

kheloindia

YOUTH GAMES



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Like father, like son: Rathore Jr shoots gold; easy for Mehuli

BULLSEYE Manavaditya beats Shardul Vihan and Lakshay Sheron; Mehuli overcomes jetlag to win

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PUNE: The shooting discipline at the Khelo India Youth Games is a star-studded event. From Commonwealth Games medallist Mehuli Ghosh to Asian Games star Lakshay Sheoran, the current top crop is competing on this platform that aims to 'discover' future talent.

But it can get tricky at times. One moment of lapse in concentration and the reputation can go for a toss. Haryana lad Sheoran, who had won silver in trap at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games, found it the hard way on Saturday and finished fourth in U-21 trap. Rajasthan's Manavaditya Rathore, son of Olympic medallist Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, came out on top in the event.

There was no such slip for West Bengal's Mehuli in the U-21 10m air rifle event. She topped the qualification with a score of 629.4 and then consistently shot 10.5s and above in the final to seal gold with a score of 252.1.

RATHORE SHINES

Sheoran topped the qualification with a score of 120 while Rathore shot 116. That counted for nothing as he missed a series of birds to let the lead slip. Rathore too could find only five of the first 10 targets in the finals but then shot nine of the next 10 birds to be in comfortable third spot with five shots left before the first of the six finalists was eliminated.

In the end, Rathore's final score read 38 while Haryana's Bhowneesh Mendiratta (34) came second followed by Uttar Pradesh's Shardul Vihan (26), who had also won silver at the Asian Games in double trap. Sheoran scored 22 in the final to finish fourth.

"I am focusing on the national trials in February. I want to represent India in international competitions at the senior level.



■ Manavaditya Rathore (left) won the trap final with a score of 38. Mehuli Ghosh won gold in 10m air rifle.

I meditate a lot and that helped me keep my composure despite being in a tricky situation today," said Rathore, a student of Hansraj College, New Delhi.

In U-21 women's trap, Madhya Pradesh's Manisha Keer won gold with a final score of 38. Delhi shooters Kirti Gupta (35) and Aadya Tripathi (25) claimed silver and bronze, respectively.

JETLAGGED MEHULI

Mehuli, who arrived from Germany two days back after a competition stint, negated jet lag to do justice to her reputation in the air rifle final. Her score of 252.1 in the final was way ahead of second-placed Elavenil Valarivan (248.8) of Gujarat and third-

placed Manni Kaushik (227) of Rajasthan.

"I am happy with the scores since I was jetlagged. I have World Cups coming up and am also going to the Netherlands for training and competition. This is an Olympic qualification year and I have to peak at the right time," Mehuli said.

In the U-21 men's 50m rapid fire pistol, Haryana's Adarsh Singh clinched gold, while in women's U-17 10m air rifle Gujarat's Heena Jayeshbhai Gohei clinched the top spot.

HARYANA WRESTLERS END ON A HIGH

Haryana emerged as the top team in wrestling as they fin-

ished with a haul of 24 golds, which was more than all others put together. In all they won 58 medals, which also included 16 silver and 18 bronze.

On the third day of athletics, Uttar Pradesh claimed top honours with three gold medals. Delhi judokas grabbed three gold medals out of the eight on offer. In gymnastics, Maharashtra maintained their overall lead by winning four of the eight gold medals on offer.

In swimming, for the third successive day Maharashtra (four gold, three silver), Delhi (three gold, three silver, two bronze) and Karnataka (two gold, one silver, one bronze) dominated.



PRATHAM GOKHALE/HT PHOTO

Lack of facilities no hurdle for gymnast Bavleen Kaur

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PUNE: The badminton hall at the MA Stadium in Jammu does not have the best of facilities for the 200-odd gymnasts who train there. That hasn't stopped its trainee Bavleen Kaur from stamping her class at the Khelo India Youth Games here.

The 16-year-old gymnast from Jammu and Kashmir has won five medals, three gold and two silver in rhythmic gymnastics.

"We come from a state which doesn't have proper facilities to train. We practice on normal mats and sometimes we even practice in the parks outside in case there are too many gymnasts in the hall," she explained.

"I started doing gymnastics 6-7 years back. I took this sport as a recreational activity but soon got interested in it. It was my father who wanted me to get into sports," added Kaur.

"It looks very gracious, this sport. But the toughest part is in learning it, and I feel it's tougher than any other sport. One needs to have a lot of concentration and should be ready for tremendous hard work," said Bavleen, who had won four medals at the 2018



■ Bavleen Kaur during a rhythmic gymnastics routine on Friday. HT

Khelo India School Games.

Bavleen credits her coaches Krupali Patel Singh and SP Singh for her early success.

"I just want to become like my coach Krupali (Singh). She is my role model. Our coaches are like foster parents. It is because of them that we are here today. They are so caring that even if

our parents are not in town they will take care of our lunch and dinner," said Bavleen, 11th standard student of KC Public School.

"During many events, whenever there hasn't been good food at the venue, they have spent money from their pockets to feed us," she added.

'Kunjarani has given me belief'

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PUNE: Few athletes have inspired generations of sportspersons in a region the way former world weightlifting champion Kunjarani Devi has in Manipur. Since her triplesilver-winning effort at the World Championships at Manchester in 1989, women lifters from the North-Eastern state have been at the forefront of India's quest for weightlifting medals in international competitions. At last year's Commonwealth Games too, India's first two gold medallists — Saikhom Mirabai Chanu and Sanjita Chanu Khumukcham — were the protégés of the legendary lifter.

On Saturday, Kunjarani's influence was evident at the



■ Seram Nirupama Devi. HT PHOTO

Khelo India Youth Games when Manipur's Seram Nirupama Devi hailed the 50-year-old as her inspiration after clinching gold in U-21 women's 64kg category.

"For every girl in Manipur, who wants to make it big in weightlifting, she is the role model. I am no different. She has given everyone belief that

through hard work we all make our nation proud," said Nirupama after lifting a total of 196kg to pip Andhra Pradesh's G Lalitha, who recorded a total lift of 195kg to bag silver. Nirupama's state-mate K Roshilata Devi claimed bronze with a total lift of 186kg.

"She keeps in touch with all of us. I had met her for the first time in 2016 and then I met her last year as well. Kunjarani and my coach Ranjan sir have had the biggest influence on me over the years," added Nirupama.

Nirupama took to weightlifting at the age of nine and though her parents, who are farmers and have three children, faced financial constraints, she received their support in her pursuits. She also credits her uncle for backing her in her career.

Polo series with Argentina All Stars ends in thrilling tie

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NEW DELHI: The three-match polo 'test' series between Argentina All Stars and La Pegasus India ended in a tie after the third and deciding match saw both teams level at 11-all at the Jaipur Polo Grounds on Saturday.

The Argentine team had won the first 'test' at Jodhpur 13-10 before the Indians won the second 'test' 9-8. Joaquin Pittaluga, who scored four goals on Saturday, was adjudged the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the match.

Dhruvpal Godara, with 21-goals overall, was Most Valuable Player of the Series. Sameer Suhag suffered a cut under his left eye and was replaced by Marcelo Araya midway. India raced to a 5-2 lead by the end of the first chukker before the Argentines moved ahead 6-5 at the end of the second. They were ahead 11-9 before the start of the sixth and final chukker before Dhruvpal got into his elements and tied the game for the home side.

Norde sends Neroca to first loss in 7 ties

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KOLKATA: Sony Norde struck in the 78th minute but if Mohun Bagan have to stretch the argument about this I-League, they might need to be more convincing than Saturday's 1-0 win against Neroca FC at Salt Lake stadium here.

After 13 matches and after winning two games on the trot at home for the first time this season, Mohun Bagan moved to 21 points, same as Neroca who have played a game less. Neroca had beaten Mohun Bagan 2-1 at home. "Sometimes, points become more important than how you play," said player of the match, Mohun Bagan goalie Shilton Paul.

Norde made the most of a brain fade in the Neroca midfield which led to them tracking back slower than they should have been. So, after Darren Calderia found Norde, it was in the kind of space he would have wanted. With no one to put in a block, Norde ran down the middle and fired from the top of the area low to goalkeeper Lalit Thapa's left.



■ Sony Norde HT FILE

One minute later, Norde was again through on goal and this time central defender Varney Kalderon had erred. His effort went way over. Sheikh Faiaz blasted into the side-netting as second-half injury-time loomed and the somewhat bright ending papered over a largely dull display. Barring Paul that is. He kept out a Subash Singh shot in the 25th minute and one minute earlier when Neroca came close from a free-kick, again it was Paul Mohun Bagan had to call on. On Sunday, Shillong Lajong FC host Indian Arrows.

ROUNDUP IRAN, IRAQ WIN, ENTER ASIAN CUP KNOCKOUT PHASE

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ABUDHABI: Iran sank Vietnam and Iraq beat Yemen as they powered into the Asian Cup round of 16 on Saturday ahead of their highly anticipated group decider next week. Sardar Azmoun struck both goals in Iran's 2-0 win in Abu Dhabi, while teenager Mohamad Ali's early solo strike kick-started Iraq's 3-0 victory in Sharjah.

Later in the day, Saudi Arabia too advanced to the next round after beating Lebanon 2-0. Iran and Iraq will meet in Dubai on Wednesday to decide who tops Group D in a repeat of their combustible quarter-final of 2015, which Iraq won on penalties.

KVITOVA DIGS DEEP TO CLAIM SYDNEY FINAL

SYDNEY: Petra Kvitova outlasted Ashleigh Barty in a final-set tie-break to win the Sydney International for the second time on Saturday.

The Czech 2015 champion and fifth seed fought back from dropping the opening set and an early break in the final set to beat the top-ranked Aussie, 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) in two hours 19 minutes.

It was a gutsy performance from the two-time Wimbledon champion who only finished her semi-final against Aliaksandra Sasnovich in the early hours of Saturday. "I left everything out there. I was cramping in the end. It wasn't the best," Kvitova said.

KENIN WINS FIRST WTA TITLE AT HOBART

HOBART: Composed American Sofia Kenin broke through to clinch her first WTA title Saturday with a straight sets win over Slovak Anna Karolina Schmiedlova at the Hobart International. The unseeded 20-year-old put in a dominant performance to win 6-3 6-0.

SANDGREN DOWNS NORRIE FOR VICTORY

AUCKLAND: American Tennys Sandgren brushed aside Britain's Cameron Norrie 6-4 6-2 to win his first ATP title at the ASB Classic in Auckland on Saturday. Sandgren, the world number 63, took one hour and 18 minutes to see off his opponent, who is ranked 30 places below him.

Fit Nadal ready with new serve, praises Murray

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MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal revealed Saturday he was back to full fitness and has a brand new serve to unleash at the Australian Open.

The World No 2 limped away from Melbourne Park a year ago, forced to retire in pain from his quarter-final with Marin Cilic.

The 17-time Grand Slam champion missed most of the next three months and cut short his season to have surgery on a troublesome foot injury. He pulled out of a Brisbane warm-up event with a slight thigh strain but declared Saturday his troubles were behind him.

"I feel good. If I am not feeling good, I will not be here," Nadal told reporters two days before the start of the first Grand Slam of the year. "I have good feelings in terms of the surgery. After surgery, after months without competing, having trouble practising,



■ Rafael Nadal REUTERS

of course there are always issues when you come back.

"But it's nothing new for me," added Nadal who admits he has to manage the workload on his creaking 32-year-old body. To better cope, he has remodelled his serve to help extend his career. "There are always things to improve," said the Spaniard, who faces Australian wildcard James Duckworth in the first round.

"The serve was always a thing

that I tried to improve, and I think I did. I am happy with the motivation to do something new. If I am able to make that happen in a good way, that hopefully it will give me the chance to help me on my game longer term.

"I didn't compete with this new serve, so let's see how it works. I am confident it's going to work well."

Of the many banged-up players on tour, Nadal may be the most able to empathise with Murray, having spent long periods on the sidelines with serious knee problems.

"It will be a very important loss for us, for the world of tennis, for the tour, for the fans, even for the rivals that he has been part of a great rivalry between the best players for a long time, and a great competitor," Nadal said of the three-time Grand Slam champion, who he played in junior tournaments when they were barely into their teens.



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