

TV PICKS

**NBA:** Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.  
**Miami Open tennis:** Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Friday)  
**Golf:** India Open, DSport, 11 a.m.  
**IPL:** Star Sports 1, 2 & Select 1 (SD & HD), 8p.m.

IN BRIEF



Jesus saves Brazil with a brace

**PRAGUE**  
Substitute Gabriel Jesus scored twice in the closing minutes to help Brazil come from behind to beat the Czech Republic 3-1 in a friendly in Prague on Tuesday. He first slammed home a cross from David Neres on 83 minutes. And then in the 90th minute, Jesus scored on a rebound of his own shot. The Czechs took the lead in the 37th minute through midfielder David Pavelka before Roberto Firmino equalised four minutes after half-time. **AFP**



Hummels 'not resentful' over Low decision

**BERLIN**  
Bayern Munich defender Mats Hummels has said he does not bear a grudge over Germany coach Joachim Low's decision to axe him and teammates Thomas Muller and Jerome Boateng. "I myself do things that other people aren't happy with, so I am not resentful about decisions other people make which have an effect on me," Hummels said in an interview with *Sport Bild* magazine on Wednesday. "It was impossible for Low to find the perfect way of informing us," he said. "It was probably difficult for him to find a way in which we could all leave the discussion feeling like everything had been done in the right way." **AFP**

Ducati in the clear after appeal rejected

**PARIS**  
The MotoGP appeal court on Tuesday cleared Ducati to continue using a "swingarm device" it employed during the Qatar MotoGP. An appeal was lodged by several MotoGP teams against Ducati after the team's rider Andrea Dovizioso held off a desperate challenge from world champion Marc Marquez to win the season-opening race. A stewards panel dismissed protests over a clamp attached to the rear wheel of the Ducati bikes. A subsequent appeal to the sport's court also went in favour of Ducati. **AFP**

Aditya knocks out Vansh

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
**RATIPUR**

Aditya Vardhan Roy Chowdhury knocked out fourth seed Vansh Bhagatani 6-2, 6-3 in the boys' pre-quarterfinals of the ITF grade-5 junior tennis at the VIPS Club here on Wednesday.

In the girls' section, Veda Raju Prapurna fought past Tanvikhaa Saravanan 2-6, 7-6(3), 7-5. **The results (pre-quarterfinals):** Boys: Thomas George Brun (Sui) bt Pranjali Tiwary 6-1, 6-1; Sushant Dabas bt Eshaan Lumba 6-4, 6-1; Aditya Vardhan Roy Chowdhury bt Vansh Bhagatani 6-2, 6-3; Dhruv Tangri bt Chetan Prashant Gadgiar 6-2, 6-2; Yash Chaurasia bt Prasanna Pravin Bagade 6-1, 6-4; Aman Patel bt Nikhil Niranjan (US) 2-6, 6-1, 6-2; Anurag Agarwal bt Sarthak Suden 3-6, 6-0, 6-4; Ajay Malik bt Chirag Duran 6-4, 6-1.

**Girls:** Bhakti Parwani bt Shreya Chakraborty 7-6(1), 6-3; Zang Qinglin (Chn) bt Shradha Chhabra 6-0, 7-6(4); Renne Singla bt Ameek Kiran Bath 6-2, 6-0; Juliette Bovy (Bel) bt Archita Mahalwal 6-4, 6-3; Veda Raju Prapurna bt Tanvikhaa Saravanan 2-6, 7-6(3), 7-5; Vipasha Mehra bt Riya Uboveja 6-1, 6-0; Shria Atturu bt Reshma Challarapu 6-4, 7-6(3); Jagmeet Kaur Grewal bt Zhao Yimei (Chn) 6-4, 6-2.

# Saurabh, Manu win with a WR

Esha and Vijayveer clinch the yellow metal in junior mixed air pistol

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
**TAOYUAN (CHINESE TAIPEI)**

Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker shot the mixed air pistol team gold, along with a world record, in the 12th Asian air gun shooting championship here on Wednesday.

There was more cheer for the Indian camp as Esha Singh and Vijayveer Sidhu captured the junior mixed air pistol team gold.

Manu and Saurabh shot 484.8 in the final to beat the Korean team by 3.7 points, after having shot 784 in World Record.

Saurabh shot 396 out of 400, while Manu shot 388. Saurabh and Manu had also won the mixed team gold in



**Triumphant duo:** Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary who won the mixed air pistol gold. **FILE PHOTO**

the World Cup, equalling the then World Record of 778 in qualification.

The second Indian team of Anuradha and Abhishek

Verma shot 764 with the latter accounting for 391, but finished fourth in the final.

Esha and Vijayveer topped qualification in the

junior event with 769, and won the gold 1.6 point ahead of the Korean team.

The second Indian team of Harshada Nithave and Arjun Singh Cheema placed fourth.

**The results: Mixed air pistol:** 1. India (Manu Bhaker, Saurabh Chaudhary) 484.8 (784 WR); 2. Korea (Hwang Seongeun, Kim Mose) 481.1 (764); 3. Chinese Taipei (Chia Ying Wu, Kuan-Ting Kuo) 413.3 (763); 4. India-A (Anuradha, Abhishek Verma) 372.1 (764).

**Mixed air pistol juniors:** 1. India (Esha Singh, Vijayveer Sidhu) 478.5 (769); 2. Korea (Jo Gaeun, Kim Wajong) 476.9 (765); 3. Chinese Taipei (Hao-Zhen Liu, Wei-Te Huang) 414.4 (744); 4. India-A (Harshada Nithave, Arjun Singh Cheema) 375.0 (755).

# Shubhankar leads the home challenge

Indians have triumphed thrice in the last four years

INDIAN OPEN

**RAKESH RAO**  
**GURUGRAM**

Another edition of \$1.75 million Hero Indian Open returns to the DLF Golf and Country Club course this week. Again, there is hope of witnessing the coronation of yet another home-grown champion on Sunday evening.

Strangely, there is no sound logic behind this optimism. After all, barring a few privileged ones who get to play at this 'Members' Only' facility, there is no real 'home advantage' for the Indians.

Moreover, the course designed by Gary Player seems to benefit the long hitters, with precision. Therefore, for most Indians, the challenging nature of this course is more discouraging as compared to their counterparts

from the European Tour. Ironically, in spite of the challenges, Indians have won the event three times in the last four years ever since it became part of the European Tour in 2015.

Anirban Lahiri defeated S.S.P. Chawrasia in a playoff in 2015. Chawrasia returned to win in 2016 and 2017 and became the first Indian to retain a title on the European Tour.

For the record, nine Indians have won the title for a total of 13 times. Indeed, if past is any pointer to the future, then the optimism behind another Indian champion stands justified.

On a course that tests patience, skill and accuracy of a golfer, only 15 players shot under-par last year. Though for most Indians, the hole is required to hit uphill to reach the green, it is the 14th that turned out to be the



**Big contender:** Shubhankar Sharma has the game to land the big prize. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

most difficult hole last year. The par-four hole saw 128 bogeys and 37 double-bogeys or worse in four days.

Shubhankar Sharma, who beat the odds and set a course record of eight-under

64 last year, is back to try and win the title that slipped away after he was among the leaders on the final day.

Lahiri and Scott Hend, the Asian Tour leader after winning Maybank Champion-

# Sherco TVS team for Merzouga Rally

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
**BENGALURU**

Sherco TVS Rally Factory Team announced a three-rider squad comprising Indians, K.P. Aravind and Abdul Wahid Tanveer, and Frenchman Michael Metge for Merzouga Rally 2019, scheduled from March 31 to April 5 in Erfoud, Morocco.

Metge and Aravind will be racing in the 450cc category, while Tanveer will compete in the Enduro category.

This will be the third Merzouga Rally for Sherco TVS as it looks to begin its Dakar 2020 campaign on a positive note.

ship on Sunday, are around. Though there are 50 Tour champions in the field, a first-time winner cannot be ruled out.

Shubhankar reflected on his last year's performance and said, "This was my home course for the longest time and it feels great to be back on familiar grounds. The course is playing much better than last year. I am obviously a lot more mature this year and really enjoying my game."

Former winner Anirban Lahiri spoke about his lack of form and said, "My game has been a bit inconsistent but it is moving in the right direction. I've had a couple of bad weekends, but I have managed to single out the problems which need to be fixed. The problem with me is I always try too hard and losing my rhythm in that process."

# Bautista Agut scuppers Djokovic's record bid

Kvitova slumps against Barty

MIAMI MASTERS

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
**MIAMI**

Novak Djokovic's pursuit of a record seventh Miami Open ATP title ended in dramatic fashion on Tuesday as Roberto Bautista Agut superbly recovered from a first set destruction to win 1-6, 7-5, 6-3 and book a place in the quarterfinals.

Women's world number two Petra Kvitova slumped to a surprise 7-6(6), 3-6, 6-2 defeat to Australian Ashleigh Barty, who will now play Anett Kontaveit for a place in Saturday's final after the Estonian brought an end to Hsieh Su-Wei's impressive run with a 3-6, 6-2, 7-5 victory to reach the last four in South Florida for the first time.

Bautista Agut, 30, may have beaten Djokovic on the way to winning the title in Doha earlier this year but 15-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic started like a train in this last-16 encounter before being amazingly reined back in.

**Cruise control**  
After just 25 minutes, Djokovic was 5-0 ahead and on cruise control, Bautista Agut

severely struggling to keep the Serbian at bay.

A short rain delay late in the second set allowed Bautista Agut to regroup, however.

He returned a completely different player and at the end of an absorbing two hours and 29 minutes, it was the number 22 seed who will now meet defending champion John Isner for a place in the semifinals.

"I played more aggressive," said Bautista Agut who began to noticeably step inside and force Djokovic onto the back foot.

"I tried to miss less balls, to really concentrate on the beginning of the point with my serve, with my return."

**The results:**  
**Men (fourth round):** Roberto Bautista Agut bt Novak Djokovic 1-6, 7-5, 6-3; John Isner bt Kyle Edmund 7-6(5), 7-6(3).

Felix Auger-Aliassime bt Nikoloz Basilashvili 7-6(4), 6-4; Borna Coric bt Nick Kyrgios 4-6, 6-3, 6-2; Kevin Anderson bt Jordan Thompson 7-5, 7-5; Denis Shapovalov bt Stefanos Tsitsipas 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(3); Frances Tiafoe bt David Goffin 7-5, 7-6(6).

**Women (quarterfinals):** Anett Kontaveit bt Hsieh Su-Wei 3-6, 6-2, 7-5; Ashleigh Barty bt Petra Kvitova 7-6(6), 3-6, 6-2.



**Remarkable turnaround:** Roberto Bautista Agut shrugged off a first set dismantling to best Novak Djokovic. **AFP**

# Jeevan-Purav duo enters last eight

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
**MARBELLA (SPAIN)**

Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and Purav Raja defeated Riccardo Bonadio of Italy and Peter Heller of Germany 7-5, 6-2 in the pre-quarterfinals of the € 46,600 Challenger on Wednesday.

In St. Brieuc (France), top seeds Leander Paes and Philipp Oswald of Austria were beaten 4-6, 6-2, [10-8] by Jamie Cerretani of the United States and Marc-Andrea Huesler of Switzerland.

**The results: €46,600 Challenger, Marbella, Spain: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Purav Raja bt Riccardo Bonadio (Ita) & Peter Heller (Ger) 7-5, 6-2.

**€46,600 Challenger, St. Brieuc, France: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Jamie Cerretani (US) & Marc-Andrea Huesler

(Sui) bt Philipp Oswald (Aut) & Leander Paes 4-6, 6-2, [10-8]. **\$15,000 ITF men, Mornington, Australia: Singles (first round):** Jacob Grills (Aus) bt Karunuday Singh 6-3, 7-5.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt: Singles (first round):** Robert Strombachs (Ger) bt Adil Kalyanpur 6-4, 4-6, 6-3; Haadim Bava bt Maxima Pauwels (Bel) 6-4, 6-2; Kacper Zuk (Pol) bt Aryan Goewes 6-2, 6-1.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Antalya, Turkey: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Luca Tomasetto & Georg Winkler (Ita) bt Tomislav Jotovski (Mkd) & Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-3, 5-7, [10-8].

**\$15,000 ITF women, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt: Singles (first round):** Corina Mader (Sui) bt Sai Samhitha 6-2, 2-6, 7-5.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Tel Aviv, Israel: Singles (first round):** Vladia Ekshibarova (Isr) bt Mihika Yadav 7-5, 6-2.

# Sreeshankar should focus on complete recovery: chief coach

The long jump National record-holder likely to go to the US for training



**Right training:** Bahadur Singh is impressed with how S. Murali has moulded his son Sreeshankar into a champion jumper. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

**STAN RAYAN**  
**KOCHI**

Long jumper M. Sreeshankar may be down with a heel injury and disappointed that he would be missing next month's Asian Athletics Championships in Doha but National Chief Coach Bahadur Singh feels that all that the National record holder should be thinking about now is complete rest and recovery.

"He is a big talent, his level is too high, we are expecting an Olympic medal from him, for me Sreeshankar is the No. 1 athlete," Bahadur told *The Hindu* from Patiala.

"I'm surprised why he went to Sangrur (for the recent Indian Grand Prix). We don't want a small injury to turn into a big one. What he

**"He is a big talent, his level is too high, we are expecting an Olympic medal from him, for me Sreeshankar is the No. 1 athlete**

**BAHADUR SINGH**

needs now is complete recovery," Bahadur said.

"I still remember (former Asian record holder) T.C. Yohannan's injury. He reached a level where he could have probably brought us an Olympic medal but unfortunately, he suffered an injury in 1976."

**Impressed**  
Bahadur said he was very impressed with how S. Murali has moulded Sreeshankar, who turned 20 on Wednes-

day, into a champion jumper. "His dad is doing a wonderful job, otherwise he would not have come to this level, his mother (K.S. Bijimol) too. At the same time, they must think what is required at this stage," said the Chief Coach.

"I've told him to shift to a centre where there is a proper recovery system. He should be training in a world-class centre where there is a proper physio, a proper doctor and proper equipment for if anything happens, he should be taken care immediately."

"That could happen in a few months time for Sreeshankar is likely to go to the US for training in June after competing in two Asian Grand Prix meets in China early that month.

# Morata double gives Spain victory for two wins in two games

Quagliarella returns to make Italy history as the Azzurri top Group J

EURO QUALIFYING

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
**TA'QALI (MALTA)**

Alvaro Morata's remarkable revival continued on Tuesday as he scored twice for Spain in a 2-0 victory over Malta. After edging past Norway 2-1 on Saturday, Morata's double at the Ta'Qali stadium gives Spain two wins from two in Euro 2020 qualifying and the perfect start in Group F.

Luis Enrique's side again showed the inability to convert possession into chances that clouded its early exit from last year's World Cup.

But Morata's brace offers room for encouragement, the striker extending his return to form since he joined Atletico Madrid on loan from Chelsea in January.

He has five goals in six games, his best return since September 2017, and has strengthened his case for a position that has proved so

troublesome for Spain in recent years.

"The boss knows how happy I am to be here and I am grateful to him," Morata said.

"We want to qualify as soon as possible for the Euros so it was important to win today."

Malta lie 182nd in FIFA's world rankings, between Liechtenstein and Macau. Its win over the Faroe Islands last weekend was its first in 17 matches and only its second in almost four years.

**Personal reasons**  
Luis Enrique was absent for "personal reasons", leaving his assistant Robert Moreno in charge on the touchline.

There were unfamiliar faces on the pitch too as only three players - Sergio Ramos, Morata and Marco Asensio - retained their places in a much-changed line-up from the team that beat Norway.



**On target:** Alvaro Morata, right, seems to have rediscovered his scoring shoes, with two goals against Malta. **REUTERS**

Six of Spain's starting 11 owned five caps or fewer, including Real Betis' attacking midfielder Sergio Canales and Mario Hermoso, the 23-year-old Espanyol defender

linked with a summer move to Real Madrid.

Morata's first, shortly after the half-hour, owed much to Malta's goalkeeper Henry Bonello, who failed to stop the

forward's scuffed finish after Hermoso's clipped pass over the top.

Sergi Roberto's cross almost gave Morata his second, only for the glancing

header to flash wide, but he did not have long to wait.

Jesus Navas delivered another ball to the back post in the 73rd minute and this time Morata made no mistake.

**Stunning form**  
Fabio Quagliarella attributed his new-found serenity after years of a stalker nightmare to his stunning form as the 36-year-old on Tuesday became the oldest player to score for Italy.

The player from Castellammare di Stabia near Naples converted two penalties in a crushing 6-0 Euro 2020 qualifying win by the Azzurri over Liechtenstein in Parma.

Italy tops Group J with six points after also beating Finland 2-0 in Udine on Saturday with goals from youngsters Nicolò Barella, 22, and 19-year-old Moise Kean.

Bosnia threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Greece and both are behind

Italy on four points followed by Finland on three.

Quagliarella received a standing ovation as he left the Stadio Tardini pitch.

"This standing ovation is a memory I will always cherish," said Quagliarella.

"I also thank Mancini who gave me this opportunity."

**The results:**  
**Group D:** Ireland 1 (Hourihane 36) bt Georgia 0; Switzerland 3 (Freuler 19, Xhaka 66, Embolo 76) drew with Denmark 3 (M. Jorgensen 84, Gytkjaer 88, Dalsgaard 90).  
**Group F:** Malta 0 lost to Spain 2 (Morata 31, 73); Norway 3 (Johnsen 41, King 59, Kamara 90) drew with Sweden 3 (Claesson 70, Quaison 86, 90); Romania 4 (Deac 26, Keseru 29, 33, Puscas 63) bt Faroe Islands 1 (V. Davidsson 40-pen).  
**Group J:** Armenia 0 lost to Finland 2 (Jensen 14, Soiri 78); Bosnia 2 (Visca 10, Pjanic 15) drew with Greece 2 (Fortounis 64-pen, Kolovos 85); Italy 6 (Sensi 17, Verratti 32, Quagliarella 35-pen, 45-pen, Kean 69, Pavoletti 76) bt Liechtenstein 0.