

12 SPORT



PAINE ON NOT SLEDGING KOHLI
 "I'm not sure who was going easy on him; we certainly had a thing where we didn't want to provoke any fight with him because we think that's when he plays at his best... I'm pretty sure they're not thinking about an IPL contract"

Dangal stars hit hard

Top mud wrestlers stand to lose up to Rs 35 lakh as circuit in Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra is stalled



Beside cash prizes, wrestlers also win tractors, cars motor-cycles and milch buffaloes. File

MIHIR VASAVDA
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

WHEN HE began the season by winning the dangal in Kapurthala on March 18, Bania Amin was salivating at the prospect of another profitable season. In the dangal universe, Amin is a showman beyond compare. His art and antics - he has a signature style while entering and exiting the mud pit: spreading wide his arms and legs, and leaping high - is why thousands pay to watch him.

And it's also why the constable from Jammu gets paid in lakhs in appearance fees from organisers across the country.

"But on March 19, we were all told that the tournaments have been suspended. It looks like the entire season will be wiped out because of the current crisis," Amin says. "So right now, I will not make at least Rs 30-35 lakh that I otherwise would."

From arguably the biggest sporting event, the Olympics, to the most globalised tournament, the Premier League, to an overwhelmingly rural sport like mud wrestling, the coronavirus outbreak has spared none. And pretty much like the players and executives across the globe, the *pehalwans* have been counting their losses in the last few weeks.

For a seemingly small sport, the economics of a dangal season is staggering, far outweighing a lot of mainstream events in the country. The season is divided in two: March, April and May - with a spillover into June - is when the tournaments take place in Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra. After a break in July, another three-month season gets underway in Punjab.

There are a few tournaments held elsewhere in the country which overlap with these, but these three most dominant belts have the most packed calendars. According to Kulbir Kainour, a dangal commentator and observer, there were around 250 dangals scheduled to take place in Himachal Pradesh, where the season had just begun when the lockdown was announced. A similar number of events were to take place across Maharashtra. Arjuna Awardee Kaka Pawar adds.

All these tournaments, roughly 500 of them, are likely to be cancelled. The dozen or so which were scheduled for Wednesday

alone, to mark Hanuman Jayanti, too were not held due to the nationwide lockdown.

"On an average, each of the 250-300 dangals have a total purse of around Rs 5 lakh. The minimum prize money at each dangal is Rs 2 lakh, with the maximum going up to Rs 7 lakh. So you can do the math," Kainour says.

A conservative estimate of the dangal, tallying events in both Himachal and Maharashtra, would be approximately Rs 25 crore. This is just the cash prize. There are other rewards as well: tractors, cars, motor-cycles and milch buffaloes.

"Each wrestler is guaranteed a participation fee," says Rajnish Kumar 'Bitta', an organising committee member of one of India's biggest dangals, held in Himachal's Kangra district. The season-ending event, held over three days, offers prize money of close to Rs 1 crore. "There are few corporate sponsors. Mostly, it is the locals who contribute so it is not like the organisers are los-

ing money. In fact, they are saving. The wrestlers, though, will be badly hit."

Like Amin. The 31-year-old's only regular income is as a constable with Jammu & Kashmir Police. During the dangal season, he fights for almost 25 days in a month, earning thousands in appearance fees. This week, Amin was to fight at back-to-back dangals in Hamirpur on Thursday and Friday, before taking a flight to Pune on Saturday for an event there.

Amin is one of the wrestlers who is in demand everywhere. But he isn't the biggest, or the best, in the business. That title is reserved for Jaskanwar Singh Gill, alias Jassa Patti, who is considered to be the best pound-for-pound mud wrestler of his generation.

Gill who competes in fewer events than Amin estimates that he will be bereft of close to Rs 25 lakh this year. But he is more concerned about lower-rung wrestlers who don't earn much and are from humble backgrounds. "We have something to fall back on. But a lot

of wrestlers don't have that luxury," Gill says. Amin and Gill spend close to a lakh every month on their diet. For majority of wrestlers, to sustain that will be tough in absence of tournaments. "Unlike Olympic-style wrestling, the dangal *pehalwans* do not receive government support. So a lot of them end up investing half of their earnings in their food and supplements," Pawar says.

Because of the sheer nature of the sport, it is highly improbable that tournaments will be held until complete normalcy is restored. There is hope that the Rs 1 crore dangal in Kangra can be held in June to salvage some part of the season. But the organisers are also facing a unique dilemma. "After the bout, the tradition is for the wrestler to perform a lap of honour and accept prizes for the crowd," Kainour says.

"The prize is usually cash. And in current atmosphere of social distancing, who will want to mingle with the crowd and accept cash from complete strangers?"

How Wimbledon, unlike IPL, avoided the corona blow

Wiser after SARS outbreak, All-England Club had a virus-related clause in their insurance policy. As for IPL, like most mega sporting events, it didn't factor a world-wide disease outbreak.

GAMBLE PAYS OFF

While global sporting leagues and competitions all across the world reel from the effects of the Covid-19 virus strain, the All-England Club is set to benefit from some foresight on their part. According to *The Times*, Wimbledon chiefs are to see their insurance triggered by the cancellation with the clause that covers infectious diseases set to be worth as much as £100m. (Insurance premium paid is an estimated 26 million pounds). According to the *Daily Mail*, the Wimbledon's insurance policy was updated in 2003 for a virus-related clause after a SARS outbreak.



The BCCI insurance doesn't cover pandemic but it covers epidemic.

The *Mail* article also claims that the Wimbledon is the only slam with a virus-related insurance policy and that the French Open's insistence on holding the tournament later this year came from the fears of losing out on an estimated £230 million. The 134th edition of the oldest tennis Grand Slam will now be held from June 28 to July 11, 2021.

WORDPLAY HURTS IPL

The definition of pandemic as opposed to that of an epidemic may end up costing the Indian Premier League a precious insurance pay-out. An epidemic is defined as a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population or region, whereas a pandemic is the same, but spread across multiple countries and continents. According to a source in the BCCI there is no pandemic insurance cover for the IPL. "The BCCI insurance doesn't cover pandemic. It covers epidemic, terrorism and climate related stuff. Pandemic situation is unprecedented. We have insured players' fees so that if they get injured, they can get money. Ticketing during play-offs and final is also insured," the BCCI source told this newspaper.

THE OPEN WAS ALSO SMART

The Open was also cancelled shortly after Wimbledon was culled. One of the reasons the golf championship was canceled rather than postponed like the Masters and PGA Championship is because of the insurance cover it has, a source told *Golf Digest*. Like Wimbledon, there is a policy in place that shields against a pandemic. According to *Golf Digest*, the Open had to cancel by a certain date in order to collect insurance money.

HOPE FOR AUS GP

The Australian GP was set to go ahead on March 15 until a McLaren garage member was diagnosed with coronavirus - a decision that comes with obvious financial repercussions. According to Australian newspaper *Herald Sun*, the Grand Prix Corporation is set to explore claims through the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority - the state government's own insurance agency. *The Herald Sun* also reported that the Scott Morrison-led Liberal Party of Australia would not be bailing Melbourne out if F1 management decided to dump the huge fee of the race on the state, despite the cancellation of the race. ENS

CROSSWORD 4088



- ACROSS**
- 1 Quiet game (5)
 - 4 Game with two essential elements of tennis (7)
 - 8 A Royal Marine member (3)
 - 9 Drink disrupted pool game (5,4)
 - 10 Fear led to a new form of government (7)
 - 11 Susie's spoil children (5)
 - 13 Actually it's about a friend (6)
 - 15 In time the deserter makes mistakes (6)
 - 18 Teach new way to commit fraud (5)
 - 19 Round and round, in a manner of speaking (7)
 - 21 Overlooking a number inside working as blacksmiths (9)
 - 23 Have to confess (3)
 - 24 Trickery of the French in a sense (7)
 - 25 It's the herb season, we hear (5)
- DOWN**
- 1 Why the confusion about how far to beginning? (4,3)
 - 2 Means to enter a faulty item without delay (9)
 - 3 Building a tug? (5)
 - 4 A weedy type, and stingy (6)
 - 5 Row about stray dog (7)
 - 6 An attempt to indicate time past (3)
 - 7 Not bound to relax (5)
 - 12 Remain outside a coach as required by law (9)
 - 14 Allowing buildings to be leased (7)
 - 16 Neat and refined, but rather slow (7)
 - 17 Vote is for communist government (6)
 - 18 Blows on the wrists (5)
 - 20 Have a duty, even if it might be tough? (5)
 - 22 Be sorry for some cruelty (3)

Solutions Crossword 4087: Across: 1 Speechless, 8 Shrub, 9 Athlete, 10 Rounded, 11 Needs, 12 Potash, 14 Becalm, 17 Idler, 19 Patches, 21 Tangier, 22 Orals, 23 Highlights, Down: 2 Pursuit, 3 Ebbd, 4 Hoards, 5 Enhance, 6 Sieve, 7 Pessimists, 8 Sore points, 13 Surfing, 15 Athwart, 16 Spiral, 18 Lynch, 20 Thong.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

You and I come by road or rail, but economists travel on ___ - Margaret Thatcher (14)

NAERR **AMINTU**

HIRST **DENCFU**

SOLUTION: REBAN, SHIRT, MUTANT, FECOND

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4175

Difficulty Level 3s
 Instructions
 To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4174



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Never underestimate the long-term effect of current changes in your social scene. All will become clear next week, so don't sit around scratching your head. Instead you can get on and complete overdue domestic duties. Spare a thought for the future, though.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

What is really needed from you now is a change of attitude. Many of your difficulties or limitations actually exist only in your imagination, and it therefore stands to reason that with a different approach they'd probably disappear. It will help to talk to the right people.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

There's a lot going on down at the bottom of your solar chart what with planets jumping this way and that like so many demented chickens. Do yourself a favour and spare a little time for quiet contemplation, that's the way to get things into perspective.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

It is said that inside every Cancer there is a Capricorn waiting to get out. In other words, inside every muddled, emotional Crab there is a world leader. Yet even without going to extremes it still looks as if you are becoming more of a leader in a very special field with every day that passes.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

There is a real danger of cutting off your nose to spite your face. This particularly applies to money matters, but also to a whole range of personal issues. If you're confused, just wait until the dust settles. It may be another couple of weeks before a matter of principle is resolved.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You think you know what you're up to, and what you must do next. However, you could be following a false trail. You may, of course, be absolutely right, but the element of doubt is sufficient for me to advise caution. A loved one is about to turn on the charm, so you have plenty to look forward to.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

If you think that nothing is as it seems, you could be wrong. Still, the great thing to remember is that friends don't always mean what they say. Keep that simple truth in mind and you'll get the most out of social relationships without being disappointed or disillusioned.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

You do dig in your heels so terribly easily. That really is a great shame, for your behaviour totally contradicts the astrological message that everything is in a permanent state of change. Also, don't imagine, for example, that a current professional situation is in any way permanent.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

Try to remember what first drew you to another person, or a group of people. It's always good to focus on what's really important - your friends and loved ones. After all, you don't want to get caught blaming the wrong people for the wrong things.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The Moon is about to let you off the hook, but I'm honestly not sure if that's a good thing. It may do you more good to grapple with contentious issues, including money matters, until the last minute, even if it is too late to substantially alter the final outcome.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The time has come to make loved ones, partners and employers realise that you cannot be taken for granted any longer. Don't press too hard just yet though, for a minority of people you have to deal with are still too self-obsessed to see anything other than their own interests.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Long-term complications aside, this is a simple and helpful day on which to discuss long-term plans. The Moon's useful aspects favour agreement and compromise just as long as you are prepared to find a radically new solution, to old problems. You might have to put one of your personal goals to one side.