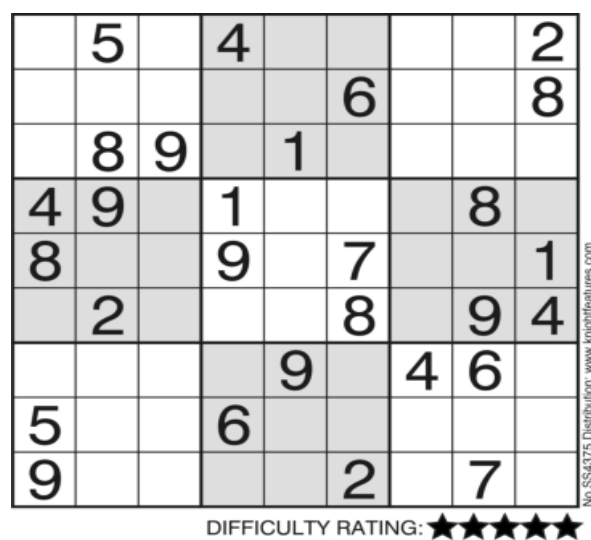
ACROSS

- 8 Personal maintenance implement made by company doctor (4)
- 9 Open and complete initial task (5)
- 10 Head-waiter's personal contribution found in the soup? (4)
- 11 Including a dead director in grave opening (6)

DOWN

- 1 Good French duke's investment (4)
- 2 Bathes in cocktail drink (8)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12643

A	M	S	S	E	C	G		
A	M	L	A	T	A	U	N	T
M	N	A	C	H	S	A	O	M
M	O	N	D	A	C	H	E	M
A	O	E	R	N				
T	S	A	R	I	N	A	S	E
H	I	S	A	T				
M	E	A	N	D	E	R		
L	I	P	O	N	C	E	M	O
S	L	I	P	O	N	C	E	M
R	O	U	L	E	T	T	E	
A	A	H	I	E	E	X		
C	H	I	C	I	N	N	E	R
U	E	C	E	T	O	M		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	3	6	8	5	9	1	4	7
4	9	1	2	3	7	6	5	8
5	8	7	6	1	4	9	3	2
9	6	4	5	7	1	8	2	3
3	1	8	9	4	2	5	7	6
7	2	5	3	6	8	4	1	9
6	4	2	7	9	5	3	8	1
8	5	3	1	2	6	7	9	4
1	7	9	4	8	3	2	6	5

FAITH

Ramzan's message

After 30 days of fasting during the holy month of Ramzan, Id-ul-Fitr (festival of charity) is celebrated on the sighting of the Shawal crescent. Muslims congregate at mosques and id-gahs for special prayers, standing shoulder to shoulder, exemplifying the fact that all are one before God. Id is a day of thanksgiving. Before feasting and rejoicing, paying fitra (alms) represents generosity. Instilled with the doctrine that Faith coupled with humility in prayer, charity, abstinence from vanity, strict probity, Muslims seek to repel evil by goodness. Every sin a Muslim commits will be counted against him on the day of judgment, so the fallible purge themselves of evil during Ramzan and redeem themselves through good deeds. Muslims celebrate the day spiritually enhanced, having cultivated a desire to get nearer to Allah. By praying they seek forgiveness and by fasting they cleanse the soul, learn self-restraint and humility. Fasting keeps animal propensities in check. Fasting during Ramzan burns up greed in the fire for Allah.

The Almighty provides guidance, and the signposts indicating the right path are prayer, fasting and zakath during Ramzan. Just as prayer purifies one's life, fasting builds inner character. Zakath (charity) is a means of wealth purification. It is not a tax but a form of worship. Muslims are encouraged to engage in acts of worship and charity, and the last ten nights of Ramzan are the best, as Laylatul-Qadr (night of power) is among them. On this night, the Koran was revealed to Prophet Mohammed. Special prayers are said at night, where the Koran is recited. Worshipping on this night is equated with doing so for a thousand months. The righteous acts wipe out sins from the book of deeds.

- M.O. Badsha