

Hamilton, Messi clinch World Sportsman of the Year honours

The Laureus Award is shared for the first time in its 20-year history; Sporting Moment Award goes to Tendulkar for the 2011 World Cup triumph



A legend arrives: Sachin Tendulkar at the 2020 Laureus World Sports Awards in Berlin on Monday. ■ AP



Frozen in time: Sachin Tendulkar being carried on his teammates' shoulders after India's 2011 World Cup triumph was voted the Sporting Moment (2000-2020). ■ FILE PHOTO

Laureus Award winners

World Sportsman of the Year: **Lewis Hamilton and Lionel Messi**

World Sportswoman of the Year: Simone Biles	World Action Sportsman of the Year: Chloe Kim
World Team of the Year: South Africa Men's Rugby Team	Best Sporting Moment: 'Carried on the shoulders of a nation' - Sachin Tendulkar
World Breakthrough of the Year: Egan Bernal	Lifetime Achievement Award: Dirk Nowitzki
World Comeback of the Year: Sophia Flörsch	Exceptional Achievement Award: Spanish Basketball Federation
World Sportsman of the Year with a Disability: Oksana Masters	Sport for Good Award: South Bronx United

STAN RAYAN
BERLIN

Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton and footballer Lionel Messi were declared joint winners of the prestigious Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award at a glittering ceremony on Monday.

The Laureus Sporting Moment Award (2000-2020) public fan vote was won by Sachin Tendulkar. Voted by

sports fans around the world, the Award celebrated moments from the past two decades where sport has unified people in the most extraordinary way.

Tendulkar, who was part of the victorious 2011 ICC World Cup-winning team, was carried on the shoulders by his teammates.

The victory could not have been more historic, as it was

India's first World Cup win on home soil and its second ever.

Sensational tie

Six-time Formula One World champion Hamilton and six-time FIFA World Player of the Year Messi were so close in terms of their achievements in 2019 that even the ultimate sporting jury, the Laureus World Sports Academy,

could not split them, with the voting being tied for the very first time in the 20-year history of the Laureus Awards.

The duo pipped golfing great Tiger Woods, Kenyan marathoner Eliud Kipchoge, tennis legend Rafael Nadal and MotoGP champion Marc Marquez to the award.

The 2019 Rugby World Cup winner South Africa

won its second Laureus World Team of the Year Award, beating Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool and the US women's football team, among others.

The memory of Siya Kolisi, South Africa's historic first black Test rugby captain, lifting the Webb Ellis Trophy in Yokohama, was an iconic moment in sport. The team's victory united communities

back in South Africa, and was proof of sport's ability to change the world. The winners were revealed as sportsperson gathered together to be part of the most important annual awards ceremony, this year celebrating the 20th anniversary of Laureus.

The event was hosted by actor Hugh Grant and the legends of sport, past and present, were treated to enter-

tainment from British singer-songwriter Liam Payne, former member of One Direction. A tribute was paid to American basketball legend Kobe Bryant, who recently died in a helicopter crash.

Biles wins it

American gymnast Simone Biles confirmed her place in the history of Laureus, win-

ning her third coveted Laureus Sportswoman of the Year Award as she continued to push the boundaries of the sport.

She beat American footballer Megan Rapinoe, Japanese tennis sensation Naomi Osaka, American track and field athlete Allyson Felix and skier Mikaela Shiffrin.

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

Chasing one rabbit at a time, says Kipchoge

STAN RAYAN
BERLIN

He safely skirted the shoes issue and did not specify when he would run a sub-two hours marathon under approved conditions and with the World Athletics' approved footwear but on Monday Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge spoke fondly about the rabbits he was chasing in life.

"I always say, I'm chasing one rabbit at a time. And the rabbit I'm chasing, as we are sitting here now, is the London Marathon (on April 26). So, after London Marathon, I will tell you about the next rabbit," said the Kenyan, in reply to a query from *The Hindu* here on Monday.

World record in London? So, can we expect a World record in London?

"Not at all but you can expect a good race, a fruitful



Reason to smile: Eliud Kipchoge says running gave him freedom. ■ AP

race and a race which will get the fans up," said the 35-year-old.

He said the Nike AlphaFly shoes, with which he made history becoming the first marathoner to break the two-hour barrier in Vienna in October and which forced the world body to bring in

new regulations for shoes because it felt that they gave the athletes an unfair advantage, were good.

"I think the shoes are good, the shoes I used were extremely cool," said the 35-year-old.

But the World Athletics have not been approved

them, isn't it?

"Anyway, you can check with Nike. But I think they are good," said Kipchoge.

Freedom

Despite being the world's best, Kipchoge is a soft-spoken man, almost whispering his answers. "The team is giving him freedom and that is why one often sees him smiling while finishing a marathon.

"They say running is the only place where you can get freedom. So, when you see me smiling, you know that I'm free in this world. I'm really exercising this freedom when I'm running."

He explained that running in teams back home gave him strength. "The team is what gives me strength. The team is what makes me run as fast and forceful. Without the team, I can tell you nothing will happen."

Australia will be favourite down under: Waugh

STAN RAYAN
BERLIN

When Sachin Tendulkar points out someone as the cricketer who reminds him of himself, there is bound to be a lot of interest on the player. But former Australian captain Steve Waugh does not think Marnus Labuschagne could turn out to be someone like Tendulkar though he is very impressed with 25-year-old.

"Maybe he's trying to put him off by saying so. I don't think so but look, Sachin has got every right to say that."

"Maybe he saw something, in my opinion, his temperament or the way he goes about his batting," said Waugh on the sidelines of the 20th Laureus World Sports Awards celebrations here.

"He has appetite for runs and tries exceptionally hard. I was really impressed with



Steve Waugh. ■ STAN RAYAN

him when he stood out at the Ashes. He wanted to make a difference, he wanted to be the next player to do well.

"He came a long way from the back of the pack... 12 months ago he was just in the top 26 players in Australia, now he is the fourth-ranked Test batsman in the world. So, it's been an incredible transformation."

Was he trying to brush away the pressure on La-

buschagne? With Tendulkar's praise, the spotlight will be on Labuschagne, who recently won Australia's Player-of-the-Year award, as India travels down under towards the end of the year for a four-match Test series.

India had beaten Australia 2-1 for its first-ever Test series win down under early last year, but Waugh felt the Aussies would start favourites this time.

As you said they won the

series last time... you can't take anything away from India but the fact is, we did not have two of our best batsmen last time and now Labuschagne has come out of nowhere.

"Our bowling attack is settled and there are no weaknesses in the Australian side. India does not have weaknesses too; so it's going to be potentially a great series."

"India has the best fast bowling attack in India. When they are playing in India they are best attack in the world. When cricket is played in Australia, I think Australia is the best fast bowling attack in the world," he said.

Slight edge

"So, when they come to Australia, I think we will have a slight edge. And if we go to India, India will have a slight edge."

'Young India a top contender'

Harmanpreet feels that the side has grown substantially



Team leaders: (front row) Harmanpreet Kaur, West Indies' Stafanie Taylor, Australia's Meg Lanning, Sri Lanka's Chamari Atapattu, Pakistan's Bismah Maroof and (back row) Thailand's Sornnarin Tippoch, New Zealand's Sophie Devine, South Africa's Dane van Niekerk, England's Heather Knight and Bangladesh's Salma Khatun. ■ AFP

T20 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SYDNEY

The void left by legends such as Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami is not easy to fill, India captain Harmanpreet Kaur said on Monday but also asserted that her young side had grown substantially to be a top contender for this month's women's T20 World Cup.

The average age of India's squad in Australia is 22.8 with Harmanpreet being among the seasoned ones.

"We already miss the experience they shared with us, but these young girls are showing their talent and ability," said the 29-year-old,

speaking at the captains' media day at Taronga Zoo here.

The ICC Women's T20 World Cup will open with a clash between India and defending champion and hosts Australia in Adelaide on February 21.

"In the last two years I've gone from being the youngest to one of the oldest in the team," she said. "They never show that they're young, they can always do what we expect of them. The team is looking in really good shape and showing what they can do with extra responsibility," she said.

She is still not over the disappointment of missing the ODI world title in 2017

and Harmanpreet said the T20 World Cup trophy would go a long way in making up for that debacle.

"Our team is growing day by day, everyone is looking so positive," Harmanpreet said. "It's going to be very big if we win, I was very surprised at all the reaction from 2017. My parents didn't tell me, they didn't want us to feel the pressure."

Reward to be reaped She is well aware what a long run in an ICC tournament can do for her country. "If we win the World Cup, there's no doubt things will change. That tournament would bring a lot of confidence to the girls."

Boult back for Test series

INDIA IN NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WELLINGTON

Fit-again senior pacer Trent Boult has been named in the 13-member New Zealand squad for the first Test against India starting here on February 21.

According to a media release issued by New Zealand Cricket, the 6' 8" pacer Kyle Jamieson, who made his ODI debut against India in the recent series, has also earned his call-up in the Test squad, which will have slow left-arm orthodox Ajaz Patel as the only spinner. Boult's comeback is a big

boost for the New Zealand side as he missed the entire limited-overs leg due to a fractured right hand sustained during the Boxing Day Test against Australia at the MCG.

"It's terrific to have Trent back with us and we're looking forward to the energy and experience he adds to the group alongside

The squad:

Kane Williamson (Capt.), Tom Blundell, Trent Boult, Colin de Grandhomme, Kyle Jamieson, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor, Neil Wagner and B-J. Watling.

Faf du Plessis steps down as captain

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JOHANNESBURG

Faf du Plessis announced on Monday he was stepping down as South Africa cricket captain with immediate effect.

du Plessis, 35, said he needed to take "a step back" from the captaincy in order to help the next generation of leaders under Quinton de Kock to emerge. de Kock led the team in the recent ODIs and T20Is against England while du Plessis was rested.

du Plessis said he wanted to concentrate on doing well as a batsman.

The squad (for Australia T20Is): Quinton de Kock (Capt., wk), Temba Bavuma, Faf du Plessis, Bjorn Fortuin,



Faf du Plessis. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Jon-Jon Smuts, Dale Steyn, Pite van Biljon and Rassie van der Dussen.

The fixtures: Feb. 21, Johannesburg; Feb. 23, Port Elizabeth; Feb. 26, Cape Town.

Humpy triumphs in Cairns Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ST LOUIS

World rapid champion K. Humpy claimed her second title in the last two months by emerging triumphant at the Cairns Cup chess following a draw against compatriot D. Harika in the ninth and final round here. Humpy, who was crowned World champion in the last week of December, finished with six points. The icing on the cake is that Humpy would be gaining five ELO rating points and moving to No. 2 in the world list.

The results: **Ninth round:** K. Humpy drew with D. Harika; Valentina Gunina drew with Kateryna Lagno;



Incredible: Humpy is now World No. 2. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Alexandra Kosteniuk lost to Wenjun Ju; Irina Krush bt Nana Dzagnidze; Carissa Yip drew with Mariya Muzychuk. **Final standings:** 1. K. Humpy 6 points, 2 Wenjun Ju 5.5, 3. Ma-

riya Muzychuk 5, 4. Alexandra Kosteniuk 5, 5. D Harika, 4.5, Kateryna Lagno 4.5, 7. Irina Krush 4, Carissa Yip 4, 9. Nana Dzagnidze 4, 10. Valentina Gunina 2.5.

A special feeling, says Humpy

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

Playing for the first time in the second edition of the Cairns Cup, said to be one of the toughest women's events, World rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy re-asserted her supremacy winning the title with 6 points from nine rounds picking up the \$45,000 winner's purse in St. Louis on Monday.

"This is a really strong field with an average rating of ELO 2500+," 32-year-old Humpy told *The Hindu* from US. The tough field included two Americans and the top eight players including reigning World champion Ju Wenjun

featuring in the round-robin format.

"Winning Cairns Cup is a special feeling for it reminds that the World championship title was no flash in the pan," she said.

"The toughest match was against Alexandra Kosteniuk in the seventh round, which was a long battle and I could manage to keep my unbeaten record against her," she said. "It was a close race for the top spot till the eighth round. Wenjun lost her game and I managed to draw my game giving me the slender half-a-point lead which eventually proved decisive."

"The best part of this

victory is that I will be gaining crucial five ELO points and moving back to World No. 2 ranking and towards my goal being No.1 one day," she said.

"The next big event is the Grand Prix in Italy this may and then I will be playing in the PSPB tournaments as part of my commitment to my employers," the Chief Manager (HR) in ONGC said.

One her targets she said, "since I am leading the FIDE Women's Grand Prix Series right now, I want to finish it off on a high and then aim to qualify for the Candidates scheduled later this year."