

# Cagers get into a 'fight' off court; federation forms probe committee

**NITIN SHARMA**  
CHANDIGARH, NOVEMBER 7

LATE ON Wednesday night, outside the national camp where India's basketball team was preparing for the upcoming South Asian Games, two cagers were embroiled in an altercation that ended in a broken pair of spectacles, a damaged gold chain and injuries. The pair, Amjyot Singh Gill and Arshdeep Singh Bhullar, was accompanied by teammate Amritpal Singh for the trip away from camp on their day off, only for Amjyot and Arshdeep to engage in yet another incident after what happened last year.

Last year, Amjyot had allegedly slapped Arshdeep while the team was in Gold Coast, Australia for the Commonwealth Games. The incident prompted the Basketball Federation

of India (BFI) to impose a one-year ban on the 27-year-old power forward, and also banned fellow cager Palpreet Singh for uploading a derogatory post on social media about the BFI. The ban was lifted in May this year, but the latest clash is expected to result in "action against the three players."

In this case, though, there are more than one version of the story.

Amjyot, who has plied his trade in Japan and has turned out for Oklahoma City Blue and Wisconsin Herd in the NBA's G-League, alleged that his colleagues tried to force him into drinking alcohol during the trip outside camp at Vidya Nagar in Bangalore. Upon his refusal, he and Arshdeep got into an altercation, and the latter assaulted Amjyot in his hostel room.

"Last night, Arshdeep, Amritpal and I went to the nearby hill outside our training

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centre as it was our day off from practice. Arshdeep offered me coke which had run in it and we had a minor altercation," Amjyot told *The Indian Express*.

"Later when I got to my room in the hostel, Arshdeep was sitting on my bed and he thrashed me. He broke my gold chain and

spectacles and pushed me holding my throat. He was apparently angry about things I had posted on social media about my ban being unfair when it was finally lifted. He told me that he will kill me if I enter Jalandhar or Punjab. Later our team-mates Amritpal Singh and Satnam Singh stopped Arshdeep and locked us in separate rooms to stop the fight. Later I filed my complaint with Bengaluru Police. Last time when I was handed the ban, BFI had told me not to file any case."

Amjyot went further to claim that Arshdeep's father Mukhwinder, a DCP in the Punjab Police, forced the cager to resign from his post in the police before going back to the United States.

In his complaint, Amjyot also alleged being "dragged on the road" when he refused alcohol. The Chandigarh lad posted photo-

graphs of his broken chain, spectacles and wounds he suffered from the alleged altercation with Arshdeep.

None of Arshdeep, Amritpal or Mukhwinder (who is abroad on vacation) responded to phone calls.

BFI secretary general Chander Mukhi Sharma, however, refuted Amjyot's claims about the incident. Sharma's account describes Amjyot's injuries coming as a result of him and Arshdeep falling off a motorbike. Additionally, Sharma claims Amjyot was in a deeply "inebriated" state when he returned to the camp. "The whole issue has been blown out of proportion by Amjyot. The three players went outside the camp since it was an off-day for them, and had alcohol. Later when they were returning, Amjyot and Arshdeep, who were on a motorbike, fell and Amjyot created a ruckus about the event and

had a fight," Sharma stated.

"A traffic inspector saw them and later came to the training camp building. Amjyot was in a heavily inebriated state and could not even speak. The police officials took him to the police station at midnight and he was later told to go to the camp at 3:30 am after the coaches went to the police station. Amjyot was not even in a condition to speak properly. The issue of fight by Arshdeep was created by Amjyot to hide the accident and the alcohol issue. We will take action against the three players and form a committee to probe the issue."

The camp began in Bangalore on October 15 in preparation for the South Asian Games in Nepal in December. But based on what Sharma asserted, it may be unlikely that Amjyot, Amritpal and Arshdeep will make the cut.

# AITA keeps door open for Bhupathi, but after Pakistan tie

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
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A DAY after Mahesh Bhupathi hit out at the All India Tennis Association for sacking him as non-playing captain for the Davis Cup tie against Pakistan, the federation said it hadn't shut the door on the former doubles specialist completely.

But AITA was standing firm in the decision to not take Bhupathi onboard for this tie. He could be considered for future national duties, AITA CEO Akhuri Bishwadeep said at a press conference in the Capital on Thursday.

"Mahesh is welcome for national duty. Whatever duty AITA requires from Mahesh, then he will be approached," said Bishwadeep.

There was no headway in terms of team selection for the tie, with Pakistan appealing against the International Tennis Federation's decision to move the tie to a neutral venue. Newly-appointed captain Rohit Rajpal said the selection committee will meet soon and would "keep in mind" the fact that certain players had put their hand up even when the contest was scheduled to be held in Islamabad.

"When the tie was supposed to be played in Pakistan, a lot of players backed out. But the moment it was learnt that it might happen in a neutral venue, everyone is back. But there were those who put their hand up when the chips were down, we will consider this fact. At the same time, we need to find the best team. National interest comes first and we cannot please everybody all the time," said Rajpal.

Rajpal, who is also the chairman AITA's selection committee, said he sees no reason why Bhupathi can't return to the scene again. "Never say never. It's the executive commit-

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tee's decision on the captain but if Mahesh is required in future, why not have him and also he can make more contribution in other capacities being a legend of the game. Everything is open," he said.

Earlier, Bhupathi, Rohan Bopanna and a few others had made themselves unavailable for the tie originally scheduled in Pakistan. AITA decided to appoint Rajpal in place of Bhupathi on Monday just hours before ITF announced its decision to move the tie to a neutral venue due to security concerns. Bhupathi vented his ire on Twitter saying players were not consulted before taking a call.

"To everyone so concerned for my thoughts and comments. All I know is from a phone call with Mr Chaterjee on Monday where I was told that Rohit is replacing me as Captain because I wasn't comfortable going to Pakistan (love the country been there before - not this time). I have not heard from the AITA since Monday or after the ITF addressed the players concerns on venue and approved a neutral location - so I am available and believe I am still Captain unless I hear otherwise! Glad to 'comment' when I know what I know," Bhupathi had posted.

## Chinki in line for Olympic quota

**Doha:** Chinki Yadav kept alive India's hopes of securing the second Olympic quota in women's 25m Pistol, clinging to fifth place in the first round qualification of the Asian Shooting Championship here on Thursday. Chinki shot an exceptional 292 and will be looking to make the final on Friday and take a shot at clinching one of the four available Tokyo berths. Rahi Sarmobat has already secured the other quota place for India in the event in earlier competitions.

Apart from Chinki, Vivaan Kapoor and Esha Singh won two gold each as India dominated the junior competitions, where they have accounted for 18 of the 23 medals won so far by the country. The icing on the cake at the Lusail Shooting complex was the 1-2 finish in the junior men's trap competition where Vivaan

shot his way to an individual gold with compatriot Bhowneesh Mendiratta following him through the day to clinch silver. The pair also combined with Manavadiya Singh Rathore to secure the team gold in the event. Vivaan, who picked up his second and third yellow metal of the competition after winning the junior trap mixed team event on day one partnering Manisha Keer, continued his good form by topping qualification with a solid 120 out of 125. Bhowneesh was second with 118, while Manavadiya missed out on the final, finishing eighth with a score of 109. Vivaan then missed five birds in the final but still emerged triumphant, with a score of 45, as Bhowneesh missed eight for the silver. Li Siwei of China won bronze. **PTI**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NOVEMBER 7

IT WILL be a match to savour as India's sizzling doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty take on the Chinese in their backyard when they go up against Li Jun Hui and Liu Yu Chen at the Haixia Olympics Sports Center in Fuzhou on Friday.

India's top shuttlers - Saina Nehwal, PV Sindhu and K Srikanth - have all picked a title in China so when the unseeded Indian pair take on the Chinese in the quarterfinals of the China Open, expectations will be high.

Satwik-Chirag are newbies in the Top 10, but there's always a hint of drama in the air when they take to the court these days. These are heady days for India's doubles stars. Satwik-Chirag made the finals in Paris last fortnight, and it came at the back of the Thailand Open title earlier this year. These results make them a novelty in Indian badminton given that neither Jwala Gutta-V Diju nor Ashwini Ponnappa and Jwala could repeatedly beat the top names like these two have.

Beyond the top two Indonesian pairs, this Chinese duo is the next best combination on the circuit. Seeded No.3, they bring to the court the sort of efficiency that'll draw the Indians into a high intensity, no-inch-ceded battle from the start.

This will also be a grudge match of sorts since the Chinese lost to the Indians in the Thailand final. In fact, on that historic Sunday, they were completely bamboozled by the cerebral game the Indians dished out. The Chinese are 1-1 in head to head against the Indians having won in Australia two months before they were tied in knots in Thailand. The Chinese are a tall combination - both 190 cm-plus and 24. Liu is a junior World champion and Li, a lanky athlete who was pushed into the sport because he was a reedy thin child. They are effective and relentless but as was proven in Thailand, not immune to being wrong-footed by the clever Indians.

Winners in Macau last week, the Chinese will be wary of the Indians who will fancy their chances if it's a long drawn-out battle, given the psychological advantage of the 62-minute win in Bangkok.

## Japan stymied

The Indians reached their second Super 750 competition quarters beating the higher-ranked Japanese pair of Hiroyuki Endo and Yuta Watanabe. The left-right combine, with the younger Watanabe a southpaw and senior Endo at 32 years, faced their second straight defeat against the Indians.

It was more of the same from the French Open semifinal. Satwik-Chirag rotated well against the retrieving duo to take the opener 21-18. The Indians were two match points up in the second, when defensive errors crept in. Satwik faulted on his serve on the second match point and Chirag was crossed by Endo to drag the match into a decider.

Once there, and annoyed by the missed opportunity to wrap things up in straight



Rankireddy and Shetty beat their Japanese opponents 21-18, 21-23, 21-11. *File*

**Winning a title in China is almost a rite of passage for India's top shuttle names. Satwik and Chirag are on a roll, but it's a steep draw ahead with the top pairings bunched up in their half. To get to the top of the podium in the next three days, they will need to jump through hoops - World Nos 3, 1 and 2.**

sets, the Indians went on a rampage giving the Japanese short shrift, to lead 10-1. Perhaps the biggest challenge was playing out this low-pitched match that drawled out ramblingly before the Indians won 21-18, 21-23, 21-11. This is not Japan's top pair but with a rank of No. 7, the converts from mixed doubles specialise in prolonging short men's doubles matches to an average hour-long slugfests with their attritional defence.

The Indians needed to stay patient after botching the two match points and responded admirably to get a stranglehold in



Parupalli Kashyap (pic) and B Sai Praneeth lost in the second round of the men's singles. *File*

the third. The pace might have lulled them, but they can expect the Chinese to come hard at them on Friday. Winning a title in China is almost a rite of passage for India's top shuttle names. Satwik and Chirag are on a roll, but it's a steep draw ahead with the top pairings bunched up in their half. To get to the top of the podium in the next three days, they

will need to jump through hoops - World Nos 3, 1 and 2.

## Kashyap, Praneeth out

**PTI adds:** Parupalli Kashyap and B Sai Praneeth were both ousted in the second round of the men's singles event.

World No. 11 Praneeth fought hard for one hour 24 minutes against fourth seed Anders Antonsen of Denmark before going down 20-22 22-20 21-16.

Kashyap, ranked 25 in the world, ran out of steam after a decent start against seventh seed Victor Axelsen and went down 13-21 19-21 in a match that lasted 43 minutes. Praneeth's loss marked the end of India's campaign in the singles.

This is the second time Kashyap had lost to Axelsen this year. The former Commonwealth Games champion, who reached the semifinals of India Open and Korea Open earlier this year, had lost to the world number six at the India Open in March.

It was also the end of the road for the mixed doubles pair of Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa. The unseeded Indian duo lost 21-23 16-21 to fifth seeds Seo Seung Jae and Chae Yujung of South Korea.

## [SPORTS BAR]



## Injured Cilic pulls out of Davis Cup finals

Defending champions Croatia will be without Marin Cilic in the Davis Cup finals later this month after the former US Open winner announced his withdrawal on Thursday because of a knee injury. Croatia, who beat previous winners France in last year's final, play the inaugural match in Madrid against Russia on November 18. "My recurring knee injury has continued to give me problems, and as the season progressed it was becoming more evident that surgery was inevitable," Cilic, world number 39, wrote on Facebook. The "rehab work was successful enough that surgery is not necessary at this stage," he continued. Cilic was supposed to play in a squad of five Croatian players which includes Borna Coric, Mate Pavic, Ivan Dodig and Nikola Pietrangeli.

## ISL: FC Goa beat Mumbai FC 4-2

FC Goa returned to winning ways and climbed to the top of the Hero Indian Super League table with a 4-2 win against Mumbai City FC in Mumbai on Thursday. The goal-fest began with Lenny Rodrigues giving Goa the lead in the 27th minute. The visitors doubled their lead with a Ferran Corominas (45') strike just before half-time. The second half saw three goals in the space of ten minutes, with Mumbai City equalising in quick session through Sarthak Golui (49'), Souvik Chakrabarti (55') and later Hugo Boumous (59') putting the visitors back in lead. Carlos Pena (89') scored another late in the game to rub further salt into Mumbai's wounds.

## Ridhima opens huge lead in Pro Golf Tour

Ridhima Dilawari, who has already won three times this season, opened up a massive six-shot lead with one more round to go in the 14th Leg of Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour in Noida on Thursday. Overnight co-leader Ridhima, who was one of the four players to shoot a sub-par round on the first day, was the only one of them to repeat the effort, as she brought home 71 to go with her first round 69 and get to four-under 140 in the Rupees Eight lakh event. Amandeep Drall was the only other player to shoot under par in the second round.



Samuel Eto'o believes African players are not appreciated. *File*

## No respect for Africans in Ballon d'Or: Eto'o

African players still do not get the recognition they deserve, Cameroon legend Samuel Eto'o told AFP in an exclusive interview, as he hopes that this will finally be the year another player from the continent wins the Ballon d'Or. George Weah, the former Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan striker who is now the president of Liberia, won the Ballon d'Or in 1995 but remains the only African player ever to have claimed the award. "Western media dominate our media in Africa, so they definitely have an influence. People prefer to see a Lionel Messi goal," Eto'o, 38, told AFP during a visit to Paris last month. The former Barcelona star, once a teammate of Messi, believes that "African players are not respected" and are "not always properly appreciated". He recently hung up his boots after a glorious career in which he won the UEFA Champions League three times and the Africa Cup of Nations twice. He never won the prize for the world's best player, although he insists he has no regrets.

## SAI clears proposals worth Rs 70 lakh

The Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Mission Olympic Cell has cleared financial proposals amounting to more than Rs 70 lakh across seven sports. During a meeting of the Mission Olympic Cell, chaired by SAI Director General Sandip Pradhan here, three national federations -- athletics, boxing and wrestling -- shared their roadmap for the 2020, 2024 and 2028 Olympics with regards to strategy, planning and talent identification. In table tennis, the committee has approved the proposals of three players -- G Sathiyam, Achanta Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra -- for their training and competition requirements in India and overseas.

## We didn't fudge data: Russian minister

Russia's sports minister insisted that data handed to the World Anti-Doping Agency was not doctored, while WADA has asked Moscow to explain "inconsistencies." "Nothing was removed there, our experts insist this didn't happen," sports minister Pavel Kolobkov said, Interfax news agency reported. The electronic data handed to WADA investigators early this year came from RUSADA's former Moscow anti-doping laboratory. In September, WADA asked Russia to respond to "inconsistencies" in the data. "They are linked to the system," he added.



## Guardiola is the world's best manager: Klopp

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has hailed Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola as the best manager in the world as the Premier League rivals gear up for Sunday's top-of-the-table clash at Anfield. Leaders Liverpool have a six-point advantage over the defending champions and the match is a crucial one for both sides. "We constantly get asked questions and sometimes we say what is in that second in our mind without thinking about anything else, that we are in public, that there is a camera," said the German. "I couldn't have more respect for Pep Guardiola, that's how it is. I've known him for so long, for me still it's a big thing to be his contender. For me he's the best manager in the world and we have the chance to win against his team which is very difficult but possible," Klopp said.