

Rahul has sealed his spot as a wicketkeeper-batsman

Kohli says the move brings balance and allows the team to play an extra batsman

AUS IN INDIA

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

A lot can happen in a week. K.L. Rahul entered the ODI series against Australia unsure of his spot in the batting order, and by the end of it, he has emerged as India's most preferred wicketkeeper-batsman.

It all started by accident. In the first ODI at Mumbai, first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant left the field after being hit on the helmet by Australian pacer Pat Cummins, forcing Rahul to don the gloves. Despite his limited experience behind the stumps, Rahul was up to the task.



Win-win situation: Team India has benefited from not only K.L. Rahul's positive batting but also from his creditable work behind the stumps as evident from this stumping of Aaron Finch. • VIJAY SONEJI

Upping the ante
Rahul upped the ante in the second ODI, showing great reflexes and presence of mind to effect a smart stumping to remove skipper Aaron Finch. He shone with the bat as well, smashing a 52-ball 82 in an unfamiliar three-drop spot, to go with his 47 at one-day in the previous match.

In the third ODI at Bengaluru on Sunday, Rahul kept wickets while a fit-again Pant

was relegated to the bench. Rahul and Pant even joked and chatted when Pant entered the field to offer drinks. He had the backing of his home crowd as well, who countered muted chants of 'Dhoni, Dhoni' with loud screams of 'Rahul, Rahul'.

The transition was complete – a fact confirmed by

skipper Virat Kohli's comments in the post-match press conference. Kohli explained that having Rahul as 'keeper brings balance to the team.

Comparisons
The skipper even went so far as to draw comparisons to the time when Rahul Dravid

kept wickets – an unorthodox move that worked very well for that side.

"It allows us to play an extra batsman, which strengthens our batting massively. That is a very important factor as far as the team balance is concerned. If you look at the 2003 World Cup where Rahul bhai started keeping,

the balance became different because you could play an extra batter, and guys at the top could really play positive cricket.

"Also, Rahul is very open to batting anywhere because he is a proper batsman who can perform in any format. He won't go slam bang from ball one, but he can do what

The India-Australia ODI series in numbers

BATTING

Player	M	R	HS	Avg	SR	100s	50s
Steve Smith	2	229	131	114.50	97.86	1	1
Virat Kohli	3	123	89	61.00	101.10	0	2
Rohit Sharma	3	171	119	57.00	91.44	1	0
Shikhar Dhawan	2	170	96	85.00	93.92	0	2

BOWLING

Player	M	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	5w	4w
Mohammed Shami	3	7	4/63	28.28	7.15	0	1
Adam Zampa	3	5	3/50	29.40	4.90	0	0
Kane Richardson	2	4	2/43	29.00	6.05	0	0
Ravindra Jadeja	3	4	2/44	35.75	5.10	0	0

- Kohli and Rohit consolidated their top two positions in the batting chart, while pace ace Jasprit Bumrah continued to lead among bowlers in the ICC ODI Rankings issued on Monday
- Ravindra Jadeja has moved up two places to be 27th among bowlers and gained four spots to lie 10th in the all-rounders' list
- Shikhar Dhawan climbed seven places to reach the 15th position while K.L. Rahul jumped 21 slots to reach the 50th position

Tiripano strikes early

SL IN ZIM

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HARARE

Donald Tiripano struck early to remove Oshada Fernando and complete an excellent second day of the first Test for Zimbabwe against Sri Lanka in Harare.

Brief scores: Zimbabwe 358 (C. Ervine 85, K. Kasuza 63, P. Masvaure 55, D. Tiripano 44 not out, S. Raza 41; L. Embuldeniya 5/114, R. Lakmal 3/53) vs Sri Lanka 42/1.

India takes on Japan

U-19 WORLD CUP

BLOEMFONTEIN: India will meet Japan in its second group game of the under-19 World Cup here on Tuesday. India had defeated Sri Lanka by 90 runs in the opening match.

On Monday, Nyeem Young's allround show (66, 4lb, five fours and four sixes & five for 45) was the highlight of West Indies' 71-run win over England (D-L method). West Indies made 267 and restricted England to 184.

In the other match, Australia registered a 10-wicket win over Nigeria after bundling out the latter for 61.

PBL

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

A dominant Chennai Superstarz overwhelmed Hyderabad Hunters 5-2 on the opening day of the Premier Badminton League here on Monday.

In fact, the host gained an unassailable 4-0 lead over Hunters even before the visiting team's – and everyone's favourite – P.V. Sindhu could enter the court for the fourth and penultimate tie against Gayatri Gopi Chand. As expected the reigning World champion demolished Gayatri 15-5, 15-5.

Earlier, Lakshya Sen, playing as a Trump, pulled off a 58-minute thriller over a fighting 17-year-old Priyanshu Rajawat, ranked 253 places below at 283. The 15-6, 13-15, 15-14 result gave Superstarz the winning lead in the third tie itself.

No pushover
In fact, Priyanshu ensured that the Chennai-Hyderabad match wasn't completely one-sided. Under pressure, he made Lakshya move from side to side, showing that he was no pushover.

After Lakshya won the first game, he was expected to wallop Priyanshu, but the latter had other plans. The



Pulling out all stops: Satswiksairaj Rankireddy and Jessica Pugh overcame a tough challenge from Vladimir Ivanov and Sikki Reddy to give Chennai Superstarz a head-start. • R. RAGU

17-year-old produced his best in the second and third games where exquisite cross-court drops and excellent retrieves were backed by fantastic movements.

In the deciding game, Priyanshu took a 6-3 lead before Lakshya caught up. The 18-year-old from Bengaluru had a match point at 14-13, but Priyanshu equalised. In the last point, Priyanshu returned Lakshya's serve into the net much to the latter's relief.

In the first tie, the Chennai mixed doubles pair of Satswiksairaj Rankireddy and Jessica Pugh defeated Vladimir Ivanov and Sikki Reddy 15-6, 13-15, 15-13 that gave the home team a head-start.

Comfortable win
The second tie, the men's singles, between 2014 World championship bronze medalist Tommy Sugiarto of Chennai and Sourabh Verma didn't reach any great heights. Sugiarto won comfortably 15-11, 15-10. In fact, Sourabh committed uncharacteristic errors, mostly in the second game.

The results: Chennai Superstarz 5 bt Hyderabad Hunters 2 (Satswiksairaj Rankireddy & Jessica Pugh bt Vladimir Ivanov & Sikki Reddy 15-6, 13-15, 15-13; Tommy Sugiarto bt Sourabh Verma 15-11, 15-10; Lakshya Sen (T) bt Priyanshu Rajawat 15-6, 13-15, 15-14; Gayatri Gopi Chand lost to P.V. Sindhu (T) 15-5, 15-5; B. Sumeeth Reddy & Satwik bt Ben Lane & Sean Vandy 15-14, 11-15, 15-8).

Messi gives Setien a winning start

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES
MADRID

Quique Setien may want a different Barcelona but he needed the same old Lionel Messi on Sunday as the Argentinian gave his new coach a winning start by scoring in a 1-0 victory over Granada.

Messi's strike in the 76th minute decided a cagey contest at the Camp Nou and prevented the much-anticipated launch of Setien's new era becoming something of a damp squib.

Victory also sends Barca back to the top of La Liga on goal difference.

"I have seen many things from the team today that I want to see," said Setien. "But I already saw some of

them against Atletico (last weekend) because Barca has been doing great things for many years."

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Juventus beat Parma 2-1 on Sunday to remain firmly on course for a record-extending ninth straight Serie A title. Juventus moved four points above Inter Milan. Ronaldo's brace took his tally to 432 goals in Europe's top five leagues, one behind all-time record-holder Messi.

The results: La Liga: Athletic Bilbao 1 (Raul Garcia 76-pen) drew with Celta Vigo 1 (Rafa 56); Barcelona 1 (Messi 76) bt Granada 0.

Serie A: Genoa 1 (Pandev 45) lost to Roma 3 (Under 5, Birschi 44-og, Dzeko 74); Juventus 2 (Ronaldo 43, 58) bt Parma 1 (Cornelius 55).



Who else? Lionel Messi's strike helped FC Barcelona shade a cagey encounter against Granada. • GETTY IMAGES

Anand lets Caruana escape

CHESS

SPORTS BUREAU
WIJK AAN ZEE

Viswanathan Anand let World No. 2 Fabiano Caruana off the hook and then suffered a painful loss in the eighth round of Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here on Sunday.

In this Queen's Gambit Declined game, Anand gained sizeable advantage with black pieces after Caruana blundered in time-pressure by opting for the exchange of queens. The-reafter, Anand twice missed clearly winning advantage by failing to find the moves of optimum strength and blundered away the game. This escape to victory saw Caruana join Alireza Firouzja in the lead at 5.5 points.

The results: Fabiano Caruana (USA, 5.5) bt Viswanathan Anand (3.5); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 5) drew with Alireza frouzja (FIDE, 5.5); Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 4.5) bt Nikita Vitiugov (Rus, 2.5); Jeffery Xiong (USA, 3) lost to Vladislav Kovalev (Blr, 2.5); Yu Yangyi (Chn, 2.5) lost to Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol, 4.5); Daniil Dubov (Rus, 4) drew with Wesley So (USA, 5); Anish Giri (Ned, 4) drew with Vladislav Artemiev (Rus, 4).

Smooth sailing for Federer, Serena and Osaka; Venus crashes out

Djokovic made to sweat; Shapovalov loses cool and match; rain causes chaos with the match schedule leading to a big backlog

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic survived a scare before joining Roger Federer and Serena Williams in the Australian Open second round as heavy downpours caused chaos on Monday, forcing organisers to postpone a swathe of matches.

Defending champion Djo-



Stunning show: Marton Fucsovics packed off World No. 13 Denis Shapovalov in four sets on Monday. • AP

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kovic was made to sweat before beating Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff in four sets on the first day, when fears over air pollution were replaced by disruption caused by rain.

While play continued at the three stadiums with retractable roofs, half of the 64 scheduled matches were

postponed, ensuring a big backlog for Tuesday.

World No. 3 Federer was briefly hauled off court while the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena before returning to complete a routine 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over American Steve Johnson.

Serena, on the hunt for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, won the first set against Anastasia Potapova in just 19 minutes as she cruised to a 6-0, 6-3 win in less than an hour.

However, Serena's elder

sister Venus was ousted in stunning fashion by 15-year-old Coco Gauff, who won 7-6 (5), 6-3 in a repeat of her first-round upset at Wimbledon last year.

In the late match, defending champion Djokovic dropped his first set since 2006 in the opening round before recovering to beat Jan-Lennard Struff 7-6(5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1.

Defending champion Naomi Osaka was done much before the downpour as she dismissed Marie Bouzkova of

IMPORTANT RESULTS

First round

Men: 8-Matteo Berrettini (Ita) bt Andrew Harris (Aus) 6-3, 6-1, 6-3; 3-Sam Querrey (USA) bt 25-Borna Coric (Cro) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; 22-Guido Pella (Arg) bt John-Patrick Smith (Aus) 6-3, 7-5, 6-4; 4-Marton Fucsovics (Hun) bt 13-Denis Shapovalov (Can) 6-3, 6-7(7), 6-1, 7-6(3); 18-Grigor Dimitrov (Bul) bt Juan Ignacio Londero (Arg) 4-6, 6-2, 6-0, 6-4.

30-Daniel Evans (GBR) bt Mackenzie McDonald (USA) 3-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3; 3-Roger Federer (Sui) bt Steve Johnson (USA) 6-3, 6-2, 6-2; 6-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt Salvatore Caruso (Ita) 6-0, 6-2, 6-3; 2-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Jan-Lennard Struff (Ger) 7-6(5), 6-2, 2-6, 6-1.

Women: 13-Petra Martic (Cro) bt Christina McHale (USA) 6-3, 6-0; 25-Ekaterina Alexandrova (Rus) bt Jil Teichmann (Sui) 6-4, 4-6, 6-2; 7-Petra Kvitova (Cze) bt Katerina Siniakova (Cze) 6-1, 6-0.

3-Naomi Osaka (Jpn) bt Marie Bouzkova (Cze) 6-2, 6-4; Sorana Cirstea (Rou) bt 32-Barbora Strycova (Cze) 6-2, 7-6(5); 14-Sofia Kenin (USA) bt Martina Trevisan (Ita) 6-2, 6-4.

Caroline Wozniacki (Den) bt Kristie Ahn (USA) 6-1, 6-3; 8-Serena Williams (USA) bt Anastasia Potapova (Rus) 6-0, 6-3; 1-Ashleigh Barty (Aus) bt Lesya Tsurenko (Ukr) 5-7, 6-1, 6-1; Coco Gauff (USA) bt Venus Williams (USA) 7-6(5), 6-3; Caty McNally (USA) bt Samantha Stosur (Aus) 6-1, 6-4; Zhang Shuai (Chn) bt 24-Sloane Stephens (USA) 2-6, 7-5, 6-2.

he lost in four sets to Marton Fucsovics.

Prajnesh's match rescheduled
India's top-ranked player Prajnesh Gunneswaran's first-round match against Japanese Tatsuma Ito had to be rescheduled for Tuesday due to rain.

In other results, Canadian 13th seed Denis Shapovalov argued furiously with the umpire over a code violation for throwing his racquet as

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Best of the day

Daniel Evans' never-say-die spirit came to the fore as he clawed back from the brink to outlast 24-year-old American Mackenzie McDonald in a three-hour 21-minute marathon. The 29-year-old Brit, the 30th seed, won 3-6, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3.

COURTSIDE BYTES

I look up to them (Venus and Serena). Every time, even just walking by them. I have to remember that even though they're my idols, they're also going to be my opponents sometimes

COCO GAUFF

It's great to be back in this arena that has a very special place in my heart. This has been by far the most successful court in my career

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

It was really tough for me trying to control my nerves. I was really thankful to get through in two [sets]. It's really tough to play someone you've never played in the first round of a Grand Slam

NAOMI OSAKA

I think the first three rounds are key to get going, to get used to the pressure and stay calm if you're down a set and a break

ROGER FEDERER

TUESDAY'S PICKS

MEN

- 1-Nadal v Delpierre
- 4-Medvedev v Tiafoe
- 5-Thiem v Mannarino
- 7-Zverev v Cecchinato
- 10-Monfils v Yen-Hsun
- 12-Fognini v Opelka
- 15-Wawrinka v Dzumhur
- 20-Auger-Aliassime v Gulbis
- 23-Kyrgios v Sonogo
- 28-Tsonga v Popyrin

WOMEN

- 2-Piskova v Mladenovic
- 4-Halep v Brady
- 5-Svitolina v Boulter
- 6-Bencic v Schmiedlova
- 7-Kerber v Cocciaretto
- 10-Keys v Kasatkina
- 11-Sabalenka v Navarro
- 12-Konta v Jabeur
- 19-Vekic v Sharapova

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