

## Sports

# Kohli says Pakistan 'very strong' ahead of Twenty20 blockbuster

## Forget the past in India match, Babar tells Pakistan team

DUBAI: India skipper Virat Kohli yesterday said they will take on a "very strong" Pakistan team in their Twenty20 World Cup opener and downplayed their unbeaten record against their opponents. India have beaten Pakistan in all of their 12 matches at the T20 and 50-over World Cups.

“Records are meant to be broken”

"We never discussed these things, about our record and past performance," Kohli told reporters on the eve of the much-anticipated clash in Dubai today. "These things create distractions. What matters is how we prepare and execute on that particular day, regardless of the opposition."

Kohli said regardless of their past dominance Pakistan is and always has been packed with talented players. "Pakistan, according to me is a very strong team and always has been a strong side," he said. "You have to play your best cricket against them, because they have lots of talent and players who can change the game."

Babar Azam's Pakistan will look to break their World Cup jinx against India, who have won all five clashes in T20's showpiece event. Babar, Mohammad Rizwan and Fakhar Zaman hold the team's batting key while quicks Shaheen Shah Afridi and Hasan Ali lead a potent bowling attack.

Kohli backed his team's match winners including Hardik Pandya to come good in the tournament despite the all-rounder struggling with his bowling. "He is getting better in terms of getting prepared to bowl two overs for us," said Kohli. "What he brings at that number six spot is something that you cannot create overnight and hence I was always in favor of backing him in Australia as a batter purely. He can take the game away from the opposition when he is in full flow."

Pandya emerged as India's top all-rounder after his white-ball debut in 2016 but a spate of back injuries affected his career and he underwent back surgery two years ago. The pace bowler did not bowl in the second leg of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in the United Arab Emirates for his side Mumbai Indians. But Kohli says the attacking batsman is an asset to the team in the shortest format.

### 'Beyond us'

Babar vowed his team will not think about Pakistan's poor record against arch-rivals India when they meet today. "To be honest, what has passed is beyond us," Babar told a virtual media conference yesterday. "We want to use our ability and confidence on the day of the match so that we can get a better result. Records are meant to be broken."

The tickets for the match were sold out within hours of going on sale after the United Arab Emirates government allowed a 70 percent crowd for the Twenty20 World Cup matches in a relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions. The South Asian nuclear rivals have only played in multi-national events like the World Cups and the Champions Trophy as strained relations have stalled bilateral cricket since 2007.



MANCHESTER: In this file photo taken on June 16, 2019, Pakistan's Mohammad Amir (second right) and teammate Babar Azam (right) speak with India's captain Virat Kohli (center) and India's Vijay Shankar (left) as they walk back to the pavilion as rain stops play during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between India and Pakistan at Old Trafford in Manchester, north-west England. — AFP

Pakistan did tour India in 2012 for five limited over matches but ties were not fully resumed as the two nations continued to be at loggerheads over multiple issues, with the disputed region of Kashmir and terrorism heading the list. Babar admitted it will be a match full of intensity. "The matches between Pakistan and India are always full of intensity so we need to perform well in all three departments of the game," said Babar.

Former champions India and Pakistan are placed in Group 2 along with New Zealand, Afghanistan and

Scotland and Namibia, who both came through the qualifying stage. Babar said Pakistan's prime minister Imran Khan — who led the country to victory in the 1992 World Cup — had shared his experiences with the team. "The Prime Minister met us before our departure and shared his experiences of the 1992 win and told us to play aggressive and fearless cricket against India." Earlier this week, India won both their warm-up matches, beating England and Australia while Pakistan beat the West Indies but lost to South Africa. — AFP

## Houston Astros beat Boston Red Sox to reach World Series

LOS ANGELES: The Houston Astros booked their third trip to the World Series in five seasons on Friday, defeating the Boston Red Sox 5-0 to wrap up a 4-2 victory in the American League Championship Series. The Astros, who will face either the Atlanta Braves or Los Angeles Dodgers in Major League Baseball's showpiece, edged out a dogged Red Sox performance at Minute Maid Park in Houston.

Houston outfielder Kyle Tucker put the seal on a clinical win for the Astros, smashing a three-run home run in the eighth inning to effectively put the game out of Boston's grasp. Earlier, Cuban slugger Yordan Alvarez drove in the opening run for Houston in the bottom of the first inning, doubling on a fly ball to centerfield to score shortstop Alex Bregman.

A tense pitching duel then unfolded over the next four innings, with Boston starter Nathan Eovaldi digging in to prevent the Astros adding to their lead. Astros rookie pitcher Luis Garcia was superb from the mound, giving up only one hit across 5.2 scoreless innings with seven strikeouts. Houston finally added to their lead in the sixth inning when Tucker grounded into a double play at first base as Alvarez crossed home plate. After a scoreless seventh inning, Tucker jumped on Boston reliever Adam Ottavino's 95mph fastball, sending a rocket high into left center field to bring Alvarez and Carlos Correa home. Houston closer Ryan Pressly then mopped up the Red Sox in the top of the ninth inning, quickly disposing of Enrique Hernandez, Rafael Devers and Xander Bogaerts as the Houston home crowd erupted.

The Astros won the World Series in 2017 against the Dodgers, but that victory was subsequently tarnished by revelations of a sign-stealing scandal which led to a \$5 million fine and the sacking of then manager A.J. Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow. Houston reached the 2019 World Series but suffered a 4-3 series defeat to the Washington Nationals. — AFP

## Zain welcomes Kuwait jet ski champions

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, welcomed the National Jet Ski team champions at Kuwait International Airport's fourth terminal (T4). The team recently received 10 medals as part of their recent participation in the second round of the World Jet Ski Championship 2021 held in the United States of America. The reception ceremony was attended by Secretary General of Kuwait Sea Sport Club Khaled Al-Fodari, Director of the Jet Ski committee in Kuwait Sea Sport Club Hussain Dashti, as well as several Sea Sport Club officials, club staff, and the team's sponsors, headed by Zain.

Zain is proud to partner with the World Champions for the past decade as part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards supporting the youth and sports sectors as well as supporting outstanding Kuwaiti athletes. The team received 10 medals (8 golds, and 2 silvers) as part of their participation in the World Jet Ski Championship 2021 concluded recently in the United States of America. The National Jet Ski team is authorized by the Kuwait Sea



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers looks at the fans seated courtside as they were getting blown out by Phoenix Suns during the second half of the game at Staples Center on Friday in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

## Davis, Howard clash as Lakers slump again

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis and Dwight Howard had to be separated by teammates as the Los Angeles Lakers slumped to an eighth straight defeat with a 115-105 loss to the Phoenix Suns on Friday. After losing all six of their pre-season games, the Lakers followed up their season-opening reverse to Golden State on Tuesday with another disjointed performance at the Staples Center.

And the tensions within the Lakers' new-look roster boiled over in the first half when Davis and Howard squared up to each other on the bench during a timeout. Several Lakers players including LeBron James scrambled to separate the duo, with Davis gesticulating as he was hustled away. Coach Frank Vogel later played down the altercation, which he said had arisen from a miscommunication on court.

"Dwight and AD had a miscue on a coverage and they talked it out," Vogel said. "When you're getting you're a\*\* kicked, sometimes those conversations get heated. Those guys love each other, they talked it out. And that's going to happen from time to time — I'd rather our guys care than not care."

Howard later told reporters he had settled his differences with Davis. "We squashed it right then and there," Howard said. "We're both very passionate about winning and we didn't want to lose this game. But we're grown men, we got it out the way. We squashed it.

Sport Club to officially represent Kuwait in regional and international Jet Ski championships. The champions won several prominent titles during their past participations in the biggest Gulf, Asian, and international competitions.

Some of the team's most prominent accolades include the recent achievement at the Europe Championship (the first round of the World Championship) held last year, where World Champion and title holder Mohammed Borubaye attained the first-

There's no issue between me and him — that's my brother, my teammate."

The Lakers led early in the second quarter against last season's NBA Finals runners-up, but were overwhelmed in the third quarter as the Suns romped into a 32-point lead. Chris Paul led the scoring for Phoenix with 23 points and 14 assists while Devin Booker had 22 points, with Mikal Bridges adding 21.

James led the Lakers scorers with 25 points while Davis added 22 with 14 rebounds in a losing effort. Russell Westbrook was one assist away from his first triple double in a Lakers shirt, with 11 rebounds, nine assists and 15 points.

### Sixers collapse

Elsewhere Friday, Kevin Durant scored a 29-point triple-double as the Brooklyn Nets punished a late collapse by the Philadelphia 76ers to bag their opening win of the season. The Nets appeared to be poised for a second straight loss following their opening defeat to Milwaukee after the Sixers pulled into a 108-98 lead with just five minutes remaining in the fourth quarter.

But the Sixers' hopes of extending their unbeaten start to the season evaporated as their shooting accuracy deserted them in the closing stages. The Sixers made 10 misses as the Nets turned a 10-point deficit into a 114-109 win with a 16-1 scoring run. Durant finished with 15 rebounds and 12 assists along with his 29-point haul, while LaMarcus Aldridge finished with 23 points and James Harden 20. Joe Harris added 14 off the bench while Patty Mills chipped in with 11.

The Sixers led for the entire game until their late fourth-quarter collapse, going 14 points clear in the first quarter alone. But they were unable to respond when Brooklyn turned up the pace in the fourth quarter with a more physical approach. — AFP

place title in the Pro GP category. The team also attained seven medals (two golds, three silvers, and two bronzes) as part of their participation in the World Jet Ski Championship 2019, as well as the IJSBA World Championship 2018 title with total points.

Zain expressed its pride in all National teams that raise the Kuwaiti flag high by achieving top international titles, and it further confirms its commitment towards Kuwaiti champions, which resembles the company's end-

## NBK RUN on December 4th

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launches its Annual Sports Festival "NBK RUN" on December 4, 2021. For registration, visit nbk.com/nbkrun. "As the health crisis gradually abates, NBK is looking forward to introduce a new experience with a new look. NBK transformed its walkathon into NBK Run to pave the way for both professional runners and beginners to enjoy challenges and competitions," said Manal Al-Mattar, NBK Public Relations - Assistant General Manager.

"NBK Run is your way to fun and challenges, in addition to enjoying a day of entertainment with your family", she added. "We were eagerly waiting for the return of this huge sporting event. As the health crisis gradually declined, we decided to come back new and different. We see NBK RUN as a place where all family members can enjoy, and this is what families deserve after a long wait."

"NBK looks forward to welcoming participants and giving away many exciting prizes. The Walkathon event will host various functions, activities and competitions", she noted. "As part of the bank's dedication to corporate social responsibility, NBK regularly supports events which encourage healthier lifestyle for members of the community"

NBK will be giving away a new Nissan X - TERA 2021 car from the strategic partner Al-Babtain Group as the grand prizes along with many other valuable prizes. The race is open for runners aged 15 and above. The top six winners will be rewarded with valuable cash prizes. The walk for both the female and male participants will start at 8:30 am from the Green Island on the Gulf Road to the Shuwaikh Beach Park, parallel to the Gulf Road, next to KPC building for a distance of 11 Km.

NBK strongly supports sporting events and encourages sporting activities as means to promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for members of the community. Throughout the years, NBK also organized several social awareness programs including educational, environmental, health and many other active initiatives.

less confidence of the competencies of the country's athletes and their capabilities in excelling in different fields. As a leading digital service provider in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti National teams and individual athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition they deserve.



KUWAIT: The champions, Sea Sport Club officials, and Zain's team at Kuwait International Airport.