

# Hurdler Jyothi breaks national record, but might not enter record book



Jyoti timed 13.03, a national record. But it wouldn't be counted as one.

NIHAL KOSHIE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 13

LAST WEEK Jyothi Yarraji, 20, broke the 18-year-old national 100m hurdles record at the All India Inter-University Athletics Championships in Moodbidri, Karnataka. Her sensational run of 13.03 seconds wiped out the previous mark of 13.38 seconds and she improved her personal best by nearly a second. Yet chances of Jyothi, the daughter of a private security guard from Vizag, being named the national record holder is slim.

This is because the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) did not test her at the championships and there was no technical delegate from Athletics Federation of India (AFI) at the event. A dope test and an AFI technical delegate as observer at a meet is mandatory for records to be ratified. The organisers though put the blame squarely on NADA and AFI for robbing a young athlete of a record.

When Jyothi's coaches realised she had gone faster than the national record, they approached the organising committee of the in-

ter-university championships to ensure dope control officers of NADA collected her sample, Alva Education Foundation's chairman Dr Mohan Alva said.

The championships was hosted by the Alva Education Foundation and the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences. According to Alva, the AIU had informed NADA about the dates of the championships which were from January 2 to 6, but athletes were tested only on the last day. The women's 100 metre hurdles final was held on January 5. "We had qualified technical officials who have the experience of being at major national and international championships at the university meet. The AFI's secretary CK Valsan was invited to be at the championships. As for NADA, it is up to them to conduct dope tests. All athletes at the inter-university meet were available for dope testing. We would like to see Jyothi's performance given the credit it deserves," Alva said.

NADA director general Navin Agarwal told *The Indian Express* that the organisers did not inform NADA about the championships but they had collected samples of other athletes. "Jyothi is slated for an out-of-competition test

at some other day," Agarwal said. Triple jumper Jay Pradeep Shah, who set a meet record, was tested, the NADA director general confirmed.

The AFI also said there was no invitation to its technical delegate from the AIU or the organisers. "The AFI is very happy to know that this particular athlete has improved her timing. But without our technical delegate being officially invited to the championships we are not in a position to check if everything was in order. For example, how do we know that the height of the hurdles were correct? The championships must have been conducted in the best possible manner but ratification of the record needs multiple factors to be verified," AFI secretary Valsan said.

An AIU observer at the championships witnessed the presence of qualified technical officials, photo-finish cameras, wind gauge and electronic timing at the Swaraj Ground where events were held. Videos of the record-breaking performance, which have been shared on social media, show the final being run on a standard synthetic track and hurdles of an AFI-approved manufacturer being used. Over 4,400 athletes from 315 universities partici-

pated in the championships. Sports minister Kiren Rijiju was the chief guest at the opening ceremony.

"Everything was in place during the championships from the technical point of view. This was as good as a national track and field event. The timing and records were genuine," Reenu Poonia, one of the observers from the AIU, said.

An organising committee member said NADA's dope control officers were requested to test Jyothi as she was still at the venue when they arrived a day after her event.

NADA director general Agarwal countered this by throwing the rule book: "Dope Control Officer at a venue has no discretion to decide who to test and who not to test. Testing is done as per mission order generated through ADAMS (Anti-doping administration and management system)."

Jyothi believes breaking the 'record' will act as a confidence-booster for her. "My aim is to win a senior medal at the Asian level," the BA first year student from the Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, said. When she started running at state-level meets, she did so without shoes as her family couldn't afford a pair. Once

she enrolled at the centre of excellence of the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh in 2015, she wore her first pair of spikes.

"My mother is a part-time cleaner at a hospital. She has encouraged me to pursue athletics. She saves money to fund my basic needs. It has not been easy for us as a family because we are not well off. My father works as a security guard and is posted at various places," Jyothi said.

She followed a routine post her medal ceremony in Moodbidri last week. "My mother does not have a phone. So I forward pictures of me on the podium or videos of my races to a neighbour who has a smartphone. My mother watches it later. She is happy I won gold and broke the national record at the inter-university meet. I hope the record is recognised."

Jyothi made waves when she won gold at her very first senior national competition, the Inter-state athletics championships in Lucknow in August, clocking 13.91 seconds. Shattering the long-standing national mark of Anuradha Biswal set in 2002 was a phenomenal improvement. Yet her name is unlikely to enter the record books.

# Ojha finds sweet spot again

MP captain scores 118 and stitches crucial partnerships to give team a chance to push for a dramatic win

VISHAL MENON  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 13

That the selectors picked Wriddhiman Saha as the first choice wicket-keeper ahead of the 2016 season when India were scheduled to play 13 Tests at home, hardly came as a surprise. What would have pleasantly pleased the chief selector MSK Prasad was the plethora of back-up options at his disposal. Leading the list was Naman Ojha and Dinesh Karthik, followed by Sanju Samson and Rishabh Pant.

Back then, Ojha had everything going for him. He was a tidy keeper alright, but it was his fluent, free-flowing batting that caught Prasad's eye. He was an IPL regular and made it to several India 'A' tours. He even made his Test debut against Sri Lanka in August 2015. Little wonder then that Ojha was earmarked as India's No.2 stumper.

Cut to January 2020, and equations have changed dramatically. Saha remains India's No.1 wicket-keeper batsman, miles ahead of his competitors. Karthik has fallen out of favour after his unsuccessful stint at the 2019 World Cup in England.

Pant may have been earmarked by the team management as the player for the future, but question marks still persist over his keeping and temperament as a batsman.

In the interim, Ojha has not just fallen behind in the pecking order; infact he has completely gone off the radar. These days he is no longer picked for India A tours, neither does he feature in the IPL.

Having gone unsold at the auction in December 2019 meant that the 36-year-old would have to train his attention to the Ranji Trophy. Even here, he was dealt with a blow as a back injury kept him out of the first three matches of the season.

## Tentative start

As the Madhya Pradesh captain, Ojha made a tentative return against Railways at the Karnail Singh Stadium, and scored just five runs in the first innings. The seasoned campaigner, however, made amends for that failure as he notched up his 22nd first-class century in the second innings. His commanding 118 was the cornerstone of Madhya Pradesh's emphatic fightback on Day 3.

Forging a 167-run fifth-wicket alliance with Yash Dubey who remained unbeaten on 79, the duo gave their team a splendid chance of going for a win on the final day. At stumps on Day 3, the visitors had not only overhauled the 120-run deficit, they also stacked up 308/5, which pushed their lead to 188 runs.

The turn of events was hardly believable, especially after the manner in which the home team held the ascendancy on the first two days. On Monday morning, the



Madhya Pradesh skipper Naman Ojha (right) struck his 22nd first-class century against Railways on Monday. Amit Mehra

**Having gone unsold at the auction in December 2019 meant that the 36-year-old would have to train his attention to the Ranji Trophy. Even here, he was dealt with a blow as a back injury kept him out of the first three matches of the season.**

conditions looked heavily in favour of the Railways bowlers. It was overcast and windy with a perceptible winter chill and a pitch that was increasingly offering uneven bounce making batting a treacherous profession.

## Increasing the tempo

Which is why Ojha's century assumes such significance. The beauty of the knock was that he never played with a defensive mindset. His belligerence rubbed off on

Dubey and Venkatesh Iyer. Together, they galloped along at an impressive 3.8 runs per over. Their positive intent took the pitch and the weather out of equation. The Railways, without their incumbent captain Karn Sharma looked bereft of ideas and inspiration.

Ojha asserted that professional setbacks and a spate of injuries have not diminished his motivation to play cricket. The 122-match first-class veteran insisted he still had a stellar role to play as the leader of this young Madhya Pradesh squad.

"I am still motivated, which is why I continue to play cricket. I still love to bat and there's a job to be done as the captain of this team that has so many youngsters," Ojha told *The Indian Express*.

It's the retirement of their former captain and veteran middle-order batsman Devendra Bundela that has put the lime-light back on Ojha once again. Bundela has taken up the role of the team's batting coach now, but there's little doubt that Ojha is the fulcrum of this team.

"When Bundi bhai (Bundela) was around, I could afford to just focus on my

batting and keeping. That's not the case anymore. I guess there comes a time in every player's career, when he has to step it up and take more responsibilities," he opined.

## On a knife's edge

Going forward, Ojha believed that his team holds the edge and with a little luck with the weather, they could enforce a win on Tuesday. "I believe we have the edge. Batting last on this pitch is not going to be easy. Infact, batting last in a Ranji game is never easy. Look what happened in the Kerala vs Punjab game. So, irrespective of the score, there's always pressure batting last. We have a good bowling attack and Avesh (Khan) is also fresh," he concluded.

Not long ago, Ojha was India's No.2 wicket-keeper batsman. He was flown to Test debut in the 2015 Sri Lanka tour, before he fell off the radar. There's no denying that even after all these years, he continues to be Madhya Pradesh's No.1 player.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Madhya Pradesh 124 and 308/5 (Naman Ojha 118, Yash Dubey 79 not out) lead Railways 244 by 188 runs.

## RANJI WRAP

### Unadkat blows Karnataka away

JAYDEV UNADKAT has been on a roll this season—he took 21 wickets in his first three games of the season. He added five more—his third five-for—against Karnataka, who have spoiled many a Saurashtra party in the past. He took out the top four to leave Karnataka with little wriggle room and they stumbled to 171 in the first innings, handing them a massive lead of 410 runs on a placid wicket. The mode of dismissals furnishes a fitting account of his discipline—three of them were caught behind, one was caught by the slip, and the other clean bowled. Without Karun Nair and Mayank Agarwal, the visitors wilted, to ignite hopes of a third outright win of the season.

**BRIEF SCORES** (At Rajkot): Saurashtra 581/7 dec vs Karnataka 171 (Ravikumar Samarth 63, Praveen Dubey 46; Jaydev Unadkat 5/49, Kamlesh Makvana 27/3) & 30/0..

### Ashwin rescues Tamil Nadu with the bat

Ravichandran Ashwin's batting has flat-lined in the last two years, but he demonstrated his willingness to grit it out adversity against Mumbai. After Tamil Nadu collapsed from 178/2 to 195/7, Ashwin waged a lone battle to prevent the tourists from running away with the match. Tamil Nadu are still 239 runs away from preventing Mumbai getting three points, but Ashwin's fightback would give them a glimmer of hope. But Tamil Nadu would rue the terrific start. Abhinav Mukund and L. Suryaparakash had laid the platform with a solid 76-run opening partnership before Kaushik Gandhi and Baba Aparajith consolidated. Thereafter, they lost wickets in a flurry—Gandhi, Aparajith and Pradosh Paul departed in the space of six balls. While adding 17 more runs, they lost Indrajith and Dinesh Karthik too.

**BRIEF SCORES** (At Chennai): Mumbai 488 all out in 148.4 overs (Aditya Tare 154, Shams Mulani 87, Shashank Attarde 58, Jay Bista 41; R Sai Kishore 4/125, R Ashwin 3/121) vs Tamil Nadu 249 for 7 in 121 overs (Kaushik Gandhi 60, Abhinav Mukund 58).

### Saxena wrecks Punjab; Kerala get off the mark

There was an inevitability about Jalaj Saxena's 7/51 fashioning Kerala's maiden victory of the season. Since joining Kerala three years ago, the all-rounder has done everything to mould Kerala into a competitive side, often single-handedly, and has played a crucial role in each of their victories in this span. No other Kerala cricketer has picked as many wickets or



Jalaj Saxena's 7/52 fashioned Kerala's 21-run victory over Punjab.

scored as many runs as Saxena. No other cricketer has multi-tasked as efficiently as him. Whether it's opening the batting or taking the new ball, playing the aggressor or anchor, shepherding the lower-order or running through top-order, Saxena has been Kerala's safety valve. Yet again, he kept Kerala in the hunt for knockouts with another masterly performance. Their hopes were all but over when Punjab rolled their second innings for a meagre 136, only for Saxena to change the script. Taking the new ball, he dismissed Rohan Marwaha off the second ball, before clearing out Punjab's best batsmen, Mandeep Singh and Gurkeerat Singh Mann. A late-order fightback reignited Punjab's hopes, but Saxena doused the resistance with an unchanged spell of 23.1-1-51-7 and gifted Kerala a 21-run win, their first of the season.

**BRIEF SCORES (TRIVANDRUM):** Kerala 227 & 136 (Akshay Chandran 31; Siddharth Kaul 5/39) beat Punjab 218 & 124 (Mayank Markande 23; Jalaj Saxena 7/51) by 21 runs. Points: Kerala 6, Punjab 0.

### It's Saurabh again for Uttar Pradesh

Left-arm spinner has been Uttar Pradesh's most consistent bowler in their post glory days. His efforts have gone largely unnoticed, but this could be his breakthrough season. In his last seven innings, he has taken five or more wickets on as many as five instances, he has already plucked 30 wickets and is the highest wicket-taker among elite league bowlers. On Monday, his three-wicket burst disarranged Baroda, who had gotten off to a solid start. From a healthy 124/1, they imploded to 179/8, chasing Uttar Pradesh steep first-innings total of 431. A first-innings lead looks assured, but if Kumar can weave his magic, Uttar Pradesh could force an outright win.

**BRIEF SCORES** (At Kanpur): Uttar Pradesh 431 all out in 124.2 overs (Mohd Saif 123, Upendra Yadav 100, RK Singh 62, Almas Shaikat 48; Swapnil K Singh 3/47, Anureet Singh 2/77) vs Baroda 179 for 8 in 79 overs (Aditya Waghmode 49, Vishnu Solanki 91, Saurabh Kumar 3/36).

# Lewis hits century as West Indies sweep Ireland; Bravo recalled

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
ST GEORGE'S (GRENADA), JANUARY 13

EVIN LEWIS smashed a dazzling century as West Indies defeated Ireland by five wickets on Sunday to complete a 3-0 sweep of the one-day international series.

Opener Lewis hit his third one-day ton off 96 balls with six boundaries and five huge sixes at the National Stadium in Grenada as West Indies reached their rain-revised target of 197 with 64 balls to spare. The 28-year-old, left-handed Lewis had made an unbeaten 99 in the first game in Barbados which his team won also by five wickets.

"All the hard work I've done in the nets has paid off," Trinidadian Lewis said at the trophy presentation. This was an opportunity for my first hundred in the Caribbean, and it's great to get a series win. I've been hungry for runs."

Lewis had reached his 50 off 41 balls while laying the foundation for a comfortable win thanks to a 100-run partnership with Brandon King (38 off 43 balls) for the third wicket. He reached his century with a mid-wicket flourish off medium-pacer Craig Young before falling next ball trying for a big

drive, caught by Kevin O'Brien. By then the West Indies were only five short of their target which had been revised after a brief rain stoppage.

Young suffered the worst punishment with his nine overs yielding just one wicket for 57 runs. Nicholas Pooran confirmed his stature in the West Indies middle-order with an unbeaten 43 off 44 balls. Earlier, leg-spinner Hayden Walsh took four wickets as Ireland were dismissed for 203.

Walsh, who starred with the bat with an undefeated 46 in Thursday's nail-biting one-wicket win in Barbados, finished with figures of 4-36. Recalled fast bowler Oshane Thomas claimed 3-41.

Dwayne Bravo was recalled to the West Indies squad on Sunday, more than three years after his last appearance as the Caribbean side build up to the defence of their World Twenty20 title. The 36-year-old all-rounder, a two-time World T20 winner, was named in a 13-man squad for a three-match series against Ireland later this month.

Bravo has played 66 T20 internationals for West Indies, taking 52 wickets and scoring 1,142 runs.

**BRIEF SCORES:** West Indies 199 for 5 (Lewis 102) beat Ireland 203 (Balbirnie 71, Walsh 4-36) by five wickets (DLS method)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS), JANUARY 13

FIVE-TIME world champion Viswanathan Anand suffered an early jolt, losing to Wesley So in the second round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here. Anand, who played out a draw in the first round, was in no mood to relent and showcased some sensational moves with the black pieces.

Sacrificing a piece early in the Italian opening, he took USA's So by surprise and continued what appeared to be a brilliant attack. However, the Indian ace faltered on the 22nd turn when another piece sacrifice would have sealed a draw, a fact that was unearthed through computer analysis after the game. Capitalising on the fault, So sealed the victory in just three moves thereafter.

The day produced four decisive games and it was again the youngsters who provided most of the entertainment. Russian Daniil Dubov, 23, defeated Vladislav Kovalev of Belarus while Vladislav Artemiev accounted for his Russian teammate Nikita Vituigov. USA's Jeffery Xiong was the other winner of the second round



Viswanathan Anand faltered in the 22nd move. File

at the expense of Jorden van Foreest of Holland.

World champion Magnus Carlsen could do little and had to settle for a draw for the second day running as Yu Yangyi played an ultra-solid with white pieces. Jan-Krzysztof

Duda of Poland signed peace with Firoouza Alireza while Anish Giri of Holland also split the point with Fabiano Caruana of USA.

With 11 rounds still remaining in the 14-player round robin tournament, it's a five-way tie at the top with Xiong, Wesley, Firoouza, Artemiev and Dubov on 1.5 points each. Caruana, Giri, Foreest, Carlsen and Duda follow the leaders with one point while Anand shares the 11th spot with Yangyi and Vituigov on a half point with Kovalev at the bottom currently as he is yet to open his account. In the Challengers section being organized simultaneously, Grandmaster Surya Shekhar Ganguly was held to a draw by Lucas van Foreest of Holland to remain in joint lead on 1.5 points. The other Indian talent Nihal Sareen drew with Pavel Eljanov of Ukraine to inch up to one point from two draws. Nihal had to defend an inferior position for quite a while but in the end escaped unscathed.

### Aleksandrov seizes lead in Delhi Open chess

Seasoned Belarus Grand Master Aleksey Aleksandrov eked out a hard-fought draw against Ukrainian GM Adam Tukhaev to jump into sole lead with 6.5 points after the end of the seventh round of 18th Delhi

International Grandmaster chess tournament here on Monday.

Aleksandrov's compatriot GM Alexei Fedorov and Indian International Master Himlal Gusain share the second spot on six points each with three rounds remaining to be played in the Rs 39 lakh prize money event. Ortik Nigmatov of Uzbekistan found the going tough against Fedorov while Gusain got the better of Indian GM N R Visakh to come within striking distance of his Grand Master norm.

As many as 14 players including Indian GM Abhijeet Gupta, Karthik Venkatraman, Diptayan Ghosh and V Vishnu Prasanna are in the hunt for the top slot on 5.5 points apiece. Thirteen-year old M Pranesh has proved to be the surprise packet so far, having secured 5.5 points and is gunning for a GM norm. He drew with Kirill Stupak of Belarus in the seventh round.

The highest rated Indian in fray, Karthikeyan Murali, also remains in the hunt for a podium finish taking his tally to five points. He, however, needs to win the remaining three games to be in with a chance. For Gupta, this was an easier round by comparison as he made short work of International Master CRG Krishna. Gupta opted for the Grunfeld defense by Gupta with black against Krishna's Fianchetto variation.