



ALBOT BEATS EVANS TO BECOME FIRST MOLDOVAN TO WIN AN ATP TITLE | 24

GOALIE KEPA'S 'MUTINY' MARKS CHELSEA'S DEFEAT TO CITY IN LEAGUE CUP FINAL | 24



GALLERY



(From left) Alex Hales, David Willey and Liam Plunkett leave the field as rain delays the start of the third ODI against West Indies in Grenada on Monday

New Zealand move to No. 2 in Test rankings

Dubai: New Zealand cricketer Henry Nicholls has hailed the team for attaining the No. 2 position in the International Cricket Council (ICC) Test rankings. The 27-year-old said that upgradation in the rankings is a result of the work the team has put in over the past few years. "It is pretty cool, it is a testament to the cricket we have been playing for the last 12 months if not longer," ICC quoted Nicholls as saying. The Kiwis have four batsmen featuring in the top 20 with Williamson occupying the No. 2 position, Nicholls at No. 5, Tom Latham and Ross Taylor at No. 12 and No. 19. "It's not something that I go out and try to achieve or focus on, but to be around some really great batters in the world, it is pretty humbling," said Nicholls.

Women's IPL exhibition games likely during playoffs, says BCCI official: The women's T20 exhibition matches, which will be staged during the IPL, is once again likely to be slotted during the playoffs as the BCCI that remains the only window available for these games. As stated earlier by the Board officials, the matches are expected to have a 7pm start to grab maximum eyeballs. "Like last year, the sole window we have is during the playoffs. But a lot depends on the election dates," a BCCI official told PTI on Monday.

Rana shines in Delhi's win: Nitish Rana's unbeaten half-century guided Delhi to a seven-wicket win over Kerala in a Group 'A' match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 cricket tournament, here on Monday. Kerala won the toss and chose to bat but couldn't make the most of it, posting a modest 139 for 7 in 20 overs. Skipper Ishant Sharma struck the first blow for Delhi, having K B Arun Karthick caught and bowled for a duck and Kerala never really got going as the impressive Navdeep Saini got Rohan Prem (8), to a return catch.

Manish Kaushik among three Indians to enter semis: Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Manish Kaushik (60kg) was among the three Indian boxers who advanced to the semifinals and assured themselves of medals at the Makran Cup in Chabahar, Iran. Kaushik, also a national champion, defeated Salar Mousivand 5-0 in his quarterfinal bout. Also making the semis were, former national champion Duryodhan Singh Negi (69kg) and Rohit Tokas (64kg). The total number of Indians in the medal rounds stands at eight after Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Satish Kumar (+91kg), Manjeet Singh Panghal (75kg), Sanjeet (91kg), Lalit Prasad (52kg) and Deepak (49kg) made the semis on Saturday.

Saurav enters pre-quarters; Joshna makes exit: India's Sourav Ghosal entered the men's pre-quarterfinals even as compatriot Joshna Chinappa crashed out of the women's event of the ongoing PSA World Squash Championship in Chicago. Sourav now remains the lone Indian in the fray. Sourav, seeded 11th, defeated France's Lucas Serme 13-11 11-6 11-8 in his second round match that lasted 48 minutes on Sunday. However, 14th seed Joshna suffered a shock defeat against Hong Kong's Joey Chan 10-12 7-11 7-11 in the second round of the women's singles event.

Magic put it across Raptors: Terrence Ross came off the bench to score 28 points and Montenegro center Nikola Vucevic added 23 points and 12 rebounds, sparking Orlando Magic's 113-98 win over Toronto Raptors. The Raptors, who played without Kawhi Leonard, fell to 44-17 and slid two games behind Milwaukee for the best record in the NBA and the Eastern Conference. The Magic improved to 28-33 and were rank ninth in the East, one game behind Charlotte for the final playoff position in the conference. Jonathan Isaac added 16 points and DJ Augustin added 12 for the Magic.

Gupta wins Cannes International Open: Grandmaster Abhijeet Gupta won the Cannes International Open after taking an easy draw with Pier Luigi Basso of Italy in the ninth and final round that concluded here on Monday. Having been tied for the top spot in the previous edition, Abhijeet did one better winning the tournament with 7.5 points, a clear point lead over nearest rivals Nikita Maiorov of Belarus, Nasuta Grzegorz of Poland and Yuri Solodovnicheko of Ukraine. AGENCIES

ACTION TODAY

BASKETBALL: Memphis vs. L.A. Lakers, 6.30 am; LA Clippers vs. Dallas, 9 am (SONY ESPN & SONY ESPN HD)
SHOOTING: SSF World Cup 2019: 50m Rifle 3 Positions Women's Final, 12.30 pm; 10m Air Pistol Women's Final, 2.30 pm
TENNIS: Dubai Open, 3.30 pm, 8.30 pm (SONY ESPN & SONY ESPN HD)

BCCI sports medicine hub in offing

Board Looks To Tie Up With Research Institutes For Proposed Centre Of Excellence; Grand Project, Worth Nearly Rs 500cr, Running Six Months Late

Arani.Basu@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The Indian cricket board (BCCI) has had talks with medical research institutes and universities in a bid to make its upcoming centre of excellence in Bengaluru a ground for sports medicine research. TOI has learnt. The BCCI also wants to create a sports medicine curriculum and upgrade the qualification criteria of physios and trainers.

All this is part of BCCI's long-term plan to build a centre of excellence spread over 40 acres of land and shift the operations of the National Cricket Academy (NCA). The project, estimated to cost around Rs 500 crore, is running six months late. The board acquired the land close to the Bengaluru in Sept 2017.

Operations at NCA have been under the scanner for some time now and the handling of Wriddhiman Saha's injury

has put a question mark on its relevance. NCA COO Tufan Ghosh, brought in to play a key role in setting up the facility and creating a centre of excellence, said, "I can't give you the details but we are already in talks with a leading university in Bengaluru."

According to the blueprint, accessed by TOI, BCCI feels it requires the affiliation of medical universities and research institutes to groom physiotherapists and trainers and increase the number of referral doctors so that botched up cases like Saha's are minimized. Interestingly, Ghosh had been involved with hospital operations before taking up his role at the NCA in Dec 2017.

To keep up with the fitness standards of modern-day sport, BCCI has also upgraded the qualification certification for its recognized trainers. The strength and conditioning coaches, simply referred to

as trainers, need to be certified either from the Australian Strength and Conditioning Association (ASCA) Level 2, UK Strength and Conditioning Association (UKSCA) and Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialists (CSCS).

as trainers, need to be certified either from the Australian Strength and Conditioning Association (ASCA) Level 2, UK Strength and Conditioning Association (UKSCA) and Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialists (CSCS). These parameters have been set by Team India Shankar Basu and his team at the NCA.

"There are no institutes in India that offer these courses. There is only one which can train you for the ASCA Level 1 degree. Generally, trainers register online and take the tests. Thus, the process is

quite tough," BCCI official said. "This will bring about uniformity in trainers across the country and it will also help Indian trainers making it to the IPL teams. This will help in monitoring the players round the year."

ADMINISTRATIVE UNCERTAINTY

While the process of setting up the centre of excellence has been delayed by administrative uncertainties plaguing BCCI for the last two years, the board is looking to get the cricketing facilities ready over the next 18 months. Ghosh refused to comment on the reasons behind the delay. According to the initial project plan, the BCCI wants to get at least four full grounds ready by the end of 2020. The plan talks about 'mimicking pitch conditions across the world—importing clay and soil and making hybrid pitches'. These grounds will be used for practice games, trial matches and other BCCI events.

The basic hurdle facing the BCCI is getting the budget sanctioned. "Who sanctions this big sum of money? According to the new constitution, the apex council should decide. But the CoA is still

running the board affairs," said a senior BCCI official.

NCA BUDGET SOARS

For now, however, it is the NCA which is likely to see a rise in its annual budget. The BCCI had nearly doubled the budget for NCA and other academies last year from Rs 26 crores to Rs 50 crore. This year, however, the NCA's medical expenses on players (excluding major injuries to centrally-contracted players) has already touched Rs 1.05 cr till January compared to Rs 55 lakh in the previous financial year. The per-player budget at the NCA has also nearly doubled from Rs 1.3 lakh to Rs 2.2 lakh. However, with a 16% increase in the budgeted number of players, another Rs 15 crore could be asked for.

"The NCA has opened its doors to state players. We have already seen 68 state players by January. The endeavour has been to technically educate players about possible injuries and to prevent these players from aggravating injuries. NCA used to see just three or four players at a time, now there are always 17-18 cricketers," a source said.

Bumrah comes to Yadav's defence, says death bowling is always difficult

JAC.Gladson@timesgroup.com

Visakhapatnam: He put in the hard yards and took his team to a near-magical victory in the first T20I against Australia on Sunday, but India's spearhead Jasprit Bumrah instead found himself put up as a spirited defence of Umesh Yadav following India's defeat.

The Australians needed 14 runs from the last over bowled by Yadav, who was found wanting not only with the ball but also in the field. His reluctance to attack the ball resulted in Pat Cummins and Jhye Richardson converting a single into two at the ACA-VDCA Stadium. "When you bowl the last over in a close game, it's 50-50," Bumrah said and added that death bowling was not easy. "You try your best, you're always clear in your execution, but some days it works and some days it doesn't. There's nothing to be worried about. We wanted to close the game in our favour but these things happen. Death bowling is always difficult."

It didn't look difficult when he bowled the penultimate over. He conceded two runs and got rid of Peter Handscomb and Nathan Coulter-Nile in the last two deliveries. "I just focused on my strengths. The wicket was a little difficult to bat on. It was sluggish. It wasn't easy to score heavily. I was just figuring out my options and planning to execute that," Bumrah said.

With three for 16, Bumrah was menacing whenever he had the ball in his hand but that did not stop the Aussies

from chasing down India's 126 for seven. "Once you know your target is small, batting is a little different. There's no need to take risks. When we batted first, we were figuring out a safe total. Maybe that was the difference. They were rotating the strike after hitting a boundary but in the end it was a good match," Bumrah said. Unlike the Australians, the Indians showed a pronounced dislike for singles, especially MS Dhoni. "We tried our best. He was trying to get us to a safe total. We were short by 15-20 runs but we still had a fighting total. That was the plan he was trying to execute," he said. "We almost pulled off a win today. On this wicket, around 140-145 would have been a very good score. There was low bounce and it was difficult to hit big shots. It's always difficult to chase on these kind of wickets."

Were the Indians a batsman short with Vijay Shankar benched? "We always knew what our batting lineup was. Everybody would have gone in taking more responsibility. This happens in cricket. We lost 2-3 wickets more than we wanted to but we back ourselves."

Rahul was an exception, though. The opener, who came in place of Shikhar Dhawan, made 50 (36b). "It's always good to have good competition," Bumrah said. "I feel he was our best batsman today; he was playing with a lot of composure. He was playing conventional shots. It's very good when a player like him is back in form."



SHOWING THE WAY: Jasprit Bumrah celebrates the wicket of Nathan Coulter-Nile on Sunday

Ritu Phogat moves from wrestling to MMA

Pratyush.Raj@timesgroup.com

Chandigarh: Ritu Phogat, daughter of Dangal fame wrestling coach Mahavir Phogat, in a shock move on Monday announced her decision to join Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), leaving a promising career in wrestling. The 24-year-old is third of the famous Phogat sisters — Geeta, Babita, Ritu and Sangita. In 2017, she had won a silver medal in the 48kg category at the World U-23 Senior Wrestling Championship in Poland.

She has joined Singapore-based Evolve Fight Team. "I am really excited to begin my new journey. The reason I picked MMA is because I want to be the first Indian to become MMA world champion," Ritu told TOI on telephone from Singa-



SURPRISE SWITCH: Ritu Phogat

pore. Her decision has shocked the Wrestling Federation of India, which says Ritu kept them "in the dark" by claiming she was injured. "I have been following MMA for a while and I was very impressed by the sport. I have always wondered why there are no Indians in this sport," she added.

When being asked what had prompted her to opt for MMA, the

grappler replied, "Everyone in our family is a wrestler. People have expectations since I'm Geeta and Babita's sister. I want to fulfill their expectations and hopes, not on the mat but inside a cage."

Explaining that she was more adventurous than her sisters, Ritu said, "Wrestling is my first love. Of course, I am going to miss it, but I am different from my sisters. I just can't wait to get started."

The move to MMA will cost Ritu her chance to win glory for India at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Commenting on Ritu's decision, WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar told TOI, "It is quite shocking, but if she has decided to join MMA then it will be curtains for her amateur career. Trust me, I can't believe this, Ritu is one of the most promising

wrestlers in India. I hope she knows the consequences as she won't be able to represent India."

Earlier this month, Ritu had pulled out of the senior women's national wrestling camp, which is underway in Lucknow, citing injury. "She should have told us. She had called up last week to inform she is injured. She instead wanted her younger sister Sangita to represent the country in her category. We have invested so much in Ritu. It is obviously a big loss for us," added Tomar.

Back home in Haryana's Balali village, her family is very excited. "It is not an overnight decision. Growing up, she was a big fan of MMA. One day she told me that she wants to try her hand at MMA," said Mahavir Phogat, her father.

Track difficult even for Dhoni: Maxwell

Visakhapatnam: Mahendra Singh Dhoni once again drew flak for his slow strike-rate against Australia in the first T20 International but Glenn Maxwell feels that on a low and slow track, that was all the former India captain could have done. Dhoni managed 29 off 37 balls in India's below-par 126 for 7 on a track where the ball was not coming out to the bat. To be fair to Dhoni, a clutch of wickets fell and he also had to stem the rot with Yuzvendra Chahal at the other end.

"It (the slow strike rate) was probably fair enough. With the way the wicket was behaving, it was difficult to score for any batter; let alone a guy who is not known for his power-hitting in Chahal," Maxwell said in Dhoni's defence as his analogy of Chahal's pyrotechnics invited a few chuckles.

It was such a track where deliveries were keeping low and Dhoni could manage only one six.

"MS is obviously a world-



Glenn Maxwell

class finisher and even he was finding it hard to hit the middle of the bat. So, I think it was right of him to try and farm the strike. He hit a six in the last over and I think that showed how difficult it was," Maxwell said. He lauded his bowlers for keeping Dhoni under tight leash. "If you are holding MS to one boundary in the last few overs, it's a pretty good effort and also a sign of the conditions as well."

They had targeted leg-spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and debutant Mayank Markande and Maxwell said Bumrah and Krunal Pandya were toughest to face in such conditions. PTI

ICC to apprise BCCI of World Cup security

Dubai: The International Cricket Council (ICC) will clear India's "doubts" about security at the upcoming World Cup but the world body is unlikely to even discuss a possible boycott of Pakistan when its Chief Executives Committee (CEC) meets here on Wednesday. The committee of administrators running Indian cricket wrote a letter to the ICC urging it boycott countries from where "terrorism emanates" but did not specifically name Pakistan.

The quarterly meeting of the ICC will start in Dubai on Wednesday with the Chief Ex-

ecutives (CEC) meeting meeting where BCCI CEO Rahul Johri's letter will be tabled and the matter will be discussed.

The BCCI had expressed its concern about the safety of the players and officials during the World Cup which starts May 30 in England.

"The ICC will provide all the details of the security arrangements made for the World Cup. It will be same for all the participating nations and England and Wales Cricket Board have always provided top notch arrangements," a senior BCCI official said. PTI



Jhulan Goswami (right) celebrates after dismissing Heather Knight

Smriti, seamers shine as India clinch series

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Riding on a superb spell by their pacers Shikha Pandey (4/18 in 10 overs) and Jhulan Goswami (4/30 in 8.3 overs), India outclassed England by seven wickets in the second ODI to clinch the three-match series 2-0 at the Wankhede Stadium, here on Monday.

Pandey and Goswami wreaked havoc with fiery spells, taking four wickets each to bundle out the opposition for a paltry 161 in just 43.3 overs, before a half-century by in-form opener Smriti Mandhana (63), and an unbeaten 47-run knock by skipper Mithali Raj helped In-

dia cruise to the target in just 41.1 overs.

India have gained two points to go up the ladder in the ICC Women's ODI championship table. As a result, they seem to be on target to qualify directly for the 2021 World Cup.

Mandhana added 73 for the second wicket with Poonam Raut (32 off 65 balls) to set the base, and then 66 for the third wicket with Mithali.

Brief scores: England Women 161 in 43.3 overs (Natalie Sciver 85, Shikha Pandey 4-18, Jhulan Goswami 4-30) lost to India Women 162-3 in 41.1 overs (Smriti Mandhana 63, Mithali Raj 47 not out) by seven wickets.