

Picked at 48, the Pravin Tambe saga continues at the IPL

The leggie from Mumbai has had an impact on the Indian cricket fraternity

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Kolkata Knight Riders received huge applause twice during the Indian Premier League's 13th Player Auction in Kolkata on Thursday. While the first one – for a whopping ₹15.5 crore to get Pat Cummins – left everyone stunned, the second one, despite being at base price to sign Pravin Tambe – put a wide smile on everyone's face in the enclosure.

That's the impact Tambe has had on the Indian cricket fraternity. Doesn't matter that the leggie from Mumbai was sold at ₹20 lakh. The fact that at 48, he attracted a bid in itself was a major development. Whether he actually gets a game during the IPL's 2020 edition or not, he will definitely be the oldest player to be a part of IPL.

"Nothing changes at all," the down-to-earth leggie tells *The Hindu*. He is neither excited nor surprised, having received a bid in the auction. "Obviously it feels good but am not so young that I will be thrilled with an IPL contract any longer."

Till 2013, a regular on the maidans of Mumbai and nets of various teams, Tambe's only taste of big-ticket events was during his five-year stint as the liaison officer for IPL games at the Dr. DY Patil Sports Stadium in Navi Mumbai. Once he made a sensational debut for Rajasthan Royals during the 2013 IPL and the Champions Trophy T20, he became the talk of the town.

Central point of motivation speakers
A First Class debut for Mumbai also followed, but most importantly, Tambe has emerged as the central point of plenty of motivation speakers, including Rahul Dravid, his Rajasthan Royals captain. "I have been a positive person all my life and



Age and wisdom: Pravin Tambe said 'obviously it feels good, but am not so young that I will be thrilled with an IPL contract any longer.' •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

have been serious about cricket. The biggest sense of achievement I get is when many of my contemporaries and even some of the younger players who stopped playing before me call and say that I have inspired them to start playing cricket regularly again," Tambe says.

"I have never retired. Age doesn't matter and the level doesn't matter. As long as I can remain fit, I will never stop playing cricket - be it the T20 tournament at Shivaji Park Gymkhana or the IPL."

After having played the IPL last time for Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2016, the closest Tambe has been to top-flight cricket is the Abu Dhabi T10 league for the last two editions.

It is indeed a mystery about how he was cleared to play in an off-shore commercial league. But it cannot be more enigmatic that the tireless spinner's rise on a cricket field well into his 40s, can it?

Many layers to NCA-Bumrah fitness episode

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Over the last week, speculation has swirled around the Bengaluru-based National Cricket Academy (NCA) and its alleged refusal to conduct a fitness test for Jasprit Bumrah. However, it has come to light that the NCA director, Rahul Dravid, had no qualms about a test being conducted for the speedster but there were other issues.

A source, clued into the academy's process, emphatically said: "At no stage we refused Bumrah at NCA. We only said that 'look if you have been treated by somebody else for the last four months and someone else knows your case, how can we conduct a test and pass you fit?' In fact, Bumrah was offered to use the NCA facilities. He was told to get whoever he wanted and do the test here. Last minute you land up and ask us to conduct a fitness test means (but) how can we? Nobody knows his case. NCA trainers have not trained with him



Jasprit Bumrah.
• FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

even one day, they have not treated him for four months. How can they be asked to conduct the test?"

According to the source, a proper method had to be followed as it was observed that the NCA often becomes a scapegoat when a player declared fit suffers an injury and then fingers are pointed towards the academy.

"You do whatever you

want, but please don't recruit the NCA staff to give the test and pass you. Because what happens is if something goes wrong, again the NCA will be blamed. No professional will agree to do this," the source said, besides reiterating that Dravid even permitted Bumrah to get the Indian team's physio to test him at the NCA.

The Hardik case
Along with Bumrah, Hardik Pandya is also on a comeback trail from an injury-enforced break and it is understood that even the latter was declared fit following pressure on the NCA's physiotherapy department, prior to the third Test at Melbourne during India's tour of Australia last year.

"He was also being treated by somebody else and later on when he got injured again for the same problem, the blame came on NCA," the source said, adding that Dravid wasn't at the helm during December when it happened.

Pakistan fights back through Shaheen's heroics

SL IN PAKISTAN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KARACHI

Lanky paceman Shaheen Shah Afridi took a maiden five-wicket haul to lead Pakistan's fightback after Sri Lanka gained a crucial lead in the second Test here on Friday.

The 19-year-old paceman took five for 77 and was ably supported by new-ball partner Mohammad Abbas (4 for 55) to keep Sri Lanka down to 271 on a tricky National stadium pitch.

That gave the visitor a lead of 80 runs over Pakistan's first-innings total of 191. By the close of second day's play Pakistan had

wiped off 57 of the deficit for no loss.

But it still trails by 23 runs with all 10 wickets in hand and three days to play.

Opener Abid Ali – who became the first batsman ever to hit a debut hundred in both Test and one-day international in the first match in Rawalpindi – was unbeaten on 32 and Shan Masood on 21 not out.

Sri Lanka's fight
Sri Lanka fought through Dinesh Chandimal, who made 74, and Dilruwan Perera, who made a fighting 48 battling at number nine.

With his team wobbling at 80 for five in the morning, Chandimal built partner-



Pivotal: Shaheen Afridi took five for 77 to help restrict Sri Lanka on a tricky pitch. •AP

ships of 67 with Dhananjaya de Silva (32) for the sixth wicket, 37 for the seventh

wicket with Niroshan Dickwella (21) and then another 51 with Perera for the eighth.



Setting it right: The iconic clock tower at the Barabati Stadium was renovated and given a more aesthetic look. •K.R. DEEPAK

Barabati all set to host series-decider

The stadium needed lot of attention after being hit by cyclone Fani last May

WI IN INDIA

Y.B. SARANGI
CUTTACK

The Barabati Stadium is at its prettiest shape in recent times as it gets ready to host the third and series-deciding one-day international between India and West Indies here on Sunday.

The 61-year-old venue, which bore the brunt of cyclone Fani in May last, demanded a lot of attention after the ODI was allotted to the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA).

It was a tough task for the newly-elected OCA office-bearers, who got about two months to put everything in place.

Major issue

"The major issue was the lights, which were installed about 18 years ago. A lot of them were damaged in the cyclone. More than 100 lights were added or changed by Dev Musco Lighting, Kapil Dev's company,

which had installed them," OCA president Mohanty told *The Hindu* on Friday.

"These lights were not available in the market. They could not replace the old lights with LEDs as they had to keep the load factor (on the towers) in mind. The other challenge was achieving the desired lux."

Clock tower renovation

The renovation of the iconic clock tower, beside which the two dressing rooms are situated, was another major work. The glass cover of the three clocks, which were broken in the cyclone, was replaced and the whole tower was given a more aesthetic look.

"The primary work was related to renovation and maintenance. Besides, we employed professional agencies to do the interiors and decorate the pathways (leading to the main block)," said Mohanty.

The whole renovation job was done at an expense of ₹6

crore. "For the last three years the OCA did not get any money from the BCCI.

"The routine expenses, like team travelling, catering etc., were transferred directly to the beneficiaries. Now, BCCI gave us about ₹10 crore which helped us complete this much-needed work."

Barabati last hosted an international match when India played Sri Lanka in a T20 two years ago. The last ODI was staged nearly three years ago.

Spectators excited

The excitement of spectators knew no bounds even though the two teams' practice sessions, scheduled on Friday, was cancelled.

The OCA has been struggling to meet the huge demand for tickets. "We are selling about 38,000 tickets, but are losing 5,200 on Gallery No. 7 as it has been declared unsafe.

"Looking at the demand, it's a significant number," said Mohanty.

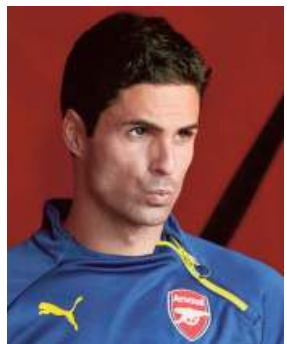
Mikel Arteta appointed Arsenal head coach

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Mikel Arteta has been appointed head coach of English Premier League side Arsenal meaning a return to the club he played more than 100 games for.

The 37-year-old Spaniard, who played for the Gunners from 2011-2016, signed a three-and-a-half year contract and ends a three-year stay as Pep Guardiola's assistant at Manchester City.

He replaces compatriot Unai Emery, who was sacked last month. "We're delighted to announce Mikel Arteta is joining the club as our head coach on Sunday,"



Mikel Arteta. •REUTERS

read an Arsenal statement. "Mikel, a former club captain, played for us for five seasons from 2011 to 2016 and has signed a three-and-a-half year contract."



What a player! Maxwell's innings drew appreciation from Kings XI Punjab, his new IPL team. •FILE PHOTO

Maxwell celebrates contract, King-style

Smashes 83 off just 39 balls in BBL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell on Friday smashed a scintillating 83 off 39 balls for Melbourne Stars against Brisbane Heat in the Big Bash League, a day after being picked by Kings XI Punjab for a whopping ₹10.75 crore at the IPL auction on Thursday.

Returning to action after taking a break to focus on his mental health, Maxwell once again showed just why he is considered one of the most devastating batsmen in T20 cricket as he hit seven boundaries

and five sixes.

The 31-year-old also equalled his fastest-ever fifty (23 balls) during the blistering knock.

Kings XI took to twitter to hail Maxwell's superb innings.

"A BIG SHOW from the 'BIG SHOW' @Gmaxi_32 was at his lethal best as he led from the front for his side in @BBL scoring a breathtaking 83 off just 39 balls."

Maxwell had played for KXIP from 2014 to 2017 before being bought by Delhi Capitals in 2018. He had opted out of the league in the last edition.