



## Semenya to miss Doha Worlds

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Caster Semenya will not defend her world 800m title in Doha in September after a Swiss judge overruled a temporary suspension on the IAAF's controversial testosterone-curb rules, her representatives said on Tuesday.

The ruling means that the 28-year-old can no longer compete in events between the 400m and mile, as she did in June and July. The World Championships are scheduled between September 28 and October 6 in the Qatari capital.

"I am very disappointed to be kept from defending my hard-earned title, but this will not deter me from continuing my fight for the human rights of all of the female athletes concerned," said the South African, also a two-time Olympic gold medalist.

Dorothee Schramm, the lawyer leading Semenya's appeal, added that the judge had made a "procedural decision" that has no impact on the appeal itself. "We will continue to pursue Caster's appeal. A race is always decided at the finish line."



Caster Semenya. • AP

# 'Need to prove my worth again'

Nine months after a bad knee injury, Sunil is back in the mix

## HOCKEY

SHREEDUTTA CHIDANANDA  
BENGALURU

S.V. Sunil is a relieved man. There was a time, not that long ago, when he wondered if his career as an Indian hockey international was over. But, nine months after suffering a severe knee injury in Bhubaneswar, Sunil is back in the scheme of things.

Last week, he was named in the Indian team for the Tokyo Olympics Test Event; it came as a reward for months of hard work and painful rehabilitation on the sidelines. When Sunil was left out of the Indian side for the FIH Men's Series Finals in June, there were doubts about his future in the set up. But now, the 30-year-old from Somwarpet is keen to make every chance count.

"I'm feeling happy," he says at the SAI here. "My first target was to get back into the team after injury. Hockey India and the team management have now given me a chance. I need to prove my worth again."

It was in October last year

that Sunil injured his left knee (a grade three LCL tear), during a training camp in the lead-up to the World Cup in Bhubaneswar. He then watched, hobbling around on crutches, as Odisha put on a grand spectacle before the world. "It was my dream to play in a home World Cup," he says. "I was very hurt. I had worked so hard. But there was nothing I could do."

### Strenuous rehabilitation

Robin Arkell, Scientific Advisor to the men's team, put Sunil on a strict strength and conditioning routine. Life was difficult at the beginning. He was on crutches for two months, and the lack of exercise told on his body. He put on seven kilos, with his body fat percentage rising from 7.5 to 12. When Sunil, a forward renowned for his speed, did finally start running again, it felt "as if someone was sitting on my back."

Sunil could run only in straight lines at first; to turn and twist at pace would be to risk damaging the knee ligaments again.

"I felt I had fallen far behind the rest of my teammates," he says. "I was feeling really low. It hurt to sit at home when tournaments were going on. But I used that as motivation."

### To quit or not...

The thought of bidding hockey goodbye did cross his mind, he admits. "This is my second major injury. I had injured my right knee earlier. So at one point I wondered if I had had enough. But I spoke to my coaches, and to close friends like Sreejesh and Birendra Lakra who came to visit me every day. They told me that there was still a lot of hockey left in me. Even my family urged me not to give up. Self-belief was important," he says.

A one-on-one meeting with chief coach Graham Reid proved to be reassuring.

"He was positive about my future," says Sunil. "He assured me that everyone would get a chance, but that proving myself was in my hands. That was enough for me."



Raring to go: S.V. Sunil is looking forward to making his mark in India colours again. • FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

## Delay in getting clearance costs men's team dear

SRFI officials say they tried their best to have a meeting with SAI

## SQUASH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

An administrative blunder by the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) has denied the National men's team a chance to compete in the World Championship in Washington from December 15 to 21.

It is learnt that the SRFI officials were not able to get the necessary clearances in time from the Sports Authority of

India (SAI) for the biennial event. "The SRFI was not able to have a meeting with SAI and that is why the approval did not come. It is really sad that the players have to bear the brunt for this," said a source.

### Clearing the air

The National federation, however, claimed that it had tried its best to get SAI's approval. "The last date for submitting India's entry was July 16 and the SRFI had written

to the SAI a little over a month ago (June 14) for approval. "The Federation had, in fact, submitted its Annual Calendar for Training and Competitions (ACTC) to the SAI as

early as January 2019 when the participation in the World championship was mentioned.

"However, no ACTC meeting was called for in the subsequent months – from February to April – when such delay does not normally take place.

"The meeting happened only on July 30 by which time the championship last date had elapsed," said an SRFI statement.

India was not exactly a title

contender, but has a competitive men's team comprising World No. 10 Saurav Ghosal, 48th-ranked Ramit Tandon and 55th-ranked Mahesh Mangaonkar.

### First time in the U.S.

Defending champion Egypt is the favourite to lift the trophy as the United States gears up to host the event for the first time in its 52-year history. India, too, hosted the prestigious event once, back in 2007 in Chennai.

## Mayank, Umesh set to play against Windies-A

India-A will look to seal the series

## INDIA-A IN WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PORT OF SPAIN

Opener Mayank Agarwal and pacer Umesh Yadav will look to get into the groove when India-A takes on West Indies-A in the second unofficial 'Test' beginning here on Wednesday with an aim to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

With Shreyas Iyer and Navdeep Saini joining the senior team in the US for the T20s against West Indies, Test specialists like opener Mayank and speedster Yadav, who are already in the Caribbean, will play the second four-day game in their absence.

Both Mayank and Umesh are part of India's squad for the Tests against the West Indies.

Earlier, Mayank was picked in the 'A' squad only for the third unofficial 'Test' from August 6 before joining

the senior team for the series opener beginning on August 22.

The six-wicket win for India-A in the series opener was mainly down to the efforts of bowlers, especially left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem, who took five wickets in both the innings. Pacer Mohammad Siraj too was amongst the wickets, taking five in total.

The game will be another opportunity for Shubman Gill to make a statement after being overlooked for the West Indies series. Both Gill and Priyank Panchal got starts in the first game but could not convert.

The biggest positive to have come out of the game was the performance of comeback man Wriddhiman Saha, who looked good with bat and behind the stumps.

Captain Hanuma Vihari did not get going in the series opener and he would like to get a big one ahead of the Test series.



Dress rehearsal: A good outing will keep Mayank Agarwal in good stead for the first Test. • GARETH COPLEY/GETTY IMAGES

## Bancroft will have to face the music: Langer

## THE ASHES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BIRMINGHAM

Australia coach Justin Langer says an Ashes return for Cameron Bancroft would be "a great story" but knows he will face a hostile reception from England fans after his ball-tampering ban.

Bancroft, 26, is set to open the batting in Thursday's first Test at Edgbaston, with Australia's top-order also likely to feature David Warner and Steve Smith.

### The 'real' culprit

If that is the case, it would

mean all three players who were banned for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last year would be in Australia's XI.

Smith and Warner have already experienced plenty of boos from English crowds during the recent World Cup.

Bancroft, not selected for the World Cup, will almost certainly experience more of the same given he was the one who actually applied sandpaper to the ball during a Test in South Africa.

"It would be a great story if he comes back into the team," Langer said at Edg-

baston on Tuesday. "His development after what happened in Cape Town has been extraordinary."

Langer, a former Australia opener, said: "We know what the reception is going to be. There's nothing we can do about it. We don't know (how he will cope) actually, but we'll find out.

"He's a good kid and as tough as anyone you could meet. To endure the scrutiny of the past 14 months, especially the first part of it, I think he's had a pretty good dress rehearsal."

Langer confirmed batsman Usman Khawaja, who



Bancroft. • AP

missed Australia's World Cup semifinal against England with a hamstring injury, had been passed fit; fast bowler James Pattinson is also set to play in the opener.

## Defenders wary of raider Rishank

The catchers of U Mumba, his former team, lie in wait

## PKL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR  
MUMBAI

Rishank Devadiga's raiding ability in do-or-die situations makes him a rage in the Pro-Kabaddi League.

As per competition rules, two passive forays without gaining any point must be followed by pro-active action on a team's part and the chosen raider needs to take risks and try to gain a point somehow.

The tall international knows how to get things done, convert pressure to earn a raid point and boost the team's morale.

Rivals are wary of him and teammates know he does not let them down. After three electrifying seasons with U Mumba, the Mumbai-born player returns to a one-time home venue, the NSCI indoor stadium, though he is representing rival side UP Yoddhas in season seven.

### Highly talented

Formerly a successful captain for Maharashtra at the Senior Nationals, he has this capability of snatching do-or-die raid points against de-



Slipping away: Yoddha's Rishank Devadiga has the potential to pull off points in do-or-die situations. • FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

fenders, waiting for the slightest mistake.

Fazel Atrachali and Sandeep Narwal, operating as left and right corner catchers for U Mumba, will face a stern test against a former teammate who is coming back from injury, which forced UP Yoddhas to rest the raider during the first leg.

Rishank, a crowd-puller at the NSCI during his stint with U Mumba (2014-2016), returned to the Yoddhas fold for a lower amount (₹61 lakh in player auction 2019 as against ₹1.11 crore in 2018).

The change in value, however, will have no effect on

his popularity with the Mumbai fans.

### Yoddha chases first win

Incidentally, U Mumba is the only team to have played four matches (two wins, two losses) so far. UP Yoddhas, on the other hand, chases its first win in two games.

Haryana Steelers will face off against Jaipur Pink Panthers in an earlier game, before the roar in the stands heralds the entry of U Mumba on to the playing arena for the second tie.

Rishank can expect applause from the fans when the league resumes at the NSCI after Tuesday's break.

## Bhupathi & Co. seek assurance on security

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Indian tennis players are "excited and available" to travel to Pakistan for the upcoming Davis Cup tie, but want assurance that all the security measures will be in place before they reach Islamabad.

All the players, except for the injured Sumit Nagal, are available for the tie, scheduled for September 14 and 15 in the capital city of Pakistan.

The squad, likely to be led by No. 1 singles player Prajnesh Gunneswaran, will be first from the country to travel to the neighbouring nation in 55 years.

It has been learnt that Bhupathi has also written a letter to the All India Tennis Association (AITA), asking about the squad's safety and security during its stay.

AITA general-secretary Hironmoy Chatterjee said he had answered the queries raised by the captain. "Yes he had some questions and we have replied to him," he said.

