

Men in Blue may be humming, but the Kiwis can't be taken lightly

The momentum is with India as Williamson's side has lost its last three matches in the league stage



K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
MANCHESTER

Blue skies turned dull, cottony tufts of clouds sauntered in but the sun was out too at Old Trafford which geared up for Tuesday's World Cup semifinal pitting India against New Zealand. A drizzle has been forecast, perhaps the rain gods are being naughty after having draped a wet curtain on the league fixture between the rivals at Nottingham's Trent Bridge on June 13.

The weather isn't exactly a cause for alarm plus there is a reserve day too though rains are predicted for Wednesday. Monday, not the manic one usually seen at Wimbledon, essentially was about the two teams putting a lid on big-game angst. India had optional training and the work-outs were more about relaxing the limbs than exerting them.

Sridhar means business
Mohammed Shami tried placing an energy drink bottle on Patrick Farhat's bald head and the physio squirmed. M.S. Dhoni, padded up for a batting stint, couldn't resist a kick when he sighted a football. Fun was the underlying theme but fielding coach R. Sridhar meant business as he made Kuldeep Yadav and Rishabh Pant run towards each other while taking high catches. The plan was to fine-



Taking guard: M.S. Dhoni, under fire for not accelerating when required, will be keen to silence his critics. • AP

tune the "it's mine" calls in the deep as in the last game involving Sri Lanka, Kuldeep and Hardik Pandya nearly collided.

Focus on staying fresh
New Zealand turned up later in the afternoon and the happy bunch at full strength, bantered away besides practising. Again the focus was to keep mind and body fresh ahead of a knockout clash. India is the tournament's form-team and New Zealand, remains the underdog that has always punched above its weight. We are talking about a unit that stays deceptive and lasts the course, like it

did in the 2015 edition where it finished runner-up.

The Black Caps will lean on its batting duo of skipper Kane Williamson (481 runs so far) and Ross Taylor besides all-rounder James Neesham. Its seam attack that includes Trent Boult, Lockie Ferguson, Neesham and Matt Henry can be a handful especially if the atmosphere turns moist. Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner may not have got too many wickets but has kept it tight. New Zealand has lost its last three contests but the squad cannot be taken for granted.

Virat Kohli will remember that his opponent had prevailed by six wickets in the

warm-up joust at the Oval on May 25. Since then India gained heft, defeated Bangladesh in a practice skirmish and enjoyed a red-hot streak barring a loss to England. Momentum, that magical thing that skippers talk about, vests with the Men in Blue.

Rohit's sizzling run

Rohit Sharma's mountain of runs (647), inclusive of five centuries and the staggering support he found in K.L. Rahul and Kohli, have helped India cope with a middle-order that hasn't exactly lit up the charts. Pandya, Pant and Dhoni had their moments and the first-named has be-

come the prime distributor of sixes while Dinesh Karthik is still feeling his way.

Primarily what helps Kohli is the knowledge that he has excellent speedsters with Jasprit Bumrah and Shami leading the way while Bhuvneshwar Kumar's expensive phase

against Sri Lanka may be deemed an aberration. It remains to be seen if Kohli will retain Ravindra Jadeja and perhaps bring in one among the wrist spinners – Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep.

The last five outings on the surface here favoured the team taking first strike including India which defeated Pakistan and the West Indies. The pitches have slowed down over the last fortnight and scoreboard-pressure becomes a raging beast at the last-four stage.

The toss will be interesting but Kohli's men would like to believe that they are fully prepared.

The teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, M.S. Dhoni, K.L. Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja, Kedar Jadhav, Dinesh Karthik, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohammed Shami, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Rishabh Pant and Mayank Agarwal.

New Zealand: Kane Williamson (captain), Ross Taylor, Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi and Tim Southee.

Umpires: Richard Illingworth and Richard Kettleborough; **Third umpire:** Rod Tucker; **Match referee:** David Boon.

Match starts at 3 p.m. IST.

Crunch time A look at how India and New Zealand have fared in the semifinals of WCs



INDIA		2003 vs Kenya, Durban	
1983 vs England, Old Trafford	India 213/10 (60 overs)	lost to India 217/4 (54.4)	India 270/4 (50) beat Kenya 179/10 (46.2)
1987 vs England, Mumbai	England 254/6 (50)	beat India 219/10 (45.3)	2011 vs Pakistan, Mohali
1996 vs Sri Lanka, Kolkata	Sri Lanka 251/8 (50)	beat India 120/8 (34.1)	India 260/9 (50) beat Pakistan 231/10 (49.5)
1999 vs Pakistan, Old Trafford	NZ 241/7 (50) lost to Pakistan 242/1 (47.3)		2015 vs Australia, Sydney
1992 vs Pakistan, Auckland	NZ 262/7 (50) lost to Pakistan 264/6 (49)		Australia 328/7 (50) beat India 233/10 (46.5)
1995 vs Pakistan, Old Trafford	NZ 241/7 (50) lost to Pakistan 242/1 (47.3)		
1996 vs Sri Lanka, Kolkata	Sri Lanka 251/8 (50) beat India 120/8 (34.1)		
1997 vs Sri Lanka, Mumbai	England 254/6 (50) beat India 219/10 (45.3)		
1998 vs Sri Lanka, Kolkata	Sri Lanka 251/8 (50) beat India 120/8 (34.1)		
1999 vs Pakistan, Old Trafford	NZ 241/7 (50) lost to Pakistan 242/1 (47.3)		
2000 vs Sri Lanka, Colombo	NZ 217 (48.5) lost to Sri Lanka 220/5 (47.5)		
2007 vs Sri Lanka, Jamaica	Sri Lanka 289/5 (50) beat NZ 208 (41.4)		
2011 vs Sri Lanka, Colombo	NZ 217 (48.5) lost to Sri Lanka 220/5 (47.5)		
2015 vs South Africa, Auckland	South Africa 281 for five (43) lost to NZ 299 for six (42.5) (D/L method)		

SERVO CRICKET TRIVIA

India is the only country to have won the 60 over, the 50 over and the 20 over World Cups.

'Respect for Dhoni is sky-high'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MANCHESTER

Equations between a former captain and his successor can be fraught with anxiety, especially if the two gentlemen are still playing together. But for M.S. Dhoni and Virat Kohli, the passing of the baton has been remarkable for its grace and camaraderie. With Dhoni playing his last World Cup and the current edition nearing its climax over the weekend, Kohli paid tributes to his predecessor, who remains an inspiration and a sounding board for the current Indian skipper.

Speaking to the media at Old Trafford here on Monday, Kohli said: "For us, who started our careers under him, the respect will always be there because of the opportunities he gave us and the faith he showed in us and the way he handled the whole team in transition. Now we are the ones who are taking Indian cricket forward. When a person has done so much for the team you have to appreciate and acknowledge. From the respect point of view for MS, it's always going to be sky-high."

And then Kohli explained another critical facet – Dhoni's ability to step back and give space: "I know how difficult it can be to transition from being captain to just being a player within the



Inspirational: The passing of the baton from M.S. Dhoni to Virat Kohli has been graceful. • AFP

same team. He is not being too assertive or too pushy in anything. He gives you space to make your own decisions and to actually discover yourself, that has been his

biggest quality. At the same time, if I go ask him anything, he is there giving me advice. I am delighted that I have been able to play for so many years with him."

We definitely deserve to be here: Williamson

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MANCHESTER

Kane Williamson stressed that his team being labelled the "underdogs" really doesn't matter as what counts is the performance on match-day. The New Zealand captain spoke to the media at Old Trafford here on Monday. *Excerpts.*
Semifinal stakes: India is a very successful and popular side. They bring so much to the sport that we are fortunate to be a part of, but it is a cricket match. We will simplify things as best as we can. Each side will want to put the other under pressure and when that happens, the next bit can be a real challenge.

Kiwi bowling: Our attack has performed well on a variety of surfaces and have adapted superbly. We will need to do that again in this match (semifinal) and assess the conditions as quickly as possible.

The underdog tag: We are in the top four and we definitely deserve to be here. We had a couple of tough losses coming into this part of the tournament, but we do need to look at those for what they were. So, whether we are underdogs or not, it doesn't really matter. It is about how we turn up on Tuesday and commit to the



Kane Williamson. • AP

plans that we want to implement and try and play with freedom.

Countering Rohit: Rohit (Sharma) has been clearly the stand-out batter in this tournament. But, as we know, we come into a semifinal and it is another day where both sides will be trying to quickly adjust to the conditions and will be looking for early wickets regardless of what the batsman's name is.

Everyone is relaxed, says Kohli

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
MANCHESTER

If there were nerves ahead of a knockout game, Virat Kohli masked it well. The Indian skipper answered every question with candour and a ready smile and felt that his men should stick to their 'A game' against New Zealand in the World Cup semifinal. Kohli spoke to correspondents at Old Trafford here on Monday. *Excerpts.*

Under-19 days and the Williamson connect: It is quite nice to realise that 11 years after we captained our respective nations (in the Under-19 World Cup at Malaysia) we are here again in the senior World Cup. Neither Kane nor I would have ever anticipated that this would happen.

The mood within the camp: Everyone is relaxed and confident. All the teams worked hard to get here and now whoever plays better will win. We are looking forward to it. It's been a long tournament, lots of hard work and intense games and we are happy that we made it to the semis. Now there's only opportunity in front of us.

A knockout game: In knockout games you need to be very precise at the same time being intense. Both teams are experienced. New Zealand was in the final last time and they have a quality

side. It is up to both the teams to bring their A-game and whoever handles pressure better is the team that is going to come out on top.
New Zealand attack: The New Zealand attack has always been balanced. Mitchell Santner brings in a lot of control in the middle overs. We know that we will have to play correct cricket to score runs because they bowl good lines. It's going to be a nice battle. It is a potent attack.

Rohit's tons and Kohli's missing century! It's great that Rohit (Sharma) is scoring so consistently which means that coming in the latter half of the innings I have to play a different role which is about controlling the middle overs and letting guys like Hardik (Pandya), Kedar

(Jadhav), M.S. (Dhoni) and Rishabh (Pant) express themselves. Personal milestones are something that no-one focuses on. Rohit said the same the other day. I hope he gets two more so we can win two more games (laughs). I have never seen anyone get five hundreds in a World Cup or any other tournament. He is at the moment the top ODI player in the world.

Five-bowler ploy: We played with five bowlers because it gives us more depth in batting. But we are up to reviewing that, otherwise, I was just told that I got Kane out (in the Under-19 World Cup) so I can bowl and I am quite lethal (laughs). Having said that, it's open for discussion because we need to be balanced on the field.



Time to deliver: Rishabh Pant needs to put his head down and play a long innings, should the need arise. • AP

Flashback: a journey that began in 2008

K.C. VIJAYA KUMAR
MANCHESTER

Once upon a time there were two boys split by teams but fused by talent and a common adolescent worry about acne.

The stage was the Under-19 World Cup at Malaysia in 2008 and the lads in question were Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson, who led India and New Zealand respectively, and do that even now.

Back then, just like it is going to happen here on Tuesday, the squads clashed in the semifinal and interestingly Kohli dismissed his counterpart for 37. India won that joust and the subsequent fi-



One from the album: Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson led their teams in the U-19 World Cup semifinals and are now at the helm of the senior sides. • COURTESY TWITTER

nal at South Africa's expense. Presciently both Kohli and Williamson were

marked out for higher glory. The two were reminded about those good old days

while laughter coursed through the press conference hall at Old Trafford

here on Monday. First up, Kohli forgot that he had scalped Williamson. "I got Kane's wicket, did I?" he asked and then added with a laugh: "I don't know if that can happen again now."

Later, Williamson's views were sought and the bearded cricketer, his eyes crinkling and an embarrassed smile stretching his lips, quipped: "Oh dear, tell me how. He used to be an all-rounder I think back in the day, but hasn't bowled as much recently."

The two wholeheartedly praised each other while boarding the nostalgia-train heading towards their under-19 days.

Knockouts: Anything can happen

Kiwis' ability to take wickets with the new ball will be critical



Mike Hesson
SELECT DUGOUT CORNER

India will no doubt go in as favourites against New Zealand, but in a knockout game, anything can happen. New Zealand will have to play very well though, certainly better than they have played so far.

From a batting point of view, New Zealand has not been able to put up a solid performance yet. They can take comfort from the fact that they have reached the semifinal despite their batting not firing.

If the likes of Martin Guptill, Tom Latham and Ross Taylor can hit their straps, they are capable of producing an upset.

The ability of New Zealand to take wickets with the new ball is going to be critical. Trent Boult plays a massive part in that. I believe that Boult can get Rohit Sharma out with the swing-

ing ball. If the pitch offers swing, then it becomes more of an even contest between the two teams.

However, if Rohit can get through the PowerPlay, then he'll be well set and ready to cash in.

As for the team combination, I think that Ravindra Jadeja is good enough to bat at No. 7. He should be one of two spinners in the eleven. At Old Trafford, both sides need to field six bowlers.

The challenge for New Zealand is that if you give Rohit early, you give Virat a chance to get a big one. Virat is primed and ready to go.

Maximum mayhem in women's draw on Manic Monday

Barty, Pliskova and Kvitova sent packing; Halep stops Gauff; no reputations harmed on the men's side



N. SUDARSHAN
LONDON

Manic Monday at Wimbledon witnessed maximum mayhem on the women's side as three of the top remaining seeds – reigning World No. 1 and Roland Garros champion Ashleigh Barty, No. 3 Karolina Pliskova and two-time winner and No.6 Petra Kvitova – were all packed off in the fourth round.

Each of the three matches went the distance – Pliskova's against fellow Czech Karolina Muchova was the longest, ending 13-11 in the third set. Kvitova was out-gunned by local favourite Johanna Konta while Barty's variety, versatility and grass-court nous finally found a match in Alison Riske.

Gauff's toughest test

The highest ranked player left in the draw is No. 7 Simona Halep, who quickly brought down the high-flying 15-year-old Cori Gauff, ending her six-match winning streak 6-3, 6-3. The counter-punching Halep was the



Upset of the day: Unseeded Alison Riske found the tennis to match Ashleigh Barty, beating the World No. 1 in three sets. ■ AP

toughest opponent Gauff had faced in her run thus far and it showed.

The Romanian, quite adept at making opponents hit that one extra ball, drew Gauff into long rallies from the outset. The teenager took the bait and even broke early, but couldn't sustain the level as Halep proved too consistent and resourceful. Gauff also seemed physically compromised, but ruled out

fatigue as a reason. "I learnt a lot," Gauff said about her Wimbledon experience. "[Learnt] to play in front of a big crowd...what it was like to be under pressure. It's crazy. I lost in the second round of qualifying in Paris. Now I made it to the second week. I'm super proud of myself."

The trigger for the day's avalanche, though, came when Riske snapped Barty's

15-match winning run stretching across French Open, Birmingham and Wimbledon. The American will next take on compatriot Serena Williams, who dismissed Carla Suarez Navarro 6-2, 6-2.

The way Barty started, there was no inkling of the outcome.

The 23-year-old displayed all the basic tenets of grass-court tennis. She started

with four aces, used the one-two punch – being Barty's, it was gentle – to great effect, and employed the backhand slice to reset rallies and regain court position as she took the first set 6-3.

However, Riske, whose best surface happens to be grass too, soon found the tennis to match Barty's. The 29-year-old's forehand is less of a shot and more of a steer. In the second and third sets

she loaded it with enough penetrative power to rattle Barty. She also used short angle cross-courts to pull the Aussie wide and open up space. It was no surprise that she won 20 of 27 advances to the net overall.

No denying Riske

Even as Riske raised her game, Barty's imploded. Her first serve gave way and the second proved inadequate as she lost the second set 6-2. The decider was a test of nerves, as she served behind, and Barty clearly felt it. At 3-4, 30-30, Riske made the play with a fierce return winner off a weak second serve followed by a fine forehand down the line.

A nervous hold ensued, but she wouldn't be denied a maiden Slam quarterfinal place.

THE RESULTS

Fourth round: Men: 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Ugo Humbert (Fra) 6-3, 6-2, 6-3; 8-Kei Nishikori (Jpn) bt Mikhail Kukushkin (Kaz) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; 2-Roger Federer (Sui) bt 17-Matteo Berrettini (Ita) 6-1, 6-2, 6-2; 23-Roberto Bautista Agut (Esp) bt 28-Benoit Paire (Fra) 6-3, 7-5, 6-2; 3-Rafael Nadal (Esp) bt Joao Sousa (Por) 6-2, 6-2, 6-2; 21-David Goffin (Bel) bt Fernando Verdasco (Esp) 7-6(9), 2-6, 6-3, 6-4; 26-Guido Pella (Arg) bt 15-Milos Raonic (Can) 3-6, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(5), 8-6.

Tuesday's schedule

MEN	
1-Djokovic vs 21-Goffin	
2-Federer vs 8-Nishikori	
3-Nadal vs Querrey	
15-Raonic / Pella vs Bautista Agut	
WOMEN	
11-Serena vs Riske	
19-Konta vs Strycova	
8-Svitolina vs Muchova	
7-Halep vs Zhang	

No reputations were harmed on the men's side however, with Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal all sailing into the last eight. In doubles, Divij Sharan and Marcelo Demoliner lost to Lukasz Kubot and Marcelo Melo 7-5, 6-7(8), 7-6(6), 6-3 to bring an end to the Indian challenge.

Women: 19-Johanna Konta (G.Br) bt 6-Petra Kvitova (Cze) 4-6, 6-2, 6-4; Alison Riske (USA) bt 1-Ashleigh Barty (Aus) 3-6, 6-2, 6-3; 11-Serena Williams (USA) bt 30-Carla Suarez Navarro (Esp) 6-2, 6-2; Barbora Strycova (Cze) bt 21-Elise Mertens (Bel) 4-6, 7-5, 6-2; 8-Elina Svitolina (Ukr) bt 24-Petra Martic (Cro) 6-4, 6-2; 7-Simona Halep (Rou) bt Cori Gauff (USA) 6-3, 6-3; Zhang Shuai (Chn) bt Dayana Yastremska (Ukr) 6-4, 1-6, 6-2; Karolina Muchova (Cze) bt 3-Karolina Pliskova (Cze) 4-6, 7-5, 13-11.

PASSING SHOTS



Fognini may face fine for 'bomb burst'

LONDON Fabio Fognini may face a fine for saying "a bomb should explode" on Wimbledon, All England Club chief executive Richard Lewis said on Monday.

The Italian 12th seed made the outburst during his straight-set third round defeat to World No. 94 American Tenny Sandgren on Saturday. "It's fair to play here? Damned English, really. Damned, really. Wish a bomb would explode on this club. A bomb should explode here," he fumed in Italian. He apologised afterwards, which Lewis said would be taken into account. "It was one of those 'heat of the moment' comments. It was a very unfortunate comment and Fabio was good enough to apologise straight away," the Wimbledon supremo said.

Kyrgios gets off

Meanwhile, Australian hothead Nick Kyrgios will not face action after he admitted deliberately blasting the ball at Rafael Nadal's body during his defeat to the Spanish third seed.

"It's very common in doubles where players aim at the opponent. It's part and parcel of being a professional tennis player," said Lewis. *AFP*

TV PICKS

ICC World Cup: Star Sports 1, 2 & Star Sports Select 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.
Wimbledon: Star Sports 3, 4 p.m.; Star Sports Select 2 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Aditi ends 40th; Feng emerges champion

ONEIDA (USA) Aditi Ashok returned a flawless six-under 66 to finish tied 40th in the Thornberry Creek LPGA Classic, here on Sunday. Aditi finished at 14-under 274. China's Shanshan Feng posted a sensational bogey-free nine under 63 to reach 29-under par to capture the Skywoman Trophy at the 2019 Thornberry Creek LPGA Classic. *PTI*

Atwal finishes 23rd; Wolff wins maiden title

BLAINE (US) Arjun Atwal carded a one-under 70 to finish tied 23rd at the inaugural 3M Open here on Sunday. Matthew Wolff stunned Bryson DeChambeau with a stunning 26-foot putt for 21-under 263 that gave him his first PGA Tour win. *PTI*

Jesus stars for Brazil

Wins Copa America for the ninth time

REUTERS
RIO DE JANEIRO

Gabriel Jesus made one goal, scored another and was sent off in the second half as Brazil beat Peru 3-1 on Sunday to win the Copa America for the ninth time in a pulsating contest at the Maracana stadium.

The host took the lead after 15 minutes thanks to some brilliant skill from Jesus on the wing. The Manchester City forward bamboozled two defenders and crossed for the unmarked Everton to fire home from close range.

Peru got an equaliser a minute before half-time when Paolo Guerrero scored from the penalty spot after Thiago Silva handled the ball.

The goal was the first Brazil had conceded in six

games at the Copa America but it did not shake its confidence and it retook the lead moments later after a well-worked move from midfield.

Roberto Firmino showed some nice skill on the right touchline before giving the ball to Arthur. The midfielder strode forward and fed Jesus, who coolly slotted the ball past a helpless Pedro Gallese.

Peru pushed forward in the second half and was thrown a lifeline with 20 minutes remaining when Jesus was sent off.

But Brazil had the final say when substitute Richarlison made it 3-1 with a penalty in the final minute.

The result: Brazil 3 (Everton 15, Jesus 45+3, Richarlison 90pen) bt Peru 1 (Guerrero 44pen).



Mission accomplished: Brazil skipper Dani Alves holds the Copa America trophy on Sunday. ■ AP

Alaphilippe aces stage three



Julian Alaphilippe ■ REUTERS

TOUR DE FRANCE

ASSOCIATED PRESS
EPERNAY (FRANCE)

Julian Alaphilippe won Stage 3 of the Tour de France and took the yellow jersey with a sparkling ride into the Champagne town of Epernay.

The French Deceuninck-Quick Step rider left the chasing pack for dead with a fierce burst of acceleration on a short sharp climb amid the Champagne vineyards. He gritted his teeth as he rode alone over the last 16kms, up Epernay's cobbled Champagne Avenue, and the lung-busting uphill finish.

Dravid NCA appointment formalised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Rahul Dravid was formally appointed as the National Cricket Academy's Head of Cricket by the BCCI on Monday.

"Dravid will oversee all cricket related activities at NCA and will be involved in mentoring, coaching, training and motivating players,

coaches and support staff at the NCA," a BCCI release stated.

"Dravid will also work closely with the National Men's and Women's Head Coaches and cricket coaches for India Developmental teams – including India A, India U-19, U-23 teams – in the identification of key training and development

objectives."

Dravid was originally scheduled to take charge on July 1 but the move took a week longer as the former India captain resolved a potential conflict of interest issue. Starting from Tuesday, Dravid is expected to be involved in interviewing candidates for specialist coaches' posts.

Kashyap loses Canada Open final

Goes down fighting to China's Li Shifeng

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CALGARY

P. Kashyap's impressive run at the Canada Open Super 100 tournament came to an end in a three-game thriller to China's Li Shifeng in the men's singles summit clash here on Sunday.

Sixth seed Kashyap, who has produced some gritty performances this week, fell short against Li, going down 22-20, 14-21, 17-21 in the one-hour-16-minute final.

"Silver it is @yonexcanadaopen. It was a good fight in the final. Lost to LiShifeng (China) ... Can't say it was the best I played this week but overall it was a good week here.

"Thank you to all the fans



P. Kashyap. ■ FILE PHOTO

for the support. Thank you to @prannoy_hs for extending his stay just to help me out. Next up US open at LA. Until next time Calgary! Cheers !!!" Kashyap

Carlsen wins

SPORTS BUREAU
ZAGREB

Viswanathan Anand ended his campaign with a draw against Hikaru Nakamura as Magnus Carlsen won the Croatia Grand Chess Tour title with a victory over Maxime Vachier Lagrave here on Sunday.

Final standings: 1. Carlsen (8 points), 2. So (7), 3-4. Aronian, Caruana (6); 5-7. Giri, Ding, Nepomniachtchi (5.5); 8. Karjakin (5); 9-11. Anand, Mamedyarov, Vachier-Lagrave (4.5); 12. Nakamura (4).

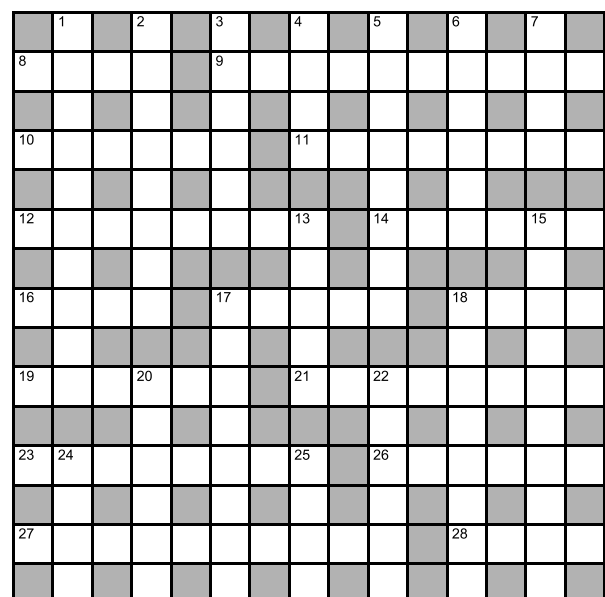
Ramkumar claims doubles title

SPORTS BUREAU
REGGIANATI (ITALY)

Ramkumar Ramanathan and Goncal Oliveira of Portugal won the doubles title in the €46,600 Challenger tennis tournament here, defeating second seeds Andrea Vavassori of Italy and David Vega Hernandez of Spain 6-2, 6-4 in the final.

The results: €46,600 Challenger: Doubles (final): Goncal Oliveira (Por) & Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Andrea Vavassori (Ita) & David Vega Hernandez (Esp) 6-2, 6-4.

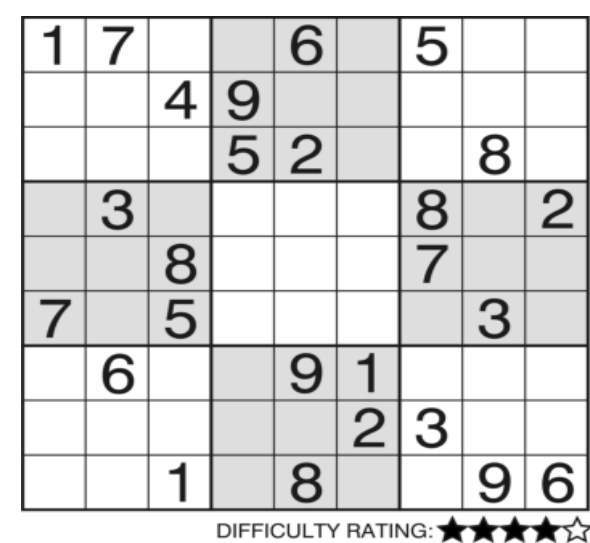
THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12673



(set by Incognito)

- Miranda cooked with energy and made a liquid for soaking food (8)
- British flying champ permitted to get a bangle (8)
- Illogical like a sailor with an irrational root (6)
- Tail-less skuas morph into other birds (4)
- Cyril Fotheringay-Phipps manages my bar (5)
- Englishman in Australia has a bit of pageantry and grandeur (4)
- Loved present day mineral having diamond (6)
- Participants appear after ward speaks wildly (8)
- Murders a criminal for percussion organs (8)
- Strip? Where one takes off? (6)
- ... and won back after male engineers were present at this place and time (4,3,3)
- Container fire (4)
- Task completion time makes a change in fortunes (10)
- Securities and Exchange Commission returns filed after German town makes extracts (8)
- Business group has some mode of transport on English channel at last (6)
- Is returned by American in old Asian nation (4)
- One is not sure how many days this month has (8)
- Rises up, paradoxically, in places to sit (6)
- Dry part of Faridabad (4)
- You in olden times included arithmetic. For example, the number of feet one may find in the yard (5)
- Canter around MIT on receipt of Euro money transfer (10)
- Yes, French game partners on cot are a sort of migrant people (8)
- Simplest legal document contains directions (8)
- Communists standing back to back become more embarrassed (6)
- Frowns endlessly after the player left match that was purposely forfeited (6)
- Implements found in Cartesian co-ordinate systems (4)
- Without Latin ratio, for example (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12672

S	T	A	R	D	N			
A	C	C	R	E	D	I	T	I
O	A	R	H	F	S	G		
C	O	I	N	C	I	D	E	N
P	S	V	I	A	T			
E	L	S	E	S	M	O	O	T
T	I	E	M	R	I	A		
B	A	T	T	E	R	E	R	
K	E	O	R	P	E	R	S	O
R	E	T	R	I	E	S	W	A
C	A	A	W	W	C	H		
L	O	F	T	P	E	R	F	E
V	E	I	O	I	E	I		
R	E	C	O	I	L	T	O	P
R	N	L	E					

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

A wake up call

Krishna revives the wilting spirit of Arjuna that makes him reluctant to fight when the Mahabharata war is about to begin. Arjuna typifies the human predicament when all beings confront problems and dilemmas of endless variety and proportions in the course of life, pointed out Srmatita Prema Pandurang in a discourse. Arjuna is well learned in the sas-tras, knows Vedanta, and is an accomplished warrior. Yet he confesses to Krishna that he is unsure about the dharma in waging war against one's own kith and kin. How can one find peace in such a victory? By abandoning war and allowing the Kurus to rule, he says his problem would be solved.

Arjuna displays physical signs of depression characteristic in one who is about to break down and he seeks surrender at Krishna's feet. The all knowing Krishna smiles at his pseudo knowledge and decides to grace Arjuna and mankind with practical wisdom and jnana on basic issues related to life and work. It is a wake up call to shed wrong notions that only delude and lead to despair, especially during critical situations in life.

The advice begins with the exhortation to sift between the eternal as opposed to the ephemeral in existence. Birth and death have to be viewed in a matter of fact manner just as one accepts normal and cyclic occurrences in nature such as the sun rising and setting, birds chirping, etc. There is nothing to grieve about these. What matters to each one is to be alert to the welfare of the immortal atma rather than on the body that is born, grows and perishes. The second advice pertains to the performance of one's ordained duties and the consequences that continue to bind one to samsara. Since none can escape from these, the way out is to be detached for Lord's sake without an eye on fruits.

IN BRIEF



Mexico beats US, wins CONCACAF cup
CHICAGO
Jonathan dos Santos scored the only goal as Mexico defeated the United States 1-0 to win the CONCACAF Gold Cup for a record eighth time here on Sunday. Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder dos Santos rifled home in the 73rd minute to settle a hard-fought encounter. The win handed Mexico its eighth Gold Cup since the championship for teams from North America, Central America and the Caribbean was rebooted in 1991. AFP

Trump congratulates US women's team
WASHINGTON
President Donald Trump on Sunday congratulated the US women's team on its World Cup victory, saying the country is "proud of you all." "Congratulations to the U.S. Women's Soccer Team on winning the World Cup! Great and exciting play," Trump tweeted. AFP



Warriors vow to retire Iguodala's number
SAN FRANCISCO
Andre Iguodala will have his number nine jersey retired by Golden State Warriors, the NBA club announced on Sunday in confirming his trade to the Memphis Grizzlies. Iguodala helped Warriors reach the past five NBA Finals, with Golden State taking the title in 2015, 2017 and 2018 and Iguodala earning the NBA Finals MVP Award in 2015, largely due to his defensive work on LeBron James and without having started a regular-season game. AFP

Angad in strong position

SPORTS BUREAU NAPOLI (ITALY)
Asian champion Angad Vir Singh Bajwa scored 73 out of 75 in men's skeet in the 30th Universiade on Monday. Angad, a student of Manav Rachna University, had rounds of 24, 24 and 25, as he found himself in the third spot.

Elavenil Valarivan is the only Indian shooter to have won a medal, as she bagged silver in women's air rifle. She was in brilliant form in the mixed air rifle competition, with a score of 316.2. "We placed 10th and missed the second qualification stage by one point," said Elavenil.

Onus on women, junior men in skeet

SPORTS BUREAU LONATO (ITALY)
The onus will be on the women's skeet team and the junior men's skeet shooters to provide an interesting finish for India's campaign in the ongoing Shotgun World Championship here. The former national champion Saniya Sheikh, Areeba Khan and Kartiki Singh Shaktawat will compete in the women's skeet event on Tuesday and Wednesday. The junior men's skeet will feature Arjun Thakur, Ayush Rudraraju and Gurnihal Singh Garcha. While India did not field any shooter in double trap as the event has been dropped from the Olympics, the trap shooters, apart from the men's skeet and junior women's skeet shooters, have not been able to make the finals in any of the events so far.

Americans hold off the impending European wave

USA was the only nation from outside Europe to reach the quarterfinals

WOMEN'S WC

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LYON
The United States underlined its status as the dominant force in international women's football by winning a fourth World Cup in eight editions on Sunday, but the tournament has also highlighted the growing threat to them coming from Europe.

In its third consecutive final, USA was too strong for the Netherlands as it won 2-0 in Lyon to retain its title with Megan Rapinoe and Rose Lavelle scoring.

It means a European nation has not won since Germany in 2007, while USA's four World Cups stand alongside its record four Olympic golds.

Its triumph came after it topped its group ahead of Sweden and then beat Spain, hosts France and England en route to the final, where it defeated the European champions.

While USA started its campaign with a World Cup record 13-0 win over Thailand, its encounters with European opposition were closer affairs.

"I think the level around the world is growing exponentially every year, so four years on, this was incredibly difficult because the opponent is better and the teams



One more! USA's four World Cups stand alongside its record four Olympic golds. AP

we had to come through some of the best in the world," said USA coach Jill Ellis when asked to compare this World Cup win with 2015.

"I don't know if it's us getting older or the game just evolving and becoming more challenging but it has been so emotionally exhausting this time," admitted Alex Morgan, 30, a survivor from the US team that lost the 2011 final to Japan.

USA was the only nation from outside Europe to reach the quarterfinals in

France. Ellis - who was born and brought up in England but only got a chance to play the game after moving to USA as a teenager - acknowledges that things are fundamentally changing in Europe as leading clubs invest more heavily in women's teams.

Real Madrid is the latest to get involved, and standards are rapidly rising in domestic leagues.

"Right now, with the trophy going back to the States, no," Ellis joked when asked if she was concerned by the

progress being made in Europe. "But with the investment the rest of the world has made, all these major clubs can see how amazing this World Cup was and how rich in terms of fan support that it was.

"Teams will want to continue to invest in the women's game. What does that do? It makes our job hard, but I think also we have had a commitment from our federation to grow our domestic league, because without leagues you can't exist as a national team."

I-League clubs write to PM

Seek enquiry commission against AIFF functioning

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI
The crisis facing Indian football Monday reached the doorsteps of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with six I-League clubs requesting him to set up an enquiry commission and "probe the All India Football Federation's functioning."

In a letter signed by Swapnan Sadhan Bose, managing director of Mohun Bagan, the I-League clubs have urged the Prime Minister to "intervene and save the sport."

Besides Mohun Bagan, East Bengal, Churchill Brothers, Gokulam Kerala FC, Minerva Punjab FC and Aizawl FC were the other clubs who have requested for the PM's intervention.

"Recent media reports and press statements from the AIFF itself have indicated

that the AIFF is seeking to make the ISL, which came into existence in 2013, the senior most league in the country, whereas I-League, that dates back to 2007 when it was launched as India's first ever professional football league is sought to be made into a second tier and inferior league," the clubs write in the letter.

"There is a sharp decline in the standard of Indian football. Football is one of the most popular sports in the world, including India, but this popularity has not been matched by necessary and good administration as far as the national body is concerned," the letter further read.

AIFF president Praful Patel last week assured the I-League clubs that their future is secure and said he will

approach the AFC to ensure the I-League continues to co-exist with the ISL for another 2-3 years. A day later, the aggrieved clubs accepted most of his proposals.

Among other issues, in the meeting with Patel, the clubs had sought clarification on the controversial move to accord the Indian Super League the top tier status in Indian football as per the Master Right Agreement (MRA) signed between the AIFF and IMG-Reliance in 2010.

"The ISL is a purely commercial venture played by franchise-based clubs owned by the clubs. It has no relevance. More importantly, players invariably are in the 35-plus age bracket. Players who have no takers abroad are roped, leading to a decline in the standard of Indian football."

Swati returns adverse analytical finding

It is learnt that the lifter faltered in the test conducted during Asian championships

Y.B. SARANGI KOLKATA
A 2014 Commonwealth Games bronze medalist in the women's 53kg category, Swati Singh, has returned an adverse analytical finding (AAF) for morphine, the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) said in a brief statement on its website.

Even though the IWF did not specify the competition in which Swati returned the

AAF, it was learnt that the lifter faltered in the test conducted during the Asian championships - an Olympic qualifying event - in Ningbo City, China, where she had finished seventh with a total of 196kg in the 59kg weight class, in April.

"In any case where it is determined that the athlete did not commit an anti-doping rule violation, the relevant decision will also be published.

"IWF will not make any further comments on the case until it is closed," said the statement.

Swati, who had come third in the National championships in Visakhapatnam with an aggregate of 193kg in February, is not part of the Indian side in the ongoing Commonwealth championships in Samoa. As per the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

prohibited list, morphine falls in the narcotics sub-category of drugs under specified stimulants which are prohibited in competition.

Use of the prohibited narcotics requires a therapeutic use exemption (TUE).

"It is not a major issue (of doping violation) in Swati's case," said a top Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLFF) official.

Pari denied French visa

TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
Pari Singh's aspirations to join the rest of the Asian team for the ITF European circuit did not fructify as she was denied a French visa, despite repeated attempts by her parents, intervention from the Asian Tennis Federation (ATF) and assurance from the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

The parents have now taken ITF's permission to let Pari join the team in the second week, and have sought

a Dutch visa as the circuit moves from France to Holland.

Originally, there was a three-day camp in Paris followed by a tournament in France from July 8, for which Pari could not join.

She will now try to reach the Netherlands for the second tournament.

Three more tournaments are scheduled afterwards in France, Germany and Belgium over the subsequent three weeks.

It is a five-week exposure trip for the best in Asia to get a taste of competing in Europe, and financed by the

Grand Slam Development Fund.

Important chance
It is an important chance for an under-14 tennis player, and Pari is the only Indian player selected for the Asian team, following her fine performances in the World Junior Cup and two more Asian tournaments thereafter.

It may be recalled that the shooting World Cup in Delhi was denied two rapid fire pistol Olympic quota places by the IOC, when two Pakistani players were not granted visa.

Women's u-23 volleyball team

SPORTS REPORTER CHENNAI

Volleyball Federation of India on Monday announced the National squad for the Asian women's u-23 championship to be held in Hanoi from July 13 to 21.

The squad: Anusree Kambrath Poyilil (Capt.), Vals Chetna Meramambhai, Aswathi Raveendran (L); Soorya, Angel Joseph, Saranya Narikunil Salikumar, Sukhveer Kour, Priyanka Shivalingam, Jincy Johnson, Lavanya Pathuri, Ayushi Bhandari and Maya Thomas. **Head coach:** C.S. Sandanandan.

Equal pay — Rapinoe calls for action

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LYON

USA star Megan Rapinoe said it was "time to sit down and get to work" after hearing American fans greet the team's victory over the Netherlands in the women's World Cup final on Sunday with chants calling for equal pay.

Rapinoe has been a key player in the squad's battle for pay equality which led it to file a lawsuit against the US Soccer Federation earlier this year accusing the organisation of gender discrimination.

She also made headlines for stating she would boycott any team visit to Donald Trump if the USA won the tournament

Trump put that spat behind him to tweet congratulations to the team on Sunday, while Rapinoe avoided getting drawn into another discussion about whether



Megan Rapinoe. REUTERS

she would go to the White House.

Proud and defiant

"We have such a strong and proud and defiant group of women, I don't think we really have anything to say," said Rapinoe.

Her coach Jill Ellis simply said: "I haven't been invited so I can't say".

When it was put to her that an invitation would surely be forthcoming, she

replied: "I wouldn't bet on that!"

Rapinoe has been the biggest star on the field over the last month in France, and she scored the opener from the penalty spot as the holder beat the Dutch 2-0 in Lyon to retain its title.

It was the 34-year-old's sixth goal of the competition, allowing her to walk away with the Golden Boot for the top scorer as well as the Golden Ball for the player of the tournament.

Pleasantries

Rapinoe said she had exchanged "pleasantries" with FIFA president Gianni Infantino as she collected her medal.

"Everyone is kind of asking what's next and what we want to come of all of this, and it's to stop having the conversation about equal pay and are we worth it," Rapinoe said.

Syria too good for North Korea

INTERCONTL. CUP

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA AHMEDABAD

Syria erased a goal deficit to beat North Korea 5-2 in the Intercontinental Cup at the EKA Arena on Monday.

The Koreans went ahead in the third minute when Ri Un Il set up captain Jong Il Gwan with a nice diagonal pass which the latter finished with a snap right-footer.

Korea earned three more chances but the Syrian goalkeeper Ibrahim Amla stood

in the way, foiling Ul Il, Han Thae Hyok and Ri Chang Ho's attempts.

Amla's efforts kept Syria in the hunt and helped it stage a comeback. It found the equaliser in the 41st minute as Khaled Kourdoghli's cross into the box was diverted home by Shadi Al Hamwi.

Going ahead

Syria took the lead in the 55th minute when Mohammad Almaroum found the target off a solo effort. Syria continued to pile up the mis-

ery, netting two more goals in the next 11 minutes.

Skipper Firas Alkhatib's creativity saw him set up Al Hamwi and also provide a fine assist to Almaroum in the 66th minute.

After Korea reduced the margin to 4-2 through Ri Hyong Jin, Alkhatib completed the tally for Syria in injury time.

The result:

Syria 5 (Shadi Al Hamwi 41,60, Mohammad Almaroum 55, 66, Firas Alkhatib 90+2) bt North Korea 2 (Jong Il Gwan 3, Ri Hyong Jin 78).

The leagues are not helping Indian players: Stimac

'It is time to overhaul the faulty club football system'

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA AHMEDABAD

Even as the investors and administrators of Indian football debate on the fate of the two leagues - ISL and I-League, the man entrusted with the job of training the country's National team says it is time to overhaul the faulty club football system which he says is responsible for the drought of talent.

Igor Stimac, the newly appointed head coach of India, insists that a lot of changes is necessary for Indian football to better its standard.

Cause of problem

"We are suffering because most our Indian strikers are not playing regularly in the ISL or the I-League as they spend most of the time on the bench. Most of them do not have open place to play and that is not good for me (as



Plainspeak: Igor Stimac, right, insists that large-scale changes are needed to improve Indian football. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the National coach) because there is only Sunil (Chhetri) who is scoring goals," the Croatian gaffer said after the Indian side capitulated to a lower-ranked Tajikistan in the opening game of the Intercontinental Cup.

"That is a big problem for us and we need to think of ways to sort out the situation as we cannot always expect Sunil to decide a game.

"We need more strikers playing in the ISL or I-League. I cannot create a

centre-forward from a full-back in the National team. They need to play more in the country's leagues to make a strong National side," Stimac, who guided his country to 2014 World Cup main stage, said pinpointing the problem besetting the club football in the country.

Reiterating his stand on a properly planned calendar to give the players around 50 matches a year, Stimac said the success of the National team depends on the standard of the clubs.

"The results will suffer as we are taking a new approach to the game and playing a totally different football from what we did before. We have a lot of young talents who make mistakes but I need to back them to make sure that India enjoys its football in future," Stimac said.

'Next few months will be crucial'

Indian hockey coach Reid has warned the players to not take their place in the team for granted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

The next three to four months will be crucial for Indian hockey, says men's team chief coach Graham Reid, insisting that a collective effort is needed to improve the performance ahead of the final round of Tokyo Olympic Qualifiers in November.

Reid made the statement after Hockey India on Sunday named a 34-core probable for the national coaching camp to begin on Monday at the Sports Authority of India campus in Bengaluru.

"We will review our previous performance at the FIH Men's Series Final and discuss among ourselves the shortcomings and how we can collectively improve our performance in the lead up to the Olympic Qualification in November," Reid said.

"The next three-four months will be crucial and everything we do will be aimed at raising the bar in all aspects of the game," he added.

Full commitment

The coach warned all players not to take their place in the team for granted



Graham Reid. PTI

ed and expects 100 per cent commitment from them in the six-week long national camp.

"The support staff and I will be closely monitoring the progress of every player during the national camp. So in that sense each session is going to be important and we would expect nothing but 100 per cent from every player.

'Healthy competition'

"The current pool of players assures of healthy competition and I am looking forward to the next six weeks," Reid said.

All the probables will report to Reid for the camp that concludes on August 11.

The support staff and I will be closely monitoring the progress of every player during the national camp. So in that sense each session is going to be important

After the camp, the Indian team will travel to Japan for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Test Event starting August 17. Besides India, hosts Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand are the other participating teams.

Core probables list: Goalkeepers: P.R. Sreejesh, Suraj Karkeera, Krishan Bahadur Pathak.

Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh, Birendra Lakra, Surender Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Varun Kumar, Rupinder Pal Singh, Gurinder Singh, Kothajit Singh Khadangbam, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Jarmanpreet Singh.

Midfielders: Manpreet Singh, Sumit, Nilakanta Sharma, Jaskaran Singh, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Ashis Kumar Topno, Yashdeep Siwach, Sayyad Niyaz Rahim, Raj Kumar Pal.

Forwards: Mandeep Singh, Akashdeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Gursahibjit Singh, Shamsher Singh, Armaan Qureshi, Sumit Kumar, Simranjeet Singh, S.V. Sunil, Gurjant Singh, Ramandeep Singh.