

COVID-19 IMPACT

A bit over-exaggerated, says Lockie Ferguson

AUCKLAND  
The way things played out after he reported a sore throat, leading to COVID-19 tests and isolation in his hotel room, were a "bit over-exaggerated", feels New Zealand pacer Lockie Ferguson. "No. Probably a bit over-exaggerated as to how I was. I just sort of had very, very mild cold symptoms and the procedures were as they were and followed by Tommy



(Simsek, physio) and the support staff. Completely understandable. So yeah, kinda had a day in the hotel room by myself." PTI



Four-goal Ilic donates ball to hospital

ROME  
Atalanta forward Josip Ilic has donated the ball with

which he scored four goals in the Champions League last week to a hospital in Bergamo, at the centre of Italy's coronavirus drama. "We too are by your side, our angels, to win the most important match of all," said Ilic, who gifted the ball to the Papa Giovanni XXIII Hospital in the city. Coach Gian Piero Gasperini has appealed for funds for the hospital to purchase medical equipment. AFP

Valencia confirms five positive tests

MADRID  
Valencia confirmed on Sunday five of the club's players and staff have tested positive, including defender Ezequiel Garay, who became the first player in La Liga to confirm a positive test earlier on Sunday. Valencia said all those affected were "now at home, in good health and obeying self-isolation measures." AFP



IOC staff to work from home starting Monday

LAUSANNE  
In order to pro-actively limit the risk of spreading the

coronavirus, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in a statement has said all its Lausanne-based staff will work from home starting Monday, until further notice, with the exception of some essential functions. It also been decided to close the Olympic museum from Monday, for two weeks. After this time, the situation will be reassessed. IANS

Paul Pogba makes fund-raising pledge

LONDON  
Manchester United star Paul Pogba has promised to financially support the fight to stop the spread of the coronavirus. He has organised a fundraising page on Facebook and the France midfielder will double the amount raised if the target of £27,000 is reached. The appeal had raised over £2,000 within hours of being launched. AFP



Beckham visits empty stadium as MLS club's home debut delayed

MIAMI  
David Beckham's six-year wait to watch his MLS club enter

Miami make its home debut, which was to have ended Saturday, has been extended. But that didn't stop him from visiting the empty stadium on Saturday. His club was to have hosted the LA Galaxy, where he played between 2007 and 2012, in its first match at its temporary home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "Special day showing the family what we've built," Beckham posted on Instagram. AFP

Axelsen takes the honours

Tai Tzu Ying wins her third crown



The coveted trophy: Viktor Axelsen finally got his hands on the prestigious All England badminton crown on Sunday. REUTERS

ALL ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BIRMINGHAM

Viktor Axelsen of Denmark claimed his maiden men's singles title at the All England Championship, while two-time former winner Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei regained the women's singles crown here on Sunday.

The second-seeded Axelsen, a former World

champion, beat Chinese Taipei's top seed Chou Tien-Chen 21-13, 21-14 in a lopsided final, lasting 46 minutes, to add another feather to his cap.

The 26-year-old is the first Dane to win the prestigious tournament since Peter Gade in 1999.

Former World No. 1 Tai Tzu Ying, playing in her fourth straight All England final, overcame top-seeded Chinese Chen Yu Fei 21-19, 21-15 to claim her third

title at the prestigious tournament.

**Other results (finals): Women's doubles:** Yuki Fukushima & Sayaka Hirota (Jpn) bt Du Yue & Li Yin Hui (Chn) 21-13, 21-15.

**Men's doubles:** Hiroyuki Endo & Yuta Watanabe (Jpn) bt Marcus Fernaldi Gideon & Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo 21-18, 12-21, 21-19.

**Mixed doubles:** Praveen Jordan & Melati Daeva Oktavianti (Ind) bt Dechapol Puavaranukroh & Sapsiree Taerattanachai (Tha) 21-15, 17-21, 21-8.

45 years ago: A look back at Indian hockey's only World Cup triumph

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

More than four decades ago, the Indian hockey team lifted its only World Cup crown on this day – a glorious chapter written after the heart-breaking loss two years earlier in 1973.

After enduring a topsy-turvy campaign, the Ajit Pal Singh-led Indian team scripted history with a thrilling 2-1 win over Pakistan on the night of March 15 at the Merdeka Football Stadium in Kuala Lumpur.

The golden voice of Hindi commentator Jasdev Singh, describing the winning moments of that iconic final, still reverberates in the hearts and minds of millions of Indians.

Ashok Kumar and Aslam Sher Khan, the stars of the semifinal and final, remembered those moments on the 45th anniversary of that historic win.

Heartbreak

"We were very close to winning the trophy in 1973 but lost to the hosts despite leading by two goals at one time. I missed a goal in extra time and we missed a penalty stroke in sudden death. It was heartbreaking for us. So



Celebration time: Team captain Ajit Pal Singh proudly holds the trophy after the final. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

we did not want to leave any stone unturned in 1975," said Ashok Kumar, the son of legendary Dhyan Chand, who scored the winning goal against Pakistan in the final.

"We had a practice camp in Chandigarh prior to the tournament. Huge crowd used to gather to watch us. Giani Zail Singh was the chief minister then and he along with sports minister Umrao Singh visited us twice a week. Our morale was high and we were determined to win."

India was trailing host Malaysia in the semifinal when team manager Balbir Singh Sr. pushed Aslam into the battlefield. The move earned rich dividends as he scored

the equaliser to take the match into extra time.

"I can never forget that goal in my life. We had left Chandigarh with only one goal: to win the World Cup. Every member of the team had the same goal and we

Sharath's long wait ends

Clinches Oman Open title; Harmeet loses in semifinal

OMAN OPEN TT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUSCAT

A. Sharath Kamal ended his decade-long wait for a title, producing a sensational performance to win the ITTF Challenger Plus Oman Open here on Sunday. Despite being a game down, the 37-year-old Indian recovered to outclass top-seeded Marcos Freitas of Portugal 6-11, 11-8, 12-10, 11-9, 3-11, 17-15 in the summit clash.

It was in 2010 that Sharath had bagged his last title, at the Egypt Open.

In the semifinals, Sharath had pulled off a stunning come-from-behind victory against Russia's Kirill Skachkov.

The fourth seed rallied from two games down to register a 11-13, 11-13, 13-11, 11-9, 13-11, 8-11, 11-7 win in a thrilling seven-set semi-final that lasted one hour and eight minutes.

Freitas had made it to the final with a 5-11, 11-9, 6-11, 6-11, 11-8, 13-11, 11-3 victory over India's Harmeet Desai.

The latter dominated the match in the initial stages before the World No. 26 fought his way back.

Our Special Correspondent adds from Chennai:

"I literally had to fight



Special Sunday: Sharath Kamal, who won a title after 10 years, with Marcos Freitas, his opponent in the final. ITTF

with my wife to participate in the Oman Open," revealed Sharath after the triumph.

"It feels great to win a title even if it is a Challenger Plus event after a long time. Winning a tournament has become tough nowadays. This is a good win before the Olympic qualifiers."

About the final, he said: "It was one of my best games. My shots were landing right. I was more aggres-

sive and my shots were sharper."

Sharath is expected to gain 800 points and his world rankings might be 31 or 32 next month.

**The results:** Final: A. Sharath Kamal bt Marcos Freitas (Por) 6-11, 11-8, 12-10, 11-9, 3-11, 17-15.

**Semifinals:** Sharath bt Kirill Skachkov (Rus) 11-13, 13-11, 11-9, 13-11, 8-11, 11-7; Freitas bt Harmeet Desai 5-11, 11-9, 6-11, 6-11, 11-8, 13-11, 11-3.

Champion squad: The members of the 1975 hockey World Cup-winning team at a felicitation function in New Delhi in May 2014.



Champion squad: The members of the 1975 hockey World Cup-winning team at a felicitation function in New Delhi in May 2014. FILE PHOTO: S. SUBRAMANIAM

Anand to commentate on Candidates

SPORTS REPORTER  
CHENNAI

GM Viswanathan Anand for the first time will don the hat of a commentator for chess.com during the FIDE Candidates Tournament. The five-time World champion will be part of the commentary team alongside other GMs and will give his views regularly during the tournament from his home here. Anand failed to qualify for the Candidates tournament, which will be held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, from March 17 to April 4 to find a contender to face Magnus Carlsen.



Anand. R. RAGU

Dhoni leaves CSK training base

IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHENNAI

M.S. Dhoni on Sunday left the Chennai Super Kings training camp here following the postponement of the 13th edition of IPL till April 15 in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

Dhoni, who had arrived in Chennai for CSK's preparatory camp early this month, left the base in front of his cheering fans.

"It has become your home, sir! Keep whistling," Chennai Super Kings wrote on its twitter handle along with a short video.

Interacts with fans

The video showed fans lining up to catch a glimpse of Dhoni as he signed autographs and interacted with the fans.

The BCCI on Friday postponed the start of this year's IPL from March 29 to April 15 in wake of the pandemic, which has caused massive upheaval across the globe.

On Saturday, the BCCI and the eight IPL team owners met in Mumbai to dis-



M.S. Dhoni. TWITTER.COM/CHENNAI IPL

cuss the various options after government-imposed travel restrictions and refusal of three states to host any matches forced the postponement of the cash-rich T20 tournament.

The 38-year-old Dhoni hasn't played any cricket since featuring in India's semifinal loss to New Zealand at the 50-over World Cup in England last year.

There has been a lot of speculation over Dhoni's international future ahead of this year's T20 World Cup in Australia, with some saying it will depend on his performance in IPL-13.

Manjrekar reacts to commentary panel snub

Says it's the prerogative of the BCCI to employ him or not

CRICKET

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

Sanjay Manjrekar, the former Test cricketer-turned-commentator, has reacted to his omission from the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI's) commentary panel.

"I have always considered commentary as a great privilege, but never an entitlement. It is up to my employers whether they choose to have me or not & I will always respect that.

"Maybe BCCI has not been happy with my performance of late. I accept that as a professional," Manjrekar wrote on his Twitter timeline on Sunday.

Manjrekar had been a regular fixture in the BCCI's panel of commentators for more than a decade.

There has been speculation over the possible rea-



Sanjay Manjrekar. EMMANUEL YOGINI

sons for his exclusion.

No comment

While BCCI president Sourav Ganguly had, after the IPL Governing Council meet on Saturday, declined to react to Manjrekar's omission, the latter's tweet in a way puts an end to the controversy over his eviction from the commentary box, starting with India's ODI series against South Africa, which was put off due to COVID-19 after the opener at Dharamshala

was washed out.

Manjrekar, a TV presenter and commentator for more than two decades, had been embroiled in quite a few controversies. India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja blasted Manjrekar after being referred to as a "bits and pieces cricketer" by the latter on air during last year's World Cup.

Manjrekar retracted his statement, but continued to be in the news for the wrong reasons.

Last November, during the pink-ball Test against Bangladesh, Manjrekar made a derogatory remark at fellow commentator Harsha Bhogle.

Manjrekar had stressed on "10-15 years of First Class cricket" experience to express views on the visibility of the ball under lights. In an interview with ESPNcricinfo later on, Manjrekar not only apologised for his remark but also admitted 2019 was "the worst year for me as an analyst and commentator".

IOC to hold crisis talks on Tuesday

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LAUSANNE

With less than five months to go before the Tokyo Olympics, the International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach plans emergency talks with member organisations, sources close to the IOC said on Sunday.

The IOC plans a conference call on Tuesday to "keep the international federations informed of the situation, as well as the National Olympic Committees and athletes," one source close to the IOC told AFP.

The IOC "will take stock of the actions taken" to respond to the coronavirus crisis "and the federations will

have the opportunity to ask questions" added a source close to one international sports federation

While many international sporting events have been postponed or cancelled, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promised on Friday that Tokyo would host the Olympic Games as planned in July and August, despite questions raised by the pandemic.

Bach said on Thursday that his organisation would follow the recommendations of the World Health Organisation regarding a possible postponement.

The issue of qualifying will be a focus of Tuesday's telephone meeting.



Follow the rule: Thomas Bach has said that IOC will abide by the recommendations of the World Health Organisation regarding a possible postponement of the Tokyo Games. AP