

Birthday boy Mayank back among the runs

Pant comes up with a smart mix of caution and aggression; Shaw advances his case

INDIA IN NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA HAMILTON
Mayank Agarwal found form on his birthday and Rishabh Pant mixed caution with aggression as India's warm-up match against New Zealand XI ended in a draw here on Sunday.

The match was called off an hour after lunch with India reaching 252 for four just 48 overs into their second innings.

Mayank, who has been going through a wretched period, retired on 81 off 99 balls with ten 4s and three 6s.

Easy hitting

To the relief of the Indian team management, Pant played in his customary manner to reach 70 off 65 balls, but also showed discretion when the bowlers were in the midst of a good spell.

There were four 6s – two each off leg-spinner Ish Sodhi and off-spinner Henry Cooper. While Sodhi was hit down the ground, Cooper was dispatched over extra-cover.

However, the best thing to have emerged from the match was Mayank's poor run coming to an end. The Seddon Park track easing out was definitely a factor, but Mayank's footwork was more assured as he played some glorious on-drives and pulls off fast bowlers.

Before this game, Mayank had played 10 competitive games, including First Class, ODIs and List-A matches, and couldn't cross the 40-run mark in 11 completed in-



Good news: Mayank Agarwal's run of poor scores seems to have come to an end. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

nings. He even bagged a pair in the 'Test' against New Zealand-A.

He didn't come out to bat after lunch giving Wriddhiman Saha an opportunity to score an unbeaten 30, his runs coming mostly against non-regular bowlers.

The Mayank-Pant pair added 100 runs in 14.3 overs and it also helped that part-timers like Cooper were introduced.

In the morning, Prithvi

Shaw (39, 31b) was bowled through the gate by Daryl Mitchell.

Shaw, though, seemed to have done enough during his brisk 72-run stand with Mayank, to put an end to the debate around the opening slot even though the tracks in Wellington and Christchurch could be a test of technique for the flamboyant Mumbaier.

It was a match that Shubman Gill would perhaps like

to forget in a hurry as he was dismissed cheaply for the second time in a row. He scored eight before Daryl Mitchell trapped him leg before.

The scores:

India – 1st innings: 263.

New Zealand-A – 1st innings: 235.

India – 2nd innings: Prithvi Shaw b Mitchell 39, Mayank Agarwal retired out 81, Shubman Gill lbw b Mitchell 8, Rishabh Pant c Cleaver b Mitchell

70, Wriddhiman Saha (batting) 30, Ravichandran Ashwin (batting) 16; Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-1, w-2): 8; Total (for four wkts in 48 overs): 252.

Fall of wickets: 1-72, 2-82, 3-182, 4-216.

New Zealand-A bowling: Blair Tinkner 3-0-19-0, Scott Kuggeleijn 12-0-81-0, Scott Johnston 4-0-18-0, Daryl Mitchell 9-2-33-3, James Neesham 6-1-29-0, Ish Sodhi 5-0-32-0, Henry Cooper 3-0-27-0, Tom Bruce 5-1-8-0, Finn Allen 1-1-0-0.

'India to play D/N Test at Adelaide'

Ganguly outlines slew of measures to protect five-day format

VIJAY LOKAPALLY NEW DELHI

Test cricket will be the top priority for Sourav Ganguly and his team of administrators in the upcoming season.

Ganguly, as president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has finalised a series of measures to attract spectators to watch Test cricket.

"We will play one day-night Test in each series beginning with the one against Australia (later this year)," Ganguly told *The Hindu*. He confirmed Adelaide as venue for the day-night Test, one of four listed for the series in which India will also play three ODIs and three T20Is.

"I am convinced that day-night Tests is the way forward. We saw a huge turnout at the Eden Gardens (last November) against Bangladesh and I know all countries are looking to encourage this idea. We are all for it," he stressed.

Ahmedabad will be the venue for the second day-night Test in India during England's visit next year.

Ganguly revealed the Board's plans to "market" Test cricket. "We have formed a committee to market Test cricket. The committee will reach out to various stakeholders and sell Test cricket to fans. There is a huge marketing potential waiting to be tapped," he said.

End of zonal system

Ganguly insisted the Board had decided to do away with the zonal system in the selection committee.



Sketching the roadmap: Ganguly and team mean business as they look to tap the market potential of the game. ■ AP

"There won't be any zonal representation in the National selection committee. There may be two or even three from one zone" said Ganguly. The CAC will meet this week to conduct the interviews for two slots in the senior and junior committees.

BCCI app

BCCI is also set to launch an app to interact directly with supporters of the game.

"We realise the potential that lies with our fans, majority of them being youth. The app will be launched to acknowledge the reach of social media. The app will allow fans to interact directly with the BCCI. It's a brilliant way to stay in touch with people who respect and love the game and the players," noted Ganguly.

The Board also released ₹2 crore for the newly-formed Indian Cricketers Association to begin functioning.

Ad-hoc panel for DDCA

In a major development, Ganguly disclosed that BCCI

would step in to ensure smooth functioning of the Delhi and District Cricket Association.

He confirmed there had been numerous complaints against the present set of DDCA office-bearers.

"We have received complaints from various quarters and will hold a Special General Meeting and appoint an ad-hoc committee to run cricket affairs of the DDCA. It will be done within a month," Ganguly emphasised.

The takeaways

- India to play Day-Night Test at Adelaide (vs Australia) and Ahmedabad (vs England)
- No zonal representation in selection committees
- Ad-hoc committee to run DDCA
- Marketing committee to sell Test cricket
- BCCI to launch App to reach out to fans
- Funds released for ICA and various State units

England takes the series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE CENTURION
England captain Eoin Morgan went on a six-hitting spree to take his side to a series win in a high-scoring third and final Twenty20 international against South Africa at SuperSport Park on Sunday.

Morgan slammed seven sixes in an innings of 57 not out off 22 balls as England chased down South Africa's 222 for six with five wickets and five balls to spare.

"It's a nice note to leave this tour on," said Morgan. **The scores:** South Africa 222/6 in 20 overs (T. Bavuma 49, Q. de Kock 35, H. Klaasen 66, D. Miller 35 n.o.; L. Curran 2/33, B. Stokes 2/35) lost to England 226/5 in 19.1 overs (J. Buttler 57, J. Bairstow 64, E. Morgan 57 n.o.; L. Ngidi 2/55).

Second T20: England 204/7 in 20 overs (J. Roy 40, J. Bairstow 35, B. Stokes 47 n.o., M. Ali 39, L. Ngidi 3/48, A. Phehlukwayo 2/47) bt South Africa 202/7 in 20 overs (T. Bavuma 31, Q. de Kock 65, H. van der Dussen 43 n.o., T. Curran 2/45, C. Jordan 2/30, M. Wood 2/39).

Greats line up for Laureus moment

STAN RAYAN BERLIN

Eliud Kipchoge appeared to be a big favourite to win the Laureus Sportsman of the Year award when he made history by running the marathon under two hours late last year, but the latest developments in the running shoes story is likely to add a twist to the tale.

In an effort to make the sport equal for all, World Athletics, the sport's governing body, had banned the shoes which Kipchoge wore on his record run.

The Laureus awards will be presented at the Verti Music Hall here on Monday night and Spanish tennis star Rafael Nadal who, with 19, is close to Roger Federer's all-time Grand Slam record of 20, F1 star Lewis Hamilton, football great Lionel Messi, golf's great comeback man Tiger Woods and motorcycling star Marc Marquez are the other nominees for the men's award.

Meanwhile, two track and field moms, Allyson Felix and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, who lit up the World Championships in Doha last



Memorable moment: South Bronx United, winners of the Laureus Sport for Good Award on Sunday. ■ GETTY IMAGES

year, footballer Megan Rapinoe, tennis star Naomi Osaka, gymnastic wonder Simone Biles and Mikaela Shiffrin (skiing) are in the race for the Laureus Sportsman of the Year title.

Meanwhile, Sachin Tendulkar's 'Carried on the shoulders of the nation' – the scene after India's 2011 ICC World Cup triumph – is among the favourites for the Laureus Sporting Moment for 2000-2020, with South African female amputee swimmer Natalie du Toit expected to give the Indian legend a fight. Toit became the

first female amputee swimmer ever to qualify for the able-bodied Olympics in 2008 in Beijing.

The Laureus Sport for Good award went to South Bronx United, a project which used football to change the lives of young people and poor communities in New York. Andrew So, SBU's co-founder and executive director, and two youngsters who benefited from the project – Mohammed Konate and Maria Martinez – received the award.

(The author is in Berlin at the invitation of Laureus).

Liverpool opens up 25-point lead

Super-sub Pasalic hits winner for Atalanta

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

Sadio Mane struck as Liverpool overcame Storm Dennis and feisty basement club Norwich 1-0 to extend its lead at the top of the Premier League table to 25 points.

The result leaves Daniel Farke's Norwich rooted to the bottom of the table, six points behind 19th-placed Watford. It looks set for an immediate return to the Championship.

Mario Pasalic scored the winner seconds after coming off the bench as Atalanta came from behind to beat Roma 2-1 and consolidate fourth place in Serie A at the expense of its Champions League rival from the capital.

"This is an important victory," said Atalanta coach Gianpiero Gasperini.

The results: Premier League: Aston Villa 2 (Alderweireld 9-og, Engels 53) lost to Tottenham 3 (Alderweireld 27, Son



Quickfire: Mario Pasalic celebrates after scoring the winner just 19 seconds after coming on as a substitute. ■ AP

45+2, 90+4); Arsenal 4 (Aubameyang 54, Pepe 57, Ozil 90, Lacazette 90+5) bt Newcastle 0.

Serie A: Udinese 0 drew with Hellas Verona 0; Sassuolo 0 lost to Parma 1 (Gervinho 25); Sampdoria 1 (Gabbadini 90) lost to Fiorentina 5 (Thorsby 8-og, Vlahovic 18-pen, 57, Chiesa 40-pen, 78); Juventus 2 (Dybala 38, Cuadrado 75) bt Brescia 0; Cagliari 0 lost to Napoli 1 (Mertens 65).

Bundesliga: Cologne 1 (Uth 70) lost to Bayern Munich 4 (Lewandowski 3, Coman 5, Gnabry 12, 66); Mainz 05 0 drew with Schalke 04 0.

La Liga: Sevilla 2 (Ocampos 15,

Suso 80) drew with Espanyol 2 (Embarba 35, Wu Lei 50); Leganes 0 drew with Real Betis 0.

Saturday: Premier League: Norwich 0 lost to Liverpool 1 (Mane 78).

La Liga: Villarreal 2 (Gerard 9, Moises 61) bt Levante 1 (Mayoral 56); Granada 2 (Antonio Rodriguez 81, Carlos Fernandez 90+6) bt Valladolid 1 (Guardiola Navarro 56).

Serie A: Lecce 2 (Mancosu 41-pen, Majer 66) bt SPAL 1 (Pitagagna 47); Bologna 0 lost to Genoa 3 (Soumaoro 28, Sanabria 44, Criscito 90-pen); Atalanta 2 (Palomino 50, Pasalic 59) bt Roma 1 (Dzeko 45).

Duckworth beats Bonzi to title

Gritty Aussie set to reach career-high ranking

BENGALURU OPEN

ASHWIN ACHAL BENGALURU
Just a couple of years ago, James Duckworth was down and out. He had undergone no less than five surgeries in 2017, and his world ranking plummeted to outside 1,000.

After a long and arduous recovery, the Australian returned to the circuit with a bang. Duckworth claimed four Challenger titles in 2019 – the most by any player – to steadily climb up the rankings.



Prized possession: James Duckworth's Bengaluru halt on his road back from injury turned out to be a memorable one. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

Miraculous
On Sunday, Duckworth added another chapter to his miraculous story by winning the \$162,000 Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger. With a 6-4, 6-4 win over France's Benjamin Bonzi in the final, Duckworth is all set to break into the top-80 and reach his career-high ranking.

Duckworth stuttered in the beginning, losing serve to go down 1-3. The 28-year-old broke back to pull level, but it wasn't all smooth sailing.

Duckworth made quite a few unforced errors, which frustrated him no end. Once, after hitting one long, an irate Duckworth took a ball from his pocket and smashed it out of the stadium. With the courts playing

significantly slower at night, the players were unable to get free points on their serves.

Duckworth did gather himself to keep his temper in check, playing the big points well. The gritty Aussie picked up the winner's cheque for \$21,600 and 125 ATP ranking points.

"Having been through all

the injury lay-offs, I have added appreciation in reaching my career-high ranking. I draw from the tough experiences – they spur me on," Duckworth said.

His fine form has earned him a spot in the Australian Davis Cup squad that takes on Brazil in two weeks' time at Adelaide. "One of my biggest goals was to play the Davis Cup. I'd rank this as the best achievement of my career. I also hope to take the step up and play more ATP Tour events," Duckworth said.

Dream campaign

For the unseeded Bonzi, this was no less than a dream campaign.

Bonzi defeated four seeded players on way to the summit clash, and his performance will raise his ranking by more than 100 spots to take him into the 250s. **The result (final):** James Duckworth (Aus) bt Benjamin Bonzi (Fra) 6-4, 6-4.

The chemistry is working well

N. SUDARSHAN BENGALURU

When the Purav Raja-Ramkumar Ramanathan duo signed up to play the Kobe Challenger in Japan last November, it was just testing the waters. But after just four weeks of tennis, the partnership seems a full-blooded one.

In less than a month of being together on court, the two have won three Challenger titles and made a run to the semifinals of an ATP 250 event (Pune). Ramkumar, India's third best singles player, is now just outside the top-100 in doubles (106).

Credits Qureshi

"Actually we have to give credit to Aisam [Ul-Haq Qureshi]," said Purav. "When we were playing the same tournament in France in October, he was like 'why don't you play some weeks with Ram. His game could really complement yours.'"

"And Ram sent me a message right after, and we set up to play Kobe and Pune and ended up winning both,



Two to tango: Ramkumar Ramanathan and Purav Raja have been on a roll after coming together. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

and I was like 'okay!'"

Then we decided to play Pune 250 and Bengaluru. And here we are! The chemistry is good and we'll see to it that we have a good understanding of each other."

Purav has thus far travelled predominantly with doubles specialists, but he remains confident of working out a schedule which

takes into account Ramkumar's singles commitments.

"Where there is a will there's a way," the 34-year-old said.

Success formula

"I have seen this working in the past and I have seen it be successful with numerous people. I'm sure I am experienced enough to try and

get over all of that."

For Ramkumar, singles remains the priority, but the sense of camaraderie that comes with doubles is liberating.

"You have a partner with you and you have so much support. Singles is just you being alone," the 25-year-old said.

"Hopefully, once we are both in the top-70 or 80, we can get into the ATP Tour events and I can also play singles qualifying there. That will be perfect for me."

When such a time comes, setting goals as a team wouldn't be a problem, Purav felt.

"I now set more targets in terms of the way I have to play. I am more of a senior player now as opposed to two or three years ago and I can lead a team.

"I am not very result-oriented, but more process-oriented. Like getting the first serve percentage up to 80, winning all the second serve points etc. Ultimately, good tennis will prevail."