

# Batsmen will have to step up for India to draw level

Ishant out with injury, Umesh likely to come in; New Zealand all set to unleash pace power by playing four specialist seamers

## INDIA IN NZ

**S. DINAKAR**  
CHRISTCHURCH  
The Hagley Oval is flanked by lush green gardens that mirror the city's serene and pleasant ambience. However, things will not be remotely as peaceful for the Indians on a grass-laden surface as they strive to square the series in the second Test beginning on Saturday.

**A big game**  
Also at stake would be 60 points of the World Test Championship. It's a big game for both sides.

The Test has not begun and India has already been hit by an injury blow. Ishant Sharma's ankle injury – picked up during the Ranji season – has flared up again and the lanky paceman will miss the second Test.

Ishant was, by far, the best Indian bowler in the first Test and returned a five-wicket haul. Umesh Yadav, sharp but not as tall as Ishant, is expected to come in. While Ishant relies on

bounce and an off-stump line, Umesh, a handful with his pace, does damage with reverse-swing. Umesh pitches the ball up and can bowl out-swingers with the new ball.

The Indian batsmen will have to approach the Test with a fresh mind-set. At Wellington, they appeared under a mental siege. They were neither convincing in defence as the ball seamed around nor able to pierce the infield. Simply put, the Indian batsmen could not take the challenge to the Kiwi pacemen.

In fact, apart from Mayank Agarwal's second-innings half-century, none was able to find the balance between aggression and defence.

### Sweet memories

The Kiwis comprehend the green, seaming track here and the conditions well. In the Test against Sri Lanka, here in 2018, New Zealand won by a whopping 423 runs. Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Neil Wagner were red hot.

And that was a Test where New Zealand, asked to bat,



**No easy ride:** India has a fight on its hands, and Mayank Agarwal, Wriddhiman Saha and Cheteshwar Pujara, seen leaving the Hagley Oval after training, know that only too well. •AP

was dismissed for 178 in his first innings. So the toss alone does not determine outcomes in these parts.

A team has to play good cricket, adapt to the conditions. The batsmen, including

the young Prithvi Shaw, have to wait for the ball to come to them, and play late.

The Indian batting could be under greater scrutiny in the Test with the Kiwis likely to play four specialist seamers plus Colin de Grand-

homme's teasing swing. Kohli & Co. will have to face off against left-arter Wagner, who employs short-pitched bowling with telling effect, both over and round the wicket, often from wide of the crease.

Before Wagner enters the picture, the Indians will have to cope with the left-right swing bowling of Boult and Southee.

Then there is the off-stump line and bounce of Kyle Jamieson.

On a seaming track, firm pushes in the 'V' rather than big drives are more productive. If the length is short, the cut and the pull can fetch runs.

### Know your off-stump

The Indian batsmen have to play and leave, know where their off-stump is. They also need to display footwork, balance in the stance, and a still head. It's important that the batsman covers for movement.

Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami did not bowl the right length in Wellington. Both should pitch the ball

■ 60 points of the World Test Championship at stake

■ New Zealand won a Test, against Sri Lanka here in 2018, by 423 runs

up for it to swing. And land on a good length for the sphere to seam around.

The Indians have a fight on their hands on what could be a seam-trap.

**The teams (from):**  
**New Zealand:** Kane Williamson (Capt.), Tom Latham, Tom Blundell, Henry Nicholls, Ross Taylor, Colin de Grandhomme, B-J. Watling (wk), Kyle Jamieson, Tim Southee, Trent Boult, Neil Wagner, Ajaz Patel and Daryl Mitchell.

**India:** Virat Kohli (Capt.), Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), R. Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, R. Ashwin, Umesh Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Navdeep Saini and Shubman Gill.

**Umpires:** Richard Kettleborough, Michael Gough; **TV umpire:** Aleem Dar; **Match referee:** Ranjan Madugalle.

The match begins at 4 a.m. IST.

## A shake-up can be a good thing: Shastri

India coach confident boys will be able to bounce back with an open mind-set

**S. DINAKAR**  
CHRISTCHURCH  
As an opening batsman, Ravi Shastri relished pushing deliveries down the ground. He played the percentage game, batted straight.

And, as coach, Shastri is someone who talks straight. No roundabout answers. He gets to the point quickly, does not go into denial mode.

Asked about India's inability to make short work of the tail, a factor that has often haunted this side, Shastri said: "It has been a problem in the last year or so. We've had a chat on this. We have been over-aggressive or at times too defensive. We will look to address it."

### Ashwin's batting

On R. Ashwin, Shastri observed: "He is a world-class bowler. If anything, he will be disappointed with the way he has batted. He would want to improve his batting.



**Charged up:** Virat Kohli drives home a point with Prithvi Shaw ahead of the second Test, which will see an India revival, according to coach Ravi Shastri. •AP

We have had conversations on this."

On having to choose between Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja for a place in the eleven, Shastri said: "We will see how much of a role a spinner has, first of all. How many overs you think he is going to bowl in the game. Is there going to be something for him on day four or five.

you are on a run like we were, a shake-up like that is good because it opens your mind-set."

He said: "When you are on the road winning all the time, or you have not tasted defeat, you can have a closed mind-set. I thought we were a little conservative and tentative in that first Test. Winning away from the sub-continent in red-ball cricket is always difficult. You need to adapt."

### Pacers ready to strike

Talking about the Indian pacemen, Shastri exuded confidence. "Bumrah is very close to getting a five-for or a six-for, might happen tomorrow. Similarly with Shami, so nothing to worry about. The Indian bowlers have to be more patient, bowl more in the right areas and create pressure."

Looking at the second Test, Shastri is not short on optimism.

## 'Advantage home pacers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHRISTCHURCH

Trent Boult was full of beans ahead of the second Test on a greenish Hagley Oval pitch.

He said here on Friday, "I wouldn't say the confidence is through the roof but we're very excited about continuing from where we left off in Wellington."

Boult said the conditions here suited the Kiwi pacemen. "I like the overheads that present down here in terms of the cloud cover and the swing that's on offer."

The left-arm pace spearhead said: "It's always a good surface here. There's always a little bit there in the initial stages of that first innings but it turns into a good surface."

On the pitch being green, Boult said: "Traditionally you come down here and normally see a bit of grass so, from my point of view, I hope it stays that way and that we get it to move around a bit."

The spinners haven't



**More ammunition:** Neil Wagner is expected to add muscle to the New Zealand attack. •AP

been too successful here. "There hasn't been too many wickets taken here by spinners, but if that suggests there isn't much turn I'm not sure. Generally it's a wicket that has good pace and carry and it swings around here a bit and it generally produces a good contest between bat and ball."

**Generally it's a wicket that has good pace and carry and it swings around here a bit and it generally produces a good contest between bat and ball**

TRENT BOULT

## Dubai to host Asia Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Friday said the next Asia Cup will be held in Dubai, paving the way for both India and Pakistan to participate in the continental tournament.

Pakistan was the designated host for the tournament scheduled for September, but with the BCCI making it clear that India would not be able to travel to the neighbouring country owing to security concerns, the event has been moved to Dubai.

"Asia Cup will be held in Dubai and both India and Pakistan will play," Ganguly told reporters at the Eden Gardens before leaving for Dubai for the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) meeting, to be held on March 3.

Earlier, the BCCI had said it has no problem with Pakistan hosting the tournament, provided it is held at a neutral venue.

## Mohinder backs Kohli to come good

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

One of India's finest batsmen, Mohinder Amarnath hoped Virat Kohli would come good in the second Test against New Zealand starting on Saturday in Christchurch. Kohli has aggregated a mere 201 in nine innings across formats with just one half-century.

"It is not that they have not played there. They have done well earlier but the difference here is that Virat has not performed," said Amarnath, in town on a private visit. Another reason, he emphasised, was the absence of K.L. Rahul from the team. "Rahul has done well. He's been the man in form. And you have to play the man in form. I am surprised he is not playing in Tests in this series. He would have been better than trying someone out."

"If you see India's performance overseas in the last two years Virat has been the key. Sometimes luck doesn't favour you. But I'm sure he'll

come good in the second Test. He's a great player. He has the technique to shine in all conditions. All great players adjust themselves very quickly and Virat knows what he is supposed to do. He won't fail in too many innings."

Amarnath, who excelled in testing conditions away from home, insisted there was a technical aspect too.

"The technique of Indian batsmen is good on harder pitches. Or on Indian pitches where the ball is not doing much in the air or off the surface. In New Zealand, you have to play the way Ajinkya (Rahane) does. I really like the way he bats. You have to play very tight and with soft hands, especially when you are defending."

### Soft hands

In Amarnath's opinion, the batsmen were, "jabbing" at the ball. "When the ball takes an edge it carries. Not the case when you play with soft hands. When you play tight you may miss connecting those deliveries. The technical aspect of batting has been the reason for the failure in this Test. You have to adjust. You can't play in your flamboyant style even if it is your natural game."

Bounce, he noted, was not the problem. "You can cope with the bounce. It's the seam movement and the swing where the technique comes into play. If the ball seams and swings in the second Test too, it will be a tough test for the Indians."



Mohinder Amarnath. •FILE PHOTO: VIVEK BENDRE

## India has a few flaws to iron out

Takes on Sri Lanka in its last group engagement



**All for one, one for all!** Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur will want her team to pull together as one unit. •PTI

## T20 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

A semifinal berth secured, the unbeaten Indian women's cricket team will look to address some of its batting issues in the final Group A match against a deflated Sri Lanka in the ICC T20 World Cup here on Saturday.

### On a roll

The Indians are on a roll, having easily sealed their semifinal berth with wins over defending champion Australia, Bangladesh and New Zealand. The Lankans, on the other hand, are out of the race following two defeats.

Come Saturday, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side would look to end its group

engagements on a high when it takes on the islanders. But the Indians definitely have a few things to worry about, especially their below-par show with the bat.

India managed just 132 against Australia, 142 against Bangladesh and 133 vs New Zealand. The middle-order has repeatedly squandered good starts. In all the three matches, the bowling unit came to the rescue.

Heavily reliant on the brilliance of a 16-year-old Shafali Verma, the Indian middle-order has cut a sorry figure and it's time senior pros like Harmanpreet and Veda Krishnamurthy step up. Opener Smriti Mandhana too has failed to join the party so far.

Shafali has been impressive at the top, registering

scores of 29, 39 and 46. But she has failed to convert the starts into big scores.

Harmanpreet has cautioned her batters against making "silly mistakes".

### Star performers

The Indian bowling, however, has been phenomenal and facilitated the smooth entry into the last-four round. Leg-spinner Poonam Yadav has been the star performer, picking up eight wickets, including a match-winning effort of four for 19 against Australia.

She has been complemented by Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Deepti Sharma and pacer Shikha Pandey. Young Shafali was adjudged Player-of-the-Match for a 34-ball 46 and the 16-year-old was elated. "Feeling

good, very happy with the performance, want to continue doing this. I waited for the loose balls and converted them," said Shafali.

### The teams (from):

**India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Taniya Bhatia, Harleen Deol, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Richa Ghosh, Veda Krishnamurthy, Smriti Mandhana, Shikha Pandey, Poonam Yadav, Arundhati Reddy, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav.

**Sri Lanka:** Chamari Atapattu (Capt.), Harshitha Madavi, Nilakshi de Silva, Kavisha Dilhari, Ama Kanchara, Hansima Karunaratne, Achini Kulasinga, Sugandika Kumari, Hasini Perera, Udeshika Prabodhani, Sathya Sandeepani, Anushka Sanjeevani, Shashikala Siriwardene, Dilani Manodara and Umesha Thimashini.

Match starts at 9.30 a.m. IST.

## England beats Pakistan

SA hands Thailand a thrashing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
CANNBERRA

England kept its hopes alive in the ICC women's T20 World Cup with a 42-run win over Pakistan here on Friday.

Captain Heather Knight once again led from the front with 62 in its 158 for seven – her sixth consecutive half-century. In reply, Pakistan was all out for 116.

Knight, who hit eight 4s and a 6, was playing her 100th T20. Natalie Sciver chipped in with 36 and Fran Wilson made 22, with Aiman Anwer taking three wickets.

Some tight England bowling pinned Pakistan down and at the half-way stage, it was struggling at 51 for five. Aliya Riaz did her best to accelerate the run rate in a 41-run cameo.

"We probably would have liked a little but more (total), but the wicket was slow," said Knight.

Earlier, South Africa

clubbed the highest total in the World Cup as it thrashed Thailand by 113 runs.

Proteas skipper Dane van Niekerk won the toss and opted to bat, with her team building 195 for three, anchored by powerful opener Lizelle Lee's 101.

It was the biggest score in the tournament's history, beating India's 194 for five against New Zealand in 2018.

In reply, Thailand was all out for 82.

"The box we wanted to tick today was to take the win," said van Niekerk. "Credit to Lizelle for that century."

**The scores:** England 158/7 in 20 overs (Natalie Sciver 36, Heather Knight 62; Aiman Anwer 3/30) bt Pakistan 116 in 19.4 overs (Aliya Riaz 41; Anya Shrubsole 3/25, Sarah Glenn 3/15).

South Africa 195/3 in 20 overs (Lizelle Lee 101, Sune Luus 61) bt Thailand 82 in 19.1 overs (Onnicha Kamchomphu 26; Shabnim Ismail 3/8, Luus 3/15).



**Making hay:** South Africa's Lizelle Lee made the most of a weak Thai attack to notch up a century. •GETTY IMAGES