



**Virat Kohli will have his hands full today. Not only will the India skipper be feeling the pressure to step up with the bat against New Zealand in Shikhar Dhawan's absence, he will also have to figure out how to lead his flawless side to a win against the only other undefeated team at the World Cup.**

PHOTO: AFP

**FACTS**

India skipper Virat Kohli has a staggering average of 68.52 -- most by any player of either sides' current World Cup squads -- in the 22 matches he played against New Zealand. He also scored 1302 runs against the Kiwis, which is again the most by any batsmen of the two sides' current squad.

For New Zealand, it's Ross Taylor who has scored 1117 runs -- most by any batsmen in current Kiwis World Cup squad -- in the 31 games he played against India.

MS Dhoni has taken 23 catches -- most by any player in the two sides' current World Cup squad -- in the 27 games he played against New Zealand.

India's 392 for four against New Zealand at Christchurch back in 2009 remains the highest total by any of the two sides in the 106 games they played against each other so far.

New Zealand pacer Tim Southee has scalped 26 wickets in the 18 matches he played against India. This is the highest by any bowlers among the two sides' current World Cup squads.

# We need to grab half-chances against India, says Ferguson

REUTERS, Nottingham

New Zealand cannot afford to squander even half-chances against a team of India's calibre in Thursday's World Cup match at Trent Bridge, Kiwi fast bowler Lockie Ferguson said.

The right-arm pacer will be spending much of his 28th birthday trying to tame a formidable Indian batting order headlined by Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, the top two batsmen in ODI rankings.

"They're world-class players, you're not going to blow them out of the water, but if you can build up enough pressure against them and then create a half-chance, that could be the wicket and you can then build from there," Ferguson told reporters on Tuesday.

"Obviously, they're playing some great cricket and they're one of the top teams in the competition but we're definitely looking forward to the opportunity of playing them in England and we haven't played them for a while in England."

India have adopted a new approach to the first powerplay overs which was evident in their clinical victory against Australia on Sunday.

Kohli's men collected only 41 runs in the first 10 overs, without losing a wicket, but went on to plunder 116 during the last 10 en route to a commanding 352-5 which was beyond Australia's reach.



"They showed us that they're probably a lot more patient in a way," Ferguson said. "And although we're looking to take wickets, sometimes we get a little bit expensive. I think taking wickets up front is the key to (beating) India but, if not, creating pressure and building dots balls."

The threat of rain looms large over the contest between the tournament's only two unbeaten teams. A record three matches have already been either abandoned or called off in the weather-hit tournament and Ferguson hoped Trent Bridge would not fall victim to another downpour.

"It's the World Cup. We're playing against India in the World Cup and it's an opportunity to get two points and we don't want to get rained-out games," he said.

"I don't think any players do but if that happens then so be it. We can't control that but we're looking forward to playing India and getting some confidence against them."

## Rain to play a part again?

AGENCIES, Nottingham

Rain has had its say at the World Cup so far with three matches having already been washed out -- the most in any World Cup. That trend is likely to continue in today's match between India and New Zealand, with the forecast showing over 50 per cent chances of rain.

According to some reports, the Indian team missed their practice session in Nottingham due to inclement weather on Tuesday and although the downpour had eased somewhat on Wednesday, there was significant clouds covering the Nottingham skyline.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) tweeted a picture from Trent Bridge, captioning it: "Glum and gloomy conditions here at the Trent Bridge."

Both India and New Zealand are unbeaten in the World Cup so far.

The Kiwis have registered wins against Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh while India have defeated South Africa and Australia.



**New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has been in good touch recently and will be looking for a big score against India today.**

PHOTO: NZC

### INFO ZONE

#### HEAD TO HEAD IN WORLD CUP

INDIA		NEW ZEALAND
3	WIN	4
4	LOSS	3
0	TIE	0
0	NR	0

#### HEAD TO HEAD IN ODIS

INDIA		NEW ZEALAND
55	WIN	45
45	LOSS	55
1	TIE	1
5	NR	5

#### LAST MEETING

February 3 2019 at Westpac Stadium in Wellington  
India won by 35 runs.

#### KEY PLAYERS



INDIA		NEW ZEALAND
Virat Kohli		Ross Taylor
59.47	Bat Avg	48.54
92.93	Bat Strike rate	83.48
50	50s	48
41	100s	20
183	HS	181*
10943	Runs	8156
82	Last Match	48

## WC is still wide open, says Taylor

AFP, Nottingham

New Zealand batsman Ross Taylor says it is too early to pick favourites for the World Cup, with most of the 10 teams firmly in the race to reach the semi-finals.

Taylor said the round-robin format gives enough time for sides to get into their rhythm towards the business end.

"I think it's still early on. The majority, all nine (other) teams are still, or maybe realistically seven teams still in the hunt," Taylor said. "I think it's not only the way the draw works out, you know, if you can get into a bit of a roll towards the end -- first and foremost, you've got to get into the semifinal."

New Zealand outplayed India, who are among the favourites alongside champions Australia and hosts England, in a pre-tournament warm-up game last month.

And Taylor believes his team's recent success against India will give them confidence.

"We've faced India a lot in recent times and had some success against them," said Taylor, who hit a match-winning 82 against Bangladesh. "Obviously, two world-class spinners on their day. I think we've had success at different stages. We'll have to wait and see what the wicket produces tomorrow," he added.

## India call up Pant as cover

### Hope remains Dhawan will be fit to face England

REUTERS, Nottingham

Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant will join the India team before Sunday's clash with Pakistan as cover for opener Shikhar Dhawan who will miss the next three to four games with a hand injury, assistant coach Sanjay Bangar said on Wednesday.

Dhawan's injury, sustained during his match-winning century against Australia, has forced India into rejigging a settled lineup after two of their nine group matches.

They remain optimistic, however, of welcoming the southpaw back before the June 30 clash against hosts and tournament favourites England.

Bangar confirmed that back-up opener KL Rahul, who was picked

to play at number four, will partner Rohit Sharma at the top of the order starting with Thursday's match against New Zealand.

"In 10-12 days we'll be taking a call on the status of Shikhar," Bangar told reporters at Trent Bridge. "If and when a replacement is required, it's always good to have the replacement player already in and practising regularly as a standby."

Like Dhawan, 21-year-old Pant is an aggressive left-hander from Delhi. However, he has played only five ODIs, and was pipped by Karthik, who is 13 years older and has a reputation as a calm 'finisher'.

Dhawan's absence not only denied India a left-right combination at the top but also left them without a southpaw in the batting lineup.

"He (Pant) bats in the middle order and obviously being a left-hander it helps," Bangar said, acknowledging the benefit of having a left-right combination which forces bowlers to alter line and length.

"It's always an advantage if you have a right-left combination right at the top of the order," Bangar said. "Shikhar will definitely be missed in the next games but we have great back-ups for each position. With that we should be able to make it up."

"We've been observing him and it will take ten to twelve days until we get to know where he stands and (will) be in a better position to take a call," Bangar said.

"You don't really want to rule out a precious player like Shikhar right at the time when his injury happened."



**Members of the Indian team, including Hardik Pandya, MS Dhoni and Kedar Jadhav, took some time off to watch a screening of Salman Khan's new movie 'Bharat' ahead of today's game against New Zealand.**

PHOTO: TWITTER

### MR EFFICIENT



It was a terrific show from Pakistan left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir against Australia in their World Cup 2019 match. The 27-year-old's brilliantly bowling did not seem enough as Australia were cruising at one stage, riding on skipper Aaron Finch and David Warner. However, Amir single-handedly stemmed the flow of runs -- evidenced by his two maidens -- and also picked up wickets at regular intervals. He eventually picked up a maiden five-wicket haul in ODIs and ended with figures of five for thirty from ten overs. With ten wickets in three games, Amir now leads the list wicket-takers in the World Cup, with New Zealand's Lockie Ferguson behind him.