

Entertainment, entertainment, entertainment...

India cranked up the thrill-o-metre in Vizag, demonstrating that when the elements sync they're ruthlessly entertaining and entertainingly ruthless



159 (138)

Rohit Sharma struck 17 fours and five sixes en route completing his 28th ODI ton



102 (104)

KL Rahul began steadily, before accelerating and crunching his third century



53 (32)

Shreyas Iyer was brutal on Roston Chase, looting 30 runs off five balls



39 (16)

Rishabh Pant lived up to his impact man reputation, belting four sixes and three fours



3/52

Enduring a lean phase, Kuldeep Yadav rekindled his form with a hat-trick

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
VISAKHAPATNAM, DECEMBER 18

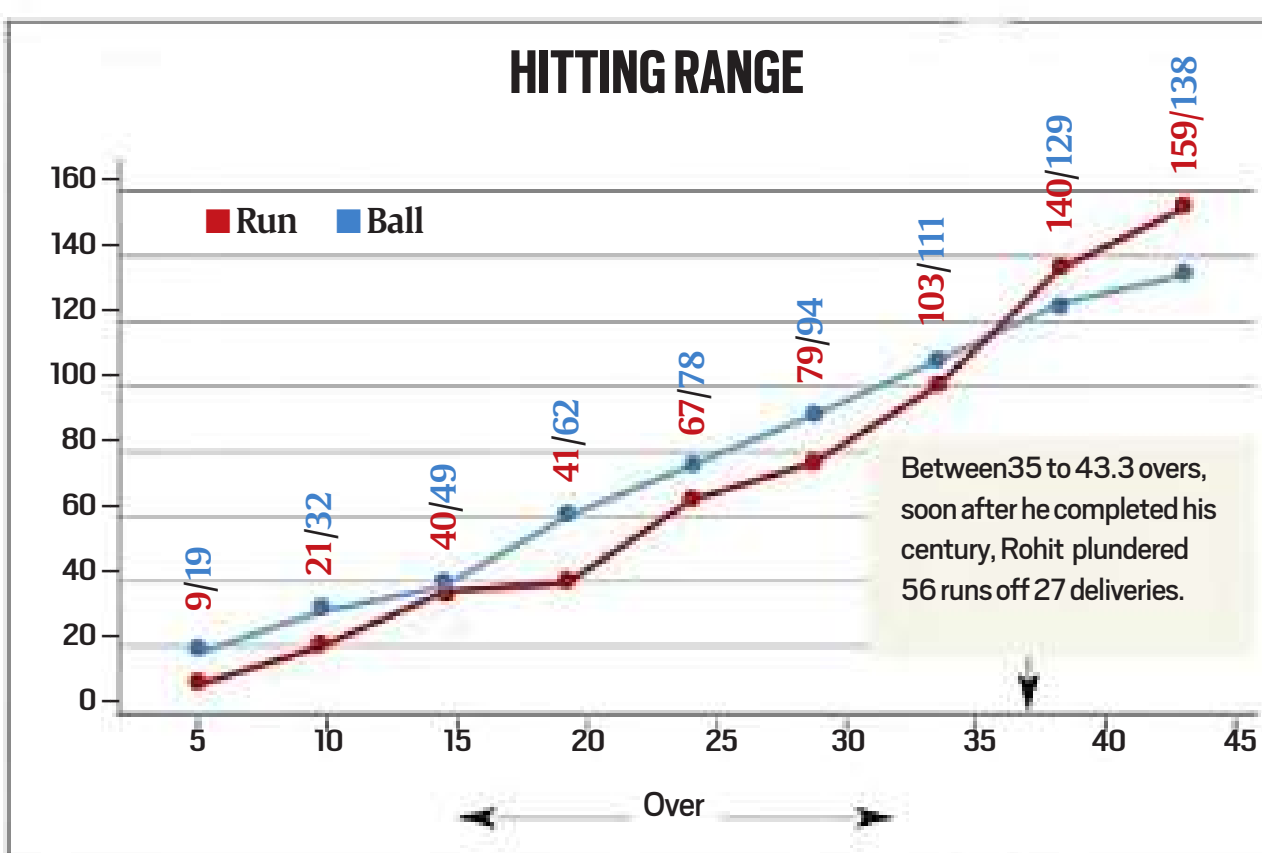
KL RAHUL stuck his fingers into the ear and shut the noise out after reaching his third ODI hundred. His opening partner, Rohit Sharma, scored his seventh century of the year. Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant wreaked havoc on the West Indies bowling in the slog overs. Iyer dismissed Shimron Hetmyer with a brilliant piece of fielding. Ravindra Jadeja bowled the ball of the match to flatten Roston Chase's off stump. Kuldeep Yadav took a hat-trick – his second in ODIs – to suck the West Indies lower-middle-order dry. The heat was on, India were game. They were also proving to be world cricket's most entertaining team. There wasn't one dull moment in India's series-levelling 107 runs win.

During the innings break, some fans at the ACA-VDCA Stadium were rueing Virat Kohli's golden duck. On a batting beauty, it was an anticlimax. India had 387 runs on the board after 50 overs, but the fans wanted to see a Kohli special. At the end, though, they had very little to complain about. Rohit and Rahul followed by Iyer and Pant treated the spectators to an exhibition of classy batsmanship and manic hitting.

Pant is at his best when he bats with an uncluttered mind, when he doesn't eschew his natural aggression. The equation was in his favour on Wednesday. India already had reached to 292 in the 44th over, when the diminutive 'keeper-batsman walked in. It was time to throw the kitchen sink and Pant showed how devastating he could be. Alzarri Joseph had been accounted for a couple of sixes to start with.

West Indies captain Kieron Pollard brought in his bowler of the series, Sheldon Cottrell, in the next over. Mayhem ensued. The first ball, a slower one, went over deep square leg. Pant survived an lbw appeal next ball and then hit three fours and a six in the last four deliveries. A 24-run over skyrocketed the run-rate.

Iyer joined the party and decimated Chase, hitting four sixes and a four against the off-spinner. Thirty-one runs had been scored in that over, most runs in an over by India in their ODI history. The fourth wicket



IN THE first 10 overs, he had just two boundaries and was batting 21 off 32 balls. In the next 10 overs he was going at a strike-rate of less than 70. From the 21st over, Rohit started to hit boundaries frequently. After 30 overs, Rohit was on 79 off 94 balls.

HE REACHED his hundred, in 107 balls. He was the leading man then, with Rahul playing second fiddle. At the end of 34th over, Rohit was batting on 102 off 108 balls. His next 57 runs came in just 30 deliveries, and when he got out in the 44th over, he had a strike-rate of 115-plus.

partnership between Iyer and Pant by then had reached 71 off 22 balls. It was where the game was taken away from the visitors.

Blitzzy Pant, searing Iyer

Pant got out two balls later after making 39 off 16 deliveries. Cottrell had Iyer caught down the leg in the next over. Iyer's 32-ball 53 oozed maturity. He played second fiddle while partnering Rohit before shifting to top gear with ridiculous ease. Iyer and Pant gave a glimpse to the future of the Indian batting, the talent it has at its disposal.

The carnage ensued India put on 127 runs in the last 10 overs. Par score was high on Vizag belt. Given the West Indies' batting wherewithal, India needed to take their total past 350. A well-over-par score

meant the Caribbeans had to play against scoreboard pressure. They eventually wilted.

Iyer and Pant built the 'Manhattan' on the foundation laid by Rohit and Rahul, who had a 227-run opening wicket partnership in 37 overs. India lost the toss and the two openers began cautiously.

For the first 20 overs they were going around five runs per over before upping the ante. Rahul took three fours of a Joseph over to trigger the charge. The second boundary, a wristy flick past mid-wicket, was a showpiece.

Rohit wasn't yet timing the ball to perfection. He was dropped on 70 off Chase, when Hetmyer running in from long-off couldn't hold on to a skier. But as he got into the eighties, Rohit gradually started to im-

pose himself on the West Indies bowlers. A four and six against the promising leg-spinner Khary Pierre helped.

Rahul reached his hundred with a four off Joseph and did the ear muffing. "I will let it stay a mystery," he told the official broadcaster at the end of India's innings. Shikhar Dhawan's injury gave him an opportunity to open. He grabbed it. Rahul departed for a 104-ball 102. He would have felt gutted, given the touch he was in.

Rohit carries on

Rohit carried on. His 28th ODI hundred came in 107 balls. A glorious straight drive for a six against Jason Holder took him past 150, off 132 deliveries. It was his eighth 150-plus score in the 50-over format and he looked set for his fourth double hun-

PRaise-WORTHY

Wanted to get our act together. KL batted well, allowed me to take my time. KL is such a talent when you watch him from the opposite end. Running between the wickets wasn't upto the mark, but we'll get used to it soon.

ROHIT SHARMA
ON HIS PARTNERSHIP WITH KL RAHUL

There's no major 50-over cricket now, so we need to just play fearlessly, which is the need of the hour. As a captain, nice to see the way we've batted first after losing the toss. It shows we're not reliant on the toss, we want to bat oppositions out of the game.

VIRAT KOHLI
ON THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE

I was a bit confused what to bowl for the hat-trick ball, then I thought I had to get in a second slip and bowl a wrong'un on the stumps. There wasn't much dew, so I was just trying to mix my pace up with the variations.

KULDEEP YADAV
ON HIS SECOND HAT-TRICK

Azhar seeks home win after 10-yr drought

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
KARACHI, DECEMBER 18

PAKISTAN SKIPPER Azhar Ali said Wednesday he wants the return of Test cricket to the country to be a memorable one as his team seeks victory over Sri Lanka in Karachi starting Thursday.

Their series is the first in Pakistan since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus killed eight people in March 2009, leading to the suspension of international cricket in the country as foreign sides refused to visit over security fears. The return of Test cricket to Pakistan last week was something of a washout, with their first encounter badly hit by the weather in Rawalpindi before stuttering to a tame draw.

After 10 years playing away, Azhar said Pakistan desperately wanted to make the most of playing at home. "We are playing a home series and need to capitalise on that home advantage," he told reporters. "We want to win this series and make the occasion memorable." Despite the Rawalpindi washout, Pakistan gained a psychological edge against the Sri Lankans with Abid Ali and Babar Azam notching hundreds to steer their team to 252-2 in reply to Sri Lanka's 308-6 declared. It was extra special for Abid, who became the first batsman to follow a one-day debut century – against Australia in Dubai in March this year – with a hundred in his first Test. Pakistan will likely make one change



Azhar will also hope to regain his own batting form, having managed just 36 runs in Rawalpindi.

from the first Test, with leg-spinner Yasir Shah replacing fast bowler Usman Shinwari, who has been ruled out with typhoid.

Azhar will also hope to regain his own batting form, having managed just 36 at Rawalpindi following his miserable 62 in four innings in Australia and 59 in six innings in South Africa earlier this year. Sri Lanka are aiming to spoil Pakistan's homecoming following

The return of Test cricket to Pakistan last week was something of a washout, with their first encounter badly hit by the weather in Rawalpindi before stuttering to a tame draw.

a string of strong performances. Earlier this year, they became the first Asian team to win a Test series in South Africa (2-0) before drawing 1-1 at home against New Zealand. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne said the team is looking to continue their winning ways as part of the World Test championship.

"We look forward to giving good competition to Pakistan, but know that it will be tough to beat them," he said. The visitors will be without their pace spearhead Kasun Rajitha, who pulled a hamstring during the Rawalpindi Test and is likely to be replaced by uncapped fast bowler Asitha Fernando.

The Sri Lankans are in third place on the Test championship table with 80 points. World number one India sit atop the nine-team table with 360 points while Australia are second with 216. Pakistan – currently sixth – lost 2-0 to Australia recently, but got 20 points from last week's draw in Rawalpindi. Launched in August, the championship involves the top nine Test teams in the world.

South Africa appoints Kallis as batting consultant

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA
JOHANNESBURG, DECEMBER 18

LEGENDARY ALL-ROUNDER Jacques Kallis was on Wednesday appointed as South Africa's batting consultant for the entire duration of their home summer. Cricket South Africa (CSA) also announced that Charl Langeveldt has been appointed as bowling consultant for the season.

"Former Standard Bank Proteas all-rounder, @jacqueskallis75 has been named as the team's batting consultant for the duration of the summer. He will join the squad for their camp starting in Pretoria today (Wednesday)," CSA announced on its official twitter handle. "Cricket South Africa (CSA) is pleased to confirm the return of former Standard Bank Proteas bowler, Charl Langeveldt as bowling consultant to the national men's team this summer. He will join the squad in camp as quickly as can be arranged," CSA tweeted.

Kallis played 519 international matches across formats for South Africa, aggregated 25,534 runs and took 577 wickets. He featured in 166 Tests, 328 ODIs and 25 T20 Internationals. The 44-year-old Kallis retired from all forms of international cricket in 2014 after amassing 62 international centuries – 45 Test and 17 ODI – averaging 55.37 and

44.36 in each format, respectively.

Kallis, who retired from international cricket in 2013, is third on the all-time Test run-scorers list with 13 289 runs at an average of 55.37. The former all-rounder is the latest high-profile name to be inducted in South Africa's coaching set-up after Mark Boucher's appointment as head coach for the national team. Langeveldt, who was a prolific bowler in his time, took 100 ODI wickets in his 72 appearances for his country.

"The former pacer resumes the bowling coaching role that he played for SA from 2015 to 2017 before consulting for Afghanistan and settling in Bangladesh under Russell Domingo," CSA tweeted. Former Test wicket-keeper Boucher was named as South Africa's new head coach on a four-year deal last week. The 43-year-old replaced Enoch Nkwe, who was interim team director after head coach Ottis Gibson was released in August and is now the assistant coach.

Kallis is not new to coaching. He was the head coach of Kolkata Knight Riders in 2015 when Trevor Bayliss resigned to take over as the coach of the England cricket team. Kallis was also the batting consultant of KKR in the past. During the home summer, South Africa will first host England from mid-December until mid-February for four Test matches, three ODIs and three T20s.

SCORECARD >>> India vs West Indies

2nd ODI | Vizag | Toss: West Indies

INDIA 387/5

R Sharma c Hope b Cottress 159 (138b, 17x4, 5x6)

KL Rahul c Chase b Joseph 102 (104b, 8x4, 3x6)

V Kohli c Chase b Pollard 0 (1b)

S Iyer c Hope b Cottrell 53 (32b, 3x4, 4x6)

R Pant c Pooran b Paul 39 (16b, 3x4, 4x6)

K Jadhav not out 16 (10b, 3x4)

R Jadeja not out 0 (0b)

■ Extras: (b 1, lb 3, nb 1, w 13) 18
Fall of wickets: 227-1 (Lokesh Rahul, 36.6), 232-2 (Virat Kohli, 37.3), 292-3 (Rohit Sharma, 43.3), 365-4 (Rishabh Pant, 47.3), 373-5 (Shreyas Iyer, 48.6)

■ Bowling:
S Cottrell 9-0-83-2
J Holder 9-0-45-0
K Pierre 9-0-62-0
K Paul 7-0-57-1
A Joseph 9-1-68-1
R Chase 5-0-48-0
K Pollard 2-0-20-1

WEST INDIES 280 IN 43.3 OV

E Lewis c Iyer b Thakur 30 (35b, 5x4)

S Hope c Kohli b Yadav 78 (85b, 7x4 3x6)

S Hetmyer run out 4 (7b)

R Chase b Jadeja 4 (9b)

N Pooran c Yadav b Shami 75 (47b, 6x4, 6x6)

K Pollard c Pant b Shami 0 (1b)

J Holder st Pant b Yadav 11 (13b, 1x6)

K Paul b Shami 46 (42b, 4x4, 3x6)

A Joseph c Jadhav b Yadav 0 (1b)

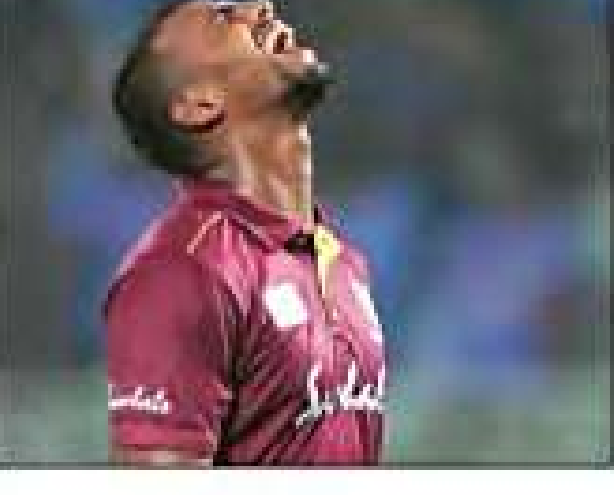
K Pierre c Kohli b Jadeja 21 (18b, 3x4)

S Cottrell not out 0 (3b)

■ Extras: (b 1, lb 2, w 8) 11
Fall of wickets: 61-1 (Evin Lewis, 10.6), 73-2 (Shimron Hetmyer, 13.1), 86-3 (Roston Chase, 15.6), 192-4 (Nicholas Pooran, 29.2), 192-5 (Kieron Pollard, 29.3), 210-6 (Shai Hope, 32.4), 210-7 (Jason Holder, 32.5), 210-8 (Alzarri Joseph, 32.6), 260-9 (Khary Pierre, 40.5), 280-10 (Keemo Paul, 43.3)

■ Bowling:
D Chahar 7-1-44-0
S Thakur 8-0-55-1
M Shami 73-0-39-3
R Jadeja 10-0-74-2
K Yadav 10-0-52-3
S Iyer 1-0-13-0

■ India won by 107 runs



Nicholas Pooran briefly threatened to take the tie away from India. AP