

Heartbreak for a fighting Anand

Dominant Carlsen strides to the title with a record tally of 27 points

TATA STEEL CHESS

RAKESH RAO
KOLKATA

"By some strange irony, I remember this quote. 'Failure I can handle. I'm okay with failure. It is the hope that is killing me.' That was what I was doing today. I would keep giving myself a chance and then destroy myself."

These words from Viswanathan Anand pretty much summed up his play on the final day of the Tata Steel rapid and blitz tournament here. Anand missed by a whisker, a qualifying spot to the four-man Grand Chess Tour Final in London. He needed to finish sixth or higher. He ended up seventh.

Magnus Carlsen, troubled by an upset stomach that saw him even take a five-move draw with Vidit Gujrathi at the start of the day, raced away with the title following a record tally of 27 points. He improved his previous record of 26.5 points set in the first event of the season.

Special feeling

"I am very happy with my performance here. The record suggests I am playing well in a strong field. After a good start to the year, I had not won anything. So this feels special in that sense," said the champion after finishing four points clear of runner-up Hikaru Nakamura.

The storyline of the final day revolved around Anand's possible qualification to the GCT's London finale. Soon-to-be-50 Anand



Reigning supreme: Magnus Carlsen underlined his stature as the best among the best with a superlative show. *RAJEEV BHATT

bounced back from the early reverse to Levon Aronian, to nail Wesley So and P. Hari Krishna, but surprisingly lost to Vidit.

The loss did hurt Anand's chances but he returned to dominate Anish Giri and inched closer to a much-needed victory. However, disaster struck Anand as he ran out of time on the clock and was declared "lost-on-time."

'My worst enemy'

"It was probably the final straw. I'm just winning and I

don't know. I just forgot about the clock. And if win this game, I'm right back in contention. So I was my worst enemy," said a dejected Anand.

With Nakamura, Carlsen and Ding Liren as his rivals in the remaining rounds, Anand's chances of scoring well looked bleak. Anand took a quick draw with Nakamura and found himself tied with Ian Nepomniachtchi, beaten by the sixth spot.

Even with two rounds to

go, Anand was tied sixth with Nepomniachtchi, the Russian who won all three encounters against him. Once Anand lost to Carlsen for the third time in three days before Nepomniachtchi defeated Hari, it paved the way for Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave to go to London.

"It was much worse this way. If I had no chance it would have been nicer," said Anand.

At the end of an otherwise harsh day, Anand chose to share some "good news"

with a wide smile. "Akhil (Anand's son) won the second prize in a dance competition in school. I am very happy about that," concluded a proud father.

The results: 27th round: Viswanathan Anand drew with Ding Liren (Chn); Wesley So (USA) drew with Magnus Carlsen (Nor); Vidit Gujrathi lost to Hikaru Nakamura (USA); P. Hari Krishna drew with Anish Giri (Ned); Levon Aronian (Arm) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus).

26th round: Carlsen bt Anand; Nepomniachtchi bt Hari; Giri bt Vidit; Liren bt Aronian; Nakamura drew with So. **25th round:** Anand drew with Nakamura; Aronian lost to Carlsen; Hari drew with Vidit; Nepomniachtchi lost to Liren; So drew with Giri. **24th round:** Giri bt Anand; Liren lost to Hari; Carlsen drew with Nepomniachtchi; Nakamura bt Aronian; Vidit drew with So.

23rd round: Anand lost to Vidit; Ding bt Carlsen; Hari lost to So; Nepomniachtchi lost to Nakamura; Aronian drew with Giri. **22nd round:** So lost to Anand; Carlsen bt Hari; Vidit bt Aronian; Nakamura drew with Liren; Giri drew with Nepomniachtchi. **21st round:** Hari lost to Anand; Carlsen drew with Nakamura; Aronian lost to So; Nepomniachtchi drew with Vidit; Liren drew with Giri.

20th round: Anand drew with Aronian; Giri drew with Carlsen; Nakamura bt Hari; Vidit drew with Liren; So drew with Nepomniachtchi. **19th round:** Nepomniachtchi bt Anand; Carlsen drew with Vidit; Nakamura drew with Giri; Hari drew with Aronian; Liren drew with So.

Final standings (rapid plus blitz): 1. Carlsen (27), 2. Nakamura (23), 3-4. Giri, So, (18.5 each), 5. Liren (18), 6. Nepomniachtchi (17), 7. Anand (16), 8-9. Vidit, Hari (14.5 each), 10. Aronian (13).

ACES Awards ceremony on Jan. 12

Will be presented in three categories in Mumbai



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The second edition of the Sportstar ACES Awards, celebrating the best of Indian sport in 2019, will be held in Mumbai on January 12, 2020.

This year has seen Indian sportspeople excel across disciplines like never before. P.V. Sindhu became the first Indian to win gold at the badminton World championships.

The Indian men's cricket team conquered a formidable frontier by winning a Test series in Australia for the first time, reached the semifinals of the ODI World Cup in which Rohit Sharma scored a record five centuries, and swept the home Test series against South Africa and Bangladesh.

Amit Panghal became the first Indian boxer to win a silver medal at the world championships. There have been many more such stories.

At ACES 2020, 21 awards will be presented in three categories - Popular Awards, Nominated Awards and Jury Awards.

A celebration

These awards celebrate the stars, the future stars and the tireless silent partners

who have dedicated their lives to sport in order to realise the dream of making India a 'sporting nation'.

The annual event aims to create a platform where stakeholders involved with Indian sports meet and share their vision for the growth of Indian sport.

Relaunched in celebration of Sportstar magazine's 40th anniversary, the 2019 awards honoured Prakash Padukone with the Lifetime Achievement Award, while Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah shared the Sportsman of the Year (Cricket) Award, and Cheteshwar Pujara received the Chairman's Choice Award, among other awards.

Leading sportspersons

The ceremony was attended by many celebrated sportspersons including like Viswanathan Anand, Sunil Gavaskar, Ajit Agarkar, Sanjay Manjrekar, Bhairung Bhutia, Gagan Narang, Anjali Bhagwat, Mithali Raj and Dutee Chand.

Also present were Bollywood celebrities like Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh, as well as International Cricket Council chairman Shashank Manohar and Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik, who accepted the award for the Best State for the Promotion of Sports.

The voting for the Popular Choice Awards is open. Visit www.sportstar.hindu.com/aces-awards to vote.

Sanju in for injured Dhawan



Sanju Samson •FILE PHOTO

SPORTS REPORTER
SURAT

India opener Shikhar Dhawan has been ruled out of the T20I series against the West Indies starting next week in Hyderabad (December 6) with Sanju Samson set to replace him.

Sanju would hope to get some game-time, having regained form, especially in white-ball formats.

Dhawan injured his left knee while playing for Delhi against Maharashtra in the first Super League match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali tournament at the C.B. Patel Ground here.

Chairman of selectors M.S.K. Prasad was in Surat on Monday and so was NCA physio Ashish Kaushik. *The Hindu* understands that after discussing Dhawan's recovery process with Kaushik, the selectors were convinced the opener wouldn't recover in time for the three-match series.

The injury is similar to what Shane Watson suffered during the IPL 2019 final between Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians earlier this year.

Sindhu and Tai Tzu fetch ₹77 lakh each

PBL AUCTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

P.V. Sindhu was on Tuesday retained by Hyderabad Hunters for ₹77 lakh in the auction for the fifth season of the Premier Badminton League (PBL) here.

World No. 1 women's singles player Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei was also bought for the joint highest amount of ₹77 lakh by defending champion Bengaluru Raptors after a bidding war with the Pune 7 Aces.

There was intense bidding for R. Satwiksairaj, who eventually went to the Chennai Superstarz for a whopping ₹62 lakh.

Korea's doubles ace Ko Sung Hyun and Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu were the only others to cross the ₹50 lakh mark as the former went to Awadhe Warriors for ₹55 lakh while the latter was purchased by North Eastern Warriors for ₹50 lakh.

Kashyap for Rockets

P. Kashyap was sold to Mumbai Rockets for ₹43 lakh while Lakshya Sen will turn out for Superstarz after it purchased him for ₹36

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The next edition from January 20 to Feb. 9, 2020 will see 74 Indians in action

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Seven teams - Awadhe Warriors, Bengaluru Raptors, Mumbai Rockets, Hyderabad Hunters, Chennai Superstarz, North Eastern Warriors and Pune 7 Aces - will compete in the event to be played in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Lucknow

lakh. B. Sai Praneeth was also retained by Raptors for ₹32 lakh.

Season 5 lost some sheen after Saina Nehwal and K. Srikanth pulled out to focus on their international careers. The format remains the same with each tie consisting of five matches - two men's singles, one women's singles, one men's doubles and one mixed doubles.

We have built a team for all formats: MSK

'Speedsters have ensured no side will prepare seaming tracks for us'

S. DIPAK RAGAV
SURAT

"We have a complete Test team," says M.S.K. Prasad, whose tenure as chairman of selectors ends next month.

Here to watch the Syed Mushtaq Ali tournament, Prasad spoke about his time at the helm for the past three years, a period in which India became the No. 1 Test side in the world.

Fantastic

"Every generation throws up one or two good teams, but this is a complete team," said Prasad. "Being at the top of the ICC Test rankings for the last few years is a fantastic thing, but it is not just about numbers. We have built a team for all formats.

"We have a set team in Tests and ODIs. In T20Is, we haven't played that much and now that we are playing a lot more, I am sure three to four months before the next World T20, our team will be fully set."

The committee he headed began its tenure with the long-term vision of building a team that could win across formats, he said.

"To some extent, we could do that in Australia.



That's how we do it! Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav and Md. Shami form a potent pace combination. *K.R. DEEPAK

The results in South Africa and England didn't go in our favour but the way we fought, it could have been anybody's game.

"We have built a winning culture and today no team - England, New Zealand or Australia - will give us seaming tracks. That is the scare we have created," he said.

"What is more heartening is we have a healthy bench-strength with the likes of Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj waiting in the wings. That will be our legacy. I am sure the bench-strength we have will last the next six to seven years," he said.

The former India wicket-keeper also backed Prithvi

Shaw and Rishabh Pant to bounce back strongly.

"Everyone knows what he (Shaw) is capable of. We have been following him and has done well since his comeback. We will keep a close watch and by the time the New Zealand series comes up, I am sure he will be in good shape to stake a claim," he said.

"With Rishabh, we keep talking to him regularly and we are making sure he is in a good space. He is full of talent and he will only go up the ladder from this low period," Prasad said.

The committee has faced a lot of flak for some of its decisions, and lack of communication, especially when R.

Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja were dropped after the 2017 Champions Trophy.

Prasad shot back: "Why do you think we have not communicated? I ensured that all the selectors met Ashwin and Jadeja. Post CT in 2017, the entire selection team spoke to Ashwin and Jadeja before taking the call."

Wait till IPL: Shastri on Dhoni

IANS
KOLKATA

Team India coach Ravi Shastri wants one and all to wait, till the IPL to see if M.S. Dhoni will make the team for the World T20 to be held in 2020.

Shastri said, "It all depends on when he starts playing and how he plays during the IPL. What are the other people doing with the wicketkeeping gloves or what is the form of those players as opposed to Dhoni's form."

Afghanistan's chance to show its mettle

Up against West Indies in one-off Test

SHAYAN ACHARYA
LUCKNOW

Afghanistan attained Test status in June 2017, but the team has struggled to find enough opportunities to test its skills in the longer format of the game.

The young Afghanistan will now take on the West Indies at the Ekana International Stadium here from Wednesday.

It's a daunting task, but the Afghan camp is confident of putting up a brave show in its 'new home ground'.

With most of its top players focusing on franchise leagues, there has been a vacuum in the Test set-up for the Windies. But the squad, led by Jason Holder, has players like Shai Hope, Shimron Hetmyer and Keemo Paul, who can alter the course of a game on their day.

Foggy conditions in the city will be a worry for both teams as Lucknow hosts its first Test since 1994.

The teams: Afghanistan: Rashid Khan (Capt.), Asghar Afghan, Ihsanullah Janat, Ibra-

him Zadran, Javed Ahmadi, Rahmat Shah, Karim Janat, Qais Ahmed, Ikram Alikhiel (wk), Afsar Zazai, Nasir Jamal, Zahir Khan, Yamin Ahmadzai, Hamza Hotak, Nijat Masood.

West Indies: Jason Holder (Capt.), Shai Hope, John Campbell, Kraigg Brathwaite, Shimron Hetmyer, Shamrah Brooks, Roston Chase, Shane Dowrich, Sunil Ambris, Jomel Warrican, Raheem Cornwall, Kemar Roach, Keemo Paul, Alzarri Joseph.

Umpires: Paul Reiffel & Nitin Menon. **Match Referee:** Chris Broad.

Match starts at 9.30 a.m.

Gayle takes a 'break'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JOHANNESBURG

West Indies great Chris Gayle has said no to playing the three ODIs in India next month and rather wants to focus on his plans for 2020.

West Indies is scheduled to play three T20Is and as many ODIs in India starting on December 6. He is also unlikely to feature in the T20I games.

When a crime emerges, the law must catch up quickly

Despite the television coverage - or perhaps because of it - T20 and T10 attract unscrupulous seducers more easily



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

The shorter the format of the game, the greater the chances of it being misused by fixers and their ilk. The full story of the Karnataka Premier League's ignominy is yet to emerge, but what we know is depressing enough. A former Karnataka captain, C.M. Gautam, is allegedly among those who have been caught with their hands in the cookie jar, which is a polite way of saying it. His teammate Abrar Kazi has been named too.

Despite the television coverage - or perhaps because of it - T20 and T10 attract unscrupulous seducers more easily.

ly. Perhaps it has something to do with fans' indifference to match results. The increase in tournaments transforms a game of bat and ball into one of dollars and cents.

Authorities have suggested that the approaches made to some players in the KPL might have been handled by international players. If this is true, then pulling at the KPL thread might unravel other domestic tournaments too. There was a cloud over the Tamil Nadu Premier League too recently before a committee ruled there was no evidence of fixing there.

Human greed

You can have Anti-Corruption Unit officers, provide regular sessions to players on how to deal with approaches, and harp on the examples of players who have fallen from their perch because they succumbed to temptation. But you can't legislate against human greed.

And until you have a law against fix-

ing, there is precious little that can be done. It is two decades since fixing arrived at India's doorstep, and some Test players were shown to be involved. But those caught still have to be held under the 'cheating' Act or, as in one case, the anti-terrorism law. This is ridiculous. The legislature lacks the political will to make fixing a criminal offence punishable by law.

As lawyer Nandan Kamath put it in *Wisden India Almanack*, "Match manipulation sits in plain sight of Indian cricket administrators as well as the country's legislators. It has been seated there for over two decades. Yet not a single cricketer or official has been successfully prosecuted (although they have faced punishment)."

Big paydays

Between the lack of will on one side and the lure of big paydays on the other, the shorter formats of the game wrestle with credibility.

are seduced too. They see it as a way of getting back at the system while making some money.

Higher standards

Cricketers who are likely targets cannot be rushed out and locked up in five-star hotels or holiday resorts as our politicians are. This is not being facetious. If cricket reflects society, then we cannot complain if the cricketers mirror the behaviour of our so-called leaders too. Selling their souls to the highest bidder is common practice among the latter, so why should we hold our sportsmen to higher standards?

The reason is simple. We expect more from our sportsmen (and women - a woman player was approached and alerted the authorities earlier this year) because they engage in a field of human activity that is pure fantasy. We have set aside sport from, say, politics, because by common consent we need a space where the sun always shines, the sky is

blue and everything is perfect. It is a fantasy, of course, but we need such fantasies to make up for the harsher realities in other areas.

Meaning to life

Sport is the most meaningless thing we do which gives life meaning. It is unreal. So when a sportsman allows reality to creep in and awaken us to the fact that the fantasy has been punctured, we are unhappy. We get depressed. We hold our heads in despair. We want those who step beyond well-laid out boundaries to pay for it.

We would like to be certain that a catch was dropped because that is the nature of the game, not because someone is, metaphorically, pulling the strings somewhere.

There will always be temptation, as there will always be greed. The authorities cannot eliminate either. But they can ensure giving into temptation may not be worth a player's while.