

GALLERY



CASHING IN: Kidambi Srikanth

Srikanth signs Rs 35-cr deal with Chinese brand

New Delhi: Kidambi Srikanth signed a four year 35-crore sports sponsorship deal with Chinese brand Li-Ning on Monday. The former world number one, who is the only Indian badminton player to have won six Super Series badminton event, signed a four-year deal with premium Chinese sports brand Li-Ning which will comprise of sponsorship and equipment supply, a media release said. "I am honoured to be the face of Li Ning in India and globally. I love their products and I'm really looking forward to stepping on the court with a renewed vigour to accomplish few more goals that I have set for myself & keep bring laurels for my country," Srikanth said. Li-Ning has been supporting the badminton teams of China, Indonesia, Singapore and Australia and was also the official sponsor of the Indian contingent at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

Ishan to lead Board President's XI against England Lions: Jharkhand wicketkeeper-batsman Ishan Kishan will lead Board President's XI in a three day warm-up game against England Lions in Thiruvananthapuram from January 18-20. The players involved in the Ranji Trophy quarterfinals have not been considered for selection, said the BCCI in a statement. Jharkhand's left-arm spinner Pappu Roy, rookie Mumbai fast bowler Tushar Deshpande, Andhra batsman Ricky Bhui have earned their places in the side. **BP XI:** Ishan Kishan (C & WK), Rituraj Gaekwad, Anmolpreet Singh, Deepak Hooda, Rajat Pattidar, Ricky Bhui, Himmat Singh, Mayank Markande, Jayant Yadav, Pappu Roy, Pankaj Jaiswal, Tushar Deshpande, Navdeep Saini.

Curry delivers 48 pts; Ibaka lifts Raptors over pesky Wizards: Stephen Curry scored 48 points and drained 11 three pointers as the Golden State Warriors stretched their win streak to four straight with a 119-114 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Sunday. Curry tallied 24 points in the second half and scored the final seven for two-time defending league champion Golden State. Elsewhere, Serge Ibaka drained the go-ahead three-pointer with 15 seconds left in the second overtime Sunday to lift the Toronto Raptors to a 140-138 victory over the Washington Wizards.

1956 Olympics footballer Zulfiqar passes away: Former India footballer Mohammed Zulfiqaruddin, who was a part of the fourth place finishing team in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, passed away here Sunday. He was 83 and survived by three sons and two daughters. As a 17-year old, Zulfiqaruddin was a part of the Indian squad which had finished fourth in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. But he did not play any match. India lost to Bulgaria 0-3 in the bronze-medal match in Melbourne to finish fourth, a result considered one of the finest moments in the country's football history. AGENCIES

ACTION TODAY

BASKETBALL: NBA: Houston vs Memphis, 6.30 am; Clippers vs Orleans, 9 am (Live on ESPN)

CRICKET: India vs Australia, 2nd ODI, 8.50 am (Live on Sony Six/Ten 3); Ranji Trophy, 9.30 am (Live on Star Sports 1)

FOOTBALL: Asian Cup, 7 pm (Live on Star Sports 1 & 3)

TENNIS: Australian Open, 5.30 am (Live on Ten 2)

WRESTLING: PWL: Punjab vs Jaipur, 6.50 pm (Live on Sony Six)

Khelo India Youth Games: 1.30 pm (Live on Star Sports 2)

Pandya and Rahul apologise; preliminary probe begins today

Mumbai: As directed by the chairman of the BCCI's Committee of Administrators (CoA) Vinod Rai, and in line with the legal opinion sought from law firm Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, Board CEO Rahul Johri, on Tuesday, will conduct a preliminary enquiry in the matter involving cricketers Hardik Pandya and KL Rahul and their controversial talk show with filmmaker Karan Johar. Pandya and Rahul flew back from Australia late on Sunday. The cricketers will now make themselves available for a telephone conversation with Johri, following which the CEO will forward the report to an ombudsman. The ombudsman, yet to be appointed, will then take a final call on the report which will then be submitted to the CoA. Both cricketers have sent their respective replies to the showcase notices sent by the CoA and have

NEED FOR SPEED: MS Dhoni (R) had a 137-run stand with Rohit Sharma (L) in the first ODI but batted a bit slowly for his 51

SPOTLIGHT ON MSD



As India Look To Solve Middle-Order Puzzle; Second ODI Today

Adelaide: Mahendra Singh Dhoni's inability to set the pace during middle overs will remain a major cause of concern when India take on Australia in a do-or-die second ODI on Tuesday in their bid to keep the three-match series alive. Hardik Pandya's sudden suspension on disciplinary grounds has badly affected the balance of the batting order, which was apparent during team's 34-run defeat in the opening match despite vice-captain Rohit Sharma's 22nd hundred in 50-over format.

Dhoni's 51 off 96 balls and the failure to rotate the strike has brought into focus the rejigging that skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri will have to think about. Dhoni has been slotted at No. 5 and even though vice-captain Rohit wants the veteran to bat a notch higher, cues from India's training session made it clear that the team is unlikely to tinker with the batting order.

India's batting order came under the spotlight at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The top three (Rohit, Shikhar Dhawan and Kohli) have enjoyed a fairly consistent run since 2016. But it was a rare occasion when Dhoni had to come out in the fourth over of the innings.

Dhoni averages 52.95 while batting at number four, which is higher than his current career-average of 50.11 over 333 games. It is even higher than his favoured batting positions of No. 5 (50.70) and No. 6 (46.33).

107

Virat Kohli's splendid innings off 126 balls at Adelaide in the World Cup encounter against Pakistan on February 15, 2015. Assisted by Shikhar Dhawan's 73 and Mohammed Shami's four-wicket haul (4/35), India had recorded a 76-ball win.

—RAJESH KUMAR

Dhoni's career strike-rate at No. 4 is 94.21, which is higher than his overall career strike-rate of 87.60, or his strike rate at No. 5 (86.08) and No. 6 (83.23). When India last played ODIs in Australia in January 2016, Dhoni batted at number four in two matches but only scored 18 runs. In fact, since that series, Dhoni has batted at number four in only eight ODIs, with the last instance being the 2018 Asia Cup.

He averages 24.75 in this interim, with a strike-rate of 77.34 and a highest of 80 against New Zealand in October 2016. This presents a quandary, which the Indian team management might struggle to sort out.

Ambati Rayudu did well enough in the Asia Cup and in the home series against West Indies, and both batsmen merit a longer run in

their respective positions to help settle this batting line-up in the run-up to the English summer. No pre-match short-list has been announced for this second ODI. All-rounder Vijay Shankar arrived here on Monday afternoon, thus might not be available for selection.

While India coped in the Asia Cup and against West Indies when Hardik Pandya was out injured, playing three spinners in subcontinental conditions helped. In overseas conditions, Pandya's absence restricts the team's capability with both bat and ball.

Despite his suspect action, Rayudu is free to continue bowling in international cricket, but it remains to be seen if the team management would want him to.

Kedar Jadhav provides an alternative option in that light, and he could come into the playing eleven at Dinesh Karthik's expense.

There is every chance that the bowling composition will remain unchanged, despite Khaleel Ahmed being off-colour. He batted in the nets alongside Yuzvendra Chahal on Monday. Mohammed Shami, one of the three fast bowlers, was most impressive in the first match and given the delicate situation of this series, he will certainly not be left out.

The team management also banks on Ravindra Jadeja's all-round skills, and as such Chahal's chances of an immediate return to the side looks doubtful. PTI

MR PROLIFIC

Rohit Sharma holds an unparalleled feat of posting at least a hundred in 10 successive ODI series/tournaments commencing from the ICC Champions Trophy in England in June 2017. He has 12 centuries to his name in this period, more than any contemporary batsman. He also has the second highest tally of runs.

THE NUMBER OF HUNDREDS AND RUNS SINCE JUNE, 2017		
Rohit Sharma (41 matches)	Tons	
2456 runs	12	
Virat Kohli (38 matches)		
2480	11	
Jonny Bairstow (28 matches)		
1370	6	
Joe Root (33 matches)		
1402	4	
Ross Taylor (23 matches)		
1376	3	
Fakhar Zaman (26 matches)		
1275	3	

—RAJESH KUMAR

1 India's only ODI win in five matches (after losing the first four) vs Australia at Adelaide was by four wickets on February 12, 2012. Overall, India have won eight and lost five out of 14 played at this venue (Tied 1). India's tally of wins includes two each against Pakistan and New Zealand and one each against Australia, West Indies, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.

5 Australia have won the last five matches played at Adelaide – two each against England & Pakistan and one against South Africa. Three matches have been won by them batting first and the remaining two while chasing.

SERIES WIN WOULD MEAN A LOT: CAREY

"It would mean a lot, it has been a while. I want to see Australia win and being part of it means so much to us every game we play. But to continue to get better every game is probably our biggest process at the moment leading into that World Cup.

"Against India, they're a really good side so they're going to look to bounce back pretty quickly. So

it's going to be a great opportunity to stand up tomorrow night, to puff our chests out again and hopefully put another really good performance.

"I think the other night was a really big step forward and we can improve from that, definitely. Obviously the three quicks that played the Test series and played last series aren't in this series so it is a really good opportunity for Jason Behrendorff, Jhye Richardson and Peter Siddle who all played really well the other night."

Indian fans are just so hard, so critical

Dean Jones

How did we win that first ODI? Our youngsters, especially Jason Behrendorff and Jhye Richardson got and took their opportunity against India on Saturday, and at four for three, the game was almost over. I cannot believe how much criticism MS Dhoni has got about losing the game, and how the press and all the pundits in the world have gone after him.

Do people actually not understand what it takes to come in when the team is four for three? Number one, you have got to stop the bleeding, and he did that. Number two, he got a shocking lbw decision. And number 3, at the end of the game with around six overs to go, Australia were worried, mainly due to the efforts of Rohit Sharma and Dhoni. And then there's the criticism that's been thrown at Rohit saying he's not fit! The Indian fans are just so hard, so critical.

That's not to take anything away from Australia. Richardson bowled with some real pace and reverse swung the ball; his

batting shows that there's something there and that he may just be a replacement for Starc in the future. Overall, I think the batting was outstanding. I was so impressed by Peter Handscomb, and I would like to see him watch his footwork in the One-day game and try to mimic it in Tests, if he gets another opportunity to do so. He's got to understand that red ball and white ball aren't much different in footwork. Where was the cover drive, the shots down the ground that we should have seen in the Test matches? Hopefully he will learn from this.

What Virat needs to do is stop the Australian middle-order; they have made sure they've got guys in the middle who play spin well, particularly Handscomb. India have got to plug up the ones. Australia needed the confidence from this performance and will have taken heart from it. So maybe, Australia aren't as bad as people think and I hope these bowlers make it very hard for Starc, Hazlewood and Cummins to come back into the team. I'm still expecting India to win the series. GAMEPLAN

THE ULTIMATE INVERTER BATTERY

EXIDE INUATUBULAR

Bengaluru: Much like the weather in the city, Karnataka's campaign in Ranji Trophy thus far has been unpredictable. They have snatched victories from the jaws of dull draws on two occasions and on an equal number of instances have conceded full points from a position where they could have fancied a draw or even salvaged a win. Inconsistent. That's a word that best describes the former champions performance. To their credit, they have been without their key players for the better part of the tournament with Mayank Agarwal, Manish Pandey, Karun Nair, R Samarth and K Gowtham all away on national or 'A' class duty. In fact, only three players – Shreyas Gopal, KV Siddharth and D Nishal – have featured in all the eight outings. In such a scenario, Karnataka will have come together as a cohesive unit when they host the red-hot Rajasthan, the group 'C' toppers, in the quarterfinals starting here on Tuesday. Rajasthan, led by the young Mahipal Lomror, have been in a league of their own this season, piling in incredible 51 points.

Consistency the key for Karnataka vs Rajasthan

Manuja.Veerappa @timesgroup.com

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RANJI LAST-8 FIXTURES

In Nagpur: Vidarbha vs Uttarakhand

In Lucknow: Saurashtra vs Uttar Pradesh

In Bengaluru: Karnataka vs Rajasthan

In Wayanad: Gujarat vs Kerala

Olivier leads SA to series sweep

Johannesburg: Fiery fast bowler Duanne Olivier took key early wickets as South Africa wrapped up a clean sweep of their series against Pakistan with victory by 107 runs on the fourth day of the third and final Test on Monday.

Pakistan resumed their second innings needing a further 228 for victory with seven wickets in hand, but their chances faded when Olivier removed the dangerous Babar Azam (21) and captain Sarfraz Ahmed (0) in consecutive balls.

The home side chipped away at the wickets to bowl the visitors out for 273, with Olivier (3-74) and Kagiso Rabada (3-75) the pick of a hostile South African attack that has been key to the team's success.

The teams begin a five-match one-day international series on Saturday with the first game in Port Elizabeth. They will also play three Twenty20 matches.

"I'm extremely proud, a 3-0 series win is just what we asked the guys for," stand-in South Africa captain Dean Elgar said at the post-match presentation.



Duanne Olivier (right) after the dismissal of Babar Azam on Monday

"It's a good way to start the year; we have set our goals and are half-way there with one more test series against Sri Lanka to come."

"Our fast bowlers know what they want to do, which makes your life easier as a captain. They have worked out their game-plans and know how to execute," he added.

95.65 Losing percentage of by Pakistan in Tests in Australia and South Africa since 1999. They have lost 12 out of 12 in Oz and 10 out of 11 in SA (won 1).

17 No. of dismissals by wicketkeepers in the Joburg Test - Sarfraz Ahmed (10) and Quinton de Kock (7) - a world record in a Test match.

Olivier was asked to open the bowling on the fourth morning and took his wicket tally in the series to 24 with two quick scalps.

The pace and bounce proved too much for Azam, who could only fend a vicious delivery to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock.

Pakistan's in-form captain Sarfraz was bowled the very next ball, a double-strike that appeared to take the fight out of the visitors.

REUTERS

Brief scores: South Africa 262 & 303 beat Pakistan 185 & 273 (Shafiq 65, Olivier 3-74) by 107 runs