

# Archer — the new weapon in England's armoury

Stokes re-appointed vice-captain; Anderson returns from injury

## THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Uncapped fast bowler Jofra Archer has been included in England's 14-man squad announced on Saturday for next week's Ashes opener against Australia, with all-rounder Ben Stokes re-appointed vice-captain.

The pair enjoyed starring roles in England's World Cup final win over New Zealand at Lord's on July 14, with all-rounder Stokes ensuring England drew level with the Black Caps total in regulation play before Archer bowled the decisive Super Over that sealed victory.

### Quick strides

Archer, 24, who qualified to play for England only earlier this year, could now make his Test debut when the first of a five-match series starts at Edgbaston on August 1.

He carried a side strain through the World Cup but reported fit after a brief holiday in his native Barbados, returning to action for Sussex on Friday, where he took two for 21 in a tied Twenty20 Blast match against Surrey.

Since making his senior debut in 2016, Archer has taken 131 wickets in 28 First Class matches at an average of 23.44.

Stokes was restored to his position as Joe Root's deputy after being stripped of the vice-captaincy following a late night brawl in September 2017. He was subsequently cleared of a charge of affray last year, with Jos Buttler acting as vice-captain.

Buttler and Stokes were rested from a see-saw Test



Where he belongs: Jofra Archer's exploits in the World Cup and his First Class returns have earned him an Ashes call-up. ■ REUTERS

against Ireland that England eventually won by 143 runs at Lord's on Friday. Veteran spearhead James Anderson also returned to the squad after missing the match with a side injury.

But, while 10 of the 11 players who defeated Ireland were included, there was no place for left-arm spinner Jack Leach following his Man-of-the-Match heroics that saw the nightwatchman make a career-best 92 in England's second innings.

Moeen Ali was retained as the lone specialist spinner.

England's top-order frailties, however, were exposed during a first innings where it only managed 85.

Opening batsman Rory Burns, despite twice being dismissed in the match for six, remained in the squad even though he now averages just 22.28 from seven Tests.

England selector Ed Smith said: "Though it is unusual to select a squad of 14 for a home Test, there are com-

pellent reasons to do so here. Several bowlers are recovering from injuries or niggles. In addition, some bowlers who played in the World Cup are being closely monitored to assess their preparation for Test-match cricket.

"The wider circumstances — a successful home World Cup campaign followed so quickly by a home Ashes series — are unprecedented. It feels sensible to select an expanded squad and leave a number of bowling options

open for the final team selection," the former England batsman added.

### It's official

Meanwhile, an England and Wales Cricket Board statement said Stokes' return to a leadership position has been cleared by several senior officials.

"Colin Graves, chairman of the ECB, has approved the reappointment of Ben Stokes as Test vice-captain following the recommendation from

managing director of England men's cricket Ashley Giles and ECB chief executive Tom Harrison."

Australia holds the Ashes, but England has not lost a Test series at home since 2001.

**The squad for the first Test:** Joe Root (Capt.), Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Jonny Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler (wk), Sam Curran, Joe Denly, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Ollie Stone and Chris Woakes.

# Aussie greats baffled by Carey's omission

Burns and Patterson missing out also raises eyebrows

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

Alex Carey's omission from the Ashes squad was met with disbelief on Saturday by former Australian greats Mark Waugh and Shane Warne, while Mark Taylor said he was surprised Joe Burns and Kurtis Patterson had missed out.

Australia named a 17-man squad for the five-Test series against England on Friday, with opener Cameron Bancroft recalled alongside Steve Smith and David Warner following their bans for a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last year.

Matthew Wade also made the grade, having not played a Test for nearly two years, following recent outstanding form with the bat.

He can act as back-up wicketkeeper to captain Tim Paine, as could Bancroft, which meant the fast-improving Carey, who starred for Australia at the recent World Cup, was controversially overlooked.

"Got to be kidding re Alex Carey," 128-Test veteran Waugh tweeted. "For me

Alex missing the squad is the biggest shock particularly after his batting during the World Cup and being the second best gloveman."

Spin king Warne was also stunned at Carey's omission.

"Very surprised/disappointed that Carey didn't make the Aussie squad," he said on Instagram in posting what he believes will be Australia's team for the opening Test at Edgbaston.

Warne has Bancroft opening with Warner and Wade coming in at number six, while opting for fast bowler James Pattinson instead of Mitchell Starc alongside Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

Former Australia captain Taylor said opener Burns and middle-order batsman Patterson missing out was tough to take given both made centuries in Australia's last Test, against Sri Lanka.

"I was disappointed Kurtis Patterson didn't make the squad. You can't help but feel a little bit sorry for both him and (Joe) Burns," Taylor said.



Tough luck! Alex Carey missing in the Australian squad for the Ashes series is the biggest shock, according to Mark Waugh. ■ RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

# Lord's pitch substandard: Root



Joe... going to the root of the problem. ■ JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

ANI  
LONDON

After winning the one-off Test against Ireland, skipper Joe Root labelled the Lord's wicket "substandard", saying the match did not offer a fair contest between bat and ball.

"I don't like saying this but the wicket was substandard for a Test match. I thought it wasn't... not even close to a fair contest between bat and ball throughout the whole game," ESPNcricinfo quoted Root as saying.

"We weren't at our best by any stretch. We managed certain periods very well. We were put under pressure by Ireland," Root said.

"But we found a way to win a game. First innings, last innings, when you are getting scores like that, that tells a story in itself when the scores are as low as that," he added.

# Nadeem spins India-A to victory



On the ball: Shahbaz Nadeem's 10-wicket match haul has put India-A in a winning position. ■ FILE PHOTO

The left-arm spinner returns a five-for; Siraj picks up three

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem took a five-wicket haul for the second time in the match to set up a six-wicket win for India-A over West Indies-A in the first 'Test' on Saturday.

Nadeem's five for 47 in 21 overs helped India-A bowl out the hosts for 180 in their second innings after they were comfortably placed at 159 for three on day three of the four-day game on Friday. Pacer Mohammad Siraj ran through the lower-order with a three-wicket burst.

Chasing 97 for victory, India-A was 29 for one at close before sealing the contest on the final morning despite some hiccups along the way. Abhimanyu Easwaran (27) and Hanuma Vihari (28)

chipped in for the visitors during the chase.

### Saha shines

India-A, which resumed the day at 299 for eight in the first innings, went on to make 312 in 104.3 overs with wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha (66) the last man to get out, marking a successful return with both bat and gloves following a long injury lay-off.

West Indies-A, which conceded an 84-run first-innings lead, was steady in the second essay after the loss of openers Montcin Hodge (36) and Jeremy Solozano (11) at 51 for two.

### Beginning of collapse

Captain Shamarh Brooks (53) and Roston Chase (32) shared a 79-run stand for the

third wicket, but the collapse began with the fall of the skipper at 159 for four.

The batsmen struggled to cope up with the guile and accuracy of Nadeem, who has been knocking on the doors of the Indian Test team with consistent performances in domestic cricket over the years.

The Jharkhand spinner had also taken five wickets in the first innings, taking his match tally to 10 for 109.

**The scores:** West Indies-A 228 & 180 in 77 overs (Brooks 53; Nadeem five for 47, Siraj three for 38) lost to India-A 312 (Dube 71, Saha 66; Cummins four for 40) & 97 for four in 30 overs.

■ **Second Test:** July 31 to Aug. 3, Port of Spain

# U Mumba begins home leg with easy win

Two all-outs seal Puneri Paltan's fate; Abhishek top scores for the winner

## PKL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR  
MUMBAI

Two all-outs inflicted by U Mumba sealed Puneri Paltan's fate in the opening game of the Mumbai leg of ProKabaddi League Season-7.

U Mumba walked away a comfortable winner at 33-23 in front of roaring fans at the NSCI indoor stadium.

Catchers called the shots in the first half, raiders came into their own after the break. Abhishek Singh (five raid points) top-scored for the winner. Surjeet Singh (six points) played his heart out for the losing side.

Fazel Atrachali and Surjeet, defensive specialists in U Mumba and Paltan respectively, were named captains and it reflected in the catching department.

Atrachali ended with four raid points, while Surjeet pulled off two Super Tackles.

Manjeet and Sanket Sawant displayed craft for Paltan, while Sandeep Narwal and Surinder were decisive in the back for the hosts.



Catchers on the mat: U Mumba defence wall of Fazel Atrachali and Surinder Singh prepare to trap Puneri Paltan's Sushant Sail. ■ COURTESY PKL

Fazel produced a Super Tackle to push U Mumba into the lead at 5-4, at the other end Surjeet failed to keep Abhishek in check at 9-9. Abhishek was the first frontline raider to scamper back with a raid point.

The home team kept its nose ahead (11-9) at the break.

Surjeet produced a Super Tackle to keep Paltan in the fray.

Rival raiders Arjun Deswal and Abhishek gave the home fans plenty to cheer about. Two all-outs were the highpoints.

U Mumba started the home leg with a dominant win over their State rivals,

the second in three appearances so far in the league after a win and a loss in the first leg.

Earlier, the Mumbai leg kicked off with India cricket captain Virat Kohli rendering the National Anthem.

**The result:** U Mumba 33 bt Puneri Paltan 23.

# Challengers cruise against Mavericks

Archana and Amalraj provide the dramatics for the Goa side

## UTT

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Young Archana Kamath produced a scintillating exhibition of speed and power to annihilate Manika Batra and set the pace for Goa Challengers' emphatic 11-4 triumph over RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata, in the Ultimate Table Tennis League here on Saturday.

### Domination

Goa dominated every individual encounter. A. Amalraj won both his matches, with the conquest of World No. 53 Benedikt Duda being the icing on the cake.

The finishing touches were provided by World No. 8 Cheng I-Ching who stopped World No. 25 Matilda Ekholm in three games. If Mavericks were straightaway put on the defensive, Archana's unrelenting attacks on Manika had everything to do with it. This clash between the country's top-ranked player and the National champion lived up to the billing.



Momentous: Archana Kamath was too good for Manika Batra. Right: A. Amalraj pulled off a big upset over World No. 53 Benedikt Duda. ■ COURTESY UTT

Fast exchanges, interspersed with long rallies brought out the best in Archana and she stayed in control.

Archana enjoyed leads of 7-4, 10-4 in the first two games before racing away with the final seven points in the third to leave Manika stranded.

After Spaniard Alvaro Robles, ranked 56th, overcame a slow start to tame Sanil Shetty 2-1, Amalraj and Ching got the measure of

Duda and Manika. Again, it was the inconsistency of Manika's returns that made the decisive difference.

**Upset** Amalraj went on to cause the other big upset. Ranked a distant 122, Amalraj was quick to respond to any challenge thrown at him by Duda and captured the first game.

In the second, Duda was lucky to win the 'golden point' when Amalraj's fore-

hand drive went out.

This miss resulted in Amalraj producing his best in dominating the decider.

**The results:** Goa Challengers bt RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata 11-4 (Archana Kamath bt Manika Batra 11-9, 11-7, 11-3; Alvaro Robles bt Sanil Shetty 10-11, 11-4, 11-5; A. Amalraj & Cheng I-Ching bt Benedikt Duda & Manika 8-11, 11-4, 11-9; Amalraj bt Duda 11-7, 10-11, 11-4; Cheng I-Ching bt Matilda Ekholm 11-8, 9-11, 11-5).

**Sunday's fixture:** Chennai Lions v Puneri Paltan (7 p.m.).





**The Ferrari rides again:** Mick Schumacher wore a helmet that paid tribute to his father's career as he drove the car which carried Michael to 13 victories and the drivers' title in 2004. •AFP

## Hamilton takes his 87th pole

Double disaster for Ferrari — Leclerc begins 10th; Vettel forced to sit out

### GERMAN GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HOCKENHEIM

Lewis Hamilton secured a gift-wrapped record-extending 87th pole position of his career on Saturday when he made the most of a double disaster for Ferrari in qualifying at the German Grand Prix.

The defending five-time world champion, who had struggled for pace and consistency in his Mercedes in practice, improved to clock a best lap in one minute and 11.767 and outpace Max Verstappen of Red Bull by 0.346 seconds.

Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas was third ahead of Pierre Gasly in the second Red Bull while Charles Leclerc, who had been fastest for Ferrari in final practice, failed to run in the Q3 top-10 shootout due to a fuel systems problem with his car.

The Monegasque will start 10th, 10 places ahead of his luckless Ferrari team-mate Sebastian Vettel who was unable to take part in qualifying due to a turbo

problem and will start at the back of the grid for his home race.

Kimi Raikkonen was fifth for Alfa Romeo ahead of Romain Grosjean of Haas, Carlos Sainz of McLaren, Sergio Perez of Racing Point and Nico Hulkenberg of Renault.

"Congratulations Lewis — you never stop amazing us," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff as the Briton drove his slow-down lap. "Thanks, Toto," he replied. "A great job guys — I don't know how we did that."

### Cause for celebration

Hamilton's lap was the only one in the 1:11's all weekend at the Hockenheimring, where he last took pole in 2008, and gave his team a perfect cause for celebration on the anniversary of 125 years of motorsport and their 200th Formula One race start.

Verstappen said: "We could have been closer, but went a bit wide and bottomed out and I lost the rear end, but this is a good result."

Bottas said: "I think the weather is going to play a big part tomorrow. I'm a bit dis-

appointed, especially with the pace in Q3. Ferrari had been very quick here... so we're in a good place."

On an overcast and much cooler day after heavy overnight rain, the Williams team were first on track for Q1, in front of an enthusiastic crowd boosted by Verstappen's 'orange army' and many local supporters for Vettel in Ferrari red.

### Luckless Vettel

Leclerc was soon on top for the 'scarlet scuderia' ahead of Verstappen, but it was bad news again for the luckless Vettel. After sitting in his car, stranded under repair in the Ferrari garage, he climbed out, condemned to start from the back of the grid.

### Mick takes father's car out for a spin

Mick Schumacher completed an emotional three-lap demonstration run in his father Michael's championship-winning Ferrari F2004 car on Saturday before qualifying.

The 20-year-old son of the seven-time world champion said it felt like "torture" as he waited to emerge from the

pit-lane in front of a big crowd at the Hockenheim circuit. Now a Formula Two driver, Schumacher wore a helmet that paid tribute to his father's career as he drove the car that carried his father to 13 victories and the drivers' title in 2004.

"I just wanted to go out and I just wanted to drive," he said. "Obviously, having to wait, even in front of the pit exit, was more like torture. I never lost a smile. It was always on my face. Even when I was locking up, I was smiling! It was really cool."

### Starting grid (provisional):

Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Max Verstappen (Red Bull), Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes), Pierre Gasly (Red Bull), Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo), Romain Grosjean (Haas), Carlos Sainz Jr. (McLaren), Sergio Perez (Racing Point), Nico Hulkenberg (Renault), Charles Leclerc (Ferrari).

Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo), Kevin Magnussen (Haas), Daniel Ricciardo (Renault), Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso), Lance Stroll (Racing Point), Lando Norris (McLaren), Alexander Albon (Toro Rosso), George Russell (Williams), Robert Kubica (Williams), Sebastian Vettel (Ferrari).

## Hat-trick of golds for Dressel

Retains 50m freestyle, 100m butterfly titles

### WORLD SWIMMING

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GWANGJU (SOUTH KOREA)

American superstar Caeleb Dressel produced more fireworks on Saturday as he romped to a hat-trick of golds, taking his tally to six on a dark day when a fatal nightclub accident shook the swimming World championships.

Day seven also threw up further doping controversy with Australian officials announcing freestyle relay world-record holder Shayna Jack had tested positive for a banned substance, explaining her mysterious no-show in South Korea.

But Dressel helped refocus attention on the pool as he retained his 50m freestyle and 100m butterfly world titles in style, before leading the American mixed 4x100m freestyle team to a new world record.

Bouncing on his toes like a prizefighter before the 50m



**True grit:** Katie Ledecky displayed a champion's heart to win her fourth successive 800m freestyle gold. •AFP

free, Dressel exploded from the blocks and never looked back, clocking a championship best 21.04s, clear of Brazilian Bruno Fratus and Greek Kristian Gkolomeev, who tied for silver in 21.45.

Dressel, who scooped seven gold medals at the 2017 Worlds in Budapest, let out a roar of delight but had very little time to savour the moment. The 22-year-old was back for the 100m butterfly final and after a long, hard stare down lane four, he got it done again.

The American touched in

49.66 — the second-quickest swim ever, a night after shattering Michael Phelps's 10-year-old world record. Dressel gave the USA relay quartet the lead it would keep, Simon Manuel bringing the Americans home in a world record of 3:19.40.

### Shock news

Dressel's heroics came after the shock news that two locals died and eight athletes were injured after an indoor balcony at a Gwangju nightclub collapsed in the early hours on Saturday, sending

party-goers plummeting over 5m onto people below.

A doping controversy followed when it was revealed Jack had failed a drug test.

American great Katie Ledecky won her fourth successive 800m freestyle gold after being pushed to the limit by European champion Simona Quadarella.

**The results: Men: 50m freestyle:** 1. Caeleb Dressel (USA) 21.04s, 2. Bruno Fratus (Bra) 21.45, 3. Kristian Gkolomeev (Gre) 21.45. **100m butterfly:** 1. Caeleb Dressel (USA) 49.66, 2. Andrei Minakov (Rus) 50.83, 3. Chad Le Clos (RSA) 51.16.

**Women: 50m butterfly:** 1. Sarah Sjöström (Swe) 25.02, 2. Ranomi Kromowidjojo (Ned) 25.35, 3. Farida Osman (EGY) 25.47. **200m backstroke:** 1. Regan Smith (USA) 2:03.69, 2. Kaylee McKeown (Aus) 2:06.26, 3. Kylie Masse (Can) 2:06.62. **800m freestyle:** 1. Katie Ledecky (USA) 8:13.58, 2. Simona Quadarella (Ita) 8:14.99, 3. Ariarne Titmus (Aus) 8:15.70

**Mixed 4x100m freestyle:** 1. USA 3:19.40, 2. Australia 3:19.97, 3. France 3:22.11.

## Bernal poised to clinch title

Will become the youngest winner since Faber in 1909



**Nearly there:** Wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, Bernal climbs toward Val Thorens during the 20th stage. •AP

### TOUR DE FRANCE

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
VAL THORENS (FRANCE)

Egan Bernal all but clinched victory in the Tour de France, defending his overnight lead in the penultimate stage which left him only needing to cross the finish line on Sunday's twilight parade into Paris to become the first Colombian winner and the youngest.

The champion-in-waiting said he was so nervous on the climb to Val Thorens in the Alps that he counted

down the kilometres on the way up as holder and team-mate Geraint Thomas ended the day in second overall. "I still have to get to Paris but it's incredible," said 22-year-old Bernal who will become the Tour's youngest winner since Francois Faber in 1909. "I'm a little calmer now. I kept thinking one less, one less to go each time as we came up the mountain. When we got to the finish and Geraint held out his hand I realised I was going to win the Tour de France."

The stage was won by 2014 champion Vincenzo Nibali.

## Desert God well tuned

BENGALURU: Desert God, who has been well tuned, is expected to score in the Tetrasoft Inc. Bangalore St. Leger (2,800m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Sunday (July 28).

False rails (width about 7m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

**1. MANITOUP PLATE (1,400m),** maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 2-30 p.m.: 1. Cavaliere (3) Antony 56, 2. Jai Vikram (6) A. Ramu 56, 3. My Vision (4) Arshad 56, 4. Silver Eclipse (2) Md. Asif Khan 56, 5. Tenno Sho (1) Trevor 56, 6. Adela (7) R. Shelar 54.5 and 8. Legendary Princess (8) Sandesh 54.5.

**2. TENNO SHO,** 2. LEGENDARY PRINCESS, 3. CAVALIERE

**2. LIVELY EMPREY PLATE (1,200m),** rated 00 to 20, 3-00: 1. Darahasini (1) John 60, 2. Zaffrina (2) S. Shareef 60, 3. Debonair (9) A. Imran 59.5, 4. Bellerophon (4) A. Ramu 58.5, 5. Show Girl (10) Vinod Shinde 58, 6. Smile Of Courage (3) M. Naveen 58, 7. Have A Nice Day (12) Noorbabi 57.5, 8. Majestic Rajkumari (7) Md. Asif Khan 57, 9. Arrogance (11) Yash 56.5, 10. Gin Daisy (3) R. Shelar 52 and 12. High Tide (13) A. Merchant 52, 13. Astron (-) 51 and 14. Scorching (8) Arshad 50.5. 1. DARAHASINI, 2. DEBONAIR, 3. HIGH TIDE

**3. MARILINGAIAH MEMORIAL TROPHY (1,200m),** rated 45 to 65, 3-30: 1. Noahs Ark (11) Zervan 60, 2. War Hero (7) R. Manish 59.5, 3. Life Awaits (10) Rayan 59, 4. Side Winder (14) Chetan G 59, 5. Miniver Rose (2) Vaibhav 58.5, 6. China One (6) Ivan 57.5, 7. Allsetgo (5) A. Merchant 57, 8. Fair Warning (1) Antony 57, 9. Super Success (13) T.S. Jodha 56, 10. Treasure Delight (3) Suraj 55.5, 11. Constantinople (4) Trevor 54.5, 12. Teodoro (12) S. Shareef 54.5, 13. Harley Quinn (9) Md. Asif Khan 53.5 and 14. Siyouni (8) M. Prabhakaran 53.

**1. TREASURE DELIGHT,** 2. WAR HERO, 3. MINIVER ROSE

**4. TETRASOFT INC. BANGALORE T. ST. LEGER (2,800m),** 4-y-o & over, (Terms), 4-00: 1. Desert God (4) Sandesh 58.5, 2. Reunion (3) Yash 58.5, 3. Salazaar (2) Suraj 58.5, 4. My Opinion (1) A. Imran 57, 5. Point To Prove (6) Zervan 57, 6. Roberta (5) Trevor 57.5 and 7. M.D. ASIF KHAN 57.5

**5. SMART CHIEFTAN CUP (Div. I),** (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 4-30: 1. Call Me Maybe (8) Sai Kiran 60, 2. Tarini (3) Yash 60, 3. Wings Of Desire (10) Zervan 60, 4. Secretpusherstar (4) R. Manish 58.5, 5. Kvasir (2) Srinath 58, 6. Alberetta (1) S. Shareef 57.5, 7. Another Rainbow (9) Md. Asif Khan 57.5, 8. Varcasva (6) Trevor 57, 9. Angels Kiss (7) Antony 57, 10. Emidio (5) Vaibhav 57 and 11. Romantic Helen (11) A. Merchant 54.5.

**1. KVASIR, 2. ANGELS KISS, 3. WINGS OF DESIRE**

**6. ALLIED FORCES PLATE (1,100m),** rated 15 to 35, 4-y-o & over, 5-00: 1. Florencia (7) A. Merchant 60, 2. Princezeem (1) T.S. Jodha 58.5, 3. Princess Holly (4) K. Raghu 56.5, 4. Nawabzaadi (3) Sai Kiran 56, 5. Hafnium (6) Arshad 55.5, 6. She's Superb (11) S. Shareef 55.5, 7. Fantastic Op (9) Zervan 55, 8. Santorini Secret (12) Khurshad Alam 55, 9. Queen Isabella (10) Nazerul 54.5, 10. Happy Dancing (8) M. Kumar 53.5, 11. Simone (5) Rayan 51.5 and 12. So Quick (2) Darshan 51.

**1. FANTASTIC APP,** 2. NAWABZAADI, 3. HAFNIUM

**7. SMART CHIEFTAN CUP (Div. II),** (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 4-y-o & over, 5-30: 1. Interesting (9) Chetan G 60, 2. Beond Reach (2) M. Naveen 59.5, 3. Panama (1) Arshad 59.5, 4. Amazonite (4) S. Shareef 58.5, 5. Decisive (11) A. Imran 58.5, 6. Pink Smile (7) Ivan 58.5, 7. Armin (6) Antony 58, 8. Depth Charge (3) R. Pradeep 57.5, 9. Helenka (10) Zervan 57, 10. Halisys (5) A. Merchant 56.5, and 11. Red Galileo (8) Sai Kiran 55.5.

**1. ARMIN, 2. HELENKA, 3. AMAZONITE**

Day's best: TENNO SHO  
Double: TREASURE DELIGHT-DESERT GOD  
Jkt: 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Tr (i): 2, 3 and 4; (ii): 5, 6 and 7.

## Bhakti crowned champion

Vantika finishes second after splitting the point with Mrudul

### NATL. CHESS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KARAIKUDI

Defending champion Bhakti Kulkarni of Air India played out a draw against Pratyusha Bodda of Andhra Pradesh in the 11th and final round to emerge champion of the 46th National women's chess championship at Chettinad Public School on Saturday.

The final round was just a formality as she was already assured of the title after having beaten K. Priyanka the other day. But Bhakti was eager to sign off with a win. Both had their chances of winning, but were content with a draw after 62 moves. With a final tally of 10 points, Bhakti not only went home having lifted the title, but also became richer by ₹4 lakh.

Vantika Agrawal of Delhi, with 8.5 points, finished se-



**The top three:** Divya, Bhakti and Vantika. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cond after splitting the point with Mrudul Dehankar of Maharashtra.

Divya Deshmukh was equal on points as she drubbed P.V. Nandhidhaa of Tamil Nadu. But Vantika, with a better tie-break score, pocketed ₹3 lakh and Divya ₹2 lakh. The District Collector of Sivaganga J. Jayakanthan gave away the

trophies and cash prizes.

**Important results (11th and final round, TN unless specified):** Bhakti Kulkarni (AI) 10 drew with Pratyusha Bodda (AP) 8; Mrudul Dehankar (Mah) 8 drew with Vantika Agrawal (Del) 8.5; P.V. Nandhidhaa 7.5 lost to Divya Deshmukh (Mah) 8.5; Aarthika Seshadri (AI) 7 lost to Srijia Seshadri 8; Nisha Mohota (PSPB) 8 bt K. Priyanka

7; Harshita Guddnati (AP) 7.5 bt P. Bala Kannamma 7; Mary Ann Gomes (PSPB) 7 drew with V. Varshini 7; S. Meenakshi (AI) 7.5 bt Michelle Catherina 6.5.

Sakshi Chitlange (Mah) 7.5 bt L. Jyothsna 6.5; Rutuja Bakshi (Mah) 6.5 drew with Soumya Swaminathan (PSPB) 6.5; V. Toshali (AP) 6 lost to S. Vijayalakshmi (AI) 7; Sanskriti Goyal (UP) 6 lost to Swati Ghate (LIC) 7; Isha Sharma (Kar) 7 bt Sriшти Pandey (Mah) 6.

Nityata Jain (MP) 7 bt Nandhini Saripalli (Goa) 6; Dhyana Patel (Gu) 6.5 drew with Bhagyashree Thipsay (Mah) 6.5.

**Final standings (top 20):** 1. Bhakti Kulkarni (10); 2-3. Vantika Agrawal and Divya Deshmukh (8.5); 4-7. Pratyusha Bodda, Mrudul Dehankar, Srijia Seshadri and Nisha Mohota (8); 8-11. P.V. Nandhidhaa, S. Meenakshi, Harshita Guddanti and Sakshi Chitlange (7.5); 12-20. K. Priyanka, S. Vijayalakshmi, Nityata Jain, Mary Ann Gomes, V. Varshini, P. Bala Kannamma, Aarthika Seshadri, Swati Ghate and Isha Sharma (7).

## World junior squash teams announced

CHENNAI: A total of 11 Indian players will take part in the World junior men's and women's individual championship (July 30 to August 4) followed by the World junior women's team championship (August 5 to 9), both to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The junior women's team comprises Sanya Vats, Yoshna Singh, Aishwarya Khubchandani and Ananya Dabke. They will be joined by Amira Singh and Megha Bhatia for the individual competitions that precedes it.

The team event is held once in two years.

The boys who will be taking part in the junior men's individual championship are Tushar Shahani, Veer Chitrani, Arnaav Sareen, Rahul Bhatia and Yash Fadte.

## Spirit of London wins

BENGALURU: Spirit of London (Sandesh up), won the Elusive Pimpernel Cup, the main event of the races on Saturday. The winner is owned by Mr. Dilip R. Ranka and trained by B. Prithviraj.

**1. AUREOLE TIME PLATE (1,100m),** rated 15 to 35: AINE (Srinath) 1, Sun Power (A. Ramu) 2, Genuine Star (Suraj) 3 and Areca Angel (Rajesh K) 4. 1-1/2, 2-1/4 and 5-1/2. Im 08.32s. ₹17 (w), 12, 13 and 12 (p), SHP: 33, THP: 45, FP: 76, Q: 58, Trinella: 95 and 25, Exacta: 762 and 713. Favourite: Aine. Owners: Mr. Rajan Aggarwal & Mr. Gautam Aggarwal. Trainer: Pradeep Annaiah.

**2. ASTRONOMIC PLATE (1,400m),** rated 15 to 35, 4-y-o & over: COLONEL HARTY (Rajesh K) 1, Sharp Response (Zervan) 2, Stars In His Eyes (R. Manjunath) 3 and Raw Gold (Chetan G) 4. 5-3/4, 7-3/4 and 1/2. Im 26.97s. ₹20 (w), 13, 18 and 24 (p), SHP: 60, THP: 52, FP: 162, Q: 75, Trinella: 1,505 and 598, Exacta: 5,607 and 1,730. Favourite: Colonel Harty. Owner: Mr. S.N. Harish. Trainer: Narayana Gowda.

**3. BARALOU PLATE (1,600m),** rated 15 to 35: ELECTRA (Chetan G) 1, Radiant Treasure (Arshad) 2, Smile Of Joy (Srinath) 3 and Fotogenic (Vaibhav) 4. Not run: Armeria, 13/4, 2 and 2-3/4. Im 39.61s. ₹23 (w), 12, 12 and 11 (p), SHP: 32, THP: 42, FP: 77, Q: 51, Trinella: 108 and 42, Exacta: 1,285 and 794. Favourite: Electra. Owners: M/s. Blazing Saddles (PF) rep by Mr. Niraj Tyagi & Mr. Vikas

Sachdeva. Trainer: Neil Darashah.

**4. ELUSIVE PIMPERNEL CUP (1,400m),** rated 30 to 50, 5-y-o & over: SPIRIT OF LONDON (Sandesh) 1, Reczai (Suraj) 2, Tokyo Rose (Chetan G) 3 and Casey (Antony) 4. Not run: Morrane Gabriella, 1-1/2, Nose and 1-1/2. Im 26.81s. ₹22 (w), 13, 14 and 30 (p), SHP: 30, THP: 56, FP: 60, Q: 33, Trinella: 324 and 269, Exacta: 4,096 and 2,743. Favourite: Spirit Of London. Owner: Mr. Dilip R. Ranka. Trainer: B. Prithviraj.

**5. SHA TIN PLATE (1,600m),** rated 00 to 20, 4-y-o & over: DREAMS UNITED (Irvan) 1, Phoenix Reached (T.S. Jodha) 2, Silent Ruler (R. Manish) 3 and Shaktiman (John) 4. 6, 2-1/2 and 1/2. Im 39.95s. ₹30 (w), 15, 13 and 16 (p), SHP: 38, THP: 51, FP: 107, Q: 66, Trinella: 270 and 219, Exacta: 1,184 and 575. Favourite: Dreams United. Owners: Mr. Naresh Kumar Pawar & Mr. P. Ranga Raju. Trainer: Sharat Kumar.

**6. DIVINE LIGHT PLATE (1,200m),** maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms): SCHAFENBERG (Trevor) 1, Magic Stream (Zervan) 2, Rorito (Sandesh) 3 and Star Sapphire (Mark) 4. Not run: Flamboyant, 3, 1 and NK. Im 13.79s. ₹17 (w), 11, 17 and 17 (p), SHP: 42, THP: 37, FP: 95, Q: 58, Trinella: 180 and 59, Exacta: 1,691 and 1,153. Favourite: Schafenberg. Owner: Mr. Prithivi Sivaji Dorai. Trainer: S. Attaollahi. Jackpot: ₹1,514 (351 kts.); Runner-up: 338 (674 kts.); Treble (i): 150 (75 kts.); (ii): 259 (123 kts.).

## 'The way we play is completely different now'

I hope the boys come injury-free and we'll put up a good fight, says Chhetri

### FOOTBALL

SHYAM VASUDEVAN  
UDAIPUR

Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri said he hoped the side would get enough preparatory matches ahead of its 2022 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers campaign.

The Indian team, drawn alongside 2022 FIFA World Cup host Qatar, Oman, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh in Group E, will begin its chase for a FIFA World Cup berth when it hosts Oman in the second round of Asian Qualifiers on September 5.

### Like the word

When asked about the "interesting group" by this reporter, Chhetri quipped: "I like the word interesting, man. Thank God. People use the word easy sometimes! It is interesting and I'm really looking forward to it. It's a

good group. The only thing is I just hope we get some training matches before the tournament starts."

He added: "I heard that the Super Cup is not going to

happen. So it's just 10-15 days of our preparation and the tournament starts. We have

two tough games — Oman at home and Qatar away. I hope the boys come injury-free and we'll put up a good fight."

Chhetri spoke to the media during his visit to the Zinc Football Academy here on Saturday.

The Indian team has been undergoing a period of transition since coach Igor Stimac's arrival in May. The Croatian has inculcated a more refreshing build-up based, passing-oriented game, and has tried multiple combinations on the pitch. However, the team hasn't enjoyed great success and was ousted from the King's Cup and the Intercontinental Cup. Chhetri, though, is unperturbed.

### Completely different

"The way we play is completely different now. You've seen it in the last two tournaments. We didn't do well because a lot of payers were in-

jured and also because he (Stimac) was trying new things. His philosophy and what he wants is quite clear. He's very knowledgeable and is somebody who really wants to change things. All the boys love him, so I think we all want to rally with him and give our best," he said.

"The way we build-up is different. He wants us to build from behind, he wants us to pass the ball and you've seen it. The likes of Sahal (Abdul Samad), Udanta (Singh) and Anirudh (Thapa) are flourishing under him. I like this kind of game because in my club (Bengaluru FC) also we play like this. The Spanish players play the same," he added.

When asked if he personally advocated this style of football, he said: "I don't know, man. I'll play in any way. I just want to win. You tell me a way to win and I'll do that."

**Showing the way:** India captain Sunil Chhetri teaches a trick or two to the trainees at the Zinc Football Academy at Udaipur on Saturday.



TV PICKS

**Badminton:** Japan Open, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 8 a.m.  
**Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh:** 2nd ODI, Sony Six (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.  
**TNPL:** Star Sports 3, 3 p.m. & 7.15 p.m.  
**Tennis:** Hamburg Open final, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.  
**Formula One:** German GP, Star Sports Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.35 p.m.  
**England Women vs Australia Women:** 2nd T20I, Sony ESPN (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.  
**Ultimate Table Tennis:** Star Sports 1 & Star Sports Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.10 p.m.  
**PKL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.15 p.m. & 8.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Bale close to Jangsu Suning move

Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale is on the verge of signing a £1million-a-week deal with Chinese Super League outfit Jangsu Suning, reports on Friday claimed. The 30-year-old Welshman has already been told by Real coach Zinedine Zidane that he does not form part of his future plans. Spanish daily *Marca* claimed that Bale will earn €22 million per season in China. However, later reports by *Sky Sports* suggested the player's representatives were negotiating a mind-boggling £1million-a-week contract before the Chinese transfer window shuts on Wednesday. **AFP**

Play abandoned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM

Play was washed out by rain in the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament here on Saturday. Faisal Qamar was leading 6-4, 2-2 against Ahutosh Tiwari when the semifinal was abandoned owing to rain on Friday. The match will continue on Sunday. Fardeen Qamar has already reached the final from the top half of the draw.

# Momota rallies to beat Sai Praneeth

The Indian squanders early lead to go down to the top seed yet again

JAPAN OPEN

IANS TOKYO

India's campaign at the ongoing Japan Open came to an end as B. Sai Praneeth lost his men's singles semifinal clash to World no. 1 Kento Momota at the \$750,000 tournament on Saturday. Praneeth lost 21-18, 21-12 to Momota in a match that lasted for 45 minutes.

Great start

The unseeded Indian started off the match on a great note as he took an initial 3-1 lead in the first few minutes.

However, Momota came back with a great fight and took an 11-8 lead at the mid-game break.

Praneeth, who had been in great touch in the tournament so far, tried to up the ante and earned some points but ultimately lost the game in 23 minutes.

Overtuns deficit

In the second game, the top-seeded Japanese didn't let Praneeth take a long lead from the start and overturned a 6-9 deficit to make it 12-9 with the help of six straight points.

From there on, the World No.1 raced to a seven-point lead and eventually won the match 21-12 in 22 minutes to make it to his second consecutive final.

**The result: (semifinal): Men:** Kento Momota (Jpn) bt B. Sai Praneeth 21-18, 21-12.



Well played! Kento Momota of Japan is congratulated by B. Sai Praneeth. **AFP**

# Divij & Erlich pair goes down fighting

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU ATLANTA

Divij Sharan and Jonathan Erlich of Israel put up a strong fight against top seeded Bryan twins, Bob and Mike, who won 6-4, 6-7(4), [10-7]. **\$25,000 ITF men, Nonthaburi, Thailand: Semifinals:** Vladyslav Orlov (Ukr) bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-2, 6-2.

**Doubles (final):** Sanchai Ratiwatana & Sonchat Ratiwatana bt Timur Khabibulin (Kaz) & Arjun Kadhe 4-6, 6-2, [10-4].

**\$15,000 ITF Tabarka, Tunisia: Doubles (semifinals): Men:** Mousa Alkotop (Jor) & Alexander Boborykin (Rus) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & PC Vignesh 6-7(2), 6-3, [10-6]. **Women:** Elizabeth Danailova (Bul) & Chelsea Vanhoutte (Bel) bt Sowjanya Bavisetti & Sravya Shivani Chilakalapati 6-4, 1-6, [10-7].

semifinals by Vladyslav Orlov of Ukraine who conceded only four games.

**The results:** **\$777,385 ATP, Atlanta: Doubles (quarterfinals):** Bob Bryan & Mike Bryan (US) bt Jonathan Erlich (Isr) & Divij Sharan 6-4, 6-7(4), [10-7].

**\$25,000 ITF men, Nonthaburi, Thailand: Semifinals:** Vladyslav Orlov (Ukr) bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-2, 6-2.

**Doubles (final):** Sanchai Ratiwatana & Sonchat Ratiwatana bt Timur Khabibulin (Kaz) & Arjun Kadhe 4-6, 6-2, [10-4].

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# Lanning makes highest individual score ever in women's T20Is

Her 133 n.o. sees Australia coast to victory over England

ANI MELBOURNE

Skipper Meg Lanning's unbeaten 133, the highest individual score ever in a women's T20 International, helped Australia defeat England by 93 runs in the first of the three-match series on Friday.

Chasing 227, England got off to a horrendous start as it lost its first four wickets with just 22 on the board. Danielle Wyatt (0), Amy Jones (0), Tammy Beaumont (8), and Heather Knight (3) all failed to put up substantial scores.

Natalie Sciver and Laura Winfield put up a brief partnership of 36, but their resistance was cut short as Sciver (28) was sent back by Sophie Molineux.

Katherine Brunt came out to bat next and she, along with Winfield, added 39 runs. However, Winfield (33) was dismissed in the 15th over by Megan Schutt.

With Winfield's dismissal, England could not do anything substantial with the bat as it was restricted to 133 for nine, handing Australia a



**Into the record books:** Meg Lanning sent the England bowlers on a leather hunt, hitting 17 fours and seven sixes. **HENRY BROWNE/GETTY IMAGES**

victory by 93 runs. Schutt was the leading wicket-taker as she scalped three England batters.

Earlier, Lanning's undefeated knock of 133 off just 63 balls with 17 boundaries and seven sixes propelled Australia to a record total of 226 for three in 20.

After the game, the destructive Lanning laughingly

said she tried to hit the final delivery of the innings for a 12. "I tried to hit it for 12," Cricket.com.au quoted Lanning as saying.

"I was just really pleased and proud of the group that we were able to win at such a ground, The Fortress.

"To come here and play so well was great," she said.

# Vishnu, Chirag dazzle on day one

Syed Muzammil unstoppable in the Gixxer Cup

MOTORSPORTS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT COIMBATORE

Chennai's Vishnu Prasad and young Chirag Ghorpade stole the show on the opening day, winning in contrasting styles in the first round of the 22nd JK Tyre FMSCI National racing championship here on Saturday.

The revamped opening round saw 27 young guns line up for the first time to have a shot at the Novice Cup. And, Bengaluru's Chirag (Momentum Motorsports) clinched the pole at the start of the day and went on to win the first race.

The 14-year-old timed 13:37.912s to beat the aggressive field by 0.338s, leaving his teammate Aaroh Ravindra and Mohamed Ryan (MSport) fighting for the other two places on the podium.

He exhibited speed and skill to wrest the second race as well.

However, all eyes were on the Formula LGB4 which had seven national champions in the fray. It was a three-way fight between Vishnu (MSport), Rohit Khanna (Dark Don Racing)



**Exhibiting his skills:** Seasoned racer Vishnu Prasad, who won Race 1 in the LGB Formula 4 category, negotiates a curve. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

and Ashwin (Dark Don Racing).

Ashwin shot into the lead, going past MSport's Sohil Shah who began on pole at the first opportunity. He hung on to it all the way to the final lap but the safety car that had come out a couple of laps earlier hurt his flow as Vishnu and Rohit stepped up the heat to over-

take him for the top two positions.

Syed Muzammil Ali was the other lad from Bengaluru who was unstoppable in the Gixxer Cup. He topped the practice rounds, grabbed the pole in the qualifiers and later finished on top in the race.

**The results (provisional): JK Tyre Novice Cup: Race 1:** 1. Chirag Ghorpade (Momentum

Motorsports); 2. Aaroh Ravindra (Momentum Motorsports); 3. Mohamed Ryan (MSport). **Race 2:** 1. Chirag; 2. Aaroh; 3. Parikshit Dardhalli (DTS Racing) **JK Tyre Suzuki Gixxer Cup: Race 1:** 1. Syed Muzammil Ali; 2. Tanay Gaikwad; 3. Amul Angadi.

**Formula LGB4: Race 1:** 1. Vishnu Prasad (MSport); 2. Rohit Khanna (Dark Don Racing); 3. Ashwin Datta (Dark Don Racing).

# 'Opportunity to raise Commonwealth TT's profile'

First priority is to regularise the championship: Vivek Kohli

CTTF

RAKESH RAO NEW DELHI

Last week, Indians accomplished an unsurpassable feat of sweeping all seven gold medals at stake in the Commonwealth table tennis championship in Cuttack.

Concurrently, in a significant development in Bhuvaneswar, India claimed the post of chairman and secretary-general of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation (CTTF) for the first time.

These Indian triumphs were not unexpected. The players capitalised on the lack of quality opposition while for the two elected representatives - chairman Vivek Kohli and secretary M.P. Singh - the election arithmetic was never a concern.

As it turned out, M.P. Singh was elected unopposed and Kohli won 22-6. Though the margin of Kohli's victory was a reflection on the support he enjoyed, England's Alan Ransome proved a reluctant outgoing incumbent as he vacated the chair after 26 years.

"This change provides India with an opportunity to raise the profile of Commonwealth table tennis," Kohli told *The Hindu* on his return to the Capital.

Kohli, 50, is actively attached to the sport since turning up for Uttar Pradesh as a junior. At present, he is the co-chairman of Stag International, a well-known equipment and apparel-maker



**New roles, new goals!** Vivek Kohli, right, and M.P. Singh after being elected chairman and secretary-general, respectively, of the CTTF. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

er in table tennis.

Spreading the sport

In his new role, Kohli has set his eyes on spreading the sport to all 71 Commonwealth nations.

"At present, we have only 45 affiliated members, of which around 38 are active. Once we reach out to all the nations, CTTF will have more members than the African TT Federation, Asian TT Union and the European TT Union, all of whom have 50-plus member-nations," said Kohli.

Elaborating his plans, Kohli declared, "When we hold events, we gain visibility. So far, even the Commonwealth championship is not held regularly. So, my first priority is to regularise the championship and invite the best from Singapore, En-

gland, Nigeria etc. Soon, we plan to introduce competitions for cadet, sub-juniors, juniors, youth and veterans.

"Constant activities bring visibility to all stakeholders. Revenue from affiliation and entry fees, sponsorships, etc., will give us a buffer to get started.

Thereafter, in due course, we plan to hold competitions for schools, universities, military, railways, etc., from Commonwealth nations.

"We will hire professionals to run the day-to-day affairs of the CTTF. I see that the CTTF holds the potential to be the biggest sporting body in the sport after the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). We will surely borrow ideas from the ITTF to help the cause of Commonwealth nations at all levels," concluded Kohli.

# Atletico humbles Real

REUTERS NEW JERSEY

Diego Costa scored four goals as Real Madrid was embarrassed 7-3 by rival Atletico Madrid in the final match of the United States tour on Friday.

Real fielded a strong side once again, with new signings Eden Hazard and Luka Jovic starting up front and Gareth Bale again on the bench, but was 5-0 down at the end of a shambolic first half.

Atletico fielded a host of new arrivals, including club-record signing Joao Felix, who immediately caught Real cold on the counter before playing Costa in for his opening goal in the first minute.

Felix got among the goals himself seven minutes later before Angel Correa, an early substitute for the injured Alvaro Morata, shocked

Real with a third in the 19th minute.

Saul Niguez capitalised on more slack defending from Real to thread through to Costa who fired in the fourth with just 28 minutes on the clock.

Costa capped a disastrous half for Real in stoppage time, winning a penalty before converting from the spot.

Felix again fed Costa six minutes into the second half before Nacho pulled one back for Real near the hour-mark.

The Costa onslaught ended abruptly, with he and Real's Dani Carvajal both red-carded for fighting, adding further drama to an incredible friendly.

Vitolo added a seventh for Atletico, before Karim Benzema and Javi Hernandez scored late for Real.

# Windies tour: MyTeam11 is title sponsor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

MyTeam11, a fantasy sports platform, will be the title sponsor of India's upcoming tour of West Indies.

The tour will be called 'MyTeam11 International Series'.

The tour commences on August 3, when the first of three T20Is between the two sides is scheduled in Florida and will see a total of three T20s and ODIs each as well as two Test matches in a five-week period in the West Indies.

# Indians grab eight medals

Ashish Kumar bags his first international gold

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Asian Championships silver medallist Ashish Kumar on Saturday bagged his first international gold, even as Indian boxers finished their campaign with a rich haul of eight medals at Thailand Open International boxing tournament in Bangkok.

India finished with a gold, four silver and three bronze.

On the final day, the Indians who won silver were former world junior champion Nikhat Zareen (51kg), Asian Championships silver medallist Deepak (49kg), GeeBee Boxing silver medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg), and India Open silver medallist Brijesh Yadav (81kg).

Ashish (75kg) was in impeccable form and out-punched Korea's Kim Jinjae 5-0 for the biggest medal of his career, just two months after claiming a silver in the India Open.

Strandja Cup gold medallist Nikhat, who pocketed a bronze from the Asian Championships as well as the India Open, faced a tough opponent in Asian Games gold medallist Chang Yuan.

The Chinese proved too strong for Nikhat as the Telegana pugilist was handed a 5-0 blow.

In 56kg, reigning India Open champion Chatchai Decha Butdee of Thailand continued his fine form to inflict a 5-0 defeat on Hussamuddin while Uzbekistan's Mirzakhabedov Nodirjon proved a tall order for Deepak in 49kg.

In 81kg, Brijesh Yadav gave his all but was edged 1-4 by Thailand's Anawat Thongkratok amidst some vociferous support for the home supporters.

Earlier, Strandja Cup silver medallist Manju Rani (48kg) failed to breach the barrier of Thailand's former World Championships bronze medallist Chuthamat Raksat and had to be content with the bronze.

Ashish (69kg) and Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg) are the others who brought bronze for India.

While Ashish succumbed to a 1-4 defeat to Thailand's former Asian Games champion Wuttichai Masuk, Kachari was outplayed 0-5 by China's Rio Olympic bronze medallist Li Qian.

# Will provide the athlete's perspective: Narang

Rijiju forms high-level panel to oversee Olympic preparations

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM HYDERABAD

London Olympics bronze medallist and ace shooter Gagan Narang is one of only two Olympians (besides tennis great Leander Paes) on the high-level committee appointed by Union Sports Ministry Kiren Rijiju to oversee, support, coordinate and strategise preparations of Indian athletes for the 2020 and 2024 Olympics.

The Committee, chaired by Rijiju, comprises Sports Secretary Radheyshyam Julaniya, IOA president Narinder Batra, IOA secretary-general Rajeev Mehta, Athletics

Federation of India president Adille Sumariwalla, Boxing Federation of India president Ajay Singh as members and Talent Olympic Podium Scheme CEO Cdr. Rajesh Rajagopalan as convener.

Objective

"The objective of the committee is to ensure the performance of Indian athletes is optimised at the Olympics and other multi-disciplinary events," says Gagan in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"For the Tokyo Games next year, the task includes advising and ensuring sup-



Gagan Narang. **FILE PHOTO**

tion among all stakeholders," he said.

"And, for the 2024 Paris Olympics, the focus will be on charting out a road map, continuous review and suggesting corrective measures, ensuring coordination among stakeholders," Gagan said. "I will draw from my experience of four Olympics to provide inputs," the star shooter said.

"Leander and I being the only Olympians on the panel, we can give bring the athlete's perspective, given that we have ourselves gone through the process," he said.