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Stay indoors people. Crucial phase this. Only thing flying around the world like a tracer bullet is this bloody Corona (COVID-19). Stay in before the bugger gets you.

IPL 2020 likely to be cancelled, no mega auctions next year



Mumbai Indians are the defending champions. File

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, MARCH 29

IT'S YET to be made official by the Indian cricket board but it's certain now that Indian Premier League will not happen this year due to the novel coronavirus. The Indian board is waiting for an announcement from the Indian government and sports ministry on visas before it makes the new official. The BCCI will officially address the issue with the IPL franchises after April 15, when the nationwide lockdown initiated by the central government ends.

The Indian government has suspended all foreign visas until April 15. *The Indian Express* understands that if IPL happens next year than there will be no mega auc-

tion. Instead, the status quo will be continued and IPL franchises allowed to pick players if they want too. As per the schedule, the mega auction was supposed to take place in 2021 with franchises allowed to retain a few players while the rest were supposed to go under the hammer.

"IPL will not happen this year. It will now happen next year. We all know how the situation is at the moment in the country and no one will take any risk. One can't have social distancing in stadium. It's better to play IPL next year. Also, no mega auction will take place. We will inform the franchises once we get final confirmation from the Indian government, the same season can continue next season," a source in the IPL administration informed.

On March 14, BCCI had a meeting with

all IPL owners to discuss coronavirus outbreak and its impact on the upcoming season. Indian board president Sourav Ganguly had then hoped to see a truncated IPL while the franchises felt that board can still do it like they did in 2009 in South Africa when the tournament ran for just 37 days.

"We will monitor further. Safety is most important ... as much as we want to host IPL, we also need to be careful about security," Ganguly had said then.

However, the situation is different now with India approaching 1000 positive cases. With Tokyo Olympics already postponed and many sporting events around the world called off, the Indian board doesn't want to take any risks by playing cricket. "The BCCI along with all the IPL franchises

have reiterated BCCI's stand of putting the safety and well-being of fans, athletes, and employees as a priority. The board will continue to monitor and work closely with Government of India, state governments and other states regulatory bodies to decide on the future course of action in the best interest of public health," BCCI secretary Jay Shah had said in a statement.

"... humanity first, everything else comes second. The situation has not improved so there is no point in even talking about it. If IPL doesn't happen so be it," Kings XI Punjab co-owner Ness Wadia had told *PTI*.

Zonal Camp to be suspended

It is learned that the Indian board will suspend the National Cricket Academy

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zonal camp that was supposed to take place across the country during the summer season. The junior selection committee picks team for Zonal camp and it is understood no selection meeting has yet taken place. NCA conducts camps for fast bowlers, spinners, and batsmen and employees hundreds of coaches to conduct these camps.

BRIEFLY

England players set for pay cuts

London: England's cricket players must "realise the bigger picture" and will be expected to take a pay cut as the country's cricket governing body (ECB) tries to deal with the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The Times reported on Sunday. More than 662,700 people have been infected by the novel coronavirus across the world and 30,751 have died, according to a Reuters tally, and the outbreak has brought global sport to a virtual standstill. England's tour of Sri Lanka was cancelled earlier this month and the ECB announced no professional cricket will be played until the end of May.

England's home test series against West Indies and Pakistan and limited overs series with Australia from June to August are also at risk of being postponed or cancelled if the situation does not improve, leading to a further loss of revenue. "We're looking at everything about how the game can make savings," an ECB spokesman was quoted as saying by The Times.

Boxing fed starts online coaching

New Delhi: Their training halted by the coronavirus-forced national lockdown, India's Olympic-bound boxers will be provided online classes by their coaches from Monday to ensure that aspects such as mental well-being and nutrition are taken care of. Nine Indian boxers have qualified for the Tokyo Games, postponed to 2021 due to the global pandemic which has caused thousands of deaths.

In a conference call with these boxers on Sunday, Boxing Federation of India (BFI) President Ajay Singh took stock of their preparations amid a national lockdown till April 14 to fight the pandemic. "This is a challenging time for all of us and is all the more a reason for us to take care of ourselves...stay fit, continue with the exercises as directed by the coaches and try to maintain your weights as much as possible," Singh told the boxers.

Ex-footballer Recber gets coronavirus

Istanbul: Former Turkish national team and ex-Barcelona goalkeeper Rustu Recber is in hospital after testing positive for coronavirus, his wife said. Recber took on hero status in Turkey as he kept goal at the 2002 World Cup, anchoring his team to the semi-finals and ultimately third place, their greatest ever performance in the tournament. The powerfully built and poney-tailed goalkeeper was easily recognisable.

UMESH YADAV INTERVIEW

'If you get into negativity, you won't find motivation to train and be fit'

UMESH YADAV has stopped worrying about being in and out of the Indian team, and now focusses on giving his best whenever an opportunity arrives. He talks to **SRIRAM VEERA**.

How are you handling the Coronavirus situation?

Staying home. Staying alive! Following what the government is saying. I train at home. This is an extraordinary situation; one can't be thinking about playing sport in these times.

How have you handled being in and out of the national team?

Thoda kharaab, buraa toh lagta hai (You do feel a touch bad) that you aren't getting as many chances. I used to feel a bit down in the past about sitting on the sidelines and watching. But it's important that you make yourself understand the situation. I realised that it's not healthy if I slip into pity. That feeling isn't good as you won't be able to perform well when you get a chance.

You can't complain too much as the other three- Ishant (Sharma), (Mohammed) Shami and (Jasprit) Bumrah are bowling well. So I can understand that for a team management, getting the right balance wouldn't be easy. All four of us are experienced bowlers.

You do well in Indian conditions and you get a *chhaap* (image) like that. It's sort of unfair as if I get regular chances in overseas Tests, I would definitely do well. I hardly get two matches in a row. Unless you play more in those conditions, you will not learn more about those conditions. I have stopped bothering too much about all this. The benchmark in our team is high, and I just want to do well in whatever opportunity I get. You have to always keep your fitness levels high, think that you can play any time. If you get into negativity, you won't find motivation to train and be fit.

Has this constant in-and-out situation affected your aggression? You are one of the fastest bowlers in the world but you don't have that aggressive aura about you.

The main thing is when you don't play back-to-back games and get the odd match in between, what does happen sometimes is that you don't have the match-rhythm of bowling. The kind of confidence that comes when you are consistently playing. That rhythm is different. You do worry about the fact that you might get dropped if you don't do well in this chance. Your focus is different then.

All that runs in the head. You are not thinking, *jaake mein uda doonga inko* (I will go and blow them away). Mentally, something else is



Umesh Yadav played just two overseas Tests in the last two years. File

running. You want to take wickets, give less runs, and stuff like that. All that is bound to affect your bowling. When you bowl *bindaas, khulke*, without a care, it's a completely different experience and you look different to people. You have no mental pressure. When you are coming back for a game in six months, you don't have that positive body language as there

are too many things running in your head. I keep telling myself and prepare myself mentally - that's why you see I do well in Tests whenever I play - but you understand, it's not easy and there is bound to be some affect. As I don't even play ODIs, my off-period is longer.

But aggression doesn't mean you get into angry fights with batsmen. I am not talking

It's been a dream journey. My father used to be a coal-mine worker. He wanted me to be a policeman and I too wanted a secure simple life. Here I am now playing for India. Years ago, I told him to stop working and enjoy life for a change. Life has given me more than I have asked of it."

UMESH YADAV

about that kind of behaviour. What's the use of getting angry with the batsmen? If some batsmen trigger me deliberately, may be yes, but generally I like to keep calm and do my thing. That's my nature.

What's happening with the whole ODI stuff?

I haven't understood that. White or red, the skill lies in swinging the ball, na? I can do it as I have done it. Of course, the lengths will vary and that is obvious and down to cricketing intelligence. If I get a series of ODIs, I feel I can prove myself as a wicket-taking bowler. I do feel I haven't been used properly by selectors in ODIs. Get a game here and there, then sit out for six months. It does get difficult. Career has never been stable. Always up and down. I did well at the 2015 World Cup, but then again out.

On a lighter side, no one has to worry about my workload management as I don't get enough work! (laughs).

Who helps you handle these emotions?

Myself! It's not new; I have always been in and out of the team, through my career. My circle of people is also good. Subbu sir, Subroto Banerjee (former India bowler and coach) is a very energetic and happy person. He doesn't allow me to linger too long in negativity. Another cricketer, Pritam Gandhi bhai is also there, another direct talker, doesn't give any false hopes.

So it's good, I feel. And when you perform well in the chances you are given; all doubts go out of the head. That gives you the most confidence. My main thought is to play cricket. Yes, I am a cricketer who plays for India but the main thing is the game which got me here. I want to play well wherever and whichever team I play - be it Ranji Trophy, India A, or for India. Just enjoy swinging it at pace.

Do you see yourself as a swing bowler or a fast bowler?

Primarily a fast bowler, but a fast bowler who swings the ball at 140 kmph and over. In

this day and age, just bowling 140 kmph and over isn't enough. You will get hit. You have to swing it and from the right areas. Try to get it to swing as late as possible and at pace. Not easy, not many bowlers do it but that's my aim. There are bowlers who seam the ball off the pitch, I like to get it to swing. Swing bowlers are very few, especially those who do it at pace.

You used to seam it well as well. That ball to Ricky Ponting in the 2012 Perth Test, it came in to knock down his stumps!

I remember that ball well! But essentially, I see myself as an outswinger bowler. At times, I have tried to get it to swing in from a really full length but because of minor problems with the grip in the past, it has gone down the leg side. I have sorted that out.

Could you detail the changes in grip now?

I used to hold the ball a bit up, on the top, with the fingertips. Some hold it in the palm, some hold it tight. I used to hold it up. When the head would fall, the ball would tilt away towards leg stump. I tried a few grips. With the fingertips. Now it sits well in the palm, not too loose. It has done two things for me of late: it doesn't go down the leg side and, most importantly, it swings late. I felt that before the ball would swing too early, almost from the hand.

Now it swings late. Just a tweak really but it has helped a lot. After playing for years, you know what to do according to the conditions. My action does change also, high-arm or jumping out towards the corner, and things like that.

Apart from that ball to take out Ponting, what else do you treasure?

Clean bowling Faf du Plessis. Then the reverse-swinging spell against South Africa in the (2015) Delhi Test. Reverse swing comes naturally to me as I have a round-arm-ish action. I treasure a comment from the great West Indian fast bowler Andy Roberts. He said that I am a natural fast bowler, still bowling fast after 8-10 years. He encouraged me saying that's a great thing, continue bowling fast. Those comments drive me. God has given me a good body, so why not use it?!

Look, I started leather-ball cricket when I was 19-20. When I played Ranji Trophy, others used to tell me that I am India material. It's then that I thought I could do it. It's been a dream journey. My father used to be a coal-mine worker. He wanted me to be a policeman and I too wanted a secure simple life. Here I am now playing for India. Years ago, I told my father to stop working and enjoy life for a change. Life has given me more than I have asked of it.

A DIFFERENT GEAR

Protective masks for health professionals, now cut from Yankees' cloth

DAVID WALDSTEIN
NEW YORK, MARCH 29

HAD THE baseball season not been postponed because of the coronavirus, players across the country would have been decked out in crisp new uniforms for opening day on Thursday. Now, some uniforms will be put to better use.

Fanatics, the company that manufactures the Nike uniforms for Major League Baseball, has temporarily converted its domestic factory in Easton, Pa., to produce desperately needed protective masks and gowns for medical professionals who are fighting the pandemic in the United States.

The masks are made from the same bolts of polyester mesh fabric used to make big-league uniforms, and the first prototypes bear the distinctive pinstripes of the Yankees and the Philadelphia Phillies.

"We've got tremendous amounts of fabric, which is exactly what the players wear," said Michael Rubin, the founder and executive chairman of Fanatics. "We're just taking it and making the masks and gowns that can be used by the people who are working to save lives every day."

Protective masks have been in short supply across the country, leaving health care workers more vulnerable to infection as they work with patients being treated or tested for Covid-19. The coronavirus is generally transmitted through viral droplets - often emitted by coughing, spitting or sneezing - and from contaminated surfaces. At best, doctors should be wearing respirators, eye protection and gloves. Gowns are also needed because the virus can survive for periods of time on surfaces of some materials.

Rubin said prototypes of the new masks made with the material for baseball uniforms

were developed last week, with help from experts from the St. Luke's hospital system in Pennsylvania. The masks will go there and to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency first.

He said that they provided basic protection, not the best protection found in respirators, but that they were still useful in a crisis. They would not be approved for surgery.

Rubin said the state of Pennsylvania offered to pay for the production, but Fanatics and M.L.B. agreed to bear the costs. "When Michael called me about this, it was the first piece of good news in a while," Rob Manfred, the commissioner of Major League Baseball, said in a telephone interview. "I really hope it's just the first step in baseball contributing to the country getting back on the road to normalcy."

The shift is part of a broader push for apparel companies to make basic medical goods quickly, using material and equipment that are

not specialized, like those required for some respirators. The Fanatics factory was closed last week as part of mass closures of nonessential industries. Rubin, who is also a part owner of the Philadelphia 76ers of the N.B.A., said he was already discussing the possibility of making masks and gowns with the material in stock at Fanatics when the company was contacted by St. Luke's, seeking help with protective equipment. March and April are normally months when Fanatics is busy producing uniforms for teams and for commercial sales, so Rubin called Manfred for permission to use the material for the masks and gowns. Manfred was eager to support the project.

"I just love the symbolism of patterns that are associated with baseball being used by the people who are carrying a huge burden for all of us," Manfred said.

Gov. Tom Wolf heard about the endeavor and called Rubin to urge him to go forward.

Wolf said in a statement that he was grateful for the shift by Fanatics. "Their innovative approach will be a model for other businesses to follow in Pennsylvania and throughout the country," Wolf said.

The first masks, bearing the Phillies and Yankees' pinstripes, came out of production on Wednesday and were expected to be distributed to hospitals within a couple of days. Fanatics hopes to produce at least 10,000 masks and gowns per day to start, but Rubin said that they hoped to increase to 15,000 per day. He said they had enough uniform material in stock for two months.

After supplying hospitals in Pennsylvania, Fanatics will look toward New Jersey and New York with masks and gowns made from Yankees pinstripes. If they have the capacity to produce for other areas, and it is feasible, those could be made from the uniforms of the teams in those areas, too.



The masks are made from the same bolts of polyester mesh fabric used to make big-league uniforms. NYT