

# England recovers, moves ahead by 181 runs

Leach at the forefront with a career-best 92; Ireland has a short period of ascendancy with some quick wickets

## LORD'S TEST

IANS  
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Nighthawtman Jack Leach scored a career-best 92 while Jason Roy notched up his maiden Test half century as England recovered from a poor start to erase a 122-run deficit and take a 181-run lead with one wicket in hand at stumps on a rain-affected day two of the only Test against Ireland at Lord's on Thursday.

Leach, sent in as a night-watchman the previous evening to negotiate one over of England's second innings, played brilliantly for his 92 off 162 balls with 16 fours.

Test debutant Roy raced to 72 from 78 balls (10x4, 1x6) as the host gained the upper hand but just before tea, Ireland pacers dented England's charge with quick wickets to leave it at 209 for 5 at tea.

## Rain interruption

In the final session which was cut short due to rain, England skipper Joe Root scored 31 from 64 balls (3x4) and Sam Curran added a quickfire 37 off just 29 deliveries (4x4, 2x6) as England finished on 303 for nine in

77.4 overs. For Ireland, Mark Adair was the pick of the bowlers with figures of three for 66.

Leach and Roy shared a 145-run stand for the second wicket as they went into lunch on 122 for one. But after resumption, Roy lost his wicket to Stuart Thompson while Leach missed out on a maiden and memorable hundred as he nicked first innings hero Tim Murtagh to Mark Adair in the slip cordon.

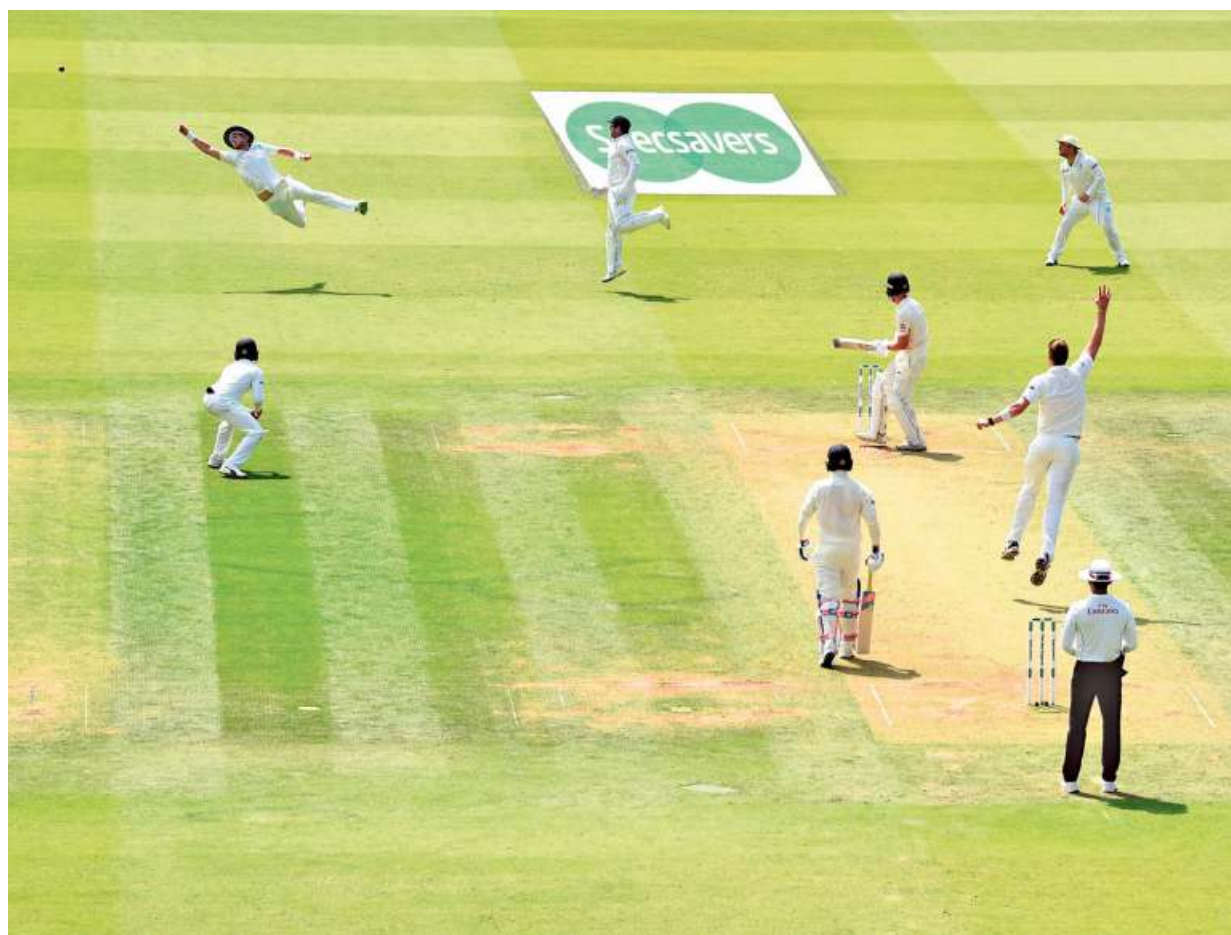
Joe Denly could manage only 10 and Jonny Bairstow once again got out for a duck like in the first innings. At tea, Root (12) and all-rounder Moeen Ali (7) were at the crease.

## Watchfully straight

Unexpected opener Leach played watchfully straight. And when fast bowler Boyd Rankin, the first cricketer since the Nawab of Pataudi in 1946 to both play for and against England in a Test match, dropped short, Leach cut him for four.

Left-hander Rory Burns fell for six when he pushed hard at Rankin away from his body and edged a simple catch behind to wicketkeeper Gary Wilson.

Roy, looking to make England's problem position of Test opener his own after



**Fighting knock:** Opener Jack Leach gave a good account of himself while giving England's second innings a robust start. ■ AFP

starring in its World Cup triumph, off-drove a four off paceman Mark Adair and hoisted off-spinner Andy McBrine for six.

It was a fine effort by

Leach, playing his fifth Test but first on home soil.

The bespectacled Leach should have been out for 72 when he edged Rankin, only for Wilson to drop the

chance despite getting both hands to the ball.

Leach had another reprieve on 92 when he edged Murtagh only for Adair, standing exceptionally close

at second slip, to drop the chance.

But two balls later a softer, defensive, edge went straight to Adair and this time he made no mistake.

## SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: 85.

Ireland — 1st innings: W. Porterfield c Leach b Curran 14, J. McCollum b Curran 19, A. Balbirnie b Stone 55, P. Stirling lbw b Broad 36, K. O'Brien (not out) 28, G. Wilson c Root b Stone 0, S. Thompson b Broad 0, M. Adair b Curran 3, A. McBrine b Broad 11, T. Murtagh c Burns b Stone 16, B. Rankin b Moeen 7; Extras (b-10, lb-6, w-2): 18; Total (in 58.2 overs): 207.

Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-45, 3-132, 4-138, 5-138, 6-141, 7-149, 8-174, 9-195.

England bowling: Broad 19-5-60-3, Woakes 10-2-34-0, Stone 12-3-29-3, Curran 10-3-28-3, Leach 3-0-26-0, Moeen 4.2-1-14-1.

England — 2nd innings: J. Leach c Adair b Murtagh 92, R. Burns c Wilson b Rankin 6, J. Roy b Thompson 72, J. Denly run out 10, J. Root c Wilson b Adair 31, J. Bairstow lbw b Adair 0, Moeen c Wilson b Rankin 9, C. Woakes c Balbirnie b Adair 13, S. Curran c McCollum b Thompson 37, S. Broad (batting) 21, O. Stone (batting) 0; Extras (b-1, lb-7, nb-4): 12; Total (for nine wkts. in 77.4 overs): 303.

Fall of wickets: 1-26, 2-171, 3-182, 4-194, 5-194, 6-219, 7-239, 8-248, 9-293.

Ireland bowling: Murtagh 18-3-52-1, Adair 20-7-66-3, Rankin 17-1-86-2, Thompson 12.4-0-44-2, McBrine 10-1-47-0.

## Indian team set to have new jersey sponsor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Indian cricketers will soon be wearing a new brand name on their official jerseys with Chinese mobile manufacturer Oppo handing over the sponsorship rights to Byju's, a Bengaluru-based educational technology and online tutorial firm.

The deal between the BCCI and Oppo, which was inked in 2017 for a five-year period, was reportedly worth ₹1,079 crore.

Virat Kohli and his men will be wearing the jersey with the new brand name from the upcoming home season, beginning with the assignments against South Africa from September 15.

A source said that the transfer is a "tripartite agreement" between Oppo, Byju's and the BCCI and will be signed on Thursday.

"Oppo and Byju's are negotiating among themselves on the possible handover of shirt sponsorship deal. The CoA has been intimated that they are discussing among themselves on the transfer of sponsorship" a senior BCCI official said on condition of anonymity.

## Consecutive wins for India U-19

Beats Bangladesh; Priyam Garg scores an unbeaten ton

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WORCESTER

Skipper Priyam Garg slammed a 97-ball century before the bowlers took centre stage to guide India U-19 to a 35-run win over Bangladesh U-19, its second consecutive in the Under-19 Youth ODI tri-series here.

Garg remained unbeaten on exactly 100, a knock that was studded with seven boundaries and four hits over the fence, taking India U-19 to 265 for five after opting to bat on Wednesday night.

Besides Garg, left-handed opener Yashasvi Jaiswal made 63 off 90 balls up the order. Jaiswal struck six fours and one six during his knock.

Tilak Varma (23) and Pragmesh Kanpillewar (23) got starts but couldn't prolong their stay, while wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel (34) also chipped in with useful runs towards the end.

Ablly supported by left-arm spinner Shubhang Hegde (three for 59) and right-arm medium-pace Kartik Tyagi (four for 16)



**Leading the way:** Skipper Priyam Garg slammed a 97-ball century to guide his team to victory. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

then led India's bowling attack to bundle out Bangladesh U-19 for 229 in 47.1 overs.

Captain Akbar Ali (56), Shamim Hossain (46) and opener Tanzid Hasan (44) were the main run getters for Bangladesh U-19.

India U-19 had defeated host England U-19 by five wickets in the tri-series opener last Sunday.

India U-19 will again meet Bangladesh U-19 in its next match in Cheltenham on Saturday.

## The scores:

India U-19 264 for five in 50 overs (Priyam Garg 100 n.o., Yashasvi Jaiswal 63 bt Bangladesh U-19: 229 in 47.1 overs (Akbar Ali 56, Shamim Hossain 46; Kartik Tyagi four for 16, Shubhang Hegde three for 59).

## Australian quartet sets a new World mark

### WORLD SWIMMING

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GWANGJU (KOREA)

The Americans got ailing Katie Ledecky back. They just couldn't overcome a World record by the Australians at the World Championships.

Ledecky returned after two days out of the pool while being sick to swim in the 4x200m freestyle relay. She rallied the U.S. to the lead on her second leg, but it wasn't enough to defend the title from 2017.

The Australian quartet of Ariarne Titmus, Madison Wilson, Brianna Throssell and Emma McKeon won in 7 minutes, 41.50 seconds to erase the old mark of 7:42.08 set by China at the 2009 Worlds.

It was still a big night for the U.S. team with Caeleb Dressel and Olivia Smoliga winning golds.

## King disqualified

Watching from the stands was Lilly King, who was disqualified from the morning heats of the 200 breaststroke and lost an appeal to be reinstated. The American was



**Fantastic four:** Australians Brianna Throssell, Ariarne Titmus, Emma McKeon and Madison Wilson celebrate their record-breaking effort in 4x200m freestyle event. ■ AP

penalized for not touching the wall with both hands in a simultaneous motion in the first turn of the four-lap race.

Dressel won the glamour 100 freestyle for his third gold and fourth medal overall.

"It hurt really bad to be honest," he said.

"You don't always get that magical feeling every night but you've just got to shut the brain off and go."

Dressel touched in 46.96 seconds, the only man to dip

under 47 seconds in the final. He was only 0.05 seconds off the 10-year-old world record of 46.91 set by Brazil's Cesar Cielo.

Olympic champion Kyle Chalmers of Australia settled for silver in 47.08. Vladislav Grinev of Russia took bronze in 47.82.

Dressel tied for quickest off the starting block and held off a challenge from Chalmers in the closing meters to defend the title he won in 2017.

The men's 200 individual medley title went to Daiya Seto of Japan. He touched in 1:56.14.

Jeremy Desplanches of Switzerland took silver. Chase Kalisz, the 2017 champion, earned bronze, ending the Americans' streak of winning at eight consecutive Worlds.

In women's 200 butterfly, Boglarka Kapas of Hungary won in 2:06.78, while Smoliga won the women's 50 backstroke, a non-Olympic event.

In the semifinals of the men's 200 breaststroke, Matthew Wilson of Australia timed of 2:06.67 to match the World record set by Ipppei Watanabe of Japan in January 2017.

## Srihari's new mark

Meanwhile, India's Srihari Nataraj broke his own 200m backstroke National record in the heats.

The 18-year-old clocked 2:02.08s, bettering his own 2:02.37s, while finishing fourth in the heats but the time was not enough to carry him to the semifinal.

## The results:

**Men: 100m freestyle:** 1. Caeleb Dressel (USA) 46.96s, 2. Kyle Chalmers (AUS) 47.08, 3. Vladislav Grinev (Rus) 47.82.

**200m IM:** 1. Daiya Seto (Jpn) 1:56.14, 2. Jeremy Desplanches (Sui) 1:56.56, 3. Chase Kalisz (USA) 1:56.78.

**Women: 200m butterfly:** 1. Boglarka Kapas (Hun) 2:06.78, 2. Hali Flickinger (USA) 2:06.95, 3. Katie Drabot (USA) 2:07.04.

**50m backstroke:** 1. Olivia Smoliga (USA) 27.33, 2. Etienne Medeiros (Bra) 27.44, 3. Daria Vasikina (Rus) 27.51.

**4x200m freestyle relay:** 1. Australia 7:41.50 (WR), 2. USA 7:41.87, 3. Canada 7:44.35.

## Gill, Panchal squander starts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Opener Priyank Panchal and number three Shubman Gill squandered their promising starts to leave India-A at 134 for three at lunch on day two of the first unofficial Test against West Indies-A here on Thursday.

India-A, resuming at 70 for one, struggled to score 64 runs in 26.4 overs in the morning session and trails West Indies-A by 94 runs.

Both Panchal (49 off 115) and Gill (40 off 87) played loose shots to be dismissed. While Panchal was trapped in front off left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican, Gill went for a big shot off spinner Rahkeem Cornwall only to top-edge it at the stroke of lunch.

On day one, India was comfortably placed after bowling out the host for 228. Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem returned impressive figures of five for 62 in 22 overs.

**The scores:** West Indies-A 228 in 66.5 overs vs India-A 134 for three in 48.4 overs (Priyank Panchal 49, Shubman Gill 40).

## Exciting debut for Puneri Paltan

Sabine Winter seals defending champion Dabang Delhi's fate

### UTT

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

It went down the wire and till late in the deciding game of the final rubber, it was tough to call the winner. Eventually, it was the experience of Sabine Winter that turned the tide in favour of debutant Puneri Paltan.

Importantly, Paltan's 8-7 triumph left defending champion Dabang Delhi to rue the missed opportunity in the inaugural clash of the Ultimate Table Tennis league here on Thursday.

## Sathiyar's twin-wins in vain

For the home team, G. Sathiyar's twin-wins proved inadequate. He grabbed a consolation 2-1 victory over Harmeet Desai in a repeat clash of the recent Commonwealth championship final to keep his team in the hunt after Paltan's Ayhika Mukherjee played to her reputation of being the Commonwealth titlist by blanking a nervous Krittwika Singh Roy.

Sathiyar returned to join hands with Bernadette Szocs to collect three more points



**Star performer:** Sabine Winter helped Puneri Paltan start its campaign on a winning note. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

at the expense of Chaung Chih-Yuan and Ayika in the third rubber. At this stage, the score stood at 5-4 in Delhi's favour.

As it turned out, in the two singles featuring overseas recruits for the teams, Paltan proved stronger. Chaung Chih-Yuan made amends for the loss in the mixed doubles by stopping

Jon Persson 2-1.

With the match tied at 6-6, Sabine raced away with opening game against Szocs of the fifth rubber. Much to the credit of Szocs, she handled the mounting pressure well in the second game and restored parity. In the decider, Sabine broke away from 6-6 and held on to her slender lead.

**The results: Puneri Paltan beat Dabang Delhi 8-7** (Ayhika Mukherjee bt Krittwika Sinha Roy 11-10, 11-6, 11-0; Harmeet Desai lost to G. Sathiyar 3-11, 11-9, 9-11; Chaung Chih-Yuan-Ayhika lost to Sathiyar-Bernadette Szocs 6-11, 7-11, 7-11; Chaung Chih-Yuan bt Jon Persson 11-7, 11-8, 9-11; Sabine Winter bt Szocs 11-5, 7-11, 11-9).

**Friday's fixture:** Chennai Lions v U Mumba, 7 p.m.

### PKL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Dabang Delhi staged a remarkable fightback in the last five minutes to record an exciting 30-29 win over Tamil Thalaivas in the league phase of the Vivo ProKabaddi League Season-7 at Gachibowli Indoor Stadium here on Thursday.

Ironically, the defeat was the result of a costly error by one of Thalaivas' best defenders, Manjeet Chhillar, who slipped 'out of bounds' when Naveen Kumar was raiding.

After going out of bounds, he was involved in a tackle that pinned down Naveen, and Dabang was awarded the crucial point which proved decisive.

For a team which struggled in the first session, Dabang showed great spirit when it mattered to pick up points, thanks to the efficacy of defender Joginder Narwal and raider Naveen.

With the scores tied at 29, all eyes were on star raider Rahul Chaudhari. But, he returned after a blank visit and then Naveen's raid changed



**Moment to savour:** Dabang Delhi players celebrate an incredible win over Tamil Thalaivas. ■ K.V.S. GRI

the fortunes.

For the winner, Naveen with seven points from 17 raids and Narwal with four points were the key performers, while for Thalaivas, Rahul scored six points from 13 raids and Manjeet five from six tackles.

Earlier, it was a slow start to the contest before Thalaivas surged ahead to take a 5-1 lead. Then, there was some drama when captain Ajay Thakur's self-out not only denied an all-out but also conceded three points for a super tackle which saw Da-

bang reduce the lead to 3-5.

Immediately, star raider Rahul was pinned down by the Delhi defence to level the scores at five.

But, after that, it was a typical clinical performance from Thalaivas which saw them lead 18-11 at the break, Rahul scoring five points from eight raids and Ajay picking up three points.

**The result:** Dabang Delhi bt Tamil Thalaivas 30-29.

**Friday's matches:** Telugu Titans vs Patna Pirates (7.30 pm); UP Yodha vs Gujarat Fortnuegiants (8.30 pm).

# 'Will play as hard as possible'

Malinga's final ODI won't distract Bangladesh from trying to win: Tamim

## CRICKET

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
COLOMBO

Stand-in Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal on Thursday paid tribute to retiring Sri Lankan star Lasith Malinga but said the fast bowler's farewell match would not distract his team from winning.

Malinga will play his final One-Day International here on Friday in the first of three matches against Bangladesh, although he hopes to continue playing in the shorter T20 format.

"I think he is a great ambassador of this game," Tamim told reporters on Thursday, adding Malinga's achievements were "extraordinary". "Tomorrow is a special game for him. But one thing is for sure - when we play against him we will not keep it in our head that it will be his last match and will try to play as hard as possible. We will try to win the game for Bangladesh."

Malinga said he was "very happy" to make way for younger players after calling time on his illustrious 15-year career in the 50-over format.



**Time to move on:** Lasith Malinga said it was an opportunity for the likes of Kusal Mendis, left, Avishka Fernando, Dhananjaya de Silva and Kusal Perera to prove their credentials. ■ AFP

"I am very happy to leave at this time. This is an opportunity for new players to prove themselves and prepare for the next World Cup.

"We may have had some setbacks, but we have the capability to win another World Cup," Malinga said, pointing to Sri Lanka's success at the 1996 World Cup and 2014 T20 World Cup.

Malinga - known for his trademark blond-highlight-

ed mop and piercings - called on cricket administrators to be patient with up-and-coming stars and let them develop ahead of the next ODI World Cup.

### Have belief

"The young players need to believe that they can deliver. They need to be dedicated and develop to a level that they can decide for themselves when they go to the

middle," Malinga said.

The match also holds special meaning for Tamim, who will make his debut as 14th ODI captain for Bangladesh. He will lead a new-look team that will also miss the services of all-rounders Shakib Al Hasan and Mohammad Saifuddin, and wicket-keeper-batsman Liton Das.

The second and third matches will be held on July 28 and 31.

# ICA membership: women cricketers looking for old records

G. VISWANATH  
MUMBAI

India's women cricketers, who played in the domestic tournaments under the aegis of the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI) are in deep predicament.

In the absence of any record of the matches played from 1973 to 2005, women cricketers across the country have virtually given up trying to find evidence of having played the WCAI organised tournaments until 2005.

Over the last 12 months, many of them have been calling up teammates, scorers, statisticians and friends in the newspaper offices to collect score sheets and clippings of the matches in which they had played.

Only verified records of a certain number of matches they have played will allow women cricketers to apply for the membership of the Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) which is registered as a company with Kapil Dev, Shantha Rangaswamy and Ajit Agarkar as the initial directors of the Board. The CoA has recognised the ICA as the only body for men and



Shubhangi Kulkarni.  
■ FILE PHOTO

women cricketers.

Three years ago, the Lodha panel recommendations that was validated by the Supreme court empowered women cricketers with meaningful roles and a place in the BCCI and State's Apex Council.

### Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria for former men and women cricketers to apply for membership of the ICA are: (1) men and women ex-cricketers who have played at least one international cricket match in any format of the game at the senior level; (2)

male ex-cricketers, who have played at least ten First Class matches at the senior level; (3) female ex-cricketers who have played at least five First Class matches in any format of the game at the senior level; and (4) differently-abled ex-cricketers who have played either international cricket or First Class cricket, where such cricket is recognised by the ICC or the BCCI or a body recognised by the ICC or the BCCI, in any format of the game at the senior level.

The CoA has also said that every three senior one-day limited-over matches and every five senior T20 matches of the BCCI-organised inter-State or inter-zonal tournament shall count as a First Class match for men and women.

### Time limit

The CoA has also said that within 20 days, former men and women cricketers should inform the associations of the State they hail from, expressing their interest to apply for membership of the ICA with relevant proof of meeting the eligibil-

ity criteria.

Nutan Natu (nee Gavasakar) told *The Hindu* that records were not maintained by the WCAI.

"Most of the matches played by the women were one-day matches and only the final of the national championship was a three-day match.

"I have played many matches over a period of four or five years, but all zonal and the inter-zonal were one-day matches."

Former India captain and secretary of the WCAI till 2006, Shubhangi Kulkarni believes that some of the States which promoted women's cricket could be having the records and they could become useful for the cricketers of the particular States. "On the basis of these records, the States can issue certificates to the former players who played in the WCAI domestic tournaments."

While the records of women's international cricket has been obtained from the IWCC, the BCCI has maintained all records after it began conducting tournaments for women.

# I wouldn't trade this group of men for the world: Neesham

ANI  
NEW DELHI

New Zealand's defeat in the cricket World Cup final was heart-wrenching. Batting all-rounder James Neesham said on Thursday that it is hard to dissect an experience like that but he would not trade his team for the world.

England won the World Cup, while New Zealand won the world. If a third category is added it would be Neesham won the hearts!

In an Instagram post, Neesham shared pictures with his teammates, including the one where he can be seen consoling Martin Gupthill after the loss in the final. He captioned it, indicating that he will prepare for the next edition.

"It's hard to really dissect an experience like that until you get a bit of distance. Sure some things didn't fall our way, but we went into the cup saying we were gonna fire some shots and scrap like hell and boy did we do both of those. Another day things might have been different but I wouldn't trade this group of men for the world," Neesham said.



**Tough luck:** James Neesham shared pictures with his teammates in an Instagram post, including the one where he can be seen consoling Martin Gupthill. ■ CLIVE MASON/GETTY IMAGES

# Deepak loves to lead from the front

Enthusied by the respect gained from being part of PKL

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

Deepak Niwas Hooda forms a feared combination with defender Amit Hooda for Jaipur Pink Panthers. U Mumba will vouch for this after its defeat in the ProKabaddi League Season-7 here the other night.

Not surprisingly, Deepak, who loves to lead from the front, did leave a huge impact on that game scoring 11 points from 15 raids and Amit notching up a high-five. "It's not about money alone. It's the kind of respect we get by playing in the PKL that is more important," emphasises Deepak in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"The growing fan following is a fair indicator of the popularity of not just the sport but also of the players," says the 25-year-old World Cup gold medalist.

Deepak, who is the biggest name for Pink Panthers, says: "I don't feel any pressure, but definitely lot more responsibility."

He is happy with the winning start and is obviously looking to sustain the mo-



Deepak Niwas Hooda.  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mentum. "We are a young side with an average age of 22 years, but immensely talented," he says.

"Also, we are fortunate to have an owner like Abhishek (Bachchan). I don't think any other franchisee owner is so deeply involved in the game. And, the best part is the way he keeps encouraging us despite setbacks," says the star raider.

And, his dream moment? "Waiting for that evening when our team clinches the trophy," he says.

# 'Home fans can expect something special'

Narwal is growing in reputation as a brilliant defender and useful attacker

NANDAKUMAR MARAR  
MUMBAI

Allrounder Sandeep Narwal is U Mumba's key player in the ProKabaddi League Season-7.

Credited with 200 League points so far, the Sonapat sensation is growing in reputation as a brilliant defender and useful attacker.

The vice-captain, focused on bringing excitement to home fans during the Mumbai leg (U Mumba won one and lost one in the opening leg at Hyderabad and faces Purner Paltan here on Saturday), spoke to *The Hindu*. Excerpts:

**What can Mumbai fans expect from Sandeep Narwal in the second leg?**

U Mumba will demonstrate something different this season.

Fans can expect something special when I am on a raid or lending my hand in defence.

After raiders and defenders ruled the previous seasons, will allrounders call the shots in future?

The allrounder's role is be-

**All teams have begun to realise the importance of allrounders**

ing talked about.

All teams have begun to realise the importance of all-rounders.

Earlier, raiders called the shots, then teams with good defenders did well over the last two seasons.

**Goals in mind for the season**

ahead

Team result is more important than personal highs. Getting two tackle or raid points and ending up on the winning side is equal to 200 points.

Raiders usually end up contributing more points

**Fans can expect something special when I am on a raid or lending my hand in defence.**

than catchers, I will try to deliver expected from me in both halves.



**A point to prove:** Sandeep Narwal, centre, sees a bigger role for allrounders henceforth. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# BBL unveils five-team finals series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

Australia's Twenty20 Big Bash League unveiled a new-look finals series and a shorter season on Thursday following fan feedback.

The ninth year of the domestic competition, starting on December 17, will again see the eight franchises playing 56 regular season games, but they will be condensed into 42 days with more double-headers.

Five teams will now be involved in the finals with a

new system that gives a double-chance for the regular season's top two teams.

The fourth and fifth-placed teams will play in the newly titled 'The Eliminator' with the winner facing the third-placed team in 'The Knock-Out'.

Teams finishing first and second play 'The Qualifier', with the loser taking on the winner of 'The Knock-Out' in 'The Challenger'. It will culminate with 'The Final' between the Challenger and Qualifier winners.

# Warner scores fifty in Ashes warm-up match

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

David Warner made a timely fifty as Australia's bowlers continued to hold sway in an intra-squad Ashes warm-up match at Southampton.

A fixture scheduled for four days will barely make it into the third, with this match Australia's only red-ball warm-up game ahead of a five-Test series with England starting at Edgbaston

on August 1.

Warner hit eight fours in a 94-ball 58. It was the first fifty of the match between the Brad Haddin XII and the Graeme Hick XII.

Fast bowler Pat Cummins had earlier taken five for 24 to run through the tail of the Hick side, who led by 15 runs on first innings after being dismissed for 120.

By stumps on day two, Hick XII was 35 for two.

## Going places



**On a mission:** Indian Divyang Cricket team poses for lensmen ahead of its departure to England where it will play the 6-Nation Physical Disability World Cricket Series in August. ■ SUPREET SAPKAL

# India thumps Jamaica

KINGSTON: India blind cricket team registered a massive 238-run victory over Jamaica in the first T20 match to take a lead in a two-match T20 series here on Wednesday.

**The scores:** India 286 for three (Sunil 107 n.o., Venkateswara 53) bt Jamaica 48 (Graham 12, Miles 9, Ajay four for 12). ANI

# FIFA asks AIFF for update on club structure

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

FIFA, world football's governing body, has sought an update from the All India Football Federation (AIFF) on the current status of the club structure in the country.

In response to the letter sent by six I-League clubs to FIFA president Gianni Infantino, FIFA's Chief Member Associations Officer Joyce Cook, has asked for an update from the national federation.

The clubs - East Bengal, Mohun Bagan, Minerva Punjab, Churchill Brothers, Aizawl FC and Gokulam Kerala - had sought Infantino's intervention in the dispute over the top tier status in Indian football between Indian Super League (ISL) and I-League.

It may be recalled that, earlier this month, the AIFF had announced that it would recommend to the AFC to consider the ISL champion for a spot in the qualifiers for the AFC Champions League.

"Further to previous exchanges concerning the sustainable development of top-level Indian club football and the current situation within Indian football, we have recently become aware of media reports concerning ongoing discussions with I-League clubs, the future of the top league's structure in India and a potentially unified 'Indian Football League'. Furthermore, we have also been contacted by several I-League clubs in this regard," Cook wrote in a mail addressed to AIFF general secretary Kushal Das.

"Many of the elements under discussion are related to suggestions made in a joint FIFA and AFC report following an extensive con-

sultation process in 2018. The report's objectives are among others, to provide the AIFF with external expertise and to support your federation and its stakeholders in establishing and implementing a widely-supported, robust medium to long-term strategy.

"As you know, the report is therefore a comprehensive review and professional proposal which also contains a series of clear and concrete recommendations for your further consideration. In view of the above, we would like to obtain an update on the current position of the AIFF as well as any additional information you may be able to provide on the present situation.

**Same as Patel's thinking** Reacting to the letter, the AIFF in a statement said: "In the recent days, the AIFF President Mr. Praful Patel in his meeting with the Hero I-League clubs as well as in several recent interviews has broadly taken the same line as was suggested in the above-mentioned report.

"Needless to mention that this is precisely the reason that a two-three-year window is required to resolve all contentious issues amicably with all stakeholders." It further added: "The question of Hero Indian Super League not remaining a closed league permanently has been clarified amply enough by the AIFF President, and promotion and relegation eventually would lead to the development of club football in India."

The AIFF said it is committed to engaging with AFC and FIFA as well as all other stakeholders for finding an early resolution to these issues.