

India can make history in Hamilton

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HAMILTON, JANUARY 28

A RUTHLESS India are expected to seal their maiden T20 International series win in New Zealand and only a special comeback from the struggling hosts in the third game here on Wednesday can delay what seems inevitable. India won the twin T20 Internationals in Auckland by margins of six and seven wickets respectively to go 2-0 up in the five-match series. A third successive win at Seddon Park will give them their first ever T20I series' win on New Zealand soil, a feat they were unable to achieve on two occasions previously. India lost 0-2 under Mahendra Singh Dhoni back in 2008-09, and last year, they went down 1-2.

Overall, this Indian side has seen an uptick in fortunes and are unbeaten in five T20 series since the 2019 ODI World Cup, including the ongoing one against the Black Caps. The only contest they didn't win was against South Africa, when the three-match series ended 1-1 after one of the games was washed out.

However, their current winning form in T20 cricket won't lead to any meaningful change in the ICC rankings. India are currently placed fifth in the T20I rankings, and need to win the remaining three matches – this series 5-0 – to move up to fourth from their current fifth spot.

New Zealand are currently placed sixth. Pakistan, Australia, England and South Africa, in that order, sit ahead in the rankings' table.

The greater concern at present is building towards the T20 World Cup to be hosted in Australia later this year.

In that regard though, the team management is quietly confident that various pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are starting to fall into place, and at the right time.

This is specifically boosted by the performances of KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer over the recent months, particularly on tour thus far. As such, there are no changes to be expected in the Indian line-up for the third T20. On Tuesday, there was an optional practice session with skipper Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah, the ones missing in action.

The support staff worked closely with those players who haven't yet received a chance to play in the series yet. Ravi Shastri paid close attention to Washington Sundar, while batting coach Vikram Rathour was busy with Rishabh Pant. Both are expected to sit out again on Wednesday.

There is possibility of one change to the Indian line-up. Kuldeep Yadav sat out the first two matches in Auckland, and that could have been a move motivated more by the ground size than anything else.

Chahal provides greater control and his wrist spin moves away from the majority of right-handers in the Black Caps' line-up, thus against the arc of swing. Yadav is a tad more adventurous in his flight and the angle of his spin into the right-handers could have been easy fodder at Eden Park's short boundaries.

Whether Yadav comes back into contention at the regular-sized Seddon Park remains to be seen. Additionally, there is little chance of Chahal-Yadav playing together, a move India have shied away from since the ODI World Cup.

From New Zealand's perspective, this is the last opportunity for Colin de Grandhomme to make an impression. The all-rounder will be replaced in the squad for the last two T20Is by batsman Tom Bruce.

INDIA UNDER-19 ENTER WORLD CUP SEMIFINAL

Small-town boy's big leap

Consistently crossing 140 kph, son of Hapur farmer runs through Australian middle-order with figures of 4 for 24

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JANUARY 28

Praveen Kumar recalls the day three years ago when acclaimed Meerut coach Vipin Vats, who had groomed him and Bhuvneshwar Kumar, asked him to see a lanky 16-year old boy bowl in the nets at Victoria Park. Kumar remembers Kartik Tyagi's long run-up, the high-arm action, and the ability to consistently beat the batsmen. "Ek dum paka hua bowler" (fully seasoned), even then," Kumar says.

On Tuesday, Tyagi, a farmer's son from Hapur, played a leading role taking four Australian wickets to pave the way for a 74-run victory and India's passage to the U-19 World Cup semifinals.

He prised out two top-order wickets off successive balls in the first over after a run-out to derail the chase and the young Aussies never recovered from that triple strike. Interestingly, India's bowling hero had never wanted to be a bowler. His heart was set on becoming a batsman, an opener at that.

At 12, he joined Vats's cricket camp. "There were many batsmen awaiting their turn in the nets, and the coach told me, 'bowling daal' and that's how I became a bowler," Tyagi had told The Indian Express before leaving for the World Cup in South Africa.

However, it wasn't just a decision to relieve the boredom of a kid; Vats believed the boy had innate talent. "Firstly, he was tall, and then he had a good high-arm action. Fifty per cent of the work was complete there itself – at that talent-identifying stage. As a coach, it's my responsibility to set the career path of each player. I felt that Tyagi was most suited to become a bowler."

Tyagi went on to play age-group cricket – U-14 and U-16 – for Uttar Pradesh. He took 50 wickets in U-16 games.

Around that time, Praveen called Suresh Raina, who was Uttar Pradesh captain then, and raved about Tyagi. "On a flat track, he was at another level from other bowlers. He was swinging the ball at will and with pace. I felt yeh ladka bheed mein na gum ho jaye. (hope this boy doesn't get lost in the crowd). That's why I called Raina."

Soon, Tyagi was representing the state in the Buchi Babu tournament in Chennai and not long after, Raina handed him a Ranji Trophy debut. Rahul Dravid was impressed with what he saw in the boy and the teenager revelled in the vote of confidence.

However, trouble intervened soon. A stress fracture put him out of cricket for a year. It was felt that he had height but not enough muscle and core strength. Vats felt fast bowlers needed strong legs and a durable build to take the punishing load.

The injury also led to financial issues; his father had to borrow money for the treatment. "It was a struggling time, Papa had to borrow money, the money which he is still repaying. You know the state of farming, kaisa haal hai. He never told me how much money he took and how much is still pending, but it was a tough time for sure. He wanted me to become a cricketer and was ready to do anything for it," Tyagi recalled on the day he was picked for Rs 1.3 crore by Rajasthan Royals. Before he left for South Africa, Vats told him to consult Dravid on how to bowl in South African conditions. On Tuesday, Tyagi certainly proved all his backers right.



Kartik Tyagi accounted for No.3 to No.6 in the Australian batting order as India defended 233. ICC

How Atharva tricked mother before his first game

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JANUARY 28

Vaidehi Ankolekar, a bus conductor with Brihannamumbai Electricity Supply and Transport (BEST) in Mumbai, was worried till last week. Her son Atharva wasn't able to find a spot in the playing XI for the first two league games of the U-19 World Cup.

Atharva had injured his hand during training on the eve of the first game and was advised a week's rest. Worried that the news might upset his mother, Atharva hadn't disclosed the injury. He suggested to his brother to whisk her away for a holiday in Rajasthan. The rationale was that being away from television would ensure his mother didn't get too worried. Vaidehi says she travelled to Jaipur and Jodhpur with a group of family members, unaware that her son was injured.

"We would speak daily around 10 pm, discuss things like whether he is eating properly but I had no way of knowing about his injury. He hid it. I would of course ask him why he wasn't playing and he would tell me that he will play the next match," Vaidehi tells *The Indian Express*.

Only after the New Zealand game did Atharva share pictures of his injury with his mother saying he had recovered now, that it



Atharva Ankolekar made 55 off 54. ICC

wasn't too serious, and he would definitely play the next game. "That's when I knew," Vaidehi says.

In the quarterfinal against Australia, Atharva showed his temperament in a vital

knock – India were struggling at 144 for 6 and even 200 looked a distant possibility but Atharva dragged them to 233 with an unbeaten 55. In particular, his 61-run partnership for the seventh wicket with Ravi Bishnoi, who made 30, turned the tide.

Vaidehi is now familiar with cricketing jargon and excitedly rattles off, "Did you see how he slogged in the latter stages? I thought even 200 was going to be tough but he batted remarkably. That partnership with Bishnoi helped a lot," she says.

Atharva's father Vinod Ankolekar died when he was 10 and Vaidehi took up her husband's job as conductor in BEST, the state transport organisation, to support her two sons. She returned from work early for the quarterfinal as everyone at the bus depot knew the significance of the day. She says every conversation with her son ends with her asking him to bring the cup back home, as a tribute to her late husband who wanted their son to become a cricketer. On Tuesday, Atharva took a little big step towards achieving his father's dream – and made his mother happy and proud.

BRIEF SCORES: India U-19 233/9 in 50 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 62, Atharva Ankolekar 55*; Todd Murphy 2/40) bt Australia U-19 159 all out in 43.3 overs (Sam Fanning 75; Kartik Tyagi 4/24, Akash Singh 3/30) by 74 runs

England, Sri Lanka record wins

New Delhi: England missed out on a Super League place after a dramatic defeat to Australia and began to make amends with a nine-wicket triumph over tournament debutants Japan. Sri Lanka, who came within two balls of a spot in the Super League in defeat to New Zealand, overwhelmed Nigeria by 233 runs. England needed just 11.3 overs of their batting reply to defeat Japan and advance from their Plate quarter-final in Potchefstroom. Jon Lewis' side have quickly recovered from the disappointment of missing out on the Super League playoffs and bristled with intent in hustling Japan out for 93. Dan Mousley hurried to the finish, carting 57 not out from just 36 balls as the end came quickly for debutants Japan. England now face the winner of UAE's clash with Scotland, while Japan go into the Plate playoff semi-finals and face the loser of that match. **AGENCIES**

Delhi pay the price for indisciplined batting

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, JANUARY 28

For once, Dhruv Shorey didn't lean into the drive properly. Mukesh Kumar bowled a wide half-volley outside the off stump and Shorey went for an expansive cover drive. The ball moved late, took the outside edge and went to 'keeper Shreevats Goswami. The batsman looked frustrated. At the dug-out, Delhi coach KP Bhaskar was disappointed.

Shorey was batting beautifully, showing signs of returning to form. His first five scoring shots had been boundaries. He had 11 fours in his 129-ball 65. The Delhi captain was driving gloriously. But with Nitish Rana departing only four overs previously, Shorey needed to eschew his attacking instincts for a while. He made a mistake. "It was a four all day. The ball swung late," he said after the day's play.

Bhaskar, though, admitted that his team preferred valour over discretion.

"Maybe, he needed to be a little more circumspect. A partnership was broken only a few overs ago."

It was Shorey's second Ranji Trophy half-century this season after his 96 against Punjab about a month back. He looked set for a three-figure score, batting untroubled. But not only the skipper, on Tuesday at Eden Gardens, the Delhi top-order fell prey to poor shot selection. It saw them surrender the initiative even after restricting Bengal to 318 in their first innings. With two wickets falling at the fag end of the day, the visitors suddenly slumped to 192/6 at stumps.

The pitch eased out a bit on the second day and Delhi should have capitalised on it. Kunal Chandel, after surviving a dropped chance early in his innings, got out for nine, when he tried to play an over-pitched deliv-



Delhi captain Dhruv Shorey top-scored with 65 but the side was struggling at 192 for 6, still 126 runs behind Bengal. PTI

ery from 31-year-old debutant seamer Nilkantha Das through mid-wicket. He closed the face of the bat, allowing the inswinger to breach his defence.

Chandela's opening partner, Hiten Dalal, was going steady at the other end. But after scoring 40, he made a similar mistake against another very full delivery from Das.

Rather than closing the face of the bat, the Delhi openers should have shown the maker's name.

The 60-run third wicket partnership between Shorey and Rana put the hosts under pressure. Delhi had the opportunity to take the game away from Bengal. But once again, patience wore thin. Bhaskar's reaction to the

dismissals was anecdotal. "Many years ago, when I was playing, Sunil Gavaskar once gave me a great piece of advice – 'fours and sixes are fine, because you have to score runs, but you must learn to enjoy your defence and leaving the ball'. Also, our batsmen should emulate (Mumbai's) Sarfaraz Khan, who has hit a double century (against Himachal Pradesh) after scoring a triple hundred (against Uttar Pradesh) in the last match. For a team to be successful, your top three batsmen should score 600 runs each in a season." After six matches, Delhi have only Rana with a decent return – 467 runs.

Not many players these days back their technique in testing conditions, trying to

Earlier, resuming on overnight 286/5, the Bengal lower-order collapsed after Anustup Majumdar was run-out on 99. The batsman yet again missed out on a century.

make it up with quick-scoring instead. And in a set-up like Delhi that lives with administrative chaos, it's almost impossible for a coach to drill his philosophy into the players. "The squad assembles just about 20 days before the Ranji season. So it's all about man-management. Without a DDCA academy, it's becomes really difficult to connect all age groups with the senior team," Bhaskar said. That Delhi still consistently churn out India players is down to the city's club culture.

Coming back to the day's play, Delhi were in trouble, when Kshitiz Sharma and night-watchman Simarjeet Singh perished to left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed in successive deliveries in the final over of the day. Sharma failed to handle the extra bounce and was caught at slip. His selection has raised controversy, but the Delhi team management felt that during his 38-ball stay he looked 'OK'.

Earlier, resuming on overnight 286/5, the Bengal lower-order collapsed after Anustup Majumdar was run-out on 99. The batsman yet again missed out on a century. A direct hit from Dalal caught Majumdar short of his crease. The last four Bengal wickets fell for 25 runs. But they fought back. Their play of bowling in the corridor and testing the patience of the batsmen worked.

BRIEF SCORES: Bengal 318 (Anustup Majumdar 99; Simarjeet Singh 4/77) vs Delhi 192/6 (Dhruv Shorey 65; Shahbaz Ahmed 2/11, Nilkantha Das 2/36)

RANJI ROUNDUP

RAIN-HIT DAY AT KARNAIL

At Delhi: Railways added 62 runs to their overnight score of 98/6 to finish at 160/7 in 72 overs on a rain hit day.

BRIEF SCORES: Railways 160/7 (Avinash Yadav 62, Arindam Ghosh 50 not out, Prateek Jain 4/29).

WASHOUT STALLS MUMBAI

At Dharamsala: Mumbai's hopes of registering an outright win suffered a major jolt after incessant rain washed out the second day's play against Himachal Pradesh.

BRIEF SCORES: 372/5 (Sarfaraz Khan 226 not out, Aditya Tare 62, Vaibhav Arora 2/28) vs Himachal Pradesh.

UNADKAT IN FINE FORM

At Baroda: Baroda were bundled out for 187 on Day 2, setting Saurashtra 200 runs to win, courtesy their slender 12-run first innings lead. The home team were fairly well placed at 140/4 at one stage, before a rampant Jaydev Unadkat ran through them in the afternoon session.

BRIEF SCORES: Baroda 154 and 187 (Jaydev Unadkat 12/106) vs Saurashtra 142 and 23/2 (Meniwal 2/17) need another 177 runs to win.

ANDHRA TAKE LEAD

At Ongole: Andhra finished the second day's play in Ongole at 255, taking a comfortable first innings lead of 88 runs. Kerala were bundled out for an abysmal score of 162 yesterday. The home team

rode on their opener Prashanth Kumar's dogged 79, which was backed up by crucial contributions from Nithish Kumar Reddy's 39 and their wicket-keeper batsman U. Girinath's 41 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: Kerala 162 vs Andhra 255 (Prashanth Kumar 79, Jalaj Saxena 3/56, Basil Thampi 3/43) lead by 88 runs.

HYDERABAD ON THE MAT

At Hyderabad: Aniket Choudhary and Tanvir-ul-Haq shared five wickets between them to give Rajasthan the ascendancy against Hyderabad at stumps on Day 2.

BRIEF SCORES: Hyderabad 171 and 101/6 (Aniket Chowdhary 3/26) lead Rajasthan 135 (Ravi Teja 4/46) by 137 runs.

CONFIDENT REPLY BY MP

At Indore: Madhya Pradesh got off to a confident start in their 2nd innings, to finish at 105/3, after having taken a slim 14-run lead to Uttar Pradesh when stumps were drawn on the second day.

BRIEF SCORES: Madhya Pradesh 230 and 105/3 vs Uttar Pradesh 216 (Saurabh Kumar 98 not out, Ravi Yadav 5/61).

VIDARBHA IN TROUBLE

At Surat: Defending champions Vidarbha were struggling at 89/4 in the 2nd innings, a lead of just 20 runs against Gujarat at stumps on Day 2.

BRIEF SCORES: Vidarbha 142 and 89/4 (Faiz Fazal 45 not out) vs Gujarat 211 (Parthiv Patel 59, Aditya Thakare 5/43) lead by 20 runs. **ENS**