

Rain takes over after Williamson and Taylor lead Kiwi fightback

The match will resume at the same stage on Wednesday, the reserve day, weather permitting



Not a pleasant sight: New Zealand had made 211 for five in 46.1 overs when rain stopped play and the covers had to be brought on. ■ AFP



No clue: Henry Nicholls is cleaned up by a beauty from Ravindra Jadeja. ■ REUTERS



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MANCHESTER

It was a Tuesday of slow runs, damp weather and the long wait. Under grim skies that made illuminated floodlights a mandatory accessory to the World Cup semifinal, India tightened the screws on New Zealand.

Old Trafford's dry pitch was on the slower side and the niggardly Men in Blue restricted the Black Caps to 211 for five in 46.1 overs when a steady drizzle gained strength and forced umpires Richard Illingworth and Richard Kettleborough to stop play at 2 p.m. local time.

The rains that wavered between the feathery drops and the insistent pitter-patter, continued unabated till 4.15 p.m. when the sun grudgingly peeped out.

While the match officials hoped for an extended dry phase so that India could commence an abridged chase with a revised target based on the Duckworth-Lewis Method, a fresh wet spell just as the umpires were inspecting the turf at 6.10 p.m., affected revival-plans and it was decided to resume the face-off on Wednesday, which is the reserve day.

Earlier in the morning despite a cloud cover and a nip in the air, boisterous Indian fans jostled on the roads, yelled patriotic slogans and belted out a rhyme in Rohit Sharma's honour while WhatsApp was flooded with one query: "will it rain?"

A cacophony of noise erupted from the stands as Kane Williamson won the toss, opted to bat and Martin

Guptill and Henry Nicholls strode towards the crease.

First-ball drama

The first ball was all drama. Expectations and anguish tailed it as Bhuvneshwar Kumar, surprisingly preferred over Mohammed Shami, rapped Guptill's pad. The appeal was negated, the review went in vain and Twitterati blamed the seamer. Meanwhile, Jasprit Bumrah did his shock and choke routine and a wicket seemed imminent.

The premonition proved true when Bumrah got one to jag, rise a bit and Guptill, not

sure if he had to play or leave, edged to Virat Kohli's left at second slip and the Indian captain caught well. New Zealand was one for one in the fourth over and Williamson walked in, needing to validate his decision of taking first strike besides sealing the first crack.

Bumrah's delivery slid past the rival skipper's willow and the fielders let out an "oooooh". Having survived that maiden inquisition, Williamson (67) remained unfazed except when a fly tried to make a home out of his helmet. The batsman got the

pest out of his eye-line, nudged the singles, lent confidence to Nicholls and a steady 68-run second-wicket partnership took shape.

Amidst the ennui of dot balls, came the relief of two fours. Nicholls cover-drove Bumrah but the acme was Williamson's straight drive off Bhuvneshwar. Elegance shimmered in that shot and it was time to quote John Keats: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Joining forces

India's first-change bowlers Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja were in operation and the former was cut and pulled by Williamson while the latter appealed often. Still, the run-rate stayed below four and a noose hovered close. Just as New Zealand was turning stable, Nicholls missed one from Jadeja and the stumps were disturbed. New Zealand placed at 69 for two in the 19th over and Ross Taylor (67 batting) joined

forces with his captain.

Meanwhile, India suffered a scare as Pandya held his left leg and gingerly retreated to the dressing room. Thankfully for Kohli's men, the all-rounder returned while Yuzvendra Chahal struggled with a few wides. Taylor blocked while Williamson slog-swept the leg-spinner. Another inevitable 50 was Williamson's to savour and after that he topped a pull off Pandya for four and Taylor's snick off Bumrah dipped just before a diving M.S. Dhoni could get a glove to it.

Sense of urgency

Williamson slog-swept Jadeja and just as he was trying to infuse urgency, the 65-run third-wicket partnership concluded. An attempted drive off Chahal ended up as a slice to Jadeja at backward point. Wobbling at 134 for three in the 36th over, New Zealand was still searching for its springboard.

Much hinged on Taylor

and all-rounder James Neesham but the latter struggled against bouncers. One such short-pitched projectile consumed the southpaw and Pandya found his reward. New Zealand needed a considerable push and Taylor complied, hammering a six

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND

Martin Guptill c Kohli b Bumrah 1 (14b), Henry Nicholls b Jadeja 28 (51b, 2x4), Kane Williamson c Jadeja b Chahal 67 (95b, 6x4), Ross Taylor (batting) 67 (85b, 3x4, 1x6), James Neesham c Karthik b Pandya 12 (18b, 1x4), Colin de Grandhomme c Dhoni b Bhuvneshwar 16 (10b, 2x4), Tom Latham (batting) 3 (4b); Extras (lb-4, w-13): 17; Total (for five wkts. in 46.1 overs): 211.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-1 (Guptill, 3.3 overs), 2-69 (Nicholls, 18.2), 3-134 (Williamson, 35.2), 4-162 (Neesham, 40.6), 5-200 (de Grandhomme, 44.4).

INDIA BOWLING

Bhuvneshwar 8.1-1-30-1, Bumrah 8-1-25-1, Pandya 10-0-55-1, Jadeja 10-0-34-1, Chahal 10-0-63-1.

Toss: New Zealand.

Play to resume on Wednesday.

upon the venue, extended the long delayed climax into Wednesday.

England in a good place, says Root

IAN S
BIRMINGHAM

England's Joe Root is feeling confident that both recent and distant history have the tournament host ready for revenge in the rematch against Australia in the second semifinal of the World Cup.

England was downed convincingly by its fiercest rivals at Lord's last month and looked in serious danger of missing the semifinals at its home tournament.

However, back-to-back wins over India and New Zealand turned the tables.

England has lost its last two clashes with Australia,

including a warm-up game ahead of the World Cup, but before that Root & Co. had the edge with a series win down under and a 5-0 white-wash on home soil.

"If you look at the past 11 games against them we have won nine," Root was quoted as saying by the ICC. "These guys and this group over the last four years, their experience against Australia have been very positive and they have got a lot of success in the bank. We will be drawing on the fact that over a long period of time now we have been successful against Australia and we should take that into Thursday."



Match-ready: Joe Root feels England is primed to exact revenge on Australia for the league stage defeat. ■ REUTERS

Cricket — How the idea of 'India' developed



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

In 1911, the first 'All-India' team toured England for a series of matches, 14 of them First Class. It was led by a 19-year-old prince, and comprised six Parsis, five Hindus, three Muslims and two Dalits. At least two earlier attempts had failed because the communal balance was deemed unsatisfactory.

How the idea of 'India' developed on the cricket field, and what the Kohlis and Bumrahs owe that pioneering effort is described superbly by Prashant Kidambi in *Cricket Country: The Untold History of the First All India Team*. The nation on the cricket field, Kidambi clarifies, was originally constituted by, and not against, the forces of empire.

When scholars (Kidambi is associate professor of colonial urban history at Leicester University) write on sport, they expand our understanding of ourselves, and the place of sport. After all, what do they know of history who only history know?

Kidambi has deliberately used the title of a book written during the world war. Edmund Blunden's *Cricket Country* is both a lament on the passing of an age and a celebration of the timelessness of the game. While Blunden's book is about Englishness, Kidambi's is a tribute to the game's Indianness. "By a curious historical twist," he says, "a sport that defined the identity of the former colonisers is now the ruling passion of the country that they conquered." If Blunden was saying that cricket was authentic only when it was English, Kidambi is saying, clearing his throat gently, that the 'country' in the title is actually India.

Blunden however anticipated Kidambi when he wrote: "The game is not terminated at the boundary, but is reflected beyond...and belongs to some wider field."

Change of names

Kidambi's field is wide, wider than most. Politics and sport and their intersection might be a key, but the role of sport in establishing identity, the approach to it for both personal and 'nationalistic' purposes ring true today; only the names have changed. For the Maharajahs and Princes, read corporates and politicians. The Indian rush to England for the World Cup had its origins in a plan by some merchants to charter a steamer to take them to Britain to watch the Indians play there in 1911. The idea was to take a party of 400 high caste Hindus, with food "prepared by Brahmins" and "all arrangements on orthodox principles." That plan fell apart, but says Kidambi, "the summer of 1911 saw a spike in the number of travellers from the subcontinent to Britain."

India couldn't persuade Ranji, the greatest Indian cricketer of his time to lead the country. Ranji tried to undermine plans for All-India teams because that might have jeopardized his status as an English icon.

Kidambi's research is deep and extensive. There are wonderful stories of many like Shaikat Ali who, along with his brother started the Khilafat Movement. Shaikat was also the cricket captain of Aligarh Muslim University whose room was "the venue of a royal durbar where appeals of freshers and younger boys were heard, decisions given and enforced." Or Shafiq Hussain, who played with only one good eye.

Misconceptions cleared

Kidambi clears some misconceptions that have attached themselves to that 1911 team. It was not "organised and financed" by the skipper, Maharajah of

Patiala Bhupinder Singh, a most colourful character who fathered 88 children (according to one estimate). The Parsi star Keki Mistry should have led, but Mistry worked for Bhupinder and would not have been granted permission to tour. Hence the ploy of getting a 19-year-old to lead so his employee could make the trip. Bhupinder "played in a manner that befitted his regal status: short, sharp bursts of flamboyant batting before boredom set in and induced a fatal error." A brilliant description of the cricket the princes played as well as the lifestyles they led.

The year 1911 was significant in many ways. In Kolkata, Mohun Bagan defeated East Yorkshire Regiment to become the first Indian team to win the Indian Football Association (IFA) Shield. In London, George V was crowned King-Emperor, and there was an Imperial Conference held there. Other Indian sportsmen were touring too. Jamsetji Marker, the world racquets champion, the great wrestler Gama and a team of Punjabi wrestlers earned both plaudits and publicity.

It was a blazing summer — one of the hottest since the mid-seventeenth century. Temperatures went beyond 36 degrees. And how did the pioneering Indian cricket team do? They won two of 14 First Class matches, and lost 10. Apart from psychological and geographical reasons, there were two sound cricketing ones too, Kidambi tells us. The weapons bowlers had developed recently — the outswinger and the googly — were a mystery to Indian batsmen. The great left arm spinner Palwankar Baloo picked up 75 wickets at just over 20, while his brother Shivram scored 631 runs, behind Rustomji Meherhomji's 684.

Watching India in England today with the crowd support suggesting they might be playing at home, it is useful to remember how it all began. *Cricket Country* tells that riveting story with passion and authority.

BCB, Rhodes part ways

No extensions for Joshi, Walsh either

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board on Monday announced it would let go of head coach Steve Rhodes after a disappointing campaign in the World Cup.

Effective immediately

"We have decided to part ways with the head coach by mutual consent. The decision will be effective immediately," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said.

The decision came a day after Bangladesh returned home after ending its campaign in the World Cup eighth in the league phase with only three wins in eight matches.

Head coach Rhodes joined Bangladesh in June last year and guided the team to its first-ever title in a multi-team tournament in Ireland just before the World Cup.

He was contracted with Bangladesh until the ICC World Twenty20 in Australia next year but his inability to give the team the expected results appear to have cost him his job.

BCB confirmed coach Rhodes would not travel with the team to Sri Lanka, where Bangladesh will play three One-Day International matches later this month.

The Sri Lankan cricket authorities on Monday announced that there will be three matches on July 26, 28 and 31 at Premadasa International Stadium in Colom-



Steve Rhodes. ■ AFP

bo. "We will shortly name an interim coach for the Sri Lanka tour," Jhalal Yumus, the chairman of the BCB media committee, told AFP.

Jalal confirmed that the BCB also planned a shake-up of other coaching staff and was unlikely to renew the contract of pace bowling coach Courtney Walsh and spin-bowling coach Sunil Joshi.

Both Walsh and Joshi had been under contract with the BCB until the end of the World Cup.

Walsh replaced former Zimbabwean pacer Heath Streak in September, 2016 on a three-year contract, while Joshi joined last year.

McKenzie, Cook stay

BCB will offer a new contract to South African batting coach Neil McKenzie and fielding coach Ryan Cook. "We would like McKenzie and the fielding coach to stay with us. But it does not depend entirely on us," he said.