

5 facts

Ireland's win against West Indies made their overall one-day international record a positive one -- they have won 42 matches and lost 41.

Ed Joyce needs 33 runs to become the sixth player to score 1,000 ODI runs for Ireland. John Mooney is 94 runs short of the landmark

After scoring 56 runs in his first five World Cup innings, Paul Stirling has hit 193 runs in his last two innings, from 156 balls

Three of the four lowest completed ODI first innings totals in Australia in the last five years have come at Brisbane

The last eight toss-winners in ODIs at Brisbane have elected to bat first -- the last three have all gone on to lose



United Arab Emirates captain Mohammad Tauqir needs his team to act together if they are to upset the rampant Irish apple-cart in a World Cup Pool B match at the Gabba in Brisbane today.

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IRELAND V UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Looking back won't help the Irish

AFP, Brisbane

Ireland's Kevin O'Brien has warned his side their World Cup win over the West Indies will "mean nothing" if they don't see off the United Arab Emirates in Brisbane on Wednesday.

Victory against their fellow Associate nation would leave the Irish on the brink of the quarterfinals after they started the tournament with the latest of several World Cup wins over a Test team courtesy of a four-wicket triumph against the West Indies in Nelson on February 16.

"It's gone -- as great a result as it was," said O'Brien. "It will mean nothing if we don't win on Wednesday."

Several members of the Ireland side play for English county teams and they will look to the likes of Middlesex's Paul Stirling, who made 92 against the West Indies, and Sussex's Ed Joyce, who scored 84, to carry on from where they left off in a match where Somerset left-arm spinner George Dockrell took three for 50.

Ireland and the UAE have met several times in lower-level International

Cricket Council competitions in recent years and all-rounder O'Brien was impressed by the way the Middle East side nearly pulled off an upset before losing to Zimbabwe by four wickets in their opening Pool B match.

"They really pushed Zimbabwe and it was only very good batting performances from Sean Williams and Craig

they needed two or three off the last ball but 'TJ' [Trent Johnston] bowled a very good ball and denied them."

UAE captain Mohammad Tauqir, reflecting on the Zimbabwe defeat, said: "We had quite a few positives from the game. The batters batted well and the bowlers did a decent job, but it was definitely an opportunity missed."

The UAE's display was all the more impressive given they are a part-time side made up of mainly expat players from India and Pakistan.

Wednesday's match is another chance for both sides to show the strength of international cricket below Test level, with the ICC under fire for their plans to reduce the number of teams at the World Cup from 14 to 10 come the 2019 edition

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Ervine that got Zimbabwe over the line," O'Brien said.

"The UAE have some very good players. Khurram Khan and Swapnil Patil are two very good middle-order batsmen and their bowlers have improved a lot. They have some useful spinners as well."

"They ran us close in the World T20 qualifiers a couple of years ago when

in England. Eight places will be reserved for the world's top eight one-day international sides.

The best way to rise up the standings is to beat higher-ranked teams yet there is no obligation between this World Cup and the next for the Test nations to play teams such as Ireland and the UAE.

'A wonderful opportunity for UAE' Ronchi's funny feeling

AFP, Brisbane

The United Arab Emirates believe their Pool B match against Ireland in Brisbane on Wednesday offers them a "wonderful opportunity" of a World Cup win, according to batsman Khurram Khan.

Both associate or non-Test nations know each other well, having played each other repeatedly in various lower-level International Cricket Council competitions.

The UAE, the only amateur side in the tournament, impressed before going down by four wickets to Zimbabwe first time out while Ireland beat the West Indies by the same margin -- a result no longer classed as an 'upset'.

Both teams will fancy their

chances at Brisbane's Gabba ground and Khurram said Tuesday: "I think it's going to be a very important game, obviously."

"They'll be targeting us. We've played lots of games against them," added Khurram, who made 45 against Zimbabwe.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity because it's a very important game for us as well. So we're definitely targeting this game."

Asked where the team needed to improve most on their performance against Zimbabwe, Khurram was clear.

"Definitely I would say in the fielding. We missed three run-out chances."

Meanwhile Khurram insisted the UAE were an amateur side in name only, saying: As we're here, we'll

enjoy our time and be as professional as we can.

"Obviously we have jobs back home, but once you're here you completely forget about the jobs and what's behind the scenes. We're here to win as many games as we can."

The UAE are also unusual in having two 43-year-olds in their squad in Khurram and captain Mohammad Tauqir.

Not that either man was in a mood for a birthday party.

"We stopped celebrating after 40, actually," Khurram joked.

The way in which the four associate teams -- Afghanistan, Ireland, Scotland and the UAE -- have all performed so far at this World Cup has led to widespread criticism of the ICC's plan to reduce the number

of teams at the 2019 edition in England from 14 to 10.

Khurram added the associates needed more matches against higher-ranked sides between World Cups, saying it was the only way to ensure they made sustained progress.

"I'd like to see us play many more matches against Test-playing nations," he said. "You cannot just expect us to come to a World Cup and do well without playing any other games against them before the World Cup."

"It's a slow process. Obviously it's going to take time. But you've seen some of the [Associates' World Cup] games. They've been crucial and close games, and we're looking forward to having some good games."

AFP, Auckland

Luke Ronchi is looking forward to the prospect of facing his old Australia teammates when he dons the gloves for New Zealand in the co-hosts' high-profile World Cup clash in Auckland on Saturday.

"It's the same thing now -- I've played with or against pretty much everyone in the Aussie team and some of them I've roomed with at the academy and things like that," Ronchi told Fairfax Media.

"I know them well and to be playing against them -- it's a funny feeling but the whole situation is pretty cool. For me especially to be given another chance to play international cricket, and now I get to come up against them in a World Cup match, it's great," the 33-year-old wicketkeeper added.

Born in New Zealand but mainly brought up in Australia, Ronchi played four one-day inter-

national and three Twenty20s for Australia in 2008-09 before changing allegiance.

Ronchi played with and against such Australia players as Michael Clarke, Shane Watson, Mitchell Johnson and Mitchell Marsh.

"The only one in their squad I haven't really played with or against is Pat Cummins," said Ronchi of the young fast bowler.

In all 24 players have represented two countries in the three forms of the game, 14 in Tests, nine in one-days and four in T20s.

Eoin Morgan, now England's one-day captain, also started for Ireland while Ed Joyce changed from Ireland to England and then returned back to his native country.

Ronchi, who switched to the country of his birth in 2012, took the field against Australia for the first time in an ultimately rain-marred match at Edgbaston during the 2013 Champions Trophy tournament in England.



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MARLON SAMUELS

Seldom does an innings of such kind end up being described as 'second fiddle', but that's what happens when Chris Gayle unleashes his might. Samuels's 133 off 156 balls was in itself a delightful knock which saw him hammer the Zimbabweans towards the end of the innings. He was a bit slow at first with a strike-rate of below 50. That was presumably because the man at the other end had taken charge. However, once he reached three figures he joined in the fun. The highlight of his innings was a beautifully-timed square drive that went all the way for a six. Having found his form, Samuels, could be a dangerous prospect for the rest of the competition.



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WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

The former Pakistan fast-bowler advised the team management to go in with specialist wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed and a fourth bowler for the remaining matches.

Pakistan's former captain and fast-bowling great Wasim Akram has advised the national team management not to involve the players in long meetings/discussions or training sessions ahead of their crucial World Cup match against Zimbabwe.

"All these long meetings and discussions and hard training will do no good. The best thing now is to allow the players to relax for the next few days and let them come back fresh for their next match," Akram said on Geo News channel.

He said the Pakistani players needed to relax and unwind after the defeats to India and West Indies.

"What has happened cannot be changed but now the players must regroup and come back fresh in remaining matches," he added.

'Kohli in a league of his own'

Former South African batsman Barry Richards feels that Virat Kohli is not only the best batsmen in the current Indian team by a long margin, but is also among the top batsmen in world cricket today. However, Richards also stated that the 25-year-old has a long way to go before he can be compared to Sachin Tendulkar.

"Virat Kohli undoubtedly is the best batsman in this current Indian team by a distance," said the 69-year-old as quoted by PTI. "He is really talented and is someone, whom you will like to pay to watch his batting. Along with AB de Villiers, he is amongst the top batsmen in world cricket today."

"He is in a league of his own. You like the way he builds an innings. The hallmark of a good batsman is to control the pace of his innings and Kohli does it with ease. He will definitely get better," said the right-hand batsman.

However, he was quick to add that Kohli needs to increase his range of shots, to be compared with Tendulkar. "Tendulkar's range of strokes was extra-ordinary, which Kohli still has some way to go," observed Richards.

Moin sent home

Pakistan chief selector Moin Khan has been sent home from the ICC World Cup after admitting that he visited a casino in Christchurch ahead of the team's second Pool B game against West Indies on Saturday.

"His return will not make a difference to the team's performance as he was not part of the official World Cup squad," Pakistan Cricket Board chief Shaharyar Khan said on Tuesday.



"We probed the matter and Moin admitted he went to a casino in Christchurch but said he had gone there with friends to have dinner. We have told him he should return until we further probe the matter."

"Manager Naved Cheema will now chair the tour selection committee with captain Misbah-ul-Haq and head coach Waqar Younis."

Anderson expects sledging

New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson admits his players are braced for a verbal onslaught from Australia in their blockbuster World Cup clash in Auckland on Saturday.

The Eden Park duel is likely to decide who tops Pool A and plays a relatively weaker team from Pool B in the quarter-finals.

As a result, Anderson feels the Black Caps will face a charged-up Australia, but insists if the sledging starts, it will be one-way traffic.

"Their sledging tactics are well known now and something we haven't involved ourselves in," Anderson told reporters.

"We're fairly neutral on the field. We stick to what we do. We'll be expecting a bit of heat from them and I guess that's part of their game-plan and we'll just deal with it as it comes." --COMPILED