Shaw hits a road bump, gets suspended

Promising India opener banned till November 15 for 'inadvertent' violation, along with two others

DOPE TAINT

AMOL KARHADKAR

Promising India opening batsman Prithvi Shaw has been suspended till November 15 for inadvertently violating the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI's) anti-doping norms by consuming an over-the-counter cough syrup in February this

In a statement released on Tuesday, the BCCI confirmed that Shaw has been suspended for eight months after being found to have ingested terbutaline, a substance prohibited under the BCCI antidoping regulations (ADR), during Mumbai's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign in Indore in February.

The BCCI also sanctioned Akshay Dullarwar, Vidarbha's Under-23 cricketer, and Rajasthan Under-19 cricketer Divya Gajraj for inadvertent violations of its anti-doping policy.

Backdated

"The eight-month period of Ineligibility will be deemed to have started to run on 16th March 2019, so that it will end at midnight on 15th November 2019," the statement read. "... Mr. Shaw may return to train with his State team and/or to use the facilities of any club or other member organisation of the BCCI after midnight on 15th September 2019."

According to the detailed decision document signed by Dr. Abhijit Salvi, BCCI's antidoping manager, Shaw's urine sample collected after Mumbai's game against Punjab at Indore on February 22 returned positive.

"The BCCI is satisfied with Mr. Shaw's explanation that he had taken Terbutaline inadvertently to treat an Respiratory Tract Infection and not as a performance-enhancing drug. Having considered all of the evidence and taken expert external advice, the BCCI has accepted Mr. Shaw's explanation of the cause of his ADRV and, on that basis, has agreed that a period of ineligibility of eight months should apply, together with disqualification of certain results," read the statement.

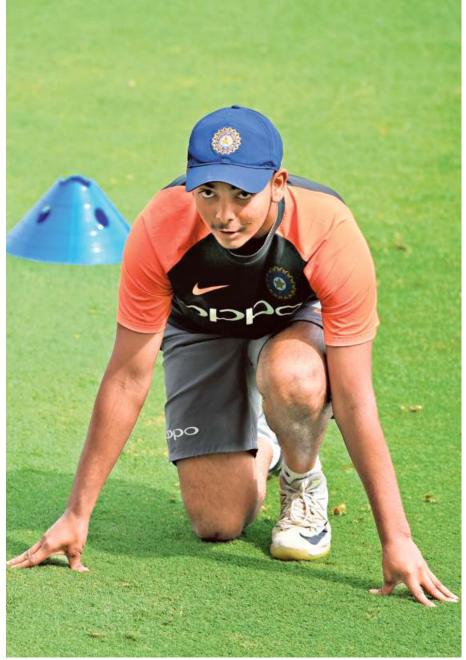
According to the detailed document, Shaw, suffering from cough, consulted his father over phone who advised him to seek a pharmacist's advice for a cough syrup. Shaw then bought a cough syrup over the counter and didn't check for its antidoping compliance. As a result, the BCCI was lenient on Shaw for unknowingly ingesting a banned substance.

Latest setback

The doping episode is the latest setback in a series of blows for Shaw, who has been on a downhill ever since marking his Test debut as a teenager with a scintillating hundred against the West Indies in Rajkot in October 2018. Then, Shaw suffered an ankle injury during a tour game ahead of India's Test series in Australia in November.

Shaw was sent back home midway through the series, fuelling speculation over his over-the-top lifestyle having affected his recovery. After returning to the field during the Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the Indian Premier League, Shaw last featured in a competitive match during the Mumbai T20 League in May.

The episode also exposes the lack of anti-doping training to Indian cricketers. A First Class regular for Mumbai, India Under-19 captain and a Test entrant last year, Shaw consulting an unknown pharmacist during a tournament is surprising. That too, when he was with the Mumbai team, when he should have first consulted the team doctor and the manager.



Turbulent times: For Prithvi Shaw, the punishment for the doping offence follows an extended period of injury woes. • FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Awe and shock

2013: Making waves on Mumbai's inter-school circuit since he was eight, Shaw plunders a record 546 runs off 330 balls in an inter-school game for Rizvi Springfield. The same year, the 13-year-old led the Mumbai under-16 team in BCCI matches

2017: His transition to the big league is smooth. Begins with a hundred on his First Class debut for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Tamil Nadu at Rajkot. Smashes a century on Duleep Trophy debut and ends the year with

a hundred against West Indies at Raikot. Gets the nod for the high-profile

series in Australia November 2018: Twists ankle while attempting a

catch during a tour game

three hundreds in his first

Ranii season. Has five

February 2018: Leads

from the front as India

Cup in New Zealand.

Tallies 261 runs at an

average of 65.25

lifts the Under-19 World

October 2018: Bursts on

to the Test scene with

before turning 18

A prolonged rehab brings First Class hundreds even into focus his attitude and May 2019: A topsy-turvy IPL campaign for Delhi

down under.

Daredevils is followed by skipper Shaw showing the way in his franchise's T20 Mumbai triumph, Hurts hip during the course of

July 2019: Is banned till November 15 for an inadvertent doping violation at the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in February, his comeback

Out of eagerness to play, I didn't follow the protocol of being careful in consuming a basic over the counter cough syrup... I have to take this in my stride and hope it inspires others in our sports fraternity too in India that we as athletes need to be extremely careful in taking any medicine for the smallest of medical ailments even if the medicine is available over the counter... Cricket is my life and there is no bigger pride for me than playing for India and Mumbai and I will come out of this faster and stronger

Attention shifts to new faces in the T20I mix

An opportunity for them to establish their skill sets, for me to get them together, says Kohli

INDIA IN WI

AMOL KARHADKAR

After an intense spell of virtually non-stop ODI action on either side of the Indian Premier League (IPL), many would have thought that allformat regulars would be given a break for the limitedover leg of India's series against the West Indies, starting August 3.

But seven of the the 15 cricketers who boarded a flight on Monday night for the three-match T20 series had featured in India's World Cup campaign.

More than these seven, the next couple of weeks will be vital for the eight players who have been on the fringe of India's white-ball squad for a while

They would be eager to make a statement as India starts its long road of preparation ahead of the next year's World T20I, to be played in Australia in Octob-

Of the eight, Shreyas Iyer and Manish Pandey were in contention for a middle-order slot for the World Cup before they fell off the radar; Krunal Pandya and Washington Sundar have been tried out for the the spin-bowling allrounder's spot in T20Is; and Khaleel Ahmed and Deepak Chahar have been back-up seamers in whiteball cricket for more than a year now.

The only two new faces right-arm pacer Navdeep Saini and leggie Rahul Chahar - would be more than keen on continuing their IPL and India-A exploits in the India jersey.

Huge boost

Captain Virat Kohli and his deputy in white-ball formats Rohit Sharma's presence will be a huge boost for the relatively young bunch. The two will keep a close watch on the newcomers.

After all, not only does the West Indies tour kick off the World T20I preparation but it also signifies the beginning of the new World Cup



Stage set: Khaleel Ahmed, India's back-up seamer for some time, will be keen to grab the chance with both hands and come to the forefront. • FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Manish Pandey.

I think it is an important time to regroup and come together as a side

cycle in ODIs. Kohli had no qualms in admitting it on Monday evening.

"From the point of view of us not making it to the final of the World Cup and bowing out (in the semifinals), I think it is an impor-

T20Is schedule

Aug. 3: Lauderhill (Florida) Aug. 4: Lauderhill (Florida) Aug. 6: Providence

(Rhode Island) All games at 8 p.m. IST

come together as a side," Kohli said.

tant time to regroup and

Need to move on "There is a T20 World Cup next year, there is always so-

mething to look forward. "I know we were all disappointed with not going through to the final and probably winning the World

"But you have to move on and you to have accept defeat as well and look forward to new things. It is an opportunity for them to establish + their skill sets, for me as a captain to have new players in the side and get them to-

I think international cricket always presents you with opportunities and challenges which I always look forward to."

Test cricket's milestone seeks to get rid of a millstone

The first experiment with 'world' Test championship in 1912 was anything but a success



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

The contest has been postponed earlier. Test cricket in Australia is in some disgrace. For a tournament in England involving the best international teams, the rules appear strange. In the end, England win. This is not 2019, but 1912, when a 'world' Test championship (it was known simply as the Triangular series) was held. It was such a disaster that only eight decades later was such a

concept discussed again. This week, England and Australia inaugurate the championship. Soon India will play the West Indies, New Zealand take on Sri Lanka and so on as the top nine countries play 72 matches over 27 series to decide the champions. The five-day game crosses a milestone while

getting rid of the millstone of 1912. That year, all three countries then playing Test cricket - England, Australia and South Africa - played nine Tests to decide the winners in a tournament proposed by the South African businessman Abe Bailey. 1912 was a wet summer to begin with. Australia didn't field their best team and South Africa were not good enough. Wisden predicted that it was an experiment that would not be repeated soon.

Scrappy affair

The Australian board was in a dispute with its players over money, and six top stars pulled out of the tour. Skipper Clem Hill and selector Peter McAlister came to blows at one point. "You've been looking for a bloody punch in the

jaw all night," said Hill, "and I'll give vou one." The action went on for some 20 minutes before the men broke away and attended to their injuries. Then thev sat down to pick the team. It needed some serious work since Australia had lost the previous series (at home) 1-4 to England.

But there was no compromise and Australia came to England with a weakened team. No Hill, no Victor Trumper, no Warwick Armstrong. Cricket in Australia, wrote the historian H.S. Altham, was "vitiated by vindictiveness, jealousy and mutual mistrust." Sometimes history repeats itself with remarkable

South Africa lost the first two matches by an innings, and only once did they manage 200. In the team was the Natalborn Charles Llewellyn, who might have been the first non-White to play for that country. He was, the story goes, tormented by teammate Jimmy Sinclair (among others), the leading batsman of the side. Years later, Llewellyn's daughter wrote that her father had no coloured blood (so to speak). When India first toured South Africa, Omar Henry was anointed the first non-White to play for them.

The Triangular series soon ran into another problem. Wisden 1913 wrote: "As no decision had been made prior to the tournament on how the winner would be decided, it was agreed that the final match would be played to a finish even if it takes a week." But four days were enough, as England, 245 and 175, beat Australia 111 and 65, by 244 runs. Had there been a Man-of-the-Match award then, Frank Woolley would have won for his 62 and match figures of 10 for 49.

Wisden's proposal

It was Wisden, eight decades later, which gave breath to the idea once

again. By the mid-90s, there were nine Test-playing countries, and when Matthew Engel, the editor, called for a Test championship, the so-called 'Wisden Plan' was well received.

Engel's plan envisaged a single Test home and away. That was modified to a four year cycle where the semifinalists met in England to decide the winners. The tournament in 2017 was to be held in England, and in 2021 in India. The ICC decided that in the period between the championships, each team should play at least 16 Tests. But there was always something artificial and gimmicky about that format.

The broad plan – that of playing a world Test championship - was acceptable, but the details had to be worked

The allure of a champion team in sport is irresistible. It is what television executives live for, what they say attracts new audiences, gives the fans something else to argue over and lends a focus to team preparations.

There is too the lure of having a world champion in each of the three formats of the game. Then there is the matter of context; Tests become important in themselves and as part of the bigger picture too.

Once it was agreed that the championship and the future tours programme would work in tandem, things became simpler. There would be a points system.

The top nine countries will now play six series - three at home and three away – over a two-year cycle, with the top two finishers playing the final at Lord's. India and Pakistan are not scheduled to meet in the first two editions of the tournament.

It is not a perfect system, but Test cricket cannot let the best be the enemy of the good. An imperfect plan is better than no plan at all.

Mavericks pulverise Paltan

Matilda and Sanil play key roles in the 11-4 win

UTT

RAKESH RAO NEW DELHI

It took two left-handers, Swede Matilda Ekholm and Sanil Shetty, to bring back RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata, on the right track in the Ultimate Table Tennis League

here on Tuesday. After a 4-11 drubbing at the hands of Goa Challengers, Mavericks needed a big win over formidable Puneri Paltan. As it turned out, each of Mavericks players pitched in and set up an impressive 11-4 victory.

Indeed, the line-up worked in favour of Mavericks as the overseas players clashed early on before the all-India clashes went to its liking.

Great start

Riding on a 3-0 start given by Matilda, Mavericks added two more when Bendikt Duda surprised Chuang Chih-Yuan 2-1. Sanil and Matilda came together to add two more points by defeating Harmeet Desai and Sabine

Trailing 2-7, Paltan looked at skipper Desai to tame underdog Shetty but that was not to be. With Desai under pressure, Shetty rallied to win 2-1, claiming 'golden point' twice in succession.

Thereafter it was left to Commonwealth Games gold medallist Manika Batra to increase the winning margin.

Facing the newly-Commonwealth crowned champion Ayhika Mukherjee, Manika raced away with the first but dropped the 'golden-point' in the second. In the decider, Manika never trailed.

Matilda, ranked 25th, expectedly blanked 62ndranked Sabine Winter to take her win-tally to three in as many encounters against the German this year. She grew stronger with every passing game and eventually left Sabine exasperated.

Thereafter it was the turn of 53rd-ranked Benedikt Duda to produce what was clearly the performance of this season. Facing 28thranked Chaung, Duda fired on both flanks, played with astounding rhythm and pulled off the first two games. In the third, Chaung

The 1-2 reverse in the mixed doubles deflated Paltan once Shetty and Matilda. both playing with a lefthanded partner for the first time, bounced back from a game's deficit. Thereafter, Paltan caved in under mounting pressure.

gained some consolation.

The results: RP-SG Mavericks, Kolkata bt Puneri Paltan 11-4 (Matilda Ekholm bt Sabine Winter 11-9, 11-5, 11-6; Benedikt Duda bt Chuang Chih-Yuan 11-6, 11-4, 8-11; Sanil Shetty & Matilda bt Harmeet Desai & Sabine 6-11, 11-8, 11-9; Shetty lost to Desai 8-11, 11-10, 11-10; Manika Batra bt Ayhika Mukherjee 11-3, 10-11, 11-7).

Wednesday's fixture: Chennai Lions v Goa Challengers (7



Left is right: Southpaws Matilda Ekholm and Sanil Shetty proved unbeatable. ■COURTESY/UTT

Gough, Wilson in ICC elite umpires panel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The International Cricket Council on Tuesday named Michael Gough of England and Joel Wilson of the West Indies in the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires for 2019-20 season following the annual review and selection process.

They replace retired umpire Ian Gould and S. Ravi.

Bangladesh colts edge India

SPORTS BUREAU BILLERICAY

Bangladesh pipped India by two wickets and three balls to spare in their tri-series under-19 match here

on Tuesday. In a match interrupted by rain, India scored 221 for five in 36 overs. Qamran Iqbal (44), K.D. Pragnesh (53) and skipper Dhruv Jurel (70) were the major contributors.

In reply, Bangladesh, facing a revised target of 218 in 32 overs, scampered home in the final over, thanks to captain Akbar Ali. He made an unbeaten 49 off 36 balls with five fours and two sixes. Opener Parvez Emon made 51. India under-19 221 for five

in 36 overs (Qamran Iqbal 44, K.D. Pragnesh 53, Dhruv Jurel 70) lost to Bangladesh 219 for eight in 31.3 overs (Parvez Emon 51, Akbar Ali 49 n.o., Sushant Mishra three for 47). Revised target: 218 from 32

A ND-NDE

Semenya to miss Doha Worlds

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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-curbing

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 medallist.

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

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 liga"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

Mayank, Umesh set to play against Windies-A

India-A will look to seal the series

INDIA-A IN WI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 T2Os 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
for Saha, who looked good with
est 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

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

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

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

■ The ACTC meeting took place only on July 30 by which time the last date to make it to the World championship had elapsed, according to an SRFI statement

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 wherein 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

World No. 10 Saurav Ghosal, 48th-ranked Ramit Tandon and 55th-ranked Mahesh Mangaonkar.

contender, but has a compet-

itive men's team comprising

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.

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 Edgbaston 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 talentedFormerly a successful cap-

tain for Maharashtra at the Senior Nationals, he has this capability of snatching door-die raid points against de-



to pull of 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

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 Mum-

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

ba on to the playing arena

for the second tie.

Bhupathi & Co. seek assurance on security

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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.

TV PICKS

Sri Lanka v Bangladesh: 3rd ODI, Sony Six (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m. UTT: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.

PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), GT20: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 10 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Red Bull breaks own pit stop record

Winner Max Verstappen and Red Bull beat their own record for a pit stop at last weekend's German Grand Prix, Formula 1 partners DHL tweeted on Monday. Teammate Pierre Gasly's 1.90 seconds at Silverstone earlier this month was pipped by Verstappen's 1.88 seconds in Hockenheim on Sunday. "Incredible! Another new pit stop world record! Well done, @redbullracing!" the company that sponsors a fastest pit stop award, tweeted. AFP



Arthur likely to remain Pakistan coach

Despite Pakistan's failure to make it to the knockout stage of cricket World Cup 2019, Mickey Arthur is most likely to retain his position as head coach, at least till the 2020 World T20. On August 2, the Pakistan Cricket Board cricket committee will review the World Cup performance, for which Arthur has already arrived in Lahore. Victories at the 2017 Champions Trophy and Pakistan's top ranking in T20Is under Arthur are likely to work in his favour, according to sources. IANS

HCL international bridge championship

The 17th HCL international bridge championship, offering a total prize of ₹1.8 crore, will be staged at the JW Marriott Hotel in Aerocity from August

About 170 teams are expected to compete in the championship this year, including 15 international teams. India had won the Commonwealth Championship gold apart

from the Asian Games bronze last year.

Olympic champion Abhinav Bindra will be the chief guest for the prize presentation.



Drug-tainted swimmer

faces four-year ban Australian swimmer Shavna Jack has been notified that she faces a four-year suspension after testing positive to a banned drug, unless she can prove her innocence, a report said on Tuesday. Jack, part of Australia's 4x100m freestyle team that set a World record last year, tested positive for Ligandrol out of competition late last month. The Daily Telegraph said the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority had told Jack she would receive a four-year suspension. The 20-year-old will be able to contest the

Sherco TVS' Metge wins **Baja Aragon rally**

TERUEL (SPAIN) Sherco TVS Rally Factory Team's Michael Metge continued his strong form on day two to win the 36th edition of Baja Aragon. This is the second time the Sherco TVS Rally Factory team has won the Baja Aragon rally. Michael's teammates Lorenzo and Harith finished fourth and seventh respectively. Aishwarya Pissay came in fifth in the Baja women's category.

Venugopala Rao calls it quits

One of only two players from Andhra to have played for India

CRICKET

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

Former India player and Andhra Ranji captain, Y. Venugopala Rao, announced his retirement from all forms of cricket on Tuesday.

Venu, as he is more familiar in cricketing circles, played for India in 16 ODIs and 65 IPL matches for Deccan Chargers, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Daredevils.

He is one of only two players from Andhra Cricket Association to have played for India (the other being current BCCI senior selection panel chairman M.S.K. Prasad). He also represented Gujarat and Rajasthan in the Ranji Trophy.

Memorable journey

The 37-year-old Visakhapatnam-born cricketer, who played a key role in the emergence of Andhra as a force to reckon with in domestic cricket, was a consistent performer in all BCCI tournaments, including Deodhar, Vijay Hazare and Challenger Trophy, which saw him make his ODI debut against Sri Lanka on July 30, 2005.

One of the high points of his career was the unbeaten 228 for South Zone against the visiting England-A in a Duleep Trophy match in Gurgaon which helped the team chase down the fourth-



Calling time: Venugopala Rao played a key role in the emergence of Andhra as a force to reckon with in domestic cricket. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

highest First Class target of

He was also a member of the India under-19 World

Cup winning team in 2000. A middle-order batsman with the ability to play the long innings and an occasional off-break bowler, Venu was also an exceptional

Later on, he became a Te-

lugu TV commentator.

The Andhra Cricket Association appreciated his contribution to Andhra cricket and wished him success in his future endeavours.

Double ton against England-A the highlight: Venugopala

Thanks IPL franchises that vested faith in his abilities

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

"The double century against England-A in the 2004 Duleep Trophy match was the

best moment of my life. "It gave me the kind of recognition I was looking for and pushed my case for a slot in the Indian team," says Y. Venugopala Rao, who announced his retirement from all forms of cricket on

'No regrets'

Tuesday.

"I have no regrets and clearly enjoyed my long career, for which I am grateful to the Andhra Cricket Association," he told The Hindu on

Venugopala's numbers

ODIs: 16 Runs: 218 Avg.: 24.22 50s: **1** First Class matches: 121 Runs: 7081 Avg.: 40.93 100s: **17**; 50s: **30**

"Coming from such a small place like Gajuwaka in Visakhapatnam and going on to play for the country is a journey I will cherish forever," he said.

"I am also grateful to the IPL franchise owners of Dec-

can Chargers, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Daredevils for giving me that kind of platform and especially to V.V.S. Laxman who is like my elder brother," he said.

He also said he owed a lot in his career to MRF, Chen-

"At MRF I had the chance to face some of the best fast bowlers in the nets and that helped me improve as a batsman," he said.

"And, I am still associated with MRF even after two decades and am really grateful to them," he said.

"One day it (cricketing career) had to come to an end. Right now, I'm not sure what I can do post-retirement."

Prajnesh in second round

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU LOS CABOS (MEXICO)

Prajnesh Gunneswaran beat John Millman of Australia 6-4, 1-6, 6-2 in the first round of the \$858,565 ATP tennis tournament here.

However, in doubles prequarterfinals, Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and Purav Raja were beaten 6-3, 6-3 by Gregoire Barrere and Lucas Puille of France.

In the ITF women's event in Thailand, Rutuja Bhosale cruised into the pre-quarterfinals with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over Tamachan Momkoonthod of Thailand.

The results: \$858,565 ATP, Los Cabos, Mexico: Singles (first round): Prajnesh Gunneswaran bt John

Millman (Aus) 6-4, 1-6, 6-2. Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Gregoire Barrere & Lucas Pouille (Fra) bt Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Purav Raja 6-3,

\$135,400 Challenger, Cheng-

du, China: Singles (first round): Toshihide Matsui (Jpn) bt Manish Sureshkumar 7-6(5), 6-4.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Arjun Kadhe & Saketh Myneni w/o Blake Ellis (Aus) & Brydan Klein (GBr)

\$25,000 ITF, Nonthaburi, Thailand:

Men: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Niki Poonacha & Abhinav Sanieev Shanmugam bt Yuttana Charoenphon & Charles Roberts (Tha) 4-6, 7-6(5), [11-9]. Women: Singles (first round): Rutuja Bhosale bt Tamachan Momkoonthod (Tha) 6-4, 6-1,

Sindhu pulls out of Thailand Open, Saina returns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BANGKOK

Top Indian shuttler P.V. Sindhu has withdrawn from the Thailand Open but compatriot Saina Nehwal will return to the circuit in the BWF Super 500 event here after missing out back-toback tournaments.

Sindhu, who reached the final of the Indonesia Open but lost in the Japan Open quarterfinals last week, will not take the court in the Thailand Open main draw,

which begins on Wednesday. She had lost to Akane Yamaguchi of Japan in both the previous tournaments. The reasons for her withdrawal from the event here are not clear yet.

Saina, seeded seventh, will open her campaign against a qualifier on Wednesday. She was forced to withdraw from both the Indonesia and Japan Open on medical grounds.

Qualifies

Meanwhile, Sourabh Verma and Sai Uttejitha Rao Chukka qualified on Tuesday foi the main draw.

Sourabh beat Kantawat Leelavechabutr of Thailand 21-18, 21-19 in the first round before defeating Zhou Ze Qi of China 11-21, 21-14, 21-18. Zhou had defeated Ajay Jayaram 16-21, 13-21 to set up the match against Sourabh.

Uttejitha beat Tam Brittney of Canada 16-21, 21-14, 21-

Thrilling win for Anjum-Arjun combine

The duo wards off Mehuli & Abhinav in an exciting mixed air rifle event

SHOOTING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Mehuli Ghosh and Abhinav Shaw made a spectacular fightback before Anjum Mudgil and Arjun Babuta closed it out for a 16-12 victory in the mixed air rifle team competition in the 12th Sardar Sajjan Singh Sethi Masters shooting championship at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Tuesday.

Anjum and Arjun led 12-0, before the Bengal pair won six of the next seven shots to bridge the gap to 14-12. The two-point difference also came about as Bengal had lost the ninth shot by 0.2

After a bad start, the young Abhinav found his touch to provide able support to the consistent Mehuli and this saw Bengal leap into contention.

However, Anjum shot 10.7 and Arjun had 10.4 to clinch



On target: The women's 25m sports pistol champion Pushpanjali Rana, centre, along with silver medallist Ruby Tomer, left, and Abhidnya Patil. • KAMESH SRINIVASAN

the last two points with ease, had tied on 28. as Mehuli and Abhinav shot

Pushpanjali proves

In women's 25-metre sports pistol, the seasoned Pushpanjali Rana of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) found her rhythm in the nick of time to beat back the challenge from Ruby Tomer of Punjab Police, winning the shoot-off 4-3 after the two

Ruby had led Pushpanjali 18-12 at one stage, but two perfect rounds of 5 each and a four put Pushpanjali on the track for gold.

The junior contest was more intense with Arunima Gaur winning the gold by beating Vishwa Jigneshbhai Dahiya 32-29. Abhidnya Patil won the bronze in both the women's and junior

In men's centre fire pistol,

Olympic Gurpreet Singh shot 585 to beat Arpit Goel and Yogesh Singh to the gold.

Arjun Singh Cheema won both the men's and junior gold medals in the 50-metre free pistol.

The results:

Men: 25m centre fire pistol: 1. — Gurpreet Singh 585, 2. Arpit Goel 583, 3. Yogesh Singh 582. 50m free pistol: 1. Arjun singh Cheema 570, 2. Anmol Jain 555, 3. Omkar Singh 553.

Juniors: 1. Arjun Singh Cheema 570, 2. Gaurav Rana 560, 3. Surinder Singh 548. Women: 25m sports pistol: 1.

Pushpanjali Rana 28(4) 574, 2 Ruby Tomer 28(3) 573 3. Abhid nya Patil 22 (571).

Juniors: 1. Arunima Gaur 32 (566), 2. Vishwa JIgneshbhai Dahiya 29 (561), 3. Abhidnya Patil 23 (571).

10m mixed air rifle team: 1. Punjab (Anjum Moudgil, Arjun Babuta) 16 (416.0; 625.6), 2. West Bengal (Mehuli Ghosh, Abhinav Shaw) 12 (416.6: 619.0). 3. Railways (Avonika Paul. Akhil Sheoran) 6 (415.1:

Fans to sue after Ronaldo sits out of Juventus friendly

The return: Saina Nehwal, seeded seventh, will open her

campaign against a qualifier on Wednesday. • FILE РНОТО

REUTERS

Football fans in South Korea are taking legal action to seek compensation after Cristiano Ronaldo failed to play in a friendly during Juventus' pre-season tour here last week. Ronaldo had been contracted to play at least 45 minutes against K League All Stars, according to event organisers The Fasta Inc, but ultimately sat out the entire game.

An online community was formed on South Korea's Naver web portal to protest Ronaldo's lack of participation, and two members reached out to lawyer Kim Min-ki to file a lawsuit against the match organisers. "Many purchased tickets

to see Ronaldo. The Fasta publicised that the company had a deal with Juventus which stipulated Ronaldo would play for at least 45 minutes and that Ronaldo would hold a fan signing event," Kim told Reuters. The lawsuit is seeking

compensation of 70,000

won for the ticket

commission fee, and 1

won (\$59) per ticket, 1,000

million won (\$847) each for compensation for "mental anguish".

'Normally in such cases the plaintiffs will be refunded the price of the tickets, but I put this under a special case since the company, through false advertising, took advantage of the football star's fans," Kim added. "For now we have two plaintiffs who sued the company. As for the mental anguish part, I'd like to say some of them are raucous fans. So for them it is very painful because they love Ronaldo and want to protect him, but they can't,

Fasta CEO Robin Chang confirmed to local broadcaster SBS that the contract stipulated Ronaldo play 45 minutes and said she found out that the 34-yearold would not take part 10

minutes into the second-

"When I went to argue with (Pavel) Nedved, the vice-president of Juventus, all he said was 'I also wish Ronaldo ran, but he doesn't want to. Sorry, there's nothing I can do.' I was so

frustrated," Chang told SBS. The Fasta issued a press release on Saturday saying Juventus did not abide by the terms of the contract.



Failing the fans: Fasta CEO Chang confirmed that the contract stipulated Ronaldo play 45 minutes but it was found out that he would not take part 10 minutes into the second-half. • AFP

US college scholarship tennis event

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The DreamBig silver series camp and UTR tennis tournament, for players in the 12-18 age group, will be staged at the Siri Fort Sports Complex from August 16 to 18.

Coaches from George Washington University, Davidson College and Bucknell University, will be attending the camp to look for promising players, for possible scholarship.

"If you want to showcase your talent and impress college tennis coaches, you have to travel to the US, which is a very expensive proposition. We are bringing college coaches to Delhi. You can participate in the camp at a fraction of the travel cost while working on that UTR score. You may be the one to win the big scholarship to play and study at one of the top Universities in the US," said Tushar Liberhan, a former top Indian junior who is organising the camp.

Another UTR event had been held in Ahmedabad and Sam Chawla and Kristi Boro have earned entry into the silver series camp.

Sahajasri ready for the next move

She became the first from Telangana to clinch the WIM title

CHESS

recently.

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD Ch. Sahajasri celebrated a milestone when she became the first from Telangana to get the coveted Woman International Master title at the Czech Republic Open

And the 23-year-old Sahajasri is already gunning for the next big one - the Grandmaster title.

"Yes, I have to sustain the level I have been playing at. It is imperative for me to take part in as many events as possible to win the GM title at the earliest," said Sahajasri in a chat with The Hindu on Tuesday.

"The target is to break the crucial ELO 2300 barrier (her ELO now is 2223). "For this, I need to train

hard and compete with the best," said the Karimnagarborn girl. "Frankly, the WIM title is

not a surprise, given my recent form. But bigger challenges lie ahead.

"As we move into the next grade of competition, it gets tougher," said Sahajasri,

who admires World cham-



The target: Ch. Sahajasri's next aim is to become a GM at the earliest. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tions.

Iam a much-improved

player ready to face bigger challenges

pion Magnus Carlsen. "For me, it boils down to the kind of financial support I can get to chase my dreams," said Sahajasri, who is also an MBA graduate, searching for a job.

At present, her father is trying to raise funds to ensure Sahajasri's passion for the

training methods. "I am a much-improved player ready to face bigger cluded.

sport does not diminish.

Sahajasri, meanwhile, is

keen on improving her mid-

dle and end-game skills

while she is comfortable

with her openings varia-

two-month break in online

coaching with Israeli coach

GM Victor Mikhalevski, I did

benefit a lot in the preceding

one year because of his

"Though there has been a

challenges now," she con-