

5 facts

One of India's 10 defeats to Zimbabwe came in the World Cup -- a three-run defeat at Grace Road, Leicester in 1999

Shikhar Dhawan's World Cup average of 66.6 is the best by any Indian to play more than five innings

Of the 40 players to notch up 50 or more ODI scores of 50-plus runs, Virat Kohli has the best century conversion rate, going on to make 100 on 22 of the 55 times he has passed 50

Brendan Taylor (552) needs 16 runs to leapfrog Dave Houghton as the Zimbabwe player with the second most World Cup runs (Andy Flower has the most, 815).

Zimbabwe beat New Zealand on their last visit to Eden Park to play an ODI in 2001. India's last trip to the Auckland venue saw them tie with the Black Caps in 2014



Indian ace Virat Kohli has his eyes on the ball as he gets ready to bat during a training session in Auckland ahead of their match against Zimbabwe today. PHOTO: AFP

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INDIA V ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe seek happy farewell

AFP, Auckland

Zimbabwe hope their World Cup campaign and the international career of Brendan Taylor end on a happy note in their last Pool B match against India in Auckland on Saturday.

The Africans started with an impressive performance against South Africa in Hamilton, losing by 62 runs before beating the United Arab Emirates.

But they then collided with record-shattering Chris Gayle in the West Indies match and a revived Pakistan as their hopes of reaching the last eight dwindled.

Their five-run defeat against Ireland in Hobart ended any outside chance for them to sneak into the next stage.

Taylor, who deputised as skipper for injured Elton Chigumbura, hit a fighting hundred which was in vain as a controversial catch by John Mooney to dismiss Sean Williams sealed their fate.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Taylor will be playing his last international match after signing a three-year deal with Nottinghamshire.

Taylor could still lead the team on

Saturday in case Chigumbura fails to recover in time from a tear to the quadriceps muscle in his left leg.

Taylor believes his team have the capacity to beat defending champions India who have already reached the quarterfinals.

"Well, it's another opportunity to try and get all three departments right, and if we do that, there's no reason why we can't beat India," said Taylor.

"We've beaten them before back home, so we have that belief we can do it."

"Yes, they're one of the best teams in the world playing on a pretty small ground in Auckland, but it's a great opportunity for us to be in the World Cup and showcase our talent and skills against the best in the world."

"There's a lot to play for, a lot of pride at stake. We want to try to finish on a high note."

But it's easier said than done as the defending champions have won all their five matches to march into the quarterfinals as the top team in Pool B.

Despite the match bearing no significance for India, skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni promises the same intensity.

Clarke raring to go

AFP, Hobart

Australia captain Michael Clarke shrugged off fears over his fitness Friday, claiming he was more concerned about time in the middle as the World Cup heads towards the knockouts.

Clarke only had a gentle practice session on Thursday as his teammates sprinted, prompting suggestions that he was still struggling with injuries.

"I certainly am fit," Clarke insisted on the eve of Australia's concluding Pool A match against Scotland.

"It was more just part of my recovery. Since coming back from my hamstring surgery we've looked at my schedule going forward and Thursday was another opportunity to make sure I recover as well as I can, not only for this game but for the quarterfinal."

AUSTRALIA V SCOTLAND

No mercy on OZ minds

AFP, Hobart

Australia skipper Michael Clarke pledged no mercy on crisis-hit Scotland as the four-time World Cup champions seek a headline-grabbing performance ahead of a potential quarterfinal collision with Pakistan.

Australia have already made sure of their spot in the next stage after last weekend's 64-run win over fellow title contenders Sri Lanka where they piled up 376-9.

That followed their World Cup record score of 417-6 to rout Afghanistan by 275 runs.

Victory against Pool A's rock-bottom Scotland on Saturday will ensure the runners-up spot behind New Zealand and a possible last-eight clash in Adelaide on March 20

against old adversaries Pakistan should Misbahul Haq's side beat Ireland on Sunday.

The only selection issue appears to still revolve around Shane Watson who was dropped for the Afghanistan match but restored to

he could come in and play his game," said opening batsman David Warner.

Australia will have little to fear from a Scotland side who have still to win a World Cup match in three appearances.

The two sides have met four times with Australia winning by six wickets in 1999, 203 runs in 2007, 189 runs in 2005 and 200 runs in 2013.

Finch will be optimistic of similar carnage on Saturday on the Bellerive Oval's compact boundaries although Scotland would have breathed a sigh of relief when Marsh wasn't selected.

Fast bowler Mitchell Johnson took 4-36 that day as the Scots were dismissed for 162.

"We've just got to back ourselves. They're the same as everyone else. They run up and try and get you out," said Scotland opener Kyle Coetzer.

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the line-up for the win over Sri Lanka in Sydney.

He certainly responded with a fine innings of 67.

"The way Shane played the other day was fantastic. I think he sort of adopted that approach where he knew

5 facts

- Australia have won all previous ODIs against Scotland, winning by at least 189 runs in three matches batting first and by 6 wickets while chasing
- Only Andrew Symonds (103) and Lance Klusener (124) have better batting averages than Michael Clarke in World Cup history 74.9 (more than five innings)
- Josh Davey's bowling average of 19.1 is the fourth best of any bowler to bowl in 20-plus ODI innings from any nation. Mitchell Starc is one of five other players to average below 20
- Scotland have lost all 13 of their World Cup matches, no other side has played more than six (Namibia) without picking up at least one victory
- Australia have won 10 of their last 11 ODIs at the Bellerive Oval in Hobart, their one loss in this run that started in 2001 coming against Sri Lanka, in 2012

Shami lauds Dhoni

AFP, Auckland

Fast-improving paceman Mohammad Shami hailed India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni on Friday, claiming the world champions' skipper never gets angry.

"I am lucky that all my debuts -- Tests, one-dayers, Twenty20s -- all have come under Dhoni and the way he handles things looks good to me," said Shami.

"He keeps me tension-free and never says anything about mistakes, he never gets angry and gives me peace. He talks in a smooth manner and it is good for a bowler that the captain backs him and that's the biggest plus for me."

"I feel it's better than domestic matches and that has given me a lot of confidence."

Shami, who turned 25 on Monday, is India's leading wicket-taker at the World Cup with 12 wickets, including a best of 4-35 in the opening victory over arch-rivals Pakistan in Adelaide last month.

"Look the motivation is to win the World Cup," said Shami.

"Everyone back home expects us to win, whether they are fans in India or elsewhere and our focus is also on that," said Shami.

"In 2011 it was the last World Cup for Sachin Tendulkar. This time, you don't know who is playing their last World Cup so we are focused on winning."

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MAHMUDULLAH RIYAD

Only last week, Bangladesh had gone 29 World Cup innings without having a single century. Now they have two centuries, thanks to the incredible form of Mahmudullah Riyad. The 29-year-old all-rounder, who scored the first century for the Tigers with a 103-run knock against England on March 9, followed it up with a sublime knock of 128 not out against New Zealand in Hamilton yesterday. That took Mahmudullah to fourth position in the top run-getters' list in this World Cup with an aggregate of 344 in five innings at an average of 86 and a strike rate of 82.89. Yesterday's knock against New Zealand was probably the better of the two by the all-rounder, not only for the fact that it was bigger and he remained unbeaten, but also because his scoring rate was a progressive one; first fifty coming in 63 deliveries, second fifty in 48 deliveries and the last 28 runs in just 12 deliveries.

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WORLD CUP COCKTAIL

Shahadat Mallick came all the way from the United States to watch the World Cup and his beloved Bangladesh, a team which feels like family to him.

"I have seen history," said Mallick, who was in Adelaide last Monday to see the Tigers claim a famous 15-run win over England which took them into the quarterfinals for the first time.

"I watched the win over England that took us to the quarters and it's a great delight for me."

"I grew up in Dhaka and have some relatives who have played for Bangladesh, so cricket is very much in my blood but now I rarely get an opportunity to watch as I am based in US."

Mallick was just one of hundreds of Bangladeshi fans who thronged Hamilton's Seddon Park for their last World Cup Pool A match against New Zealand on Friday.

"I have come with my family of five," said Shoukat Hossain, who is from Tauranga. "It's great to see Bangladesh perform so well in the World Cup."

Hossain has already bought a ticket for quarter-final in Melbourne where Bangladesh would meet defending champions India on March 19.

"We will not allow India to beat us," said Nafees, Hossain's son, a student at Hamilton University.

"Every time in the past we left the World Cup empty-handed but this time we can finish at our best."

Mozzies attack in Hamilton

Who are proving the more pesky opponents for the Black Caps at Seddon Park today?

While Bangladesh were providing plenty of bite with the bat in the World Cup match in a steamy Hamilton, the New Zealand side were being plagued by mosquitos and their ilk.

During breaks between overs, many of the home team's players were constantly calling for bug-repellent spray to keep the

critters away; applying a full-body cover over their black clothing.

The Bangladeshi batsmen weren't spared being bothered either - not only did they have to cope with the tournament's top wicket-taker in Trent Boult, but they also sought insecticide relief as muggy, overcast conditions made the ball swing and the bugs bite.

Another Tui crowd catch

A fifth cricket fan is in the running for a share of a possible \$1 million after taking a scorching one-handed catch during the Black Caps' World Cup match against Bangladesh on Friday night.

The catcher was deep in the crowd at Seddon Park when Corey Anderson smacked a huge six off the bowling of Nasir Hossain in the 37th over.

The man's mates cheered and hugged him, but it was the last scoring shot Anderson played.

He was out next ball, bowled by Hossain for 39, though the New Zealanders went on to win in a thrilling finish.

The man joins Sunjay Ganda, Travis Committie, Jamie Gough and Sajjad Ahmad in the Tui competition as fans who have taken clean, one-handed catches during World Cup matches.

The prize pool has reached \$350,000, but the brewery will make the prize \$1m if New Zealand wins the cup. The successful catchers will share the prizemoney.

The latest catch was yet to be verified by Tui. --COMPILED

