



**Breaking through:** Once Lucian Goian headed home Chennaiyin FC's opening goal, the hosts went on a scoring spree against Goa. ■ M. VEDHAN

# Dazzling Chennaiyin stuns Goa

Goian, Thapa, Sabia and Chhangte on target for the hosts; Gama nets the visitors' consolation goal

## ISL

**K. KEERTHIVASAN**  
CHENNAI  
Chennaiyin FC produced a delightful performance to register a sensational 4-1 victory over FC Goa in the first leg semifinal of the Indian Super League (ISL) on Saturday.

### Team effort

It was a collective effort by the hosts, each department playing its role to perfection. Be it Rafael Crivellaro with his touches, Nerijus Valskis and Andre Schembri on the prowl in the frontline, Lu-

■ It was Chennaiyin's first win over Goa in the last five meetings

■ Goa hampered by the absence of Boumous (indisposed), Fernandes (injured) and Bedia, who flew back to Spain for personal reasons

■ The return leg will be held at Fatorda on March 7

cian Goian & Co. at the back, Jerry Lalrinzuala on the wings and Edwin Vanspaul in midfield, each player just-

fied his position.

Goa, on the other hand, was hampered by the absence of a few key players: Hugo Boumous (indisposed), Brandon Fernandes (injured) and Edu Bedia, who had to fly back to Spain for personal reasons.

After an exciting goalless first half, Chennaiyin sprung into action in the second. Crivellaro's free kick, with three defenders lurking around, saw the visitors' goalkeeper Mohammad Nawas jump high in an effort to palm it away.

However, it was Goian

who leapt higher and headed it home.

### Glut of goals

Chennaiyin pulled further away when Anirudh Thapa scored a peach of a goal. From around 15 yards, the 22-year-old unleashed a curling shot that went past the outstretched hands of Nawas.

The hosts netted two more in the space of eight minutes through Eli Sabia and Lallianzuala Chhangte.

Valskis' wonderful low cross from the left saw right-back Sabia poke the ball

home with his right foot.

Off Thapa's assist, Chhangte then struck home from close range.

Goa substitute Saviour Gama's late goal made it 4-1, but it was too little too late.

Thanks to their first win over Goa in the last five meetings, Owen Coyle's men have one foot in the final while Goa has a mountain to climb in the return leg at Fatorda on March 7.

**The result:** Chennaiyin FC 4 (Lucian Goian 54, Anirudh Thapa 61, Eli Sabia 77, Lallianzuala Chhangte 79) bt FC Goa 1 (Saviour Gama 85).

# BFC needs to put its best foot forward

Will find it tough against ATK in the semifinal first leg

## ISL

**N. SUDARSHAN**  
BENGALURU

The first leg of the ISL semifinal against ATK comes at a tough time for Bengaluru FC. The reigning champion has had to endure a heart-breaking midweek defeat in the AFC Cup playoff, leaving the club without continental group stage action for the second straight season.

If the deflating loss was not enough, the club has been sweating over the fitness of its best player, Sunil Chhetri.

But on Sunday at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium it needs to somehow pick up the pieces and put its best foot forward.

"It doesn't take a lot to get my players to be competitive," coach Carles Cuadrat

stressed on Saturday.

### Ready for the game

"I think Sunil [Chhetri] is ready for the game and we are three games away from becoming champions. We need not punish ourselves for the things we did in the past. For the third season in a row we are fighting for the title while a lot of teams are already in their holidays."

It will certainly help that the semifinal and final offer a clean break from everything that has transpired in the league thus far. It's a mini-tournament in itself, with the winner guaranteed a 2021 AFC Cup playoff spot. Following an up-and-down season, it's a reward that the club will be desperate to secure.

### No pushover

But ATK will be no pushover. A two-time ISL champion, it

has scored 33 times in 18 games, second only to FC Goa.

Unlike BFC, which has solely depended on Chhetri, Roy Krishna, Edu Garcia, David Williams and Michael Soosairaj have combined to score 27 goals. What's striking is the combination play among these four, something BFC needs to be wary of.

At the same time, ATK has leaked a mere 16 goals, with only BFC stingier at the back (13).

"I think it will be a very competitive match because two organised teams will be playing [against each other]," said ATK coach Antonio Habas. "BFC is balanced and very competitive and one of the favourites. Until now, they are the champions and we have to respect them."

The game kicks off at 7.30 p.m.



**Raring to go:** Sunil Chhetri, right, who had some fitness issues, appears ready for the game against ATK. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

# Dutee storms to gold

Sets new 100m inter-University record



**Clear winner:** Dutee Chand was the first to get off the blocks and ran a comfortable race. ■ BISWARANJAN ROU

## KIUG

**SHYAM VASUDEVAN**  
BHUBANESWAR

Dutee Chand's quest for an Olympic berth began in fine fashion as she stormed to a dominating win in the 100m event at the Khelo India University Games on Saturday.

Running in lane 3, she clocked 11.49 seconds to bag the gold, setting a new inter-University record in the process.

Talking post the race, Dutee said she was glad to get the year off to a winning start and assured she had a lot more left in the tank.

"I am very happy because this is the first time I have begun the year so well. And I hope to shave off at least 0.10 seconds in my upcoming races," she said, surrounded by an army of cameras, all eager to snap a byte with the local star.

**Silver for Dhanalakshmi**  
Dutee was the first to get off

the blocks and ran a comfortable race, powering her way past second-placed S. Dhanalakshmi of Mangalore University, who clocked 11.99s.

Representing host KIIT University, Dutee ran 11.61s in the semifinals earlier in the day.

The Odiya sprinter has run faster. She set the track ablaze at the National Open in October last year, where she clocked 11.22s for a new National record. She is currently 0.07s away from making the Olympics cut, with the qualification mark set at 11.15s.

While the audience hoped she would breach the Olympics mark here, Dutee said she needed a higher level of competition to push herself further.

"As you saw, there wasn't a lot of competition here. To achieve the Olympic cut-off I need to compete against faster athletes who will help me push me further," she said.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

The Government of India has sent a questionnaire to the Badminton Association of India (BAI), seeking clarity on health status of the Chinese shuttlers, scheduled to travel to the national capital for next month's Indian Open.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday asked the BAI to furnish some details about the Chinese players before it takes a call regarding their entry into the country for the Super 500 tournament, which is a crucial event for the Tokyo Olympics qualification.

Some of the questions asked by the Ministry include: "Players/Officials are from which state of China?", "How many players/officials have undergone for medical check-up and medical certificate has been issued?", "How many players/officials are coming from the other countries?"

### Response awaited

After receiving the queries, BAI has directed the questions to their Chinese counterparts and is awaiting a response.

"We have sent the questions received from the external affairs ministry to the Chinese Badminton Association. We are waiting for a response. Once they revert, we will send them to the Ministry to start the visa process," BAI secretary Ajay Singhania told PTI.

World No. 1 Chen Yufei, world number eight He Bingjiao and former All England champion Shi Yu Qi are some of the stars of the 60-plus Chinese squad who are expected to compete at the Indira Gandhi International Stadium from March 24 to 29.

### BAI optimistic

BAI is optimistic about China's participation in the India Open despite the fears surrounding the deadly coronavirus as Chinese shuttlers were in quarantine for almost a fortnight in Europe earlier this month.

The deadly coronavirus, which originated in Wuhan, China, has so far killed close to 3000 people and infected nearly 80,000 globally and there are concerns about the spread of the virus.

Given the health hazards, India have put flying bans on China and Hong Kong, besides issuing a mandatory 14-day quarantine period for the people who are travelling to the country from the affected nations such as Korea, Iran, Italy.

Earlier this month, government didn't grant visas to Chinese wrestlers for the Asian Championships due to same concerns.

However, Chinese players were cleared to play three tournaments in Europe - German Open, the All England Open and the Swiss Open, with the Chinese Badminton Association claiming that "no one is infected".

Most of the Chinese team members have been training in Britain to play in the tournaments in Europe and BAI is hopeful they will be granted visas. "The Chinese shuttlers have been in Europe for quite sometime now. They have been quarantined there and they have applied for visas at UK. Since the team hadn't been to China since the outbreak, we are hopeful they will be granted visa," Singhania said.

Concerns over the rapid spread of the deadly virus has already forced the postponement of the four Olympic qualifying events so far - Lingshui China Masters (February 25 to March 1), Vietnam International Challenge (March 24-29) and German Open (March 3 to 8) and Polish Open (March 26-29).

### Racing against time

Many top players such as two-time Olympic champion Lin Dan, London bronze medalist Saina Nehwal and Rio Olympics quarterfinalist Kidambi Srikanth are racing against time to book their ticket to Tokyo.

India Open thus is an important tournament considering the deadline to make it to Tokyo ends on April 28 with the ranking published on that day to be considered for qualification.

Badminton's world body (BWF) on Friday said it has currently no plans to make any adjustments to the regulations related to the Tokyo Games qualification period.

# Bishkek not to host wrestling qualifiers

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek has pulled out as host for next month's Asian Olympic wrestling qualifying event as part of preventive measures against the spread of coronavirus.

The March 27-29 event was originally scheduled to be held in Xian but was moved out of the Chinese city amid the outbreak of the virus that has killed close to 3000 people and infected nearly 80,000 globally.

The Kyrgyzstan government has postponed all sporting events in the country till further notice in the wake of the epidemic. The sport's world governing body United World Wrestling (UWW) has communicated to all Asian federations that Bishkek is no more hosting the tournament.

"Today (February 28), UWW has received the information that the Kyrgyz government has decided to take measures against the spread of the COVID-19, and such measure unfortunately include the cancellation of the Asian Olympic OG Qualifier that had been previously reallocated to the city of Bishkek," the UWW said.

A 14-member Indian squad, including youngsters Jitender Kumar and Sonam Malik, were set to compete in the tournament.

# Sun's lawyer blasts 'lies' after ban

Says he will appeal based on a series of procedural errors

## SWIMMING

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
HONG KONG

Swimmer Sun Yang, three-time Olympic champion, came out swinging on Saturday against his eight-year drug ban, threatening legal action of his own as he attempts to salvage his career.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) hit the Chinese freestyle swimmer with the lengthy ban on Friday for refusing to give a doping sample in September 2018.

It is the 28-year-old's second ban for doping, having served three months in 2014, and he said in the immediate aftermath that he would appeal at the Swiss federal court.

A lawyer for Sun, a hugely popular figure in China, issued a fiery statement on Saturday, reiterating that he will appeal, based on "a series of procedural errors."

"February 28, 2020, was a dark day. It shows the scene where evil defeats justice and power replaces self-evident truths," Beijing lawyer Zhang Qihui said in a statement.

"On this day, CAS listened to prejudice, turned a blind eye to rules and procedures, turned a blind eye to facts and evidence, and accepted all lies and false evidence."

### Not qualified

The statement reasserted Sun's defence that doping officials who came to his home were not qualified or author-

ised, and it was they who decided not to pursue testing.

Sun will sue a doping inspector who gave "false evidence", said the lawyer, also accusing the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) of "distorting facts and abuse of power."

With the Tokyo Olympics just five months away, the reigning 1500m freestyle world record-holder is fighting to save his career and reputation.

A vial of Sun's blood was smashed with a hammer during the contentious testing session in 2018, but he was acquitted by world swimming body FINA of anti-doping violations, agreeing that testers failed to produce adequate identification.

But WADA took the matter to CAS, demanding a ban of between two and eight years for missing the out-of-competition test.

In its bombshell judgment, CAS said its panel "unanimously determined" that Sun, whose career has been overshadowed by numerous controversies, had tampered with his doping control.

The severity of the ban reflected the fact that it was his second doping violation. He served three months in 2014 for taking a banned substance.

Sun's downfall will be celebrated by clean athletes, but his critic and rival Mack Horton said their bitter feud was never personal.

The Australian refused to shake hands with Sun after a medal ceremony at last year's acrimonious world championships in South Korea, after which Horton received death threats on social media.

It reignited a row from the 2016 Rio Olympics, where Horton labelled Sun a "drug cheat". "I think regardless of the outcome it was always going to be a statement to the world and my stance has always been about clean sport, never about nations or individuals," Horton told Channel Seven en route to training on Saturday.

### Restores faith

David Sharpe, who heads the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority, said the CAS ruling "restores faith in the anti-doping system."



**Hitting back:** Sun Yang will sue a doping inspector who gave false evidence, says his lawyer. ■ AP



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