

Pant, Kohli help India sweep series

The duo hit half-centuries after Deepak Chahar rocks the West Indies top-order

INDIA IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PROVIDENCE (GUYANA)

Rishabh Pant finally came good under the guidance of skipper Virat Kohli as India comfortably beat West Indies by seven wickets in the third T20 International, to complete a 3-0 sweep, here on Tuesday.

Chasing a target of 147 on a slowish deck, Kohli anchored the innings with his 21st half-century in T20 Internationals (59, 45b, 6x4) while Pant was brilliant during his unbeaten 65 (42b, 4x4, 4x6) as the visitor made it in 19.1 overs.

Pant and Kohli, who came together at 27 for two, put on 106 runs in 12.5 overs. However till their 50-run stand, the duo didn't go hammer and tongs at the Windies attack.

It was in the 13th over when Pant finally gave the charge, getting his first six – a flat hit over extra cover off Keemo Paul's bowling. He was to repeat the same shot off the same bowler for the same result!

Once he had reached his second T201 half-century, Pant got on one knee and hit Oshane Thomas for his third six, while his fourth and final maximum got India the winning runs.

Pollard attacks

Earlier, Deepak Chahar's incisive swing bowling was countered by Kieron Pollard's attacking half-century and Rovman Powell's cameo as the West Indies totalled 146 for six after being put into bat.

The Rajasthan seamer made full use of his only opportunity in this tour taking



The dazzler: Deepak Chahar is over the moon after sending back Shimron Hetmyer. ■ AFP

■ The ODI series begins at the same venue on Aug. 8 (7 p.m. IST)

three wickets in his first two overs to leaving West Indies tottering at 14 for three. He got the ball to swing both ways while removing Sunil Narine (2), Evin Lewis (10) and Shimron Hetmyer (1). This effort was to fetch him the man-of-the-match award.

Pollard counter-attacked with with as many as half-a-dozen sixes in his 45-ball-58 – his first half-century for the West Indies in seven years. Along with Nicholas Pooran

(17), who played the second fiddle, Pollard added 66 for the fourth wicket as the host looked to have recovered from the initial slump.

However, Navdeep Saini came back for his second

spell to first dismiss left-hander Pooran and then pegged back Pollard's middle stump.

With the host reduced to 105 for five, Powell smashed his way to an unbeaten 32 off 20 balls to prop up the total.

STAT SPHERE



1 Pollard (58) registered his first half-century since the unbeaten 63 he scored against NZ at Lauderhill in June 2012. Since then, he went without a fifty in 31 innings

4 India has recorded its fourth 3-0 victory in a three-match bilateral T20I series

1 Pant's 65* is the highest by an Indian wicket-keeper in T20Is. The youngster has become the first Indian to score two T20I fifties before turning 22 years

6 Number of consecutive losses suffered by West Indies, its worst streak. The team had earlier lost five games on the trot to Pakistan in 2017-18

2 Deepak Chahar's spell of 3-1-4-3 is the second most economical bowling (min. 3 overs) for India in T20Is, after Bhuvneshwar's 3-0-3-0 against WI (Mirpur, 2014)

16 Number of consecutive dot balls bowled by Deepak Chahar after conceding three runs off his first two deliveries

21 Number of 50-plus scores notched up by Kohli in T20Is, the joint most with Rohit. Guptill is third with 16

Washington 3-0-23-0, Krunal 4-0-35-0.

INDIA

K.L. Rahul c Pooran b Allen 20 (18b, 2x4, 1x6), Shikhar Dhawan c Cottrell b Thomas 3 (5b), Virat Kohli c Lewis b Thomas 59 (45b, 6x4), Rishabh Pant (not out) 65 (42b, 4x4, 4x6), Manish Pandey (not out) 2 (5b); Extras (w-1): 1; Total (for three wkts. in 19.1 overs): 150.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-10 (Dhawan, 1.6 overs), 2-27 (Rahul, 4.4), 3-133 (Kohli, 17.3).

WEST INDIES BOWLING

Cottrell 4-0-26-0, Thomas 4-0-29-2, Allen 3-0-18-1, Narine 4-0-29-0, Brathwaite 2.1-0-25-0, Paul 2-0-23-0.

Toss: India. **MoM:** Deepak Chahar; **MoS:** Krunal Pandya.

India won by seven wkts. with five balls to spare and swept the series 3-0.

SCOREBOARD WEST INDIES V INDIA, THIRD T20I

WEST INDIES

Evin Lewis lbw b Deepak Chahar 10 (11b, 1x4), Sunil Narine c Saini b Deepak Chahar 2 (6b), Shimron Hetmyer lbw b Deepak Chahar 1 (3b), Kieron Pollard b Saini 58 (45b, 1x4, 6x6), Nicholas Pooran c Pant b Saini 17 (23b, 1x4, 1x6), Rovman Powell (not out) 32 (20b, 1x4, 2x6), Carlos Brathwaite c Washington b Rahul Chahar 10 (7b, 1x6), Fabian Allen (not out) 8 (5b, 1x6); Extras (lb-4, w-4): 8; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 146.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-4 (Narine, 1.5 overs), 2-13 (Lewis, 3.1), 3-14 (Hetmyer, 3.5), 4-80 (Pooran, 13.1), 5-105 (Pollard, 15.4), 6-119 (Brathwaite, 17.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Bhuvneshwar 3-0-19-0, Deepak Chahar 3-1-4-3, Saini 4-0-34-2, Rahul Chahar 3-0-27-1,

Duleep Trophy to revert to red ball

Domestic season-opener in Bengaluru from Aug. 17 to Sept. 8

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Pink-ball cricket was the only saving grace for the Duleep Trophy, a tournament that's been struggling for relevance in the recent past. Come next week and the season-opening fixture that was once virtually considered to be a selection trial for India's Test squad will revert to red-ball cricket.

The tournament, to be played in Bengaluru from August 17 to September 8, will revert to the traditional format after experimenting with pink-ball cricket under floodlights for the last three editions.

Considering the Indian team's opposition to playing a pink-ball Test – even overseas, let alone at home – it is understandable that the BCCI has halted the experiment for the Duleep Trophy.

Logistical challenges

However, Saba Karim, the BCCI general manager – cricket operations, preferred to focus on the logistical challenges, including lack of broadcast of matches except for the final as the



Shubman Gill. ■ FILE PHOTO

primary reason than India's reluctance to play a floodlit Test.

“We were finding it very difficult to get a venue. Only a couple of days back were we able to finalise it. That is why only the final will now be telecast. It does not make sense to play the tournament with the pink ball,” Karim said.

The captains

Promising batsman Shubman Gill, Vidarbha's successive Ranji Trophy-winning captain Faiz Fazal and Gujarat captain Priyank Panchal will lead India Blue, India Green and India Red in the

tournament. The national selection panel, headed by M.S.K. Prasad, announced the squads on Tuesday.

Interestingly, the tournament will not feature a single Tamil Nadu player despite 44 top performers in domestic cricket being divided in three teams.

The squads:

India Blue: Shubman Gill (capt.), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Rajat Patidar, Ricky Bhui, Anmolpreet Singh, Ankeet Bawane, Snell Patel (wk), Shreyas Gopal, Saurabh Kumar, Jalaj Saxena, Tushar Deshpande, Basil Thampi, Aniket Choudhary, Diwesh Pathania, Ashutosh Aman.

India Green: Faiz Fazal (capt.), Akshath Reddy, Dhruv Shorey, Siddhesh Lad, Priyam Garg, Akshdeep Nath, Rahul Chahar, Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, Jayant Yadav, Ankit Rajpoot, Ishan Porel, Tanveer-UL-Haq, Akshay Wadkar (wk), Rajesh Mohanty, Milind Kumar.

India Red: Priyank Panchal (capt.), Abhimanyu Easwaran, Axar Patel, Karun Nair, Ishan Kishan (wk), Harpreet Singh Bhatia, Mahipal Lomror, Aditya Sarwate, Akshay Wakhare, Varun Aaron, Ronit More, Jaydev Unadkat, Sandeep Warrier, Ankit Kalsi.

Saha on song

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TRINIDAD

Wriddhiman Saha's counter-attacking 62 (65b, 9x4, 1x6) took India-A to 180 for five in 58 overs on the opening day of the third ‘Test’ against West Indies-A here on Tuesday.

Hanuma Vihari (51) and Shivam Dube (19) were at the crease.

Asked to bat, India-A lost opener Abhimanyu Easwaran for a duck before Mayank Agarwal (33) and Shubman Gill departed off successive balls in the 20th over.

However, Vihari and Saha rescued the side.

The scores: India-A 180 for five (Mayank Agarwal 33, Hanuma Vihari 51 batting, Wriddhiman Saha 62) vs West Indies-A.



Wriddhiman Saha. ■ FILE PHOTO: BISWARANJAN ROUT

An artist who lent grace to a brutal craft

Steyn bowled the Proteas to famous Test wins

TRIBUTE

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Fast bowling is explosive in nature. When a genuine quick lands in the process of delivering a ball, he withstands ground forces several times his body weight.

Yet, Dale Steyn glided to the crease in his run-up, light on his feet much like a ballet dancer, and released the sphere with an action that was astonishingly smooth.

Work of art

Every delivery of his, from run-up to load-up to release was a work of art. The South African brought grace to an otherwise brutal craft.

But then, the ease with which he sent down his thunderbolts masked the enormous effort he put in for every ball of his.

When asked who the best contemporary fast bowler was in South Africa last year, Michael Holding, who earned the moniker the ‘Whispering Death’ for his silky style, replied, “Dale Steyn, of course. A complete fast bowler.”

And this was a period when Steyn, past his best,



Torch-bearer: Steyn inspired a new generation of pacers. ■ AFP

was being stymied by fitness concerns. It's sad that Steyn will not be figuring in Test cricket any more. But at 36, his body scarred by injuries and several failed comebacks to the longest format, he had given it his all for Tests.

He leaves behind immortal Test memories, showcasing his enormous skills, slicing through line-ups, conquering, and celebrating with his unique pumping-the-ground style. Steyn had a lot going for him as he decimated

teams in different conditions. Nobody sent down those speedy outswingers of control and viciousness better than he did in this era.

And he mixed them with potent inswingers, high on accuracy. When the ball got older, Steyn could unleash deadly reverse-swing; all at a velocity between 145 to 150 kmph.

The manner he employed his wrist and used the seam position lent cutting edge to his bowling. Steyn could

bowl effective cross seam as well. There was little respite for the batsmen. He could hurt them with his fast, skiddy bouncers delivered from a deceptive quick-arm action.

Steyn's bowling was not just about ability and beauty. It was much about heart and spirit. He would keep his belief and bowl with the same intensity and speed during wicketless spells, find a way, and then come up with a bunch of scalps.

Staggering numbers

His numbers are staggering. No bowler with 200 or more wickets has a better strike rate than Steyn's 42.30 in Test history.

And while picking up 439 wickets in 93 Tests, Steyn averaged under 25, both home and away. A captain's dream, Steyn bowled the Proteas to famous Test victories in Australia, New Zealand, England and the sub-continent. At home, he was a force of nature.

Steyn inspired a new generation of South African pacemen, Kagiso Rabada being the foremost among them.

Steyn, truly, was a thing of beauty in Test cricket.

The walking leg-before wicket who drives bowlers to distraction

Smith's batsmanship evoked the ‘U’ word – ugly – before it inspired the ‘G’ word – great



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

I have a friend, who, before he leaves home for work pats his hips, his shirt pocket, jacket pocket intoning as he does so: travel card, wallet, glasses, keys (it sounds lyrical in his native Bengali).

It is a ritual I am reminded of when watching Steve Smith settle into his stance. Pad, box, pad, helmet; everything in place, a short walk to the edge of the crease, a bending of the knees; are the pads in place? Check. Trousers on? Check. Have I paid the electricity bill? Did I switch off the lights before leaving home?

I exaggerate. But Smith, like fidgets everywhere, draws you into his routine. If he misses a step, you worry for him. It might be tempting fate.

How to get Smith out?

As Smith was moving towards his second century in the Birmingham Test, the commentator David Lloyd asked spectators: “How do you get Smith out? Yes, you in the blue cap...” Those with commentary earpieces looked as helpless as the English

bowlers. The point is, everybody knows how to get Smith out. He is a walking leg-before wicket as he squares up in front of the stumps, having shuffled his way outside the off. At least, that's what the coaching manuals tell us.

Smith has no business being the second most successful batsman of all time with a technique that renders irrelevant these manuals. But there it is. He can pull the ball he converts into a short-pitched one and drive when the bowler overcompensates. And he has been dismissed leg-before only 18 times in 119 innings. Greatness comes in many forms.

It is not often that a player builds, furnishes, and inhabits a monument all his own with material no one else has used, and tools which in anybody else's hands would simply not work. Uniqueness is not mandatory for greatness, but in Smith's case they go together.

With a mind as strong as his – he returns from a one-year ban into an Ashes series and scores two centuries straightaway – and an obsession with the game from his schooldays when his father finished work early so he could bowl to him, how did he allow the sandpaper scandal under his watch?

Is it part of the contradiction of being Steven Smith? He has reduced batsmanship to a two-point programme.

He keeps his head in line with the ball and keeps it perfectly still while playing it. You cannot simplify further.

All in the head

Forget footwork, forget that cricket is a game played side-on and all those things coaches tell us. It's all in the head.

It might see him finish up facing the bowler with his feet pointed down the wicket; he challenges the bowler to hit his pads. He moves so far across that he knows anything outside the line of his nose misses the off-stump, and if anything comes in, he is confident enough to find gaps on the leg-side. Smith is an excellent example of an unorthodox player left alone by the authorities.

When he made his Test debut, he was a leg-spinner who batted at No. 8. It was only after his first century in his 12th Test that his batting average climbed to 34. His bowling average, meanwhile, was 49. But he was persisted with, rather like Steve Waugh was.

Doesn't play by the book

For a purist, Smith is a difficult man to embrace. He doesn't inspire love and admiration so much as ambivalence. He doesn't play by the book. It is as if someone taking a math exam shows the workings of a problem that is all wrong, yet somehow has found

the right answer.

No other sport lays such stress on both the methods and the results. You can accidentally deflect a header into a goal and become a national hero, but a Test batsman who makes a 50 scoring mostly off the outside edge is mocked. It is a conceit of the game that it's better to make a perfect 30 than to score a scratchy century. Smith's batsmanship evoked the ‘U’ word – ugly – before it inspired the ‘G’ word – great.

It is tempting – and many have fallen for the temptation – to see a century in each innings as redemption for a man who was banned from cricket for cheating, or at least allowing his players to cheat.

If you stretch that argument, does making, say, 10 in each innings fall short of redemption by 180 runs? It's apples and oranges. Smith should be feted for his brilliance at the crease, but to conflate two separate issues while finding in one what should follow the other is simplistic.

Sure, everyone deserves a second chance, and Smith has grabbed it with commendable mental strength and rare skill. But his misdeed occurred a little over a year ago. Redemption will come with a clean slate between now and the end of his career.

Meanwhile, English bowlers ask, like the nuns in the movie: How do you solve a problem like Steve Smith?

Lions maul Mavericks, climb to second

The Kolkata team gets eliminated after the 11-4 drubbing

UTT

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

It proved pack-up time for Manika Batra and RP-SG Mavericks from the Ultimate Table Tennis league.

Marching ahead in style was Chennai Lions that led comfortably through the tie and completed a resounding 11-4 thrashing of the Kolkata franchise on Tuesday.

The triumph catapulted Chennai to the second spot from fifth in the six-team table. With just two league matches remaining, U Mumbai tops the list with 44 points from five games, followed by Chennai Lions (35 from four), Dabang Delhi (33 from four), Goa Challengers (30 from four), Mavericks (30 from five) and Puneri Paltan (23 from four).

Tuesday's tie ended the agonising campaign of Manika in the league. Struggling for form, she suffered a humiliating 3-0 drubbing at the hands of Madhurika Patkar.

Petrissa blanks Ekholm

Once World No. 24 Petrissa Solja set the table for Chennai with a surprise 3-0 rout of Matilda Ekholm, ranked 23, Mavericks simply could not bridge the gap. Tiago Apolonia enhanced the margin by taking the first two games against Sanil Shetty



Making heads turn: Madhurika's win over Manika was the high point of Lions' performance. ■ COURTESY UTT

before the latter managed to pull one back.

Thereafter, the unbeaten duo of Sharath Kamal and Petrissa made amends for losing the first game on ‘golden point’ to Benedikt Duda and Manika by racing away with the next two.

Sharath could not keep pace with his good friend Duda in the singles and lost 1-2. But Sharath gave his team the winning lead in an encounter that provided most thrills. The players produced some long rallies interspersed with innovative shot-making.

Sharath's defeat was pushed to the background once Madhurika came out firing against Manika. She controlled the first game to

put pressure on her more fancied opponent.

In the second, Madhurika showed character by bouncing back from 0-5 and 8-10 to claim the ‘golden point’. In the final game, Madhurika progressively grew stronger, leaving an exasperated Manika with plenty to think about.

The results: Chennai Lions bt RP-SG Mavericks (Kolkata) 11-4 (Petrissa Solja bt Matilda Ekholm 11-7, 11-10, 11-9; Tiago Apolonia bt Sanil Shetty 11-9, 11-6, 3-11; Sharath Kamal & Petrissa bt Benedikt Duda & Manika Batra 10-11, 11-4, 11-7; Sharath lost to Duda 7-11, 11-5, 7-11; Madhurika Patkar bt Manika 11-5, 11-10, 11-8).

Wednesday's fixture: Goa Challengers v Puneri Paltan (7 p.m.).