

# India’s recent form makes it the overwhelming favourite

Men in Blue have won all six T20Is against West Indies in the last 13 months; visiting skipper Pollard, however, happy to put his faith in an unproven unit



**What's on the horizon:** Virat Kohli, Manish Pandey, Shreyas Iyer, Sanju Samson and Yuzvendra Chahal prepare for the T20I series against the West Indies. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

## WI IN INDIA

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA  
HYDERABAD

India and the West Indies have faced each other in six T20 Internationals over the last 13 months. From Lauderhill to Lucknow, these fixtures have produced the same result every single time – an Indian win.



So the ordinary fan might be forgiven any lack of enthusiasm when the two teams meet again this month, for a three-match T20I series that begins at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium here on Friday.

The West Indians have not arrived in the best of shape. Theirs is a relatively inexperienced outfit, fresh off a T20I series defeat to Afghanistan. A number of star names are absent, either through injury or other reasons. Andre Russell has had his knee issues but was fit enough to play in the Abu Dhabi T10 league; Chris Gayle's future is unclear; and Sunil Narine has hurt his finger. A return to international cricket for Dwayne Bravo, who last played for the West Indies in 2016, has been spo-

ken of but there has been no comeback yet. The limited-overs captaincy has now been handed to Kieron Pollard, who dashed off to Abu Dhabi himself after the Afghanistan T20s last month. **Upbeat** Pollard has quite the task on his hands. But the West Indies skipper sounded upbeat on Thursday, happy to put his faith in an unproven unit. Opener Brandon King and leg-spinner Hayden Walsh, who has also represented the USA, are here on the strength of their perfor-

mances in the 2019 Caribbean Premier League. Lendl Simmons, who caused India much pain in that 2016 World T20 semifinal, is back in the fold after a two-year absence. In Alzarri Joseph and Sheldon Cottrell, West Indies has two good fast bowlers, while Nicholas Pooran, Evin Lewis and Shimron Hetmyer are competent batsmen. India will thus be cautious, aware that its own performances in T20 cricket have been far from spectacular. But Virat Kohli did not seem too concerned by India's results or ranking – cur-

STAT SPHERE



INDIA VS WEST INDIES IN T20IS

Matches: **14**

India: **8**

West Indies: **5**

No Result: **1**

IN INDIA

Matches: **4**

India: **3**

West Indies: **1**

IN A BIG CLASH

- Semifinal, ICC World T20 2016, Mumbai
- India 192-2 in 20 overs (Kohli 89\*, Rohit 43, Rahane 40) lost to West Indies 196-3 in 19.4 overs (Simmons 82\*, Charles 52, Russell 43\*)

COMPILED BY ANANTA AJITH RA

DEC. 6, HYDERABAD | DEC. 8, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM | DEC. 11, MUMBAI | ALL MATCHES BEGIN AT 7 P.M. | LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & HD, SELECT & HD

INDIA  
TOP RUN-SCORERS

Player	Inns	Runs	HS	Ave	Strike Rate	50s/100s
Rohit	12	425	111*	47.22	139.34	3/1
Kohli	8	318	89*	45.42	139.47	3/0
Dhawan	9	193	92	21.44	116.96	1/0
Rahul	5	189	110*	63.00	164.34	0/1
Pant	7	171	65*	28.50	130.53	2/0

TOP WICKET-TAKERS

Player	Inns	Wkts	BBM	Ave	Eco	4W
Bumrah	5	8	2/20	20.25	8.10	0/0
Jadeja	8	7	3/48	33.28	9.91	0/0
Kuldeep	3	6	3/13	13.16	6.58	0/0
Bhuvneshwar Mishra	9	6	2/12	34.16	6.40	0/0
	2	5	3/24	8.40	5.25	0/0

WEST INDIES  
TOP RUN-SCORERS

Player	Inns	Runs	HS	Ave	Strike Rate	50s/100s
Lewis	6	242	125*	48.40	180.59	0/2
Pollard	8	187	58	26.71	108.09	1/0
Simmons	6	181	82*	26.20	130.21	1/0
Gayle	5	177	98	35.40	115.68	1/0
Charles	3	174	79	58.00	185.10	2/0

TOP WICKET-TAKERS

Player	Inns	Wkts	BBM	Ave	Eco	4W/5W
Bravo	5	7	4/38	22.71	9.35	1/0
Thomas	6	7	2/21	25.14	7.33	0/0
Paul	6	5	2/23	36.80	8.69	0/0
Sammy	3	5	4/16	8.20	5.12	1/0
Cottrell	3	4	2/20	17.75	5.91	0/0

## Front-foot no-balls to be third umpire’s call

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Front-foot no-balls in the upcoming T20I and One-Day International series between India and the West Indies will be decided by the third umpire and not the on-field officials, the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced on Thursday.

### Technology on trial

The technology to call front-foot no-balls will be put to trial in the first T20I in Hyderabad on Friday.

“Throughout the trial, the third umpire will be responsible for monitoring every ball bowled and identifying whether there has been any front-foot infringement,” the ICC said in a statement.

“If there has been an infringement on the front

foot, the third umpire will communicate this to the on-field umpire who will subsequently call a no-ball.

“As a result, the on-field umpire will not call a front-foot no-ball without the advice of the third umpire,” it added.

### Benefit of doubt

The ICC said the benefit of doubt in close calls would lie with the bowler.

“It’s important to note that any benefit of the doubt lies with the bowler, and if a late no-ball call is communicated, then the on-field umpire will rescind a dismissal (if applicable) and call no-ball,” the statement said.

Based on this trial, the ICC will gauge whether the system has a beneficial impact on the decision-making process and the flow of the game.

## ‘We will be flexible, unpredictable’

Team combination getting stronger, says India captain

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

“Twenty20 cricket is all about being flexible. There won’t be a set pattern. The combination or playing eleven might look similar, but there is nothing like ‘this is how we are going to go.’ We have to be unpredictable,” India captain Virat Kohli told the media on the eve of the first T20I against the West Indies.

“T20 is a format where you experiment a lot more than in ODIs or Tests. And you take a lot more risks in terms of what you want as a team,” he said.

The captain was happy with his pace attack as it comprised experienced and consistent bowlers like Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami.

“Deepak (Chahal) is really bowling well. Also, a couple more guys are under the scanner for sealing a spot alongside the three main seamers,” he said.

On having two wrist and

**In the groove:** Deepak Chahal, Mohammed Shami, Rishabh Pant and Bhuvneshwar Kumar give their captain reason to feel confident. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

two finger-spinners in the squad, the captain felt it was a big advantage, especially on the big grounds in Australia. “It is all about balance. You need to have six bowling options in T20 cricket, that’s the basic rule,” he said.

“This is really Jaddu’s (Ravindra Jadeja) best phase as an all-rounder. And Washi (Washington Sundar) has been brilliant with the new ball. So, we’re very happy with how our options are placed.”

On Sanju Samson’s chances of playing in the eleven, Kohli said the batting order had a settled look now.

“The responsibility to bring control in the middle-order is on me. The other batsmen will be able to express themselves and play freely. This is the meaning of batting in partnership – one or two control the batting, the rest can play with strike-rates of 170-180,” he said.

### Batting in tandem

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## Kohli puts his weight behind Pant

‘Once he comes good, you will see a different version of him’

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

India captain Virat Kohli was unequivocal in his support for ‘under fire’ wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant. “He needs to be left alone, we know he’s a match-winner and once he comes good, you will see a different version of him,” he said.

Kohli’s backing should bolster the youngster’s confidence.

“We certainly believe in Rishabh’s ability. It’s the player’s responsibility to work hard and perform, but there’s a collective responsibility as well to give him the space to do well,” the captain said.

“If he misses a chance people should not be shouting ‘MS’ in the stadium. It’s not disrespectful. No player would like that to happen. If you’re playing in your own country, you should get support rather than have people waiting for you to make a mistake,” Kohli said.

“You’ve seen the match-winner version of him in the

**Giving him his space:** The team has to rally around the beleaguered Rishabh Pant, feels Virat Kohli. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

IPL because he’s free, relaxed there. He feels there’s a lot more respect when it comes to his ability,” said Kohli.

“He needs to be given space, but not isolated to the extent that he gets nervous on the field. If you want him to do well and win matches

for the team, all of us collectively need to make him feel he belongs,” the captain said. On whether Pant would be used as an opening batsman, Kohli said: “Not really, in the Indian team if you look at the top three or four batsmen right now, they are set.”

## An opportunity and a challenge: Pollard

‘Looking to channelise our energy for ways to be positive’

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

West Indies captain Kieron Pollard says India’s form is good for his team as it looks at the forthcoming series as an opportunity and a challenge.

“We have to deal with what is presented to us and we are looking to channelise our energy for ways to be positive, get the basics right and continue to use that opportunity every time we step onto the field,” Pollard said after the team’s training session here on Thursday.

### Team effort

“So, we don’t want to focus too much on individuals. We are here as a team, looking forward to improving our cricket,” he said.

Referring to the absence of some senior players, Pollard said: “(Andre) Russell, (Sunil) Narine and (Dwayne) Bravo are big gaps, but the squad selected has come

**Team work:** Kieron Pollard, left, and Jason Holder lead the practice session. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

down here to try and do the job. We back each and every player.

On his own form, he said: “You have bad and good

times. I just want to continue scoring and help my team’s cause. We are here to play some good cricket and we are well-prepared. Hopeful-

ly, we will hit the ground running.”

On West Indies’ indifferent form in the T20 format despite being the defending World Cup champion, Pollard felt it was all in the past.

“It is important to do certain things well against a formidable side like India, tick the boxes and hopefully the results will be taken care of,” he said.

### New talent

Speaking about new talent like Hayden Walsh Jr. and Brandon King, Pollard felt the most important thing for the management was to have patience. “At the end of the day you want to have results, but sometimes you need to be honest with yourself,” he said.

“Sometimes, you need to have that umbrella over them and try and protect them from any vultures,” he concluded.

## Lakshmi set to make history

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DUBAI

Former India cricketer G.S. Lakshmi is set to become the first woman match referee to oversee a men’s ODI when she officiates the opening match of the third series of the World Cup League 2 in the UAE on Sunday.

Lakshmi will oversee the match between the UAE and USA at Sharjah.

## ICC extends its OPPO tie-up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The ICC on Thursday, announced the extension of its partnership with smartphone maker OPPO for another four years till September 2023.


OPPO will continue to remain the official mobile handset and headset partner of ICC.

## 2020 Sportstar Aces Awards


The 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 panel, which will decide the winner

THE NOMINEES


SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR (CRICKET)



**ROHIT SHARMA**  
Rohit first led the Mumbai Indians to a fourth IPL title. Then he smashed five hundreds and a half-century at the ODI World Cup in England, emerging as the tournament’s No. 1 batsman with 648 runs. Rohit also had a rebirth in Test cricket. Promoted as an opener in the three-match series against South Africa, he amassed 529 runs with two centuries and a double hundred.



**MOHAMMED SHAMI**  
Shami has been at the forefront of India’s pace revolution. This year, he became the second Indian to bag a hat-trick at the World Cup (against Afghanistan). In Tests, Shami returned with 14 wickets in six second innings at an average of 11.50 and strike rate of 22.6, making him the biggest threat for the opponents in their second stint.



**JASPRIT BUMRAH**  
Bumrah was part of the Mumbai Indians side that won its fourth IPL crown, picking up 19 wickets in 16 games. In his debut World Cup, Bumrah finished with 18 wickets in nine matches at an average of 20.61 and economy rate of 4.41. He also bowled the most maidens (nine). Bumrah continued his fine form in red-ball cricket, bagging 13 wickets in two matches against the West Indies in the Caribbean, including his Test-best figures of 6/27.

To vote, log on to <https://sportstar.thehindu.com/aces-awards>

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