

# A big boost to my confidence: Lakshya

The 18-year-old shocked second seed Victor Svendsen to clinch the Belgian title

## BADMINTON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Rising Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen is hoping to continue the consistency that fetched him the Belgian Open as he looks to break into top 50 in the World ranking, which will help him qualify for bigger tournaments next season.

The 18-year-old from Almora shocked second seed Victor Svendsen of Denmark in straight games to clinch the men's singles title at the Belgian International Challenge last Saturday.

"I think I played consistently well throughout the week and I'm happy with my

performance," Lakshya, who didn't drop a single game throughout the tournament, said. "This win will give me lots of confidence to do well in the coming tournaments," he said.

"This year I can play more tournaments than last year in the senior circuit and I hope to prepare well."

Playing his first full-fledged season in the senior circuit, Lakshya had broken into the top-100 in March this year. The Belgian Open win saw him jump 12 places to grab the World No 67th spot in the latest BWF ranking.

Lakshya is currently in Europe playing in the Danish League for Aarhus club.



Looking ahead: The Belgian Open win helped Lakshya Sen jump 12 places in World rankings.

FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

## The Lakshya file

Date of birth: 16/08/2001

Birthplace: Almora (Uttarakhand)

World ranking (men's singles): 67

BWF International Challenge/Series titles (5): Belgian Open, Tata Open, India International Series (2), Bulgarian Open

2016: Won the all-India ranking tournament, the youngest to do so

2018: Silver, Youth Olympics (Buenos Aires)

Gold, Asian junior tournament (Jakarta)

Bronze, World junior championship (Canada)

# India well placed to pick up the remaining seven Olympic quotas

Asian Championship in Doha offers final chance

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

While India was happy topping all the four World Cups in rifle and pistol this season in Delhi, Beijing, Munich and Rio, power house China was quietly collecting 25 Olympic quota places for Tokyo 2020.

Interestingly, world leader China's supremacy, as compared to nine Olympic quota won by India so far, should favour the Indian shooters when they make a final attempt for the Olympic berths in the Asian Championship in Doha, Qatar, in November.

## Bright chances

With China virtually out of the race in most of the events, having won maximum possible two quotas in each event, and Korea with 12 quotas so far, India will have bright chances to pick up the remaining seven

Olympic quotas that it is eligible to win, in the rifle and pistol events.

India has won the maximum possible two Olympic quotas in women's air rifle, men's air pistol and women's air pistol.

Thus, it should not matter much as to who shoots in these events in the Asian championship.

Of course, the Olympic quota-winners Saurabh Chaudhary and Abhishek Verma in men's air pistol, Anjum Moudgil and Apurvi Chandela in women's air rifle and Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Manu Bhaker in women's air pistol, top the averages.

## A tussle

Following the last set of selection trials, Sharvan Kumar has risen to the third spot in men's air pistol, Elavenil stays world No. 3 and the Indian No. 3 ahead of

Mehuli Ghosh in women's air rifle. It is a tussle between Olympian Annu Raj Singh and the 14-year-old Esha Singh for the third spot in women's air pistol, as the two are tied with an average of 577.67.

Two-time Olympian Heena Sidhu has slipped to the 16th spot with an average of 568.33 in air pistol.

The fact that Annu Raj figures third in women's sports pistol, behind quota-winners Rahi Sarnobat and Manu Bhaker, should see her make the cut in that event, along with Chinki Yadav and Neeraj Kaur. For, there are four Olympic quotas on offer in sports pistol in Doha, and India needs to add to the one won by Rahi.

Equally, India will aspire to win one or two Olympic quotas from the four available in the men's 25-metre rapid fire pistol.

# Pugnacious Wade ever ready for a pay-back

The 'keeper-batsman' lifted his team's spirits with a typically Australian approach in the Ashes

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

With his scruffy appearance, combativeness and a penchant for exchanging words, Matthew Wade is a "fair dinkum Aussie".

You can picture him on the outback, living the hard life. The 31-year-old Wade, when handed a lifeline during an unforgettable Ashes series, breathed life into this Australian team.

It was not just about his gutsy left-handed batting against Jofra Archer's extreme pace or his two flamboyant Test hundreds under pressure or his sharp reflex catches close to the wicket.

## Feisty approach

Wade brought with him a feisty, typically Australian approach, often getting under the skin of the batsmen with his chatter from short-leg, or verbal duels with the bowlers, without crossing the line.

This was a refreshing

change from the Aussie methods against India at home when the side appeared 'soft', treading the safe path following Sandpapergate, the effects of which impacted Australia's attacking approach.

Yet, as Tim Paine's Aussies retained the Ashes with a 2-2 verdict in a gripping series, Wade's biggest contribution was in injecting the team with a dose of aggression. The Aussies, sledging on occasions, were their own selves again without employing offensive language.

And Wade, the orchestrator, was at the centre of it.

He was bound to be targeted by Archer. Wade, though, displayed character, withstanding a spell of brutal pace and venom from Archer during his counter-punching hundred at the Oval.

He was peppered with the short stuff, was struck on the shoulder, but did not flinch. When glared at by Archer, he glared back.

# Sahal wants to become the 'Indian Messi'

He is one of the youngsters blooded into the national team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Just seven matches old, midfielder Sahal Abdul Samad has already brought some fresh air into the Indian football team with his dribbling, feints and turns.

Not surprisingly, the youngster wants to mould himself like Argentine maestro Lionel Messi.

The 22-year-old from Kerala made an immediate impact in his debut match against Curacao in the King's Cup in June and within four months, he has become the midfield pivot of the Indian team.

"I love dribbling, gunning for a sprint and I love to do that wherever I play. I love to put through balls, penetrate the defence, attack with the ball. I'm a fan of Lionel Messi, I watch him a lot and try to learn as much as possible," Sahal said. "That's my way of playing."

Sahal is one of the youngsters blooded into the national team by new head coach Igor Stimac. He showed his



The pivot: Midfielder Sahal Abdul Samad has impressed with his dribbles and body feints. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

talent while turning out for Indian Super League club Kerala Blasters where he has been playing for the last two years. He did not, however, make it to India's final squad for the Asian Cup in January.

Naturally, he is loving Stimac's possession-based football, building from the back with neat passes and smooth transition to attacking.

"In modern football, it's all about keeping the ball and making the opponent run and get them tired. I, perso-

nally, and the whole team like the brand of football which we are playing," said the current Emerging Player of the Year for both the AIFF and the ISL.

"Supporters also continue to cheer for us - everyone has been enjoying our brand of football, which is a positive sign for us."

Sahal said India can surprise Oman in its own den and hope for a berth in the next round of the World Cup Qualifiers.

# U Mumba roars back

## PKL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR  
PUNE

Fazel Atrachali's empty raid was greeted with a roar by the U Mumba fans as the captain ran down the clock and took his team to a rousing 39-36 win over UP Yodha in their ProKabaddi League match at the Balewadi indoor stadium on Wednesday. The Iranian's guidance brought out the best in fellow catcher Surinder Singh and raider Abhishek Singh in a thrilling fightback.

Three all-outs, many Super Tackles, one Super Raid amidst frayed tempers and flying leaps resulted in an exciting contest. Yodha was in charge before the defenders cracked under pressure. Three catchers went out in an attempt to stop Abhishek (11 points). Surinder's bold tackles as right cover earned him six points.

The decibel levels rose when the second half start-

ed with U Mumba one point behind Yodha. With two all-outs in an action-packed first half, both squads with quality in their ranks raised the tempo. Yodha bounced back from four players down, Sachin Kumar managed a Super Tackle and Surinder returned the favour with a crunching Super Tackle.

Shrikant Jadhav and Rishank Devadiga, taking on former U Mumba teammates, did their bit before being overshadowed by the defence when an aggressive Surinder stood out.

The Yodha raiders and catchers worked in tandem right through the first half before losing the plot. Both teams remain in the race for the playoffs.

The results: U Mumba 39 (Abhishek Singh 11, Arjun Deswal 7, Surinder Singh 6) bt UP Yodha 36 (Rishank Devadiga 9, Shrikant Jadhav 8).

Purneri Patnan 36 (Manjeet 11, Pankaj Mohite 8, Amit Kumar 4) tied with Tamil Thalivas 36 (Ajith Kumar 18, Rahul Chaudhari 4, Shabeer Bapu 4).



In the thick of it: Surinder, right, shone for U Mumba.

# Advani in knockout stage

## WORLD 6-RED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MANDALAY (MYANMAR)

Top Indian cueist Pankaj Advani received top billing in the knockout stage of the IBSF World 6-Red Snooker Championship here on Wednesday.

Advani, who won the 150-up format at the IBSF World Billiards Championship last

week, had under a day to switch to snooker.

The 34-year-old was the only player in the championship to win all his group matches without dropping a frame.

He accounted for Myat Thu of Myanmar, Michael Schnabel of Germany and Rajan Lama of Nepal in identical fashion beating them all 4-0.

However, the elimination stages could pose a threat for Advani as he is likely to run into last year's finalist and a noteworthy competitor Thanawat Tirapongpaiboon of Thailand in the quarterfinals.

Other Indians in the final 32 include Anuj Uppal, Aditya Mehta, Laxman Rawat, Kamal Chawla and Pushpendar Singh.

# Saketh and Jeevan enter doubles quarterfinals

Ramkumar and partner advance in Glasgow

## INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU  
KAOHSIUNG, CHINESE TAIPEI

Saketh Myneni and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan combined well to get past the Aussies Alex Bolt and Jacob Grills 4-6, 6-4, 10-8 in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the \$162,480 Challenger tennis tournament here on Wednesday.

In the quarterfinals, the Indian pair will play the third seeded Taipei pair of Cheng-Peng Hsieh and Tsung-Hua Yang.

In the singles second round, however, Sasi Kumar Mukund was beaten 6-4, 6-1 by Marc Polmans.

Ramkumar Ramanathan made the doubles quarterfinals of the Challenger in Glasgow, in partnership with Marek Gengel of the Czech Republic.

The results: \$162,480 Challenger

ger, Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei: (second round): Marc Polmans (Aus) bt Sasi Kumar Mukund 6-4, 6-1. Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Saketh Myneni & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan bt Alex Bolt & Jacob Grills (Aus) 4-6, 6-4, [10-8].

€46,600 Challenger, Glasgow, United Kingdom: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Marek Gengel (Cze) & Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Scott Clayton & Lloyd Glasspool (GBR) 7-5, 7-6(7).

\$15,000 ITF men, Nanchang, China: (first round): Prithvi Sekhar bt Xian Yao Zhou (Chn) 4-6, 6-3, 6-4; Kaza Vinayak Sharma bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-1, 6-3. Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Luca Castelnuovo (Sui) & Anirudh Chandrasekar bt Nathasith Kunsuwan (Tha) & Rukai Wang (Chn) 6-2, 7-6(7); Poi Wattanakul (Tha) & Nitin Kumar Sinha bt Xiaoyu He & Changli Zhang (Chn) 6-2, 0-6, [10-8]; Kosuke Ogura & Ryota Tanuma (Jpn) bt Oleg Khotkov (Ukr) & Tarun Anirudh Chilaka-

lapudi 2-6, 6-3, [10-7].

\$15,000 ITF men, Cairo, Egypt: (first round): Simone Roncalli (Ita) bt Aryan Goveas 6-2, 3-0 (retired).

\$15,000 ITF men: Tabarka, Tunisia (first round): Zachary Eisinga (Ned) bt Kabir Gupta 6-0, 6-0.

\$15,000 ITF men, Antalya, Turkey (first round): Michael Vrbensky (Cze) bt Adil Kalyanpur 6-4, 6-1. Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Kelsey Stevenson (Can) & Adil Kalyanpur bt Gabriele Bosio & Carlo Alberto Fossati (Ita) 6-2, 6-2.

\$15,000 ITF men, Anning, China: (first round): Meiqi Guo (Chn) bt Soha Sadiq 6-4, 6-1; Zhibek Kulambayeva (Kaz) bt Sowjanya Bavisetti 2-6, 6-3, 6-4. Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Oleksandra Oliynykova (Cro) & Sowjanya Bavisetti bt Eun Se Jang (Kor) & Nikita Ubeiro (US) 6-2, 6-1.

\$15,000 ITF women, Tabarka, Tunisia: (first round): Alice Amendola (Ita) bt Likhitha Kalava 7-5, 7-5.

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