

India cuts a dashing figure on the world Test stage, thanks to Kohli

Brains trust’s focus on the importance of workload management pays dividends



The dazzlers: Team India has made 'Playing to win every Test' its magic mantra. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

CRICKET IN '19

VIJAY LOKAPALLY
NEW DELHI
Virat Kohli's figure looms large in the Indian dressing room. His consistency and exacting fitness regime kept the team war-ready through the year.

Team to beat
India, as asserted by coach Ravi Shastri, played some “fantastic” cricket to justify its new-found reputation as the combination to “beat.” India's performance in Tests – seven wins in eight matches – highlighted the focus on the importance of workload management that has propelled the team into a zone of perfect returns for

the effort put in. “We are now playing to win every Test. The players have realised that only performance and nothing else is going to take them forward. There is no place for reputation. This is a different team from what you have known in the past. The fitness levels and the commitment have created a terrific work culture in the team,” Shastri told *The Hindu*. The India-A pipeline has delivered results with some decisions taken in the back-ground cementing the faith of the players in the National selectors. Shreyas Iyer making a strong comeback in ODIs and Shivam Dube gaining the tag of an all-rounder prove the

excellent rapport between the selectors and the team management. **The No. 4 slot** The struggle for the No. 4 slot in ODIs was settled with Shreyas excelling in the new role. Shreyas was seen as the best batsman by the team management to adapt to the challenge. So was Dube, who went through rigorous strength training for six months in the run-up to his international debut. The workload management is a complex process but aims at keeping players fresh. “There is not a player who can be found wanting in any format. International cricket

demands intense training and this was evident in the way we played in 2019. We ought to have won the Sydney Test (at the beginning of the year) but rain took away the last day's play. “In all other matches, India played dominating cricket. Critics said it was a second-string South Africa that we beat, but the same team hurt England,” asserted Shastri. **Amazing pace** The workload management meant the Test fast bowling unit – Mohammed Shami (33 wickets), Ishant Sharma (25 wickets) and Umesh Yadav (23) – was at peak fitness for critical matches. “They were amazing,” said Shastri.

The team also gained from the consistency of Mayank Agarwal, Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane and Rohit Sharma in Tests and K.L. Rahul in ODIs. Rohit was the performer of the year, amassing 2,442 runs across all three formats – three centuries in Tests and seven in ODIs establishing him as the batsman to fear. He has to be battle-ready even though he has been rested for the T20I series against Sri Lanka with strengthening coach Nick Webb putting him through a punishing training block. The year 2019 was marked by key Indian players maintaining top fitness due to the professionalism seen in the way the team management,

Short added to Aussie squad



D'Arcy Short. ■ GETTY IMAGES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE
D'Arcy Short was on Monday added to the Australian squad for its upcoming one-day tour of India, with all-rounder Sean Abbott sidelined for up to a month with a side strain. The three-match tour gets under way on January 14 in Mumbai and National selector Trevor Hohns said all-rounder Short deserved his chance. Abbott picked up the injury playing for Sydney Sixers in the Big Bash League on Friday. **The squad:** Aaron Finch (Capt.), Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins, Peter Handscomb, Josh Hazlewood, Marnus Labuschagne, Kane Richardson, D'Arcy Short, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Ashton Turner, David Warner and Adam Zampa.

Kohli and Bumrah in Wisden's T20I team of the decade

M.S. Dhoni doesn't find a place in the side led by Finch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON
India skipper Virat Kohli and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah were the only two Indians who found a place in *Wisden's* T20 International team of the decade, which didn't feature M.S. Dhoni. Australia's limited-overs captain Aaron Finch was named captain of the team, which has two more Australian in Shane Watson and Glenn Maxwell, two England cricketers – Jos Buttler and David Willey, two Afghanistan all-rounders – Mohammad Nabi and Rashid Khan, and New Zealand's Colin Munro and Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga. On Kohli, *Wisden* said: “While Kohli's record in domestic T20 cricket is patchy, the same cannot be said of T20Is. Kohli's average of 53 was the best in the decade, and while his consistency compromises his strike-rate slightly, he is still able to score at a good rate, even if not exceptional. Kohli, who ranks third in the list of leading run-scorers of all time with 21,444



Just recognition: Jasprit Bumrah and Virat Kohli's heroics for India have fetched them a place on the elite list. ■ FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

runs, was also included in *Wisden's* Test and ODI teams of the decade, besides being named in *Wisden's* list of five cricketers of the decade which also features Steve Smith, Dale Steyn, A.B. de Villiers and Ellyse Perry. Bumrah found a place in the bowling unit due to his superb economy rate and reputation for being a reliable death bowler.

“Bumrah's overall economy rate of 6.71 is the second best in the world among quick bowlers, behind Dale Steyn,” *Wisden* said about Bumrah. **Wisden's T20I team of the decade:** Aaron Finch (Capt.), Colin Munro, Virat Kohli, Shane Watson, Glenn Maxwell, Jos Buttler, Mohammad Nabi, David Willey, Rashid Khan, Jasprit Bumrah and Lasith Malinga.

Too early to say: Ganguly on four-day Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA
BCCI President Sourav Ganguly on Monday said it's “too early” to comment on the International Cricket Council's proposal to make four-day Tests mandatory as part of the World Test Championship from 2023. “First we will have to see the proposal, let it come and then we will see. It's too early to say. Can't comment just like this,” said Ganguly. The ICC's cricket committee will formally consider trimming Tests to four days from five for the 2023-2031 cycle. The ICC wanting to stage more global events, BCCI's demands for an expanded bilateral calendar, proliferation of T20 leagues around the world and cost of hosting a five-day game are some factors contributing to the need for a four-day game. Four-day Tests have been played between England and Ireland in 2019 and South Africa and Zimbabwe in 2017.

2019 Report Card

OVERALL PERFORMANCE


Format	Mat	Won	Lost	Draw/NR	Win%
Tests	8	7	0	1	87.50
ODIs	28	19	8	1	67.86
T20Is	16	9	7	0	56.25

TOP BATSMEN

Format	Player	M	Runs	HS	Avg.	SR	100/50
TESTS	Mayank Agarwal	8	754	243	68.54	59.04	3/2
	Ajinkya Rahane	8	642	115	71.33	49.96	2/5
	Virat Kohli	8	612	254*	68.00	63.28	2/2
ODIs	Rohit Sharma	28	1490	159	57.30	89.92	7/6
	Virat Kohli	26	1377	123	59.86	96.36	5/7
	M.S. Dhoni	18	600	87*	60.00	82.30	0/6
T20Is	Virat Kohli	10	466	94*	77.66	147.93	0/5
	Rohit Sharma	14	396	85	28.28	138.46	0/4
	K.L. Rahul	9	356	91	44.50	142.40	0/4

TOP BOWLERS

Format	Player	M	Wkts.	Best	Avg.	Econ.	5W
TESTS	Mohd. Shami	8	33	5/35	16.66	2.83	1
	Ishant Sharma	6	25	5/22	15.56	2.86	2
	Umesh Yadav	4	23	5/53	13.65	3.54	1
ODIs	Mohd. Shami	21	42	5/69	22.64	5.36	1
	Bhuvneshwar Kumar	19	33	4/31	23.75	5.23	-
	Kuldeep Yadav	23	32	4/39	34.68	5.33	-
T20Is	Deepak Chahar	9	16	6/7	13.00	6.53	1
	Yuzvendra Chahal	9	8	2/28	39.25	8.97	-
	Bhuvneshwar Kumar	9	8	2/19	33.87	8.21	-
	Krunal Pandya	12	8	3/28	42.87	8.10	-



COMPILED BY RAJNEESH GUPTA

selectors, physios and the strengthening coaches functioned. Each player was monitored closely and it reflected in the approach of the team – unbeaten run in Tests; 19 wins in 28 ODIs and nine in 16 T20s.

“We had a wonderful World Cup but for those 15 painful minutes. There was little to complain even though I would say we have to push ourselves in the T20 format,” noted Shastri. As Shastri insisted, the team was focused on a taxing

2020 with Tests in New Zealand and Australia and the T20 World Cup. “We are ready for all challenges. There is some outstanding talent waiting to conquer the world of cricket,” the India coach concluded.

Man City eases past Sheffield

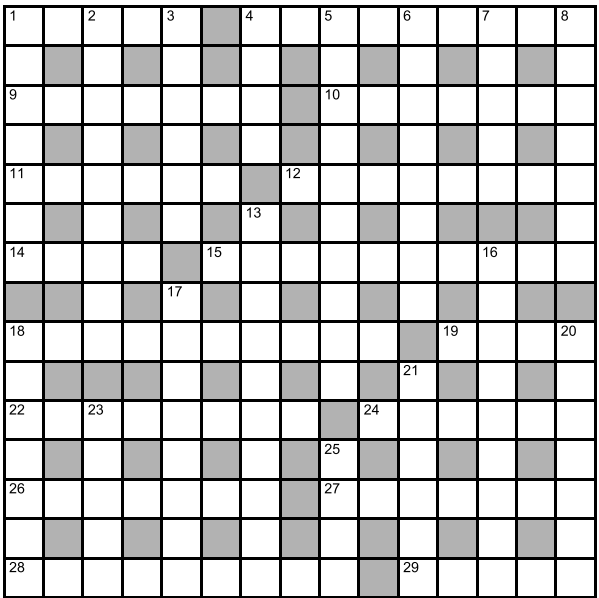
Defending champion back to within 14 points of Liverpool

PREMIER LEAGUE	
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MANCHESTER Manchester City shrugged off a tight turnaround from defeat at Wolves to beat Sheffield United 2-0 on Sunday thanks to second-half strikes from Sergio Agüero and Kevin de Bruyne. City boss Pep Guardiola had lambasted the scheduling that saw the English champions kick off less than 48 hours after playing the majority of Friday's 3-2 defeat at Molineux with 10 men. Goal ruled out Fatigue seemed to get the better of City in the first half as the Blades enjoyed the better of the chances and had a Lys Mousset goal ruled out after a VAR review for offside. However, the greater individual quality at Guardiola's disposal decided the game as de Bruyne teed up Agüero to smash into the roof of the net seven minutes after the break. de Bruyne then rounded off another excellent display by scoring the second himself with a fine finish eight minutes from time to inflict Sheffield's first defeat away from home for nearly a year and bring City back to within 14 points of runaway leader Liverpool. The result: Manchester City 2 (Agüero 52, de Bruyne 82) bt Sheffield United 0.	

On target: Sergio Agüero scores Manchester City's first goal against Sheffield United. ■ REUTERS

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12820

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



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ACROSS

- 1 Partial blockade at harbour ending (5)
- 4 Superb, finally I have our set working! (9)
- 9 Fools nation, initiates trade wars, intimidates truth-tellers, silences leaders (7)
- 10 Order some upma when in bad temper (7)

- 11 Observe the storm (6)
- 12 Harsh step, heartlessly taken upon reflection (8)
- 14 A legend still followed by one? (4)
- 15 Salary covers accidental illness without any problems (10)
- 18 Crying aloud: feel no shame (10)
- 19 Anger, perhaps without an end? (4)
- 22 Dancing is sin? Dad rejects! (8)
- 24 Gussalufz is back, oddly brandishing one rhythmic line of verse (6)
- 26 Still, egalitarianism is partly prohibited by law (7)
- 27 Data discovered with a fresh X-ray provides peace of mind (7)
- 28 Absolve old lover (a judge!) (9)
- 29 Go through valued gifts regularly (5)

DOWN

- 1 Extremely dreary and awful line of rulers (7)
- 2 Pure gold, at that time, traded in coins, initially (9)
- 3 Husband takes the lead from wife in bulk, stature (6)

(set by Gussalufz)

- 4 Evil seen rising in communities abroad (4)
- 5 A dominant edge in the right kind of 17? (10)
- 6 Extraordinary service winning essential match points (8)
- 7 You said, "In love...", twirling a piece of a flower (5)
- 8 When coming back finally, Moon vehicle manoeuvre or attempt? (7)
- 13 Bacteria developed on all meals (10)
- 16 Pub had stock for the Reverend, right? (9)
- 17 Figure resulting from indefinite integral (8)
- 18 Broken dud embraced by the upper class? That's a non-starter for one rejecting technology (7)
- 20 Scramble eggs; never cook red yams; preheat tawas... (top tips) (7)
- 21 A large handkerchief with a hole in the middle showing a fruit (6)
- 23 Burst from colossal volcano (5)
- 25 Built a puzzle that requires replacing the last letter with a bit of devilry (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12819												
E	S	C	O	L	A	R	S	T	A	G	G	E
T	Z	T	A	O	O	L	L					
C	I	A	O	I	N	F	L	U	E	N	C	E
F	N	S	A	R	O	M						
A	F	R	E	S	H	T	R	E	N	C	H	E
E	F	O	L	D	O	N						
I	N	F	A	V	O	R	O	F	A	C	U	T
A	I	S	L	E	T	O	R	C	H			
A	I	S	E	L	O	G	A	R	I	T	H	M
N	B	E	M	F	C	H	U					
S	A	L	U	T	I	N	G	C	L	A	U	S
N	T	I	N	O	U	V	E	B				
D	E	P	O	S	I	T	O	R	S	O	P	A
L	N	O	D	A	I	N						
W	I	V	E	R	N	S	O	L	D	O	D	O

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku												
2	9	5	6	7	8	4	1	3				
7	8	4	9	3	1	2	6	5				
1	3	6	2	5	4	8	9	7				
3	4	7	1	8	2	6	5	9				
5	2	9	7	6	3	1	4	8				
6	1	8	4	9	5	7	3	2				
8	6	1	3	2	9	5	7	4				
9	7	2	5	4	6	3	8	1				
4	5	3	8	1	7	9	2	6				

FAITH

Divinely ordained

When Bhashma lay on his arrow bed, he told Arjuna about the 1000 names of Vishnu. These 1000 names constitute the Vishnu Sahasranama. Vishnu Sahasranama transcends philosophical differences, said V.S. Karunakarachariar in a discourse. It has commentaries by Sankara Bhagavadpada, Parasara Bhatta and Satyasanda Teertha. So, whether it is the Advaitic school or Visishtadvaitic school or the Dvaita school of philosophy, the Vishnu Sahasranama was considered important enough for all three to write commentaries on it. PrasthAna traya refers to the three most important works of Vedanta – Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Bhagavad Gita. Bhagavadpada wrote commentaries for these works, and also for Vishnu Sahasranamam. How he came to write this commentary is interesting. He asked his disciple Padmapada to fetch a manuscript from the manuscript collection, and he also said Padmapada had to pick something randomly, with his eyes closed. The manuscript that turned up was the chapter titled Vishnu Sahasranama, in the Anusasana Parva of the Mahabharata. Bhagavadpada asked Padmapada to repeat the process, this time also with his eyes closed. The second time also, it was the Vishnu Sahasranama that came up. Padmapada tried a third time, with the same result. Another version says that Padmapada tried for a fourth time, and that a godly looking little girl, picked a manuscript for Padmapada. And the manuscript selected by her too turned out to be the Vishnu Sahasranama. When Bhagavadpada came to know about this, he felt it was Goddess Parvathi Herself who had asked him to go ahead with a commentary on Vishnu Sahasranama. Taking it as a divine sign he wrote a commentary for the Vishnu Sahasranama.