



"I hope there's some effort being made to extend/change the qualification period. The ranking is still not frozen.. points of last years Swiss open have been removed. ATP froze the ranking.. we should learn from tennis."

PARUPALLI KASHYAP

Sparring partner of Taiwanese players at All England tests positive

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, MARCH 20

DANISH SHUTTLER Hans-Kristian Vittinghus who had drawn the badminton world's attention to exposure risks to top players and spectators at the All England Championships last week prompting suspension of tournaments, on Friday pointed to another glum piece of news, to show that the Birmingham meet might've posed a grave risk.

While officials did not confirm the athlete or the sport, the European itinerary in a Taiwanese news update, exactly matched the description of a suspected teenaged sparring partner of the Chinese Taipei squad that played at All England. This included finalists Tai Tzu Ying and Chou Tien Chen.

Quoting *Taiwan News*, Vittinghus,

tweeted, "So a Taiwanese athlete who was in Spain at the time of the Barcelona Masters, in Germany (where the Taiwanese badminton players had training) the following week and then in UK during the time of All England — has tested positive for COVID-19 after returning home..."

Taiwan News reported that the teenager was the province's "first athlete diagnosed with coronavirus who had visited 4 European countries."

It was on a day that the province reported its largest single-day spike of 27 new cases, many of whom had travelled in from abroad.

He was not a member of the national team, but had been in training as a backup, according to some media reports.

The national team was staying in quarantine at a training center in north Taiwan, while the young man was taken to hospital. He

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stayed in Spain from Feb. 16 through 24, in Germany from Feb. 25 through March 7, in Great Britain from March 8 through 15, and transited in France on March 16-17 before

heading home to Taiwan, the Central Epidemic Command Centre (CECC) said," *Tw.news* reported.

According to the website, "the day after his return, his eyes began to hurt and he felt a headache, leading him to seek medical care. According to the CECC, he did not go back to school, though 33 people he had been in contact with were asked to stay in home quarantine."

Several shuttlers including Indians Saina Nehwal, P Kashyap and Ajay Jayaram besides a bunch of Danes, had raised the issue of the All England carrying on as if nothing was wrong, even while requesting the world body BWF to cancel the rest of the tournaments in the next 6 weeks even as Covid-19 cases in UK rose exponentially overnight.

However, the All England went ahead stubbornly, witnessing some fine matches,

but risking health of players, support staff and spectators who thronged the arena as the tournament refused to go behind closed doors. It was tempting fate, almost and *tw.news* reported that champion Tai Tzu Ying is now in quarantine.

A CECC press conference offered some details of the case.

"The 114th case was a male who moved into his native country in his teens. He had a history of travel in Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom. He was a contestant (sic)," *tw.news* said, specifying the dates that coincide with the travel schedule of the Taiwan team. *Taiwan News* said that Zhuang Renxiang, deputy team leader of CECC, had confirmed, "It is understood that this physical education student is a national team's sparring practitioner."

The report stated that while it was un-

derstood that noone in the national team was a teenager, nor did the case No 114 stay with the squad in the same hotel room, he had taken the shuttle bus with the team ("...but he also took the official team (transport) with players from all over the world. Shuttle bus between the stadium and the hotel." (sic).

Renxiang was asked about Tai Tzu Ying specifically, and said, "She (Dai Zhiying, he Chinese name) would have to be quarantined at home".

Badminton's most prestigious tournament - which screened noone during the playing week keeping in line with UK's insistence on carrying on, might well have risked the biggest names in shuttle.

While 7 Indians opted out, top names PV Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, K Srikanth and Ashwini Ponappa and rookie Lakshya Sen had played in Birmingham.

P.K BANERJEE: 1936-2020

Stories from a storied career

PK's tales: From getting Bhutia charged up for a Federation Cup game to giving bangles to teammates who believed India's fate against North Korea was sealed

MIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

IN HIS association of more than five decades with Indian football, Pradip Kumar Banerjee has donned various roles: player, coach, thinker, scout and commentator. Banerjee, who passed away on Friday aged 83, scored landmark goals, coached iconic teams and mentored players who have gone on to become legends themselves. Here are some of the moments and stories that made Banerjee the 'greatest Indian footballer of the 20th century', an honour bestowed upon him by FIFA.

The wingman

THEY CALLED India the 'Brazil of Asia'. And Banerjee was at the forefront of that golden generation, which made India one of the top teams of the continent in the late 50s and early 60s. Back then, India traditionally used a 3-2-5 formation. But out of the five strikers that were used, three routinely inflicted the biggest damage on the opponents. Tulsidas Balram, playing on the left, was as versatile as he was lethal. Chuni Goswami, the inside-left, was the one with skills. And Banerjee, the right-winger, had the pace and power: he could take on players, dribble, cross and shoot.

They had a telepathic understanding and gave the Indian team an identity that none before or after them have managed.

Balram-Goswami-Banerjee formed the most famous attacking trio in Indian football. According to historian and statistician Gautam Roy, the national team won 12 of the 16 games they played between 1958 and 1962, with the three of them scoring 20 of India's 36 goals. Banerjee scored some of the most prominent goals during this period: against France in the 1-1 draw at the 1960 Rome Olympics, in the final against South Korea in 1962 Asian Games and so on.

Wet, heavy footballs

A LOT of what Banerjee did was self-taught. Back then, there was little formal coaching for young players who started out. Neither were there any professional coaching courses, or access to techniques adopted by other countries. That, though, did not stop Banerjee from perfecting his art.

After the routine training sessions ended, Banerjee soaked the ball - the old, leather footballs which were used at the time - in water. The already heavy ball got heavier and Banerjee practised his shooting with that to increase the power behind his shot. Syed Abdul Rahim, the coach of the team, used to set targets for accuracy.

As a coach, he made his players do the same. "More than tactical, I would say he emphasised on the technical aspects of the game," says former India international and FC Goa technical director Derrick Pereira. "At that time, we were not exposed to proper coaching and there was no internet to look at what others were doing."

So he made sure we focussed on that aspect a lot; things like using open spaces, ways to improve individual skills and such. He kept an eye on what the latest trends were and tried to implement that in training. He was



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

His style and philosophy made Banerjee the most successful coach in Indian football. He won 54 trophies with Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, 13 more than Amal Datta, India's first professional coach.

ahead of his time in that sense."

North Korea, Old Delhi rooftop

IN THAT sense, Pereira regards Banerjee as India's first 'modern' coach. Not only because of his emphasis on technique and tactics, but he is considered to be the first one to bring the man-management aspect to coaching. A raconteur, he knew which player to talk to before a match and how to inspire them.

A story goes, according to Novy Kapadia's book *Barefoot to Boots*, that on the eve of East Bengal's 1973 DCM Cup final against Dok Ro Gang, a formidable North Korean side, Banerjee called a team meeting on the rooftop of an old Delhi hotel where they were staying. A lot of players, including East Bengal's fearsome striker Mohammed Habib, were resigned to their fate and believed they had no chance of beating Dok Ro Gang, who had six players from the legendary 1966 World Cup North Korean team.

"On the roof of the Duke Hotel in Daryaganj where the team stayed, PK used to take theory classes with the team. In one of the sessions he brought glass bangles and gave them to Habib, (Mohammad) Akbar and some other players, and told them that if they did not want to fight, they could wear

bangles like sissies. The players were incensed and got charged up," Kapadia writes. The match, eventually, ended as a draw.

Bhutia, Datta and a famous win

ANOTHER EXAMPLE of him needing his players to get the best out of them came in the 1997 Federation Cup semifinals between Banerjee's East Bengal and Amal Datta's Mohun Bagan. Roy says the match was one of the crowning moments of Banerjee's coaching career because of his ability to break the 'diamond midfield' system employed by Datta, which no one had been able to counter.

It was one of Indian football's most iconic matches.

As a sub-plot, Datta and Banerjee - the two most successful coaches - shared a great rivalry, too, and the match drew a crowd of more than 130,000. In his pre-match comments, Datta had slighted Bhaichung Bhutia. So, a couple of days before the match, Banerjee called the striker for dinner and read out every single word in Bengali, and ended the conversation with a simple, 'show him who you are'.

On the match-day, Banerjee set up his team in a way that did not give Bagan's dominant midfield any space while a vengeful

IN MEMORIAM



Pradip da was such a cool and composed man and it reflected in the match. He was definitely like a father figure to me. Not only on the playing ground, he used to call us or we went to his house and dine at his place. His family used to prepare wonderful meals."

BHAICHUNG BHUTIA,
FORMER INDIA CAPTAIN

I lost a very dear person today. Someone whom I loved and respected enormously. Someone who had so much influence on my career when I was an 18-year-old boy. His positivity was infectious."

SOURAV GANGULY,
BCCI PRESIDENT & FORMER INDIA CAPTAIN

He was a pioneer in every sense of the word, and his feats will forever have a place in Indian footballing history."

SUNIL CHHETRI
INDIAN CAPTAIN

Bhutia scored a hat-trick and East Bengal won 4-1.

'Where PK goes, trophies go'

HIS STYLE and philosophy made Banerjee the most successful coach in Indian football. He won 54 trophies with Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, 13 more than Datta, India's first professional coach. Across maidans, a reputation was cemented. "Where PK goes, the trophies go," they said.

In 1970, when India won the Asian Games bronze, he was the team's manager. He thus has a unique distinction of winning an Asian Games medal as a player (gold, 1962) and support staff; a record, perhaps, that will last for several more decades.

He was very quick, oozed power



TULSIDAS BALARAM

WE HAD a long association - PK Banerjee, Chuni Goswami and I. PK first played for India in the 1955 Quadrangular Tournament in Dacca. I made my debut in the 1956 Olympics. We played together till 1962, for India and Bengal in the Santosh Trophy. After Railways started playing the Santosh Trophy in 1962, Pradip had to turn up for his employer.

On the pitch, our understanding was telepathic. Off it, we were great friends despite playing for different clubs. PK played for Eastern Railway, Chuni Goswami was a Mohun Bagan man through and through and I plied my trade for East Bengal.

But such was our understanding on the pitch, when we played together, that we always had the right pass or the right ball for each other. Also, we were always totally selfless in our approach, never allowing our personal egos to get the better of the situation. If I had a 99 per cent chance to score a goal, while PK or Chuni had 100 per cent, I always fed them. They, too, always returned the favour.

PK was a class act. As a right out, nobody could ever come even close to him as far as Indian football is concerned. He was very quick and oozed power and physicality. He had the ability to dribble past the defenders even on a dead run. He was very strong in the air also.

Not for nothing that people still consider us as the benchmark in Indian football. At a time when India were the best in Asian football and a force to be reckoned with in the Olympics, we were the undroppables - PK, Chuni, Jamail Singh, and I were the first four names on the team-sheet. In 1962, when PK went to play for Railways in the Santosh Trophy, both me and Chuni felt that without him our Bengal team was incomplete, that we were missing someone irreplaceable.

In the 1960 Rome Olympics, we were in a tough group, alongside Hungary, France and Peru. Our first match was against the mighty Hungarians (of the Nandor Hidegkuti, Jozsef Bozsik, Sandor Kocsis and Zoltan Czibor vintage) and the predicted scoreline was 10 or 12 goals in their favour. But we had a fantastic coach in Abdul Rahim.

He was great at analysing the opponents. We were outplayed in the first-half, prisoners of our inferiority complex. But when Rahim saab gave us a clear plan for the second half, we actually dominated them. We lost the game, but the Italian media, the world football media to be precise, came up

with the headline: 'Another football power is rising, India'. India probably had only one reporter covering the 1960 Olympics.

Suddenly, the French started to take an interest in Indian football. Rahim saab was flooded with interview requests. Against France, we probably dished out the best performance by an Indian football team ever. PK was magnificent. He scored a goal from my assist, though France later equalised. It was a team performance. Collectively we were outstanding. The world football fraternity agreed that India would be a dominant force in the near future. Alas, our football gradually went into a terminal decline.

I have an interesting story to share with regards to the 1962 Asian Games, where we won the gold medal. PK was the reason why I played in the tournament. We had a six-week pre-Asiad training camp at Hyderabad. The selection trials were also held there. After the final selection, we came to Calcutta, our departure point for Jakarta. I was down with the flu and was feeling very weak. I felt I would be useless and shouldn't go. A standby should be picked instead.

I sent a message to the All India Football Federation. Pankaj Gupta, a founding member and one of the top bosses at the AIFF, held a meeting with Rahim saab, PK and Chuni about what to do, whether we should pick a standby in place of Balaram. At the meeting, PK said: "Balaram is sick. Even if he is dead, we would take his dead body to Jakarta. We need him for the team. Put him into the plane." Chuni, who was the captain, agreed. But PK took the initiative. So you can understand the fellow feeling that we had.

All of us were one-club men, because we valued loyalty. People speak about PK never playing for Mohun Bagan, East Bengal or Mohammedan Sporting and still had such an exceptional international career.

But what people forget is that Eastern Railway that time used to boast of four-five Olympians. Beyond them, they also had some fine players like Dinu Das who couldn't make the cut because there was no vacancy in the Indian team. They were equally good but because we were there, they missed out.

After retiring as a footballer, Pradip became a very successful coach, because he was technically very sound, had a good understanding of the game and his game-reading was very good. His wards idolised him and PK, because he was always very caring, had the respect and support of his players. Pradip left us today, but as long as Indian football will exist, he will be remembered. We will always remain as the fabled 'Three Musketeers'.

Tulsidas Balaram was an East Bengal and India forward, who with PK Banerjee and Chuni Goswami formed the Holy Trinity. (As told to Shamik Chakrabarty)

Kiwi cricketers self-isolate on return

Wellington: New Zealand cricketers and support staff members have gone into a 14-day self-isolation period after returning from their aborted Australia tour, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. New Zealand Cricket confirmed that all 15 players and support staff members who returned from Sydney last weekend have gone into lockdown at home as per the government's directive. "They [Black Caps players and touring staff] have all gone into self-isolation," New Zealand Cricket's public affairs manager Richard Boock told stuff.co.nz. "We've passed on all the details about what self-isolation means and as far as we know they're all following it strictly," he added.

New Zealand were scheduled to play three ODIs and as many T20s but the Chappell-Hadlee series was called off after just one ODI, which was held without

spectators. The Kane Williamson-led side had lost the match by 71 runs. Fast bowler Lockie Ferguson was kept under isolation after he reported a sore throat. However, he tested negative for the coronavirus. On Wednesday, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had advised all returning travellers to self-isolate for two weeks amid the Covid-19 outbreak, even if they arrived in the country before the March 14 cut-off.

Taking a leaf out of BCCI's book, the NZC also asked its Auckland headquarters employees to work from a trial basis on Friday. NZC's Auckland headquarters will also have a trial self-isolation day on Friday where staff will work from home. BCCI shut down its headquarters in Mumbai from Tuesday with its employees being advised to work from home.

PTI

Akmal charged for two breaches of anti-corruption code

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI, MARCH 20

Controversial Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal has been charged on Friday for two separate breaches of the Pakistan Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code. Umar, who was provisionally suspended on February 20 and barred from playing for his franchise, Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League, has been charged for failing to disclose corrupt approaches to the PCB Vigilance and Security Department (without unnecessary delay). He was issued the charge sheet on March 17 and has been given time to respond until March 31.

This was a breach under 2.4.4 for PCB's anti-corruption code.

According to the Anti-Corruption Code Article 6.2, the range of permissible period of ineligibility for those charged and found

guilty for a violation of Article 2.4.4 is a minimum of six months and a maximum of a lifetime.

Umar, 29, has had a chequered career since making his debut in August, 2009 and has since just managed to play 16 Tests, 121 ODIs and 84 T20 internationals for his country despite making a century on Test debut.

His last appearance came in last October during a home T20 series against Sri Lanka and before that he also played in the March-April, 2019 one-day series against Australia in the UAE.

Umar who has a penchant for getting into trouble with the establishment was reprimanded and cleared in February just before the PSL for allegedly misbehaving with a trainer during a fitness test in Lahore.

The PCB had then said that the incident occurred as a result of a misunderstanding. Before that also on numerous occasions, Umar has faced disciplinary action most no-



Umar Akmal was charged for failing to disclose a corrupt approach.

table being when clashed with former head coach, Mickey Arthur in Lahore during a practice session and accused him of using abusive language.

He was also sent back from the 2017 Champions Trophy in England after failing a fitness test but Umar claimed Arthur didn't want him in the team.

Another former head coach, Waqar Younis had also in a much publicised confidential report which was leaked out advise the board to drop Umar from the Pakistan team and send him to play domestic cricket for at least a year to gain cricketing discipline.

The talented batsman who scored a double century in the final the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy in December in Karachi has gained the reputation of shooting himself in the foot. Since he was suspended by the PCB last month, Umar has kept a low profile and stayed away from the media spotlight.