

SYED MUSHTAQ ROUND-UP



Comeback aspirant Karthik smashed 58 off 32 balls.

GROUP B

Karthik steers TN to super leagues

Thiruvananthapuram: Skipper Dinesh Karthik came up with another superb knock (58, 32 balls, 5 fours, 3 sixes) to spur Tamil Nadu as they beat Vidarbha by 113 runs on Sunday. His knock helped his team to 168 for 8 in 20 overs before the bowlers stepped in to rout Vidarbha for 55 in 14.5 to seal a big win. Tamil Nadu advanced to the super league to be played in Surat, topping Group 'B' with 20 points from 6 games (5 won, 1 lost).

BRIEF SCORES: Tamil Nadu 168/8 in 20 overs (Dinesh Karthik 58, B Aparajith 33, Yash Thakur 3/23) beat Vidarbha 55 in 14.5 overs (R Sai Kishore 3/9, Vijay Shankar 3/12); TN: 4 points, Vidarbha: 0.

Tripura 69/7 in 16 overs (Milind Kumar 22 not out, Aniket Choudhary 3/15, Rahul Chahar 2/18) lost to Rajasthan 74 for 1 in 5 overs (Mahipal Lomror 50 not out); Rajasthan: 4 points, Tripura: 0.

Kerala 119/8 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 38) beat Uttar Pradesh 42/4 in 7 overs (Akshdeep Nath 30 not out) by 1 run via VJD method; Kerala: 4 points, UP: 0.

GROUP D

Pondicherry stun Bengal by 4 wkts

Mumbai: Newbies Pondicherry spun an upset over Bengal, chasing down a modest target of 132 with four wickets in hand.

BRIEF SCORES: Bengal 132 for 7 (Vivek Singh 43, Abhimanyu Easwaran 28, Suresh Kumar 4/17) lost to Pondicherry 135 for 6 (Rohit Damodar 55, Suresh Kumar 16) by four wickets. Pondicherry 4 points, Bengal: 0.

Madhya Pradesh: 159/6 (Rajat Patidar 69; Harshal Patel 3-34) lost to Haryana 162/6 (Sumit Kumar 44 not out, Shivam Chauhan 4) by four wickets. Haryana 4 points, Madhya Pradesh 0.

Meghalaya: 207/4 (Ravi Bhamidipati 53 not out, Abhay Negi 50 not out) beat Mizoram 182/2 (Taruwar Kohli 90, Pawan Prasad 72 not out) by 25 runs. Meghalaya 4 points, Mizoram 0 points.

GRUPE

Dagar, Dalal star in Delhi's canter

Surat: Leg-spinner Karan Dagar started with the ball before opener Hiten Dalal scored a blistering half-century as Delhi registered an emphatic nine-wicket win over Sikkim. **BRIEF SCORES:** Sikkim 88/7 in 20 overs (Iqbal Abdulla 37; Karan Dagar 4/12) lost to Delhi (Hiten Dalal 54 not out) by 9 wickets.

Back from the ban, with a bang

Prithvi Shaw celebrates his return to competitive cricket with a thrilling 63 off 39 balls against Assam

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 17

PRITHVI SHAW didn't overdo his celebrations after cracking a breezy half-century against Assam in a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy league game, upon his return to competitive cricket from an eight-month doping ban. He calmly nodded his head, reluctantly turned towards the camera and waved his bat, followed by a let-the-bat-do-all-the-talking gesturing. Not animatedly, but shyly.

But inwardly, he might have felt unburdened after passing through what he once referred to as the darkest days of his life, after samples of a banned drug, Terbutaline, was detected in his urine sample, which the 20-year-old claimed came from a cough syrup. He dusted up bitter memories of that angst phase: "I never thought that something like this would happen. I was obviously upset. For the first 20-25 days after I was banned, I was not able to make sense of things. After that, I stabilized myself and kept myself mentally stronger. But each day was hard. I kept harder with each passing day."

Worse, he had no place to train, as the ban meant he couldn't avail the training facilities back home or even play a local game. Negativity piled and to escape the public glare, he packed his bags to London, where he could blend into anonymity. "I could chill in London," he said. Soon, he realised that he could do nothing about the ban, but could work harder to regain the lost ground during the time. "Obviously I committed a mistake. I had no idea what I was consuming. In that period I was alone and was trying to stay away from people and their advice. I was telling myself that I can get out of this mess and be mentally strong," he explained.

He returned to India refreshed and was planning to join the gym ace shuttler PV Sindhu frequents in Hyderabad, before he got a call from Rahul Dravid, ever his supportive mentor, to report at the National Cricket Academy, where he could train and could be in the groove once his ban ended. A lot of emphasis was on his fitness. "Under Rahul sir a lot of focus was on training. I had to clear all my fitness Tests. Rahul sir was always there for guidance," he said.

It also helped that Kuldeep Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Varun Aaron were also training at the NCA, which meant he was facing quality bowlers and managing quality practice at the nets.

So by the time his ban period ended, on November 16, he was not only in the right frame of mind but also in reasonable touch. His comeback though wasn't guaranteed, as Mumbai had nailed a settled opening pair in Aditya Tare and Jay Bista in this format. Obviously, skipper Suryakumar Yadav and the



Shaw started sedately, before he demolished the Assam bowlers in a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy league encounter. File

team management were in a dilemma, before, on the morning of the match, Yadav decided to ring in Shaw's comeback.

Restrained start

Shaw, who likes to attack straight away, began sedately, smuggling singles and farming the strike to Tare, who tore into Assam's bowlers. Off their 138-run first-wicket alliance, the foundation of Mumbai's 83-run win, Tare's contribution was 82 (off just 48 balls). But gradually, Shaw began to deal in boundaries and returned to his violent best, eventually smacking seven boundaries and a brace of sixes, completing his half-century in 32 deliveries. He perished in his attempt for the third six, miscuing a swipe to midwicket. He was aghast, but he knew his comeback was on the right track.

The early restraint was perhaps a sign of maturity, which young players develop after traversing through adversities. Or maybe, it was the Shaw 2.0 he had mentioned in his

birthday post last week. For Shaw, who celebrated his 20th birthday just a week ago, there wouldn't be any shortage of motivation. Life was flowing smoothly after his hundred on Test debut against the West Indies in Rajkot, before an ankle injury that he picked during a warm-up game, ruled him out of the Australia series. Months after his return, when enjoying a rich vein of form in the IPL, winked in another setback in the form of the doping ban.

In the interim, Mayank Agarwal and Rohit Sharma emerged as India's primary openers in the longest format. Agarwal's stocks continue to soar after he logged in his second double hundred in four Tests, while Sharma has acquitted well with the new role by cracking a pair of big hundreds against South Africa. Talented as he is, the selectors and the team management will certainly keep an eye on his progress. Said Team India batting coach Vikram Rathour: "Getting back into the team will be the selectors' decision. As far as team manage-

For the first 20-25 days after I was banned, I was not able to make sense of things. After that, I stabilized myself and kept myself mentally stronger."

PRITHVI SHAW

ment is concerned, I think he's a phenomenal player. So let's see how it goes, how he shapes up after the suspension. I'm sure he's working hard and getting ready to come back."

To trace his route back to the national team, Shaw has to file constant reminders to the selectors, remain patient for another break and latch on to. He would require truckloads of runs this domestic season, which he has set off in promising fashion. He promises to let runs flow of his bat, and in jest promises to keep off cough syrups. "Zindagi mein ab kabhi koi syrup nahi peeonga!"

Journeyman tales: No sponsors, camping in tents & pay pangs

SHAHID JUDGE
PUNE, NOVEMBER 17

AS HE sank to the floor, James Duckworth punched the air a few times. He greeted his vanquished opponent Jay Clarke, walked to the other side of the court and fell to the deck again, pressing his forehead against the blue centre court at the Balewadi Tennis Stadium in Pune. Later he buried his face in his towel, sobbing uncontrollably.

This was to celebrate the singles title of the USD 54,160 KPIT Pune Challenger, an 80 ranking point event which is the lowest rung on the ATP tour. Duckworth's celebration may have been akin to those of tennis' top stars when they conquer another big title. But for the Australian, a journeyman on the tour, any and all wins make a big difference. And this one in Pune will now take him to the top 100—considered the break-even point in the sport.

"I knew that if I won this, I'd break into the top 100 and get direct entry into the Australian Open," says Duckworth after beating Clarke 4-



The Pune win took James to top 100.

6, 6-4, 6-4. "I knew there was a lot on the line. And I've struggled a lot to get this far."

The 27-year-old was once a top 100 player, reaching as high as 82, but then came a series of injuries that required five surgeries. But once he got back, his ranking had dropped and he lost all sponsors. "I met some people who gave

me a few shirts and shorts for the US Open, that's about it," he says. "I don't have a racquet sponsor either. Today I won USD 7200, which is nice. But there have been times where I lose the first round and get just USD 500."

Travelling is the essence of the tour, as players require to move around the world and compete in tournaments for ATP points. The Grand Slams are the pinnacle of glory but the lower you step on the tennis rung, the more obscure and uncertain your world gets—that's where about 80 percent of the players dwell.

Japanese veteran Toshihide Matsui remembers starting out in the sport by driving around Japan in a car and staying in a tent he'd carry along with him. It was a time when the 41-year-old had returned home after finishing college in the United States. By the time he did start to earn a living, the main goal for all tennis players—getting good results in the Grand Slams—became a distant dream.

"I'd travel around in Japan for prize money tournaments (national events that do not offer ATP ranking points), and set up my tent outside the courts," says Matsui, who paired up

with India's Vishnu Vardhan and reached the semi-final of the Pune Challenger. "That phase ended when I was 25, but by then I had to think about making a living which is why I had to play those money events. I could have tried to travel for the ATP tour, but I didn't have the money for it."

Travelling on the circuit has been a problem faced by players from all countries. And the players, particularly those who do not have the resources to move at will, have the extra pressure of winning matches. At some point there's just no scope left for them to get far.

"I see millions of these stories (of players living in a car or tent). I feel bad but I have almost become immune to them now," says Purav Raja. "We have at least 100 players in India who will fizzle out in the next two years just because they don't have the finances."

But for those who do manage to get on tour, live through the grind, somehow, and continue to stay on the circuit, the measure of success always varies. "For some players it is winning Grand Slams. But for me it's trying to make a living," Matsui says. "Yes I want to say that I will

Kim wins Panasonic Open; Shiv tied second

Nuh (Haryana): A double-bogey on the last hole proved costly as Indian golfer Shiv Kapur signed off tied second along with compatriot S Chikkarangappa at the Panasonic Open India here on Sunday. Kapur (70), who lost out in a playoff at the Thailand Open last week, was again denied victory this week as he conceded a one-shot lead to 17-year-old Korean sensation Joohyung Kim, who fired a seven-under 65 to bag the top honours with a total of 13-under-203.

Kapur and Chikkarangappa (67) ended with a total of 12-under 204 at the Classic Golf and Country Club here. Indians Vikrant Chopra (10-under-206) and Veer Ahlawat (eight-under-208) claimed career-best finishes of tied fifth and tied eighth respectively.

Kim, who earned his Asian Tour card for the remainder of the 2019 season after claiming three wins on the Asian Development Tour (ADT) this year, continued his hot streak in India with rounds of 70, 68 and 65 at the USD 400,000 event which was contested over 54 holes. "I'm really speechless. It has been a dream of mine to play on the Asian Tour ever since I was young. It's really wonderful to come here, be in contention and win," said the Korean, who became the second youngest Asian Tour winner.

"I cannot describe the feeling now. The season has been great especially coming back from my injuries and winning three times on the ADT and now this victory."

Kapur (67-67-70), who was in a three-way lead after the penultimate round, mixed five birdies with a bogey and a double-bogey on Sunday. Kapur, the 2017 Panasonic Open India champion, was leading by one shot till he hit his tee shot out of bounds on the 18th. The Dubai-based golfer finally missed a 20-foot bogey putt that would've taken him into a playoff with Kim.

Chikkarangappa (69-68-67) produced his best round of the week on Sunday to secure the joint runner-up position, his best for the season. Chikka got his confidence going with the early birdie on the third where he made an 11-foot conversion.

The Bengalurean then added two more birdies and a bogey till the 10th. Chikka managed to finish well with three birdies over the last five holes where he made two quality chip-putts and a 30-footer after a poor second shot on the 15th.

The other Indians in the top-20 were Arjun Prasad and M Dharma (both tied 11th at seven-under-209) as well as Om Prakash Chouhan, Karandeep Kochhar, Khalin Joshi and Rashid Khan (all in tied 14th at six-under-210. PTI

[SPORTS BAR]

Ruthvika, Siddharth win badminton titles

South Asian Games gold medallist Ruthvika Gadde roared back to form by claiming the women's singles title while Siddharth Pratap Singh triumphed in men's event at the All India Senior Ranking Badminton Tournament in Pune on Sunday. The unseeded Ruthvika, who started her campaign as a qualifier, defeated 13th seed Shruti Mundada 21-10, 21-17 in the final that lasted just 35 minutes. In the men's singles, a day after knocking out the top seed Ansal Yadav, the 10th seed Siddharth pipped K Jagadeesh 23-21, 21-15 in a hard fought final.

Shagun grabs pole on day 1 of trap qualifiers

Shagun Chowdhary shot two rounds of 25 to grab the pole position on day one of the women's trap qualifiers at the 63rd National Shotgun Shooting Championship in New Delhi. Shagun, representing ONGC, shot the same score of 71 as Punjab's Rajeshwari Kumari, but two perfect rounds of 25 including the third and final round of the day, saw her claim the top honours at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range. Intense competition is building up as the finals beckon after two more qualifying rounds on Monday, with Bihar's Shreyasi Singh closely following on 70 and the likes of India's only World Cup medallist Seema Tomar also in the top six with a score of 67.



Indian players arrive in Muscat on Sunday. AIFF

Stimac cautious ahead of Oman tie

Winless India will start as underdogs in the World Cup qualifying round match against Oman in Muscat on Tuesday, said head coach Igor Stimac, while ruing that his players were creating chances but not converting them. Stimac's side had lost 1-2 in the first leg in Guwahati in September. "Qatar and Oman are two favourites in our group. The difference between the other three (Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India) is very less. Against Afghanistan my team performed in the second half," Stimac said. India had needed an injury time goal to eke out a 1-1 draw against Afghanistan in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on November 14 to play out their third draw of the campaign in four matches. "This is a team for the future and we are in the process of becoming a tough team to play against. We had created chances to win every match until now. We even created chances against Qatar in the last minutes. We're improving gradually and that's what makes me proud," the Croatian said.

Marquez wins season ending MotoGP race

World champion Marc Marquez won the Valencia GP on Sunday with a superb performance for his 12th victory of the season to ensure that the Repsol Honda team won the teams' world title. The 26-year-old, who began the day behind Petronas Yamaha's pole-sitter Fabio Quartararo, overtook the French rookie with a superb move in the eighth lap and never looked back to finish the race in 41 minutes, 21.469 seconds. Quartararo finished second, 1.026 seconds behind Spaniard Marquez, while Australia's Jack Miller was third for the non-works Pramac Ducati team.

Mixed form for Eng ahead of NZ Test

England completed preparations for the first Test against the Black Caps with mixed fortunes in a drawn warm-up match against New Zealand A in Whangarei on Sunday. After New Zealand batted first and declared at 302 for six, England slumped to five for 105 before a middle-order revival by Joe Denly (68) Ollie Pope (88) and Jos Buttler (116) lifted the total to 405. At stumps on the third and final day, New Zealand were 169 for eight in their second innings with Jofra Archer taking three for 34 and Sam Curran three for 42. The first Test starts in Tauranga on Thursday.



12 medals for India at Asian Youth Boxing

It rained gold for India at the Asian Youth Boxing Championship as all five of the country's women finalists emerged victorious while two men signed off with silver medals in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on Sunday. Naorem Chanu (51kg), Vinka (64kg) Sanamacha Chanu (75kg), Poonam (54kg) and Sushma (81kg) fetched the yellow metal for the country in a phenomenal sweep. Naorem and Sanamacha train at Mary Kom's academy in Manipur. Among the men, Selay Soy (49kg) and Ankit Narwal (60kg) settled for the second place after going down in their respective summit clashes. India signed off with 12 medals in the event with bronze coming from Arundhati Choudhury (69kg), Komalpreet Kaur (+81kg), Jaismine (57kg), Satender Singh (91kg) and Aman (+91kg).