

5 facts

This is Scotland's third World Cup campaign. They have lost all eight matches they've played across the 1999 and 2007 campaigns

New Zealand have not lost a game in the South Island of the country since the loss to Pakistan in Christchurch in January 2011

Scotland lost by only one run in a one-day match against a New Zealand XI in October last year

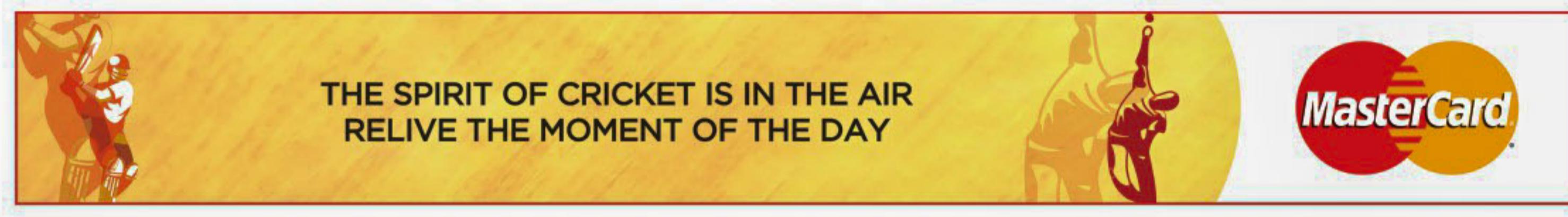
The surface at Dunedin is flat and the ground's boundaries are short that may allow for big scores

Ross Taylor needs 73 runs to become the fourth player after Stephen Fleming,



Kane Williamson is a phenomenal talent for New Zealand. After his pyrotechnics against Sri Lanka, the Kiwi batsman would be under the spotlight again when his side take on the minnows from Scotland at Dunedin today.

PHOTO: STAR FILE



MR. EFFICIENT



LENDL SIMMONS

A dejected West Indies looked completely out-of-sorts when they came to bat. They were traveling at a snail's pace and fell to 87 for 5 midway on a track that had runs written all over it. They may have ended up losing the game but Lendl Simmons's century at number six gave them a shot at a remarkable comeback.

At a time when his colleagues were struggling against Ireland's slow left-arm spinner, George Dockrell, Simmons hammered an 84-ball 102 to keep up with the ongoing World Cup trend and lift the men from the Caribbean over 300.

NEW ZEALAND V SCOTLAND

Kiwis cautious about Scottish banana skin

AFP, Dunedin

Co-hosts New Zealand face a potential World Cup "banana skin" against minnows Scotland in Dunedin on Tuesday, former Black Caps skipper Stephen Fleming has warned.

New Zealand justified their tag as one of the pre-tournament favourites with a comprehensive 98-run win over Sri Lanka in their opening match and will be keen to maintain momentum against Scotland.

The Scots have not won a match in two previous World Cup campaigns (1999 and 2007), with bookmakers rating them 12-1 outsiders to upset the in-form New Zealanders. But Fleming said the Pool A clash was "a banana-skin type match where, if it was allowed, complacency could be a danger".

He pointed out that Scotland, an ICC associate nation, lost by just one run in October to a New Zealand XI which included eight of the Black Caps' World Cup squad.

"They've found a way to stand up to the big teams and we'll be looking to do the same thing," he said. "We're not here to fill in the numbers."

South African-born Mommsen said he was part of the best-prepared team to

The Export Leader



Scots were taking inspiration from Ireland's giant-killing exploits at previous World Cups, when they claimed the scalps of Pakistan (2007) and England (2011).

The pair's likely replacements are Nathan McCullum and Mitchell McClenaghan.

Fine, dry weather with highs of 25 degrees Celsius is expected on Tuesday in Dunedin, a city with strong Scottish roots where both teams can expect enthusiastic support.

ever leave Scottish shores.

They are coached by former Black Cap Grant Bradburn, assisted by gritty ex-England batsman Paul Collingwood, who has helped toughen the mental aspects of their game.

New Zealand coach Mike Hesson said shock results were inevitable at the World Cup and the Black Caps, more accustomed to being labelled underdogs, were determined not to fall victim to one.

"I think there will be a number of upsets in this tournament and if sides take any other side lightly they could get turned over," Hesson said.

"We will respect Scotland as much as we do every other team."

New Zealand are expected to rest veteran spinner Dan Vettori and paceman Adam Milne, with Hesson admitting there were some "sore bodies" in the camp after the Sri Lanka game.

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X-factor is the toss?

AFP, Adelaide

If Pakistan were looking for answers for its wretched losing streak against arch-rivals India in the World Cup, they need to cut to the chase and begin with the captain's luck with the toss.

When Misbahul Haq called incorrectly before Sunday's 76-run defeat at the Adelaide Oval, it was the fifth time in six World Cup outings that Pakistan had lost the toss to India.

In all those five games, Pakistan failed to chase down the target. The only time India batted second, at the Centurion in 2003, the genius of Sachin Tendulkar took the game away from Pakistan.

Former Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq is convinced India's luck with the toss has played a major role in its 6-0 scoreline against the old foes in the sport's premier 50-over showpiece.

"I believe batting first is always an advantage as batsmen tend to get under pressure while chasing in big games," Inzamam wrote in a guest column for the tournament's official website.

"I can't find a suitable word to describe what goes wrong when we chase against India, but it's more like a mental blockage of players."

On Sunday, after Virat Kohli's 107 had set up a 301-run target, Pakistan folded up for 224 with only skipper Misbah contributing a valiant 76 off 84 balls.

In previous World Cup games against India, Pakistan failed to chase down totals of 216 in Sydney (1992), 287 in Bangalore (1996), 227 in Manchester

(1999) and 260 in Mohali four years ago.

India's latest win came without the reassuring presence of retired batting superstar Tendulkar, who had proved a stumbling block for Pakistan in at least four of the five previous encounters.

In 2003, Tendulkar tamed a star-studded pace battery of Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis and Shoaib Akhtar to fashion India's six-wicket win with a scintillating 98 off 75 balls after Pakistan had piled up 273-7.

Misbah was at a loss to explain another failure on Sunday.

"I don't know what happened," he said. "But it is important to forget this loss and look to the future. The game is gone now, so we have to just concentrate on the next one."

Six straight losses will hurt more because Pakistan enjoy a superior overall one-day record over India, having won 72 games and lost 51.

India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni had some comforting words for Pakistan, saying the unbeaten run would not stay for ever.

"This World Cup record is good and we are proud of it," he said. "But a time will come when we will lose to them. This record won't stay for the rest of our lives."

And that opportunity could come in the ongoing tournament itself if the two sides clash again in the semifinals or the final.

In 1992 when the World Cup was held down under, Pakistan recovered from a 43-run loss to India in the league to win the tournament under Imran Khan.

Where is Everest!

AFP, Dunedin

Scotland are widely considered to have a mountain to climb in their World Cup opener against co-hosts New Zealand in Dunedin on Tuesday.

But any inspiration they or their supporters may have drawn from the 'fact' that paceman Iain Wardlaw climbed the world's highest peak was dashed when Scotland captain Preston Mommsen finally gave a rest to his bowler's tale of scaling Everest.

"Iain Wardlaw, there's been a lot of press around that he's climbed Mount Everest. That indeed is not true," Mommsen told reporters on Monday.

"He put that when he first played for Scotland, he did a little Q & A [question and answer], and he put it there as a joke, and our media man was guilty of putting that online."

"I think the ICC has taken a liking to that fact and that's been published



WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Pakistan's World Cup winning captain Imran Khan took to Twitter to console the crestfallen Pakistanis after Sunday's defeat to India in Adelaide.

Imran, who admitted he had watched a cricket match properly for the first time in years, said that Pakistanis shouldn't get depressed over the defeat.

"Pakistanis shouldn't get depressed over today's loss to India. If performance is accurately analysed, the defeat can be a blessing in disguise," he tweeted.

"I saw some good talent on display today but there is a need for a better strategy," he added.

The cricketer-turned-politician also expressed confidence in the bowling attack which failed to prevent India from putting up a big total (300 for 7) in Adelaide.

"[Mohammad] Irfan, Wahab [Riaz], Yasir [Shah] and Sohail [Khan] can defend if batsmen give a decent target. But Younis [Khan] is a must for future matches".

Faulkner unfit for Tigers

All-rounder James Faulkner said Monday he was "no chance" of returning from injury for Australia's second World Cup game against Bangladesh this weekend.

Faulkner has missed the last two weeks with a side strain and despite looking fit and unencumbered while batting in the nets, he was unable to resume bowling or fielding at training.

"I'm no chance for Bangladesh, I can tell you that," Faulkner told reporters in Brisbane ahead of Saturday's match at the Gabba.

Faulkner's fitness status eases the pressure on out-of-form fellow all-rounder Shane Watson, who appears to be the most likely man to make way when the Tasmanian returns after Watson's first-ball duck in Australia's big opening win over England.

Faulkner, rated one of the best ODI innings 'finishers', said he was prepared to return as a specialist batsman initially if his side strain prevented him from bowling his medium-pacers.

Afghanistan the 'fairy-tale nation'

Australia's Governor-General Peter Cosgrove has labelled Afghanistan the "fairy-tale nation" of the cricket World Cup and coach Andy Moles just hopes his side doesn't "freeze" in its first visit to the tournament.

But Afghan all-rounder Mirwais Ashraf is confident there are no nerves leading up to their first game -- against Bangladesh at a sold-out Manuka Oval on Wednesday -- just excitement.

The team met Cosgrove on Sunday night and he told the team that plenty of Australians would get behind the World Cup minnows.

As their first time in the tournament, Moles conceded there was a chance Afghanistan could "freeze in the headlights", but it helped playing against Bangladesh -- a team they know well, having beaten them in Bangladesh at last year's Asia Cup.

Several of the Afghan team, including captain Mohammad Nabi, have also played in the

Bangladesh Premier League.

Moles said about 20 busloads of Afghans were travelling from Sydney for the game.

Yuvraj denies dad's claims

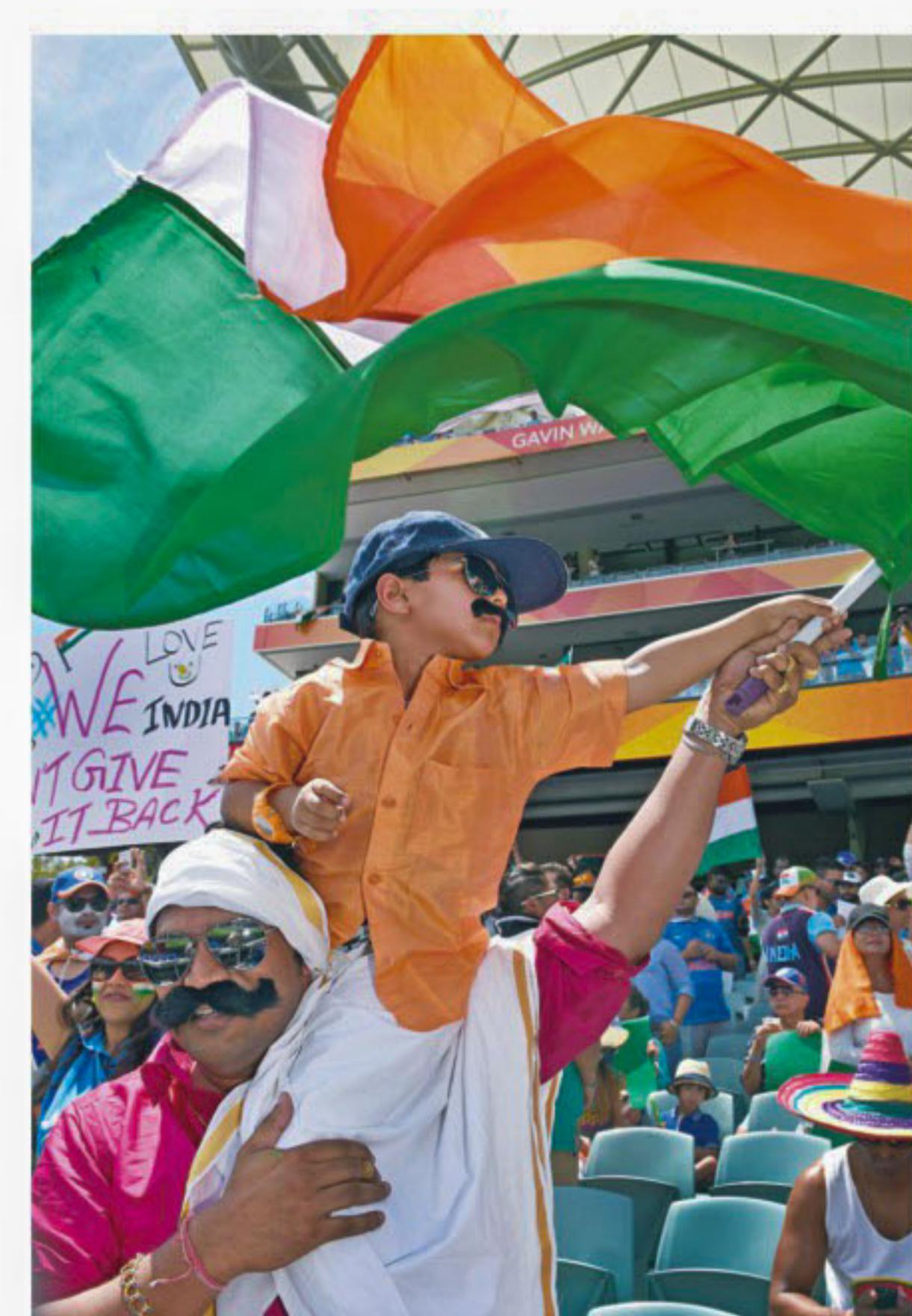
Yuvraj Singh's mercurial father Yogi on Monday made a controversial claim that Mahendra Singh Dhoni did not want his son in India's cricket World Cup squad, only to be dismissed by the left-hand batsman himself minutes later.

"I was shocked when I learnt that Yuvraj Singh was not in the World Cup squad. If MS Dhoni is having personal issues with my son, I won't do anything. God will do justice. He [Dhoni] told the selectors that Yuvraj was not needed in the squad," said Yogi.

However, it did not take long for Yuvraj to clear the air: "Like every parent my dad is also passionate and I am sure he got carried away. I always enjoyed playing under Mahi [Dhoni] and would do so in future," Yuvraj tweeted to his 2.86 million followers.

Yogi's comments came on a day when his son was bought for a record 16 crore rupees at the IPL auction in Bangalore. Yuvraj is not part of the Indian World Cup team playing down under after being the star of the tournament in the side's triumph four years ago.

-- COMPILED



Fans cheer for their team as India take on Pakistan in their Cricket World Cup match in Adelaide on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP