

SAINA TAMES SINDHU AGAIN, RETAINS CROWN

Sourabh Varma Stops Lakshya Sen In Men's Singles Final At Badminton Nationals

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Guwahati: The big battle between India's badminton queens was once again won by Saina Nehwal. Making light of the top seed and arch-rival PV Sindhu, Saina won 21-18, 21-15 to retain her crown. With this dominating victory, Saina also maintained her perfect record in the Senior Nationals with four titles in as many appearances.

Out of the five finals scheduled on the concluding day of the Senior National Badminton Championship here on Saturday, the Saina-Sindhu clash was the cynosure of all eyes here on Saturday. Sindhu was off the blocks in style, winning the first three points. But Saina did not take long to find her groove. The defending champion first leveled the scores and then took a slender lead (11-10) at the break.

Saina, who will turn 29 next month, maintained a steady lead and didn't allow Sindhu to nose ahead thereafter. Playing aggressively, Saina used powerful smashes to good effect. Sindhu's returns were mostly in mid-court areas which were finished in a flash by Saina, who converted her second game point to grab the opener at 21-18.

Like in the first game, Sindhu pocketed the first couple of points in the second, hinting at a fightback. Sindhu was ahead a few times (5-3 and 7-6) but after she lost steam, Saina increased the intensity by firing bullet smashes to every corner of the court. Her aggressive brand of play caught Sindhu completely unawares and she came under tremendous pressure. Saina continued her tempo and sealed the fate of Sindhu on the second match point (21-15) in 44 minutes. It was Saina's back-to-back win in the Nationals after she won in Nagpur last year.

Results (Finals): Men's singles: Sourabh Varma bt Lakshya Sen 21-18, 21-13; Women's singles: 2-Saina Nehwal bt 1-PV Sindhu 21-18, 21-15; Men's doubles: 2-Pranav Jerry Chopra-Chirag Shetty bt 1-MR Arjun-Shlok Ramchandran 21-13, 22-20; Women's doubles: Shikha Gautam-K Ashwini Bhat bt 1-Meghana Jakkampudi-Poorvisha S Ram 21-16, 22-20; Mixed doubles: Manu Attri-K Maneesha bt 1-Rohan Kapoor-Kuhoo Garg 18-21, 21-17, 21-16.

Railways demand team championship winners

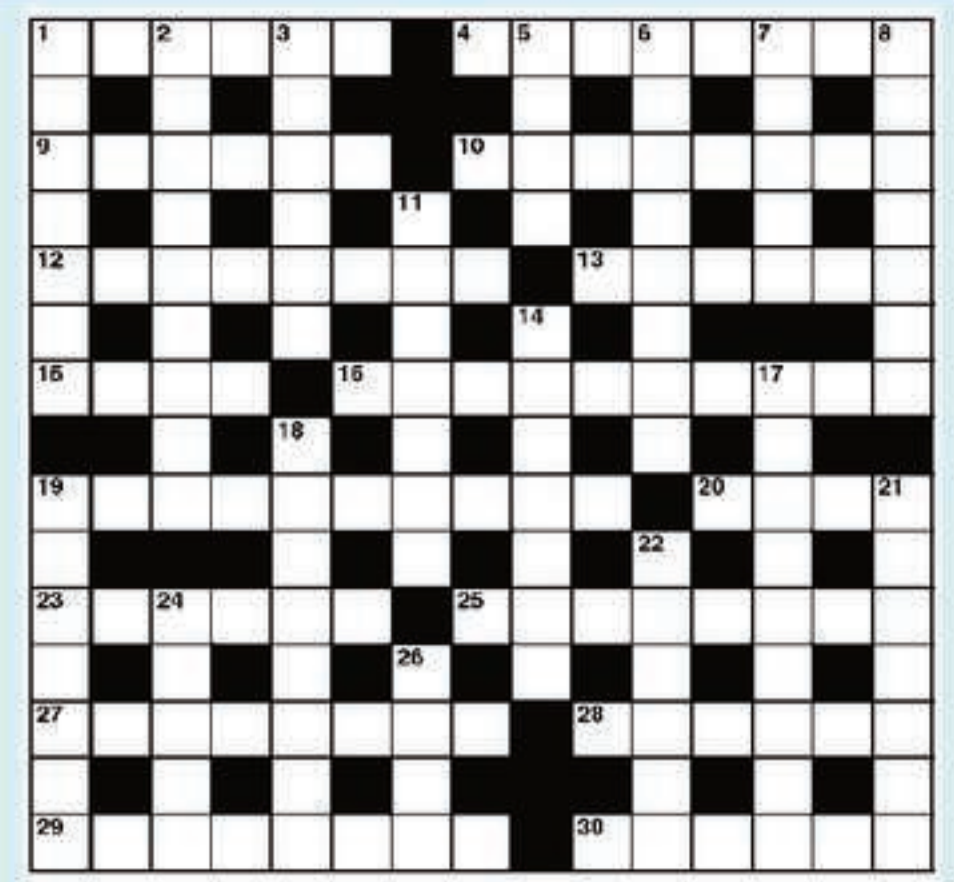
AAI's disqualification

Guwahati: The Inter-State team championship runners-up, Railways, have alleged that Airport Authority of India (AAI) won the title by fielding ineligible players and hence should be disqualified. The AAI team edged out Railways 3-2 to clinch their maiden title last Monday.



STILL GOING STRONG: Saina used her powerful smashes to telling effect in the final on Saturday

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 3190



CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Container ship (6)
 - Satanic food in which there's no good (8)
 - Pointer to what the heckler tries to do (6)
 - Tree house, perhaps, of frontier days (3,5)
 - Stays around (8)
 - Magnificent Slav round up (6)
 - Either way it was of some worth in India (4)
 - Clipper of the line (7,3)
 - They make their names as proverbial listeners (3,7)
 - The hollow sound of success in business (4)
 - It bores me in the back (6)
 - Very French to approve sin (8)
 - Nate a hundred still in a trance (8)
 - Treatment for bruises in a car smash (6)
 - Time for a few words (8)
 - Get to finish in her underwear? (6)
- DOWN**
- Dad holding a high card can solve all problems (7)
 - Spare room? (9)
 - She professes an inclination, we hear (6)
 - His victims lose heart (4)
 - Takes in Uncle Sid when turned out (8)
 - I'm getting a numberless blue dye (5)
 - Most women have this combination of give and take (7)
 - Inveigh against medical treatment (7)
 - Essentially, where the old may be young (2,5)
 - Trying time for a beginner (9)
 - Not brave, showing sign of fear (8)
 - Sailor obtains marks for shooting (7)
 - Mother hides a blemish with make-up (7)
 - Shylock is certain to be found in the old city (6)
 - Bad lighting (5)
 - An element of jazz in classical music (4)

QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Undamaged (6)
 - Deter by advice (8)
 - Sailors (6)
 - Ornamental stoppered bottle (8)
 - Be successful (2,6)
 - Quest (6)
 - Melody (4)
 - To convict (4,6)
 - Lose an opportunity (4,3,3)
 - Competent (4)
 - Sports official (6)
 - Possible course of action (8)
 - Material (8)
 - Japanese loose robe (6)
 - A representative (8)
 - A fine knitted fabric (6)
- DOWN**
- Visible (2,5)
 - Ceremonial harness (9)
 - Title of Roman emperors (6)
 - Concept (4)
 - Discreditable (8)
 - On the move (5)
 - Terrestrial (7)
 - Unit of intensity of sound (7)
 - Accessory (7)
 - Involving toilsome effort (9)
 - Of excellent quality (8)
 - On horseback (7)
 - Thrift (7)
 - Foolish (6)
 - Intended as punishment (5)
 - Surfeit (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 3189



GOLF ROUNDUP



STEADY SHOW: Justin Thomas

Thomas, Scott in lead at rainy Genesis Open

Los Angeles: Justin Thomas and Adam Scott were tied for the lead at 10-under par in the second round of the PGA Tour's Genesis Open on Friday when play was suspended at Riviera due to another day of heavy rain. With no player able to complete the first round on Thursday due to the weather, the field were making up for lost time on Friday. Thomas and Scott shot matching 66s in their first rounds. Thomas and Scott shot matching 66s in their first rounds while Holmes shot a 63 to lead at the end of the first round with Jordan Spieth one shot behind.

Kapur misses play berth by one shot

Perth: Shiv Kapur missed out the match play action at the World Super 6 in Perth on Saturday by just one shot as he bogeyed his final hole in the third round. A superb first nine after starting from the tenth saw him go five-under, but he bogeyed his final hole, the ninth and missed out. He shot four-under 68 for a total of 211 over 54 holes and ended T-26th. Top-24 advanced to the match play stage. Also missing out was SSP Chawrasia (71) as he finished at three-under 213. Sweden's Per Langford returned with a 64 to emerge as the 54-hole stroke play leader.

Kuchar sorry to caddie over pay dispute

New York: Matt Kuchar apologised to caddie David Ortiz on Friday and said he will pay him the amount he asked for after Ortiz criticized the golfer for giving him only \$5,000 of the nearly \$1.3 million he earned by winning the Mayakoba Classic in November. "I plan to call to call David to apologise. I have made sure he has received the full total he requested." AGENCIES

Minerva forfeit match against Real Kashmir

...After Football Federation Refuses To Shift I-League Venue

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New Delhi: Defending champions Minerva Punjab FC have forfeited their upcoming I-League encounter against Real Kashmir FC after the All India Football Federation (AIFF) turned down their request to relocate the fixture in the aftermath of the Pulwama terrorist attack. The match was scheduled to be played on Monday.

The club released a statement in which it stated that the foreign players of the team have been advised by the embassies of their respective countries to pull out. "We regret to inform you that travelling to Srinagar is not a risk that we are ready to take, hence we shall not be travelling to the turbulent region," the club underlined in its letter to the AIFF.

Minerva also said that it did not receive the security assurances it had sought from the AIFF following the attack. "The Union ministry of home affairs needs to approve the football match being held in Srinagar. If the CRPF convoys are not safe, then we are very soft targets for such attacks," the club stated.

"Please note that our foreign players have already received travel advisory warnings from their respective embassies asking them not to travel to Srinagar till further notice," the letter added.

Earlier, I-League CEO Sunando Dhar said the local security authorities in Srinagar gave the match a go-ahead.

Joseph earns Gokulam a point

Kozhikode: Gokulam Kerala's winless streak extended to 11 matches as they shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw with the Indian Arrows in an I-League fixture here on Saturday evening. Keralaite Rahul KP scored for the Arrows to give them a lead in the first half, but Trinidadian striker Marcus Joseph's fourth goal in as many games in the second, ensured a draw.

Bikramjit stars in Bagan's win

Aizawl: A late goal by Bikramjit Singh handed Kolkata giants Mohun Bagan their seventh victory of the current I-League season, as they defeated Aizawl FC 2-1 here on Saturday. Ugandan forward Henry Kisekka put the Green and Maroons ahead with an early strike, before former

Mohun Bagan man Ansumana Kromah drew Aizawl level on the half-hour mark. The Kolkata giants left it late for defender Bikramjit Singh to grab the winner with just 12 minutes of regulation time left on the clock.

Pune dent Jamshedpur's play-off chances with a 4-1 win

Jamshedpur: FC Pune City produced a clinical display to beat Jamshedpur FC 4-1 in an Indian Super League clash here on Saturday. Robin Singh (17 and 65th minute), Marcelinho (45+2) and Ashique Kuruniyan (70th) found the target for Pune while Carlos Calvo (76th) scored a consolation goal from the penalty spot for Jamshedpur who slumped to their first defeat of the season at home. AGENCIES

Bayern fight back twice in CL tune-up to win

Berlin: Bayern Munich conceded the fastest own-goal in Bundesliga history and twice had to equalise before securing a 3-2 win at Augsburg in their final tune-up before their Champions League tie at Liverpool.

Ahead of Tuesday's last 16, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp will have watched with interest how Augsburg, who sit just above the Bundesliga relegation places, caused Bayern a few problems.

With one eye on Anfield, Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer returned after three games out with a thumb injury, but conceded two goals in the opening 24 minutes -- the first after just 13 seconds. Leon Goretzka claimed an unwanted record for the Bundesliga's fastest



Romina Sala, sister of late Emiliano Sala, leaves her brother's wake at Club Atletico y Social San Martin in Progreso on Saturday.

own-goal when he turned the ball into his own net.

Ronaldo on target as Juve win

Milan: Cristiano Ronaldo set up Paulo Dybala to score early and added one himself with defen-

der Leonardo Bonucci also on target as Juventus surged 14 points clear in Serie A with a 3-0 win over lowly Frosinone.

Coach Massimiliano Allegri was taking no chances, even against a side sitting second bottom of the table, ahead of next week's Champions League last 16, first-leg tie at Atletico Madrid. Dybala returned to the front line alongside Ronaldo and Mario Mandzukic with key defenders Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini both back from injury.

Guardiola 'sad and sorry' for keeping Mahrez out

London: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has apologised to Riyad Mahrez for the winger's

lack of game time in recent weeks, saying the Algerian's form is not to be blamed. "I am the reason (he has not played). He is absolutely not guilty," Guardiola told reporters. "I am sad because he is training incredibly."

Bayern clear Coman for Liverpool match

Berlin: Bayern Munich's on-form striker Kingsley Coman has been given the green light to face Liverpool in the Champions League after fears he had sustained ligament damage. "After a thorough examination conducted by the Bayern medical staff Saturday morning we can say it was a false alert," the club said on its website. AGENCIES

I will always be there for Delhi football: Chhetri

New Delhi: Sunil Chhetri, the all-time leading scorer for India in international football, says he is always there to help develop the sport in the national capital, where he was brought up. The 34-year-old Padma Shri was Friday conferred the first ever Football Ratna honour by Football Delhi, the association governing the sport in the city. "I am honoured by the kind gesture of Football Delhi and recognising me with the Football Ratna award. My support will always be there for the development of football in Delhi and I am sure the current management is working hard to develop football in Delhi and make Delhi a model football state in India," Chhetri said. Football Delhi president Shaji Prabhakaran, himself a former player of repute and administrator at the All India Football Federation and FIFA, presented the award to Chhetri. PTI

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