

REPORT

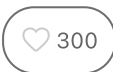
Rohit, Rahul, spinners lead India to third Champions Trophy title

India had just too much quality and depth to end their second straight ICC tournament unbeaten



[Sidharth Monga](#)

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India 254 for 6 (Rohit 76, Iyer 48, Rahul 34*, Bracewell 2-28, Santner 2-46) beat **New Zealand** 251 for 7 (Mitchell 63, Bracewell 53, Phillips 34, Kuldeep 2-40, Varun 2-45) by four wickets

New Zealand defended with all their might against heavy favourites India. But, in the end, India had just too much quality and depth for them, and ended their second straight ICC tournament unbeaten. They now hold two of the four ICC trophies, having lost in the final of the other two. In the last three ICC tournaments alone, India have won 22 of their 23 completed matches.

On a tired pitch, run-scoring followed a similar pattern to earlier games. Having won a crucial toss - India have lost their [last 15 ODI tosses](#) - New Zealand raced away to 69 for 1 in the powerplay, but the high-quality spin from India dragged them back. On a pitch offering them the least turn of all matches in Dubai this tournament, the four India spinners bowled 38 overs between them to concede just 144 runs and take five wickets. Again, as New Zealand got pace on ball at the death, [Michael Bracewell](#) scored 53 off 40 to give himself and his bowling colleagues a target.

India made a similarly breezy start of 64 for 0 in the powerplay, but New Zealand kept clawing their way back despite a 105-run opening stand between [Rohit Sharma](#) and Shubman Gill. Lacking the mystery of [Varun Chakravarthy](#) or the rare left-arm wristspin art of [Kuldeep Yadav](#), New Zealand capitalised on the increased turn -

average of 2 degrees in the first innings, 3.4 in the second - and tested India thoroughly. Their spinners bowled 35 overs for 152 runs and five wickets.

Every batter other than Virat Kohli got a start - scores ranged between Rohit's 76 and Hardik Pandya's run-a-ball 18 - but none of them completed the job. Their incredible depth, though, prevailed as **KL Rahul** and Ravindra Jadeja saw them through with one over to spare and four wickets in hand.

It was a final to rescue the tournament that has been short on close contests. India came in with much more ammunition for the conditions than New Zealand, but the toss proved to be a bit of an equaliser. Ravindra Jadeja, leading run-getter of the tournament, batted like a dream against the new ball, the best conditions all day long. He scored 37 off 29 in a start that stunned the crowd, helped along by two spilled chances.

Under the pump, India went to their likeliest wicket-takers as opposed to the usual formula of bowling Axar Patel with the new ball. Varun took Will Young with drift on a legbreak, but the natural variation provided the telling blow to trap him lbw. Kuldeep, just five wickets so far, announced himself on the final with two of the biggest wickets: Ravindra to a wrong'un first ball, and Kane Williamson beaten in the air with big dip and offering a return catch.

Three wickets had fallen to reduce New Zealand to 75 for 3, and it was now up to Tom Latham and Daryl Mitchell to keep wickets in hand for the final push. Mitchell struggled to score fluidly, which meant Latham - a stalwart in the middle overs of ODI cricket - had to take a risk. And when you take a risk against the metronomic Jadeja - 10-0-30-1 - you better not miss because he will get you lbw.

For the second time in this tournament, India bowled just spin through the middle overs. It was a slow track but offered minimal turn. It is a testament to the quality and the accuracy of India's spinners that New Zealand were choked through the period. It took them 21 overs to double their ten-over score of 69. Varun came back to get Glenn Phillips in the 38th over, again pushing back their charge.

Bracewell brought back memories of how fluidly Ravindra batted as India went back to pace on ball at the back end. Mitchell, who followed Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill into scoring his slowest fifty, now tried an assault but a slower ball from Mohammed

Shami got the better of him. Bracewell, though, hit three fours and two sixes to give New Zealand what only looked like respectability at that time.

Even that respectability looked dodgy the way Rohit started the chase. Some sensational hitting off the fast bowlers - including Nathan Smith, the replacement for Matt Henry, the leading wicket-taker of the tournament who injured his shoulder - pushed Santner's hand. He brought himself on in the ninth over, but the best he and Ravindra could manage was a few relatively quiet overs.

In the first over after the drinks break, Phillips produced his third unbelievable catch of the tournament, leaping high at extra cover and plucking a one-hander to send Gill back. With his first ball, Bracewell trapped Kohli lbw for one. Now the easy runs stopped. Rohit slowed down, looking like he was setting himself up for an old-fashioned Rohit knock. Then, though, after a spell of eight overs for 19 runs and two wickets, he charged at Ravindra, looking to hit his fourth six of the night, missed, and was stumped.

Iyer, two half-centuries to his name already, and Axar then repaired the damage with a 61-run partnership from 122 for 3. Iyer was the edgier of the two. Young caught him at the deep midwicket fence but touched the boundary skirting, Jamieson dropped him as he tried two consecutive sixes off Phillips, the sixth dropped catch between the two teams.

When Iyer fell in the 39th over, caught off Santner at short fine leg, India needed 67 off 68. The asking rate only hovered around a run a ball - the biggest difference between the balls and runs was four with six overs left. Confident in their depth, India kept taking the odd risk and kept hitting sixes. When pace finally came back on, the calm Rahul took India ahead. Jamieson provided one final stumbling block with Hardik's wicket off a nasty bouncer in the 48th over, but India still had Jadeja in the bank.

Michael Bracewell

Rohit Sharma

Varun Chakravarthy

Kuldeep Yadav

KL Rahul

India

New Zealand

New Zealand vs India

ICC Champions Trophy



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