

# Rohit Sharma — oozing class and chutzpah

Opener makes batting a treat to watch and has forged a great understanding with Dhawan and Rahul

## WI IN INDIA

Y.B. SARANGI  
CUTTACK

With his effortless batting, Rohit Sharma offers cricket lovers a sit-back-and-enjoy show. His performance is easy on the eye, yet high on effectiveness.

In 2019, he performed plenty of such shows. Especially in the 50-over format, where he gathered 1490 runs in 27 innings at an average of 57.30 and end up as the highest run-getter ahead of captain Virat Kohli (1377).

“Personally I have enjoyed batting, but there is no way I am stopping,” said Rohit Sharma, the Man-of-the-Series in India’s 2-1 win over West Indies, during the post-match presentation at the Barabati Stadium here on Sunday night.

This demonstrates how Rohit relishes his moment in the middle. It has helped him score seven hundreds and six fifties in the last 12 months.

### Boy next door

At a time when hunks have replaced common men as heroes in Indian movies, Rohit, with his lazy elegance, is like a superstar from a bygone era who has found acceptance and appeal even today. While batsmen with bulging muscles have made

## Power-packed performances

The India-West Indies ODI series went down to the wire before the hosts clinched it in a thrilling finish at Cuttack on Sunday

BATTING	Name	I	R	H	Avg.	S/R	50/100s
	Rohit Sharma	3	258	159	86.00	100.38	1/1
	Shai Hope	3	222	102*	111.00	77.62	1/1
	Nicholas Pooran	3	193	89	96.50	144.02	2/0
	K.L. Rahul	3	185	102	61.66	88.94	1/1
	Shimron Hetmyer	3	180	139	60.00	123.28	0/1
BOWLING	Name	M	W	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	4/SW
	Keemo Paul	3	6	3/59	26.00	6.59	0/0
	Mohammed Shami	3	5	3/39	32.40	6.11	0/0
	Sheldon Cottrell	3	5	2/46	40.60	7.00	0/0
	Alzarri Joseph	3	4	2/45	41.50	6.38	0/0
	Kuldeep Yadav	3	3	3/52	54.66	5.46	0/0
	Name	M	W	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	4/SW
	Ravindra Jadeja	3	3	2/74	62.00	6.20	0/0

COMPILED BY G. PRASAD

the thrashing of the leather ball a trend in T20 cricket, Rohit, the boy next door, sends the white ball flying to the boundary without much toil.

Rohit, who closed the year with a 63-ball 63 and contributed significantly in India’s big run chase in the third and final ODI here, has scored the most number of boundary shots – 146 fours and 36 sixes – this year.

Only Eoin Morgan has hit more sixes – 41 – while Aaron Finch has the same number. Nevertheless, they are

far behind on number of fours.

“I understand my batting really well. I want to play within my limits. Knowing the game plan you want to execute is very important,” said the 32-year-old, providing an insight into his uncluttered mind and mature thinking.

The other important facet of Rohit’s batting is making his partner feel good in his company. After his fine run with opening partner and good friend Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit has forged an en-

viable rapport with the talented K.L. Rahul. The result is for everyone to see.

In just 10 innings this year, Rohit and Rahul have developed a special bond which has yielded 923 runs, including five century stands, at a whopping average of 92.30. They have defied the popular theory of left-right combination with sheer class.

### Rapid strides

Rohit and Rahul’s 227-run stand in Visakhapatnam has already established itself as the best Indian opening asso-

### Rohit in numbers

- In 2019, he has totalled 1490 runs in 27 ODI innings at an average of 57.30.
- Rohit is the highest run-getter ahead of captain Virat Kohli (1377).
- This includes seven hundreds and six fifties in the last 12 months.
- Rohit has scored the most number of boundary shots – 146 fours and 36 sixes – this year.
- In just 10 innings this year, Rohit and Rahul have scored 923 runs, including five century stands, at a whopping average of 92.30.

ciation against the Windies. Their combined average is unmatched by a mile and the two, in their prime, promise to make rapid strides on the all-time list of successful opening partners.

Rohit, who went past Sri Lankan Sanath Jayasuriya’s 22-year-old record of scoring the most runs by an opener in international cricket during his knock here, wants to replicate his white-ball cricket success in red-ball matches too.

He has already shown signs of it after being promoted as an opener in Tests and is eagerly looking forward to achieving greater glory.



On song: While other burly batsmen prefer to bludgeon the bowlers, Rohit Sharma is all touch and timing without compromising on the scoring rate. • K.R. DEEPAK

# Bumrah and Dhawan back in Indian squad

Rohit and Shami rested for the T20Is against Sri Lanka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Jasprit Bumrah and Shikhar Dhawan have been picked to the Indian teams, for the Twenty20 Internationals against Sri Lanka and the One-Day Internationals against Australia, to be played in January.

However, in-form opener and vice-captain Rohit Sharma and Mohammed Shami have been rested for the three-match series against Sri Lanka, beginning on January 5.

Bumrah, who had suffered a stress fracture, is reportedly fit enough to test his recovery in Gujarat’s forthcoming Ranji Trophy match.

According to selection committee chairman M.S.K. Prasad, “Sanju Samson will be the back-up opener in the T20 series. Against Austra-



### The squads and dates

#### T20IS VS SRI LANKA

Virat Kohli (Capt.), Shikhar Dhawan, K.L. Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur, Manish Pandey, Washington Sundar and Sanju Samson

January 5, **Guwahati**  
January 7, **Indore**  
January 10, **Pune**

#### ODIS VS AUSTRALIA

Virat Kohli (Capt.), Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma, K.L. Rahul, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey, Rishabh Pant, Kedar Jadhav, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Shami, Navdeep Saini, Shardul Thakur, and Jasprit Bumrah

Jan. 14, **Mumbai** | Jan. 17, **Rajkot** | Jan. 19, **Bengaluru**

lia, we have all three openers in the team – Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma and

K.L. Rahul.” Seamers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Deepak Chahar

Sanju Samson will be the back-up opener in the T20I series

M.S.K. PRASAD

are out of the reckoning on account of injuries.

“Deepak, who did well in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, aggravated his back injury in the second ODI in Visakhapatnam,” said Prasad.

On the availability of all-rounder Hardik Pandya, the chief selector said they would test him in the third week of January for a possible chance to figure in the series against New Zealand from January 24.

Shardul Thakur, Navdeep Saini, who will be the 16th member for the ODI series against Australia, and Khaled Ahmed will continue to be in the scheme of things for the season.

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

M.S.K. Prasad wants Rishabh Pant to work with a specialist wicket-keeping coach and former Test stumper Kiran More is willing to offer his services.

Chief selector Prasad rates Pant as a special talent. “He has done well and we have seen glimpses of some good batting recently. He batted exceptionally well in Tests (in England and Australia). Pant is a work in progress and I would suggest he can benefit if he gets to work with More. There is no problem with Pant’s batting but he surely needs to work on his wicketkeeper. As a wicketkeeper he has to be good enough to command his place,” Prasad told *The Hindu*.

When asked if he would help Pant, More responded,



Under scrutiny: Rishabh Pant, who has had a rash of wicketkeeping gaffes, needs to up his game. • R. RAGU

“Any time. I will be too happy to work with Pant. I did work with him for two days (last year) but then I would need to spend more time with him. A ten-day stint one-on-one with Pant would be a good idea to start with. He has a fantastic cricket sense and there are a few technical things to be sorted out. He is young and needs

some guidance. Putting pressure is not going to help at all. I must tell you he is mentally very strong.”

As Prasad pointed out, “The desire to work on his wicketkeeping has to come from within. We are studying his work and are all ready to help him. Ideally he needs to improve in certain areas. It is not fair to talk of Pant in the

same breath as (Wriddhiman) Saha or M.S. (Dhoni). Please remember Pant did not play much of domestic cricket before he got into the Indian team like say Parthiv (Patel) or (Dinesh) Karthik. Had he played a good three-four seasons of hard grind in domestic cricket he would not have faced some of these issues.”

Would Pant find a place purely as a batsman? “Possible. But then it would depend on what kind of combination the team wants. It would also mean that Pant would need to develop as a fielder in some specialist position. It is not easy. Look at K.L. (Rahul) finding it tough to get a place in the Test team. Pant is being guided. I keep talking to him. He has lost weight and is working hard on his keeping skills. We will back him.”

# Dhoni’s 15 years in India colours

Took the team to the pinnacle of glory in all formats



Living legend: Mahendra Singh Dhoni has brought joy to the Indian fans with his exploits as a player and captain. • AFP

	M	Inns	N.O.	Runs	HS	Avg	SR	100s	50s	Ct/St
Tests	90	144	16	4876	224	38.09	59.11	6	33	256/38
ODIs	350	297	84	10773	183*	50.57	87.56	10	73	321/123
T20Is	98	85	42	1617	56	37.6	126.13	0	2	57/34

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Two-time World Cup-winning former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni on Monday completed 15 years in international cricket, a milestone that has come at a time when he is on a sabbatical from the game.

The dasher from Ranchi, who made his debut against Bangladesh under Sourav Ganguly’s captaincy in 2004, has been one of the

most impactful Indian cricketers with 17,266 runs across all formats for India.

The 38-year-old wicket-keeper has turned up for the country in 350 ODIs, 90 Tests and 98 T20 Internationals while affecting a staggering 829 dismissals behind the stumps.

His career is studded with several milestones including leading India to victory in the 2011 World Cup where he finished the final with a

six to help the ‘Men in Blue’ lift the coveted trophy.

Under Dhoni, India transformed into one of the most successful limited-overs sides in world cricket and he is the only Indian captain to have won all the three major ICC trophies – World Twenty20 in 2007, ICC World Cup in 2011 and Champions Trophy in 2013.

He also led Test India to the No.1 spot in ICC rankings in both Tests and ODIs.

# Harmanpreet, Smriti and Veda to lead teams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana and Veda Krishnamurthy will lead India-A, B and C teams in the women’s T20 Challenger Trophy to be played at Cuttack from January 4 to 11.

**The squads: India-A:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Taniya Bhatia (wk), Shivali Shinde (wk), Jasia Akhtar, Priya Puniya, Deepti Sharma, Devika Vaidya, Sneha Rana, Mansi Joshi, Megha Singh, Komal Jhanjhad, Meenu Mani, Radha Yadav, and Bharati Fulmali.

**India-B:** Smriti Mandhana (Capt.), Sushma Verma (wk), R. Kalpana (wk), V.R. Vanitha, Jemimah Rodrigues, Anuja Patil, Poonam Yadav, Pooja Vastrakar, Shikha Pandey, Renuka Singh, Anjali Sarvani, Sushri Dibadarshini, T.P. Kanwar, and Richa Ghosh.

**India-C:** Veda Krishnamurthy (Capt.), Nuzhat Parween (wk), Shafali Verma (wk), Yastika Bhatia, D. Hemalatha, Harleen Deol, Manali Dakshini, Jincy George, Arundhati Reddy, Monica Patel, Vrushali Bhagat, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Tanushree Sarkar, and Madhuri Mehta.

# Shaw in India-A squad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The in-form Prithvi Shaw on Monday took another step towards an India comeback after being named in the ‘A’ squad for the tour of New Zealand.

**The India-A squads:** For two tour matches and three one-day games: Shubman Gill (Capt.), Prithvi Shaw, Mayank Agarwal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Suryakumar Yadav, Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan (wk), Hardik Pandya, Krunal Pandya, Axar Patel, Rahul Chahar, Sandeep Warrier, Ishan Porel, Khaled Ahmed, and Mohd. Siraj.

**For first four-day game:** Hanuma Vihari (Capt.), Prithvi Shaw, Mayank Agarwal, Priyank Panchal, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Shubman Gill, K.S. Bharat

(wk), Shivam Dube, Shahbaz Nadeem, Rahul Chahar, Sandeep Warrier, Avesh Khan, Mohd. Siraj, Ishan Porel, and Ishan Kishan.

**For second four-day game:** Hanuma Vihari (Capt.) Prithvi Shaw, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), K.S. Bharat (wk), Shivam Dube, R. Ashwin, Shahbaz Nadeem, Sandeep Warrier, Avesh Khan, Mohd. Siraj, and Ishan Porel.

### The schedule:

**Tour games:** Jan. 17 & 19, Lincoln.

**One-dayers:** Jan. 22 (Lincoln), Jan. 24 & 26 (Christchurch).

**Four-day matches:** Jan. 30-Feb. 2 (Christchurch) and Feb. 7 to 10 (Lincoln).

## 2020 Sportstar ACES Awards

Readers will have a chance to pick their favourites for the 10 Popular Choice Awards. The top two contenders from each category, based on popular vote, will be sent to a jury, which will decide the winner

THE NOMINEES

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR (TEAM SPORTS)



**BALA DEVI (FOOTBALL)**  
Playing for Manipur Police SC, Bala Devi was the highest goal-scorer in the Indian Women’s League (IWL) this year with 26 goals in seven matches. Aged 29, she was also the top-scorer at the senior women’s national football championship held in Arunachal Pradesh, netting 21 goals in five matches, including the all-important winner in the final as Manipur beat Railways to win its 20th national title. Recently, Bala Devi also emerged as the star of the South Asian Games where she slotted home twice to guide India to a comfortable 2-0 victory over Nepal in the final.



**DEEP GRACE EKKKA (HOCKEY)**  
Deep Grace has been one of the core members who have laid the foundation for the Indian women’s hockey team’s growing success in the international arena. A natural leader in the defence and gifted with a tactical understanding of the game, Deep Grace has contributed heavily to India’s Test tour victories in Ireland, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan. Her calmness in the final minutes of the Olympic qualifiers tie in November, helped India hold the US at bay to secure back-to-back Olympic appearances for the first time in history.



**LALREMSIAMI (HOCKEY)**  
At the age of 19, Mizoram forward Lalremsiami already has 64 international caps for India, including a World Cup quarterfinals appearance and an Asian Games silver medal. Her telepathic understanding with fellow forwards and ability to create chances have played a big part in the women’s team’s improved scoring record on foreign soil in the past year. As the Indian women’s team prepares for its third Olympics next year, Lalremsiami will have a bigger role to play at Tokyo alongside her experienced teammates.

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