

WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Du Preez clinches tense win for South Africa

REUTERS
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SOUTH AFRICA'S Mignon du Preez celebrated her 100th T20 match by hitting a six and a four in consecutive balls in the final over to power her team to a thrilling six-wicket win over England in the Women's Twenty20 World Cup in Perth on Sunday.

South Africa appeared in a precarious position in their chase of 124, needing 33 from the last three overs, but they managed to bring the equation down to nine from six balls. Experienced England seamer Katherine Brunt conceded only two in her first two deliveries before Du Preez sealed the win for South Africa in the Group A clash.

Natalie Sciver's knock of 50 from 41 balls helped England post 123 for eight in their 20 overs after being asked to bat first at the WACA ground. South Africa were going well with an 84-run stand for the second wicket between captain Dane van Niekerk, who made 46, and Marizanne Kapp.

But they lost both batsmen in consecutive overs as the asking rate kept climbing in the face of clinical left-arm spin bowling from Sophie Ecclestone, who finished with 2-19.

Earlier, South African bowlers kept picking up wickets at regular intervals to stall England's momentum. Opener Amy Jones provided a solid start for England with a knock of 23 but they lost Jones and fellow opener Danni Wyatt in quick succession while captain Heather Knight also fell cheaply to leave them tottering at 43-3 in the ninth over. Sciver steadied the innings, however, and hit five fours and a six before falling in the 19th over to Ayabonga Khaka, who finished with figures of 3-25.

BRIEF SCORES: South Africa 127/4 beat England 123/8 (Sciver 50, Khaka 3-25) by six wickets.

Can't be complacent against Bangladesh: Krishnamurthy

Perth: India's middle-order batter Veda Krishnamurthy has warned her colleagues against complacency after their splendid win against Australia, saying they must stay focused ahead of their clash against Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup, here on Monday. India's impressive bowling display lit up the tournament-opener with leg-spinner Poonam Yadav playing a key role with four wickets to halt the defending champions' run chase.

Krishnamurthy does not want to see India let their emotions get the better of them, insisting the top and middle order need to survive longer. "We can't be complacent with the victory (against Australia). We have to let go of those emotions now and focus on repeating all the good things we did," Krishnamurthy said on the eve of the match. India will need to improve their batting performance as they scored a below par 132 against Australia. Since the tri-series preceding this World Cup, the Indian batting has been inconsistent, struggling to post big totals.



Mignon du Preez hit a six and a four off consecutive balls in the final over to seal a thrilling 6-wicket win for SA.

SILVER LINING: NO GOLD ON FINAL DAY BUT INDIA MANAGE RECORD HAUL



Jitender Kumar (R) goes for a leg attack in the 74kg category final against Kazakhstan's Daniyar Kaisanov in the Asian Championship in New Delhi on Sunday. He lost the bout 3-1 to settle for a silver medal.

■ A gold eluded India on Sunday with Jitender Kumar (74kg category) winning a silver medal while Deepak Punia (86kg) and Rahul Aware (61kg) finishing with bronze.

■ The four medals took India's over tally to 20, making it their best performance at the Asian Championship. India won 5 gold, 6 silver and 9 bronze medals.

■ The hosts had won one gold and four bronze medals in the Greco-Roman style to finish fifth overall. In women's wrestling, India finished second behind Japan after winning three gold, two silver and three bronze medals while in men's freestyle, they won one gold, four silver and two bronze to finish second once again, this time behind Iran.

■ It must be noted, however, that the tournament had a depleted field due to a combination of factors: China and North Korea had pulled out in the aftermath of coronavirus while Iran, Mongolia and Japan did not send their best teams in some categories because of the Olympic qualifiers next month.

We will stick to what had been said before – those who have won a medal at the Asian Championship will not have to give another trial. Jitender has won a silver, so he will be in the team for the qualifiers. It will be unfair on him otherwise. Trials will be held in three categories only.

BRIJBHUSHAN SHARAN SINGH
PRESIDENT, WRESTLING FEDERATION OF INDIA

Jitender's medal puts the heat on Sushil

MIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 23

FOR CLOSE to four months, Jitender Kumar toiled for hours on the wrestling mat to improve his attacking game. But ironically, that was a nervy, ultra-defensive show that earned him a place in the Indian team for next month's Tokyo Olympics qualifiers.

It means that if the 25-year-old reaches the final in Bishkek, not only will he make it to his maiden Olympics, but also shut the door on two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar and rookie Gourav Baliyan, billed as the next big thing in Indian wrestling.

That is subject to the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) sticking by its policy, in the absence of any written guideline. But as things stand, Jitender has his – and Sushil's – fate in his hands.

Such a scenario has emerged after Sushil, citing injury, opted out of the national selection trials for the Asian Championship and Asian Olympic Qualifiers. In his absence, Jitender clinched a berth but the WFI later said they would conduct a re-trial in weight categories where India don't win a medal in the continental championship, which concluded here on Sunday.

That left the door ajar for Sushil, but Jitender won a silver on Sunday – his maiden Asian Championship medal – which means he will get a shot at earning a Tokyo Olympics quota before his idol. "We will stick to what had been said before – those who have won a medal at the Asian Championship will not have to give another trial. Jitender has won a silver, so he will be in the team for the qualifiers. It will be unfair on him otherwise," WFI president Brijbhushan Sharan Singh said.

While Sushil will have to wait and see if he gets a second chance, Rio Olympics bronze medalist Sakshi Malik (62kg category) has an opportunity to make the cut for the Bishkek-bound team after the WFI decided to hold trials in her weight category. India, who won a record 20 medals, could not finish on the podium in women's 62kg and 76kg classes along with the 60kg category in Greco-Roman style. "Trials will be held in these three categories only," Sharan said.

Relief for Jitender

The WFI's decision will come as a relief for Jitender, who looked a tad anxious at the start of the day. That reflected in the way he wrestled as he appeared to be fighting with an intention to not lose, rather than going all out for a win, which his coach Shako Bendinitis has been working on. The 10-0 win over Thailand's Parinya Chamnanjan in the opening round was his only dominant performance.

After defeating Iran's Mostafa Mohabbali Hosseinkhani in a low-scoring quarterfinal, Jitender's last-four bout against Mongolia's Sumiyabazar Zandanbud was another dull, defensive affair. Both wrestlers could not manage any attacking moves and earned just penalty points because of the passivity of their opponent. Jitender ultimately won the bout 2-1, which took him into the final – as well as into the team for the Olympic qualifiers.

Another cagey display in the final saw him lose to Kazakhstan's Daniyar Kaisanov 3-1. The defeat, however, will not bother him. If Jitender reaches the finals of the Olympic qualifier, he will secure an Olympic quota for himself. If not, it will be a three-way race between him, Sushil and Baliyan for the final qualifying tournament in April-May.

India have so far won four Olympic quotas – Vinesh Phogat (53kg), Ravi Dahiya (57kg), Bajrang Punia (65kg) and Deepak Punia (86kg).

Porel catching up on lost time

Bengal pacer has worked on his fitness, strength and action to become a much-improved bowler this season

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
CUTTACK, FEBRUARY 23

A PIECE of advice and a couple of video clips on WhatsApp from Amol Muzumder acted as catalysts for Ishan Porel this season. After the fourth day's play in the Bengal-Odisha Ranji Trophy quarterfinal at the DRIEMS College ground, the Bengal seamer gave the lowdown. "During the Duleep Trophy, Amol sir sent me video clips of my bowling vis-à-vis Prasadh Krishna's (Karnataka pacer). The videos captured how my front leg was collapsing (at the time of loading), while Prasadh Krishna's front leg was a lot straighter. The advice was that a straighter front leg would help me generate more pace," Porel explained.

It prompted the pacer to get down to work. "A complete change would have required a break from matches and going back to the nets. I was playing back-to-back matches. So I worked on the strength and mobility of my legs and kept the advice in mind while bowling in the nets."

It worked. Last season, Porel was mediocre. In six Ranji Trophy matches, he had 17 wickets at an average of 31. He looked pedestrian on pitches that didn't offer help. This season however, Porel is into his fourth fixture, and has already accounted for 15 scalps at an average a shade over 18. His pace is up and extracts steeper bounce. Bengal head coach Arun Lal called him an "old woman" last season. He now calls the 21-year-old "India material". Porel has graduated to India A, and had decent outings in New Zealand last month.

Muzumder recognises the improvement. "A noticeable change for me is that he has started to bowl a yard up (to the batsman). In first-class cricket, you won't get away with it, if

RANJI ROUND-UP

Gujarat reach semis

At Valsad: Gujarat hammered Goa by 464 runs to reach the Ranji Trophy semifinal. Given an improbable target of 629 runs, Goa's second innings folded for 164. Left-arm spinner Siddharth Desai bagged a five-for for Gujarat. Left-arm seamer Arzan Nagwaswalla took four wickets. **Brief scores:** Gujarat 602/8 decl. and 199/6 decl. (Lakshay Garg 3/40) beat Goa 173 and 164 (Suyash Prabhudessai 66; Siddharth Desai 5/81, Arzan Nagwaswalla 4/18) by 464 runs.

Karnataka take the lead

Jammu: Karnataka took the crucial first-innings lead after bowling out Jammu and Kashmir for 192 on the fourth day of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here on Sunday. Resuming the day at 88/2 in reply to Karnataka's 206, Jammu and Kashmir let the advantage slip by losing wickets at regular intervals. **Brief scores:** Karnataka 206 and 245/4 (KV Siddharth 75 not out, Samarth 74) vs J&K

192 (Shubham Khajuria 62, Abdul Samad 43; Prasadh Krishna 4/42)

Saurashtra tame Andhra

Ongole: Saurashtra have effectively reached the Ranji Trophy semifinal after finishing Day Four with a 658-run lead over Andhra. The only thing now needs to be seen if they secure an outright win on the final day. **Brief scores:** Saurashtra 419 and 375/9 (Prerak Mankad 85, Dharmendra Jadeja 60; N Sai Krishna 4/47) vs Andhra 136.

Bengal grind Odisha

Cuttack: After a shaky start on the fourth day, Bengal sauntered to safety to all but secure their spot in the semifinal, taking a 443-run lead over Odisha. For Bengal, it was a 102-run fifth wicket partnership between Abhishek Raman and Shreevats Goswami that slammed the door shut on Odisha. **BRIEF SCORES:** Bengal 332 and 361/7; (Shreevats Goswami 78, Abhishek Raman 67) vs Odisha 250. **ENS**

you aren't bowling the first-class length – short of a length. About the video clips, I really don't want to make it a big thing. He is a much-improved bowler. He has got the advantage of height. The target should be to bowl 15-20 overs in a day. The more you bowl, your bowling muscles improve and consequently your pace improves," he told *The Indian Express*.

Porel is doing a lot of strength-training as well. "I'm doing the extra yards in the gym. I know I have to train harder. I have to build

more strength in my legs," he explained, crediting the Bengal head coach for organising an extensive pre-season. "The last season didn't go as well as I wanted. But this season, the ball is rolling for me. We had a very good pre-season, where Lal ji (Arun Lal) pushed us hard. That really helped me a lot."

Things haven't come easy to the boy from Chandernagore, Hooghly. Two years ago, he went to the U-19 World Cup as part of the pace bowling trio with Shivam Mavi and



Porel finished with figures of 3/72.

Kamlesh Nagarkoti. But in the first match against the Australia colts, he bruised his heel and hobbled off the field. He came back to the fold all right, but by then, Mavi and Nagarkoti had stolen a march on him, at times hitting 145kph. They were the stars of India's U-19 World Cup-winning campaign. Kolkata Knight Riders forked out Rs 3 crore for Mavi and Rs 3.2 crore for Nagarkoti at the 2018 IPL auction. But injuries ruled out Nagarkoti for two IPL seasons running, while Mavi, too, missed last year's edition due to a lower-back stress fracture. In fact, Nagarkoti hasn't played competitive cricket for two years now. Mavi, on the other hand, featured in just one Ranji Trophy match for Uttar Pradesh this term. Porel will play the IPL this year, as a Rs 20 lakh buy for Kings XI Punjab. But back in 2018, he was playing catch-up.

Porel has matured enough to deal with bowling on placid pitches. He did it here against Odisha with a heavily-strapped ankle – a minor twist – and returned with three wickets in the first innings. By his own admission, he now handles the new ball better. "I always preferred to bowl with the older ball because I have natural reverse swing. Now, by bowling with the new ball has improved."

[SPORTS BAR]

Odisha, Kerala 8-goal thriller ends in a draw

Odisha FC and Kerala Blasters played out an entertaining 4-4 draw in the Indian Super League here on Sunday. Manuel Onwu scored a hat-trick for the hosts, while Bartholomew Ogbeche netted twice to lead the Golden Boot standings with 15 to his name. Odisha FC ended their league stage campaign with 25 points, while Kerala Blasters finished seventh with 19 points in their kitty. Odisha took the lead through Manuel Onwu in the very first attack of the game. Jerry Mawihmingthanga's cross saw Onwu head it first time as he left Bilal Khan stranded to his position to make it 1-0.

Khelo: Jain University swimmers shine

A four-gold medal haul at the swimming pool helped Jain University, Bengaluru, take early lead in the inaugural Khelo India University Games on Sunday. Guru Nanak Dev University's (Amritsar) fencing squad claimed three gold to be on the second spot on a day when fencer Riya Bakshi of Cluster University, Jammu, won the first gold medal on offer. SV Nikitha was the toast of Jain University, winning the women's 400m Freestyle gold with nearly five minutes to spare and then anchoring the 4x200m Freestyle relay team to a handsome victory over Delhi University and University of Mumbai.



The Indian pair lost 5-11, 9-11, 11-8, 9-11 to German combination of Benedikt Duda and Patrick Franziska.

Sharath, Sathiyana win silver at Hungarian Open

Indian men's doubles pair of Achanta Sharath Kamal and Gnanasekaran Sathiyana settled for a silver medal at the ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open after losing the summit clash to German combination of Benedikt Duda and Patrick Franziska. The Indian pair, which defeated top seeds Ho Kwan Kit and Wong Chun Ting of Hong Kong 3-2 in the semi-finals, put up a strong effort in the summit clash but eventually went down fighting 5-11 9-11 11-8 9-11 to the 16th seeds German pair in a 30-minute showdown on Saturday. It is Sharath Kamal's second medal from the prestigious tournament. He also won a bronze with Manika Batra in mixed doubles. It turned out to be a super Saturday for India as Chennai's Mathan Rajan Hansini bagged a bronze medal in the mini-cadet girls' singles category at the Swedish Junior and Cadet Open in Orebro, Sweden. The 10-year-old Class V student started her main draw challenge after a couple of wins in the group stages before going down to Russia's Iuliia Pugovkina 12-10, 9-11, 5-11, 8-11 in a gruelling semi-final match.

Bharat, 13, stuns Chinese GM in Moscow

India's 13-year-old Bharat Subramniyam stunned Chinese Grandmaster Jiancho Zhou in the fourth round to jump to joint top spot in the 'A' group of the Aeroflot Open chess tournament in Moscow. Playing with white pieces, Subramniyam, an International Master, outlasted Zhou in a long-drawn game in 74 moves for his third win in the tournament on Saturday. He now shares the top spot with Azerbaijan GM Rauf Mamedov, who was held to a draw by India's SP Sethuraman. Both Subramniyam and Mamedov have 3.5 points. Subramniyam had earlier registered his second victory in the event by beating the second seeded Gabriel Sargissian.

Rashpal and Gawte defend titles in Delhi

Rashpal Singh and Jyoti Gawte thwarted a strong field of runners to successfully retain their crown at the IDBI Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon on Sunday. Army Sports Institute's (Pune) Rashpallived upto his top billing and finished the full marathon (42.2k) with an impressive time of 2:23:29 hours to pocket the coveted title. Jyoti of Maharashtra proved to be untouchable in the women's category, winning the title in a canter. She completed the full marathon, which was flagged off from JLN Stadium, in 2:50:37 hours, with almost eight minutes to spare.



Aizawl snatch a point from Chennai City FC

Defending champions Chennai City FC played out a 1-1 draw to share the spoils with Aizawl FC in the I-League on Sunday. Veteran Katsumi Yusa (in pic) broke the deadlock in the business end of the first half before Rochharzela brought the visitors back to level terms with a well converted penalty in the second half. Both coaches made three changes apiece. Chennai gaffer Akbar Nawas reinstated Pravitto Raju and Jishnu Balakrishnan to his midfield along with Varun Mathur who made way for Rohit Mirza. Aizawl boss Stanley Rozario recalled Juuko Richard Kassaga to his backline and opted for a different line of control upfront, naming Jonathan Lalrawngbala and Justice Morgan in his starting eleven. The first goal-bound opportunity fell the way of the hosts in the ninth minute.