

IN BRIEF

Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire called off

NEW DELHI
Cheteshwar Pujara's deal with Gloucestershire for the first six matches of the County Championship has been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The 32-year-old was supposed to play six matches for the club at the start of the County's first season back in Division One. However, Gloucestershire



on Thursday said that the deal is off now given the global health crisis. PTI

Former hockey player Diwan seeks IOA's help

NEW DELHI
Ashok Diwan, member of the 1975 hockey World Cup-winning team, sought help to get back to the country from USA. His deteriorating health adding to the trauma, the 65-year-old made a distress call to the IOA president Narinder Batra, requesting him to take his plea to higher authorities. It was confirmed that Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has received the letter. PTI

Australia's Test tour of Bangladesh postponed

SYDNEY
Australia's two-Test cricket tour of Bangladesh in June has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. The first Test was to start on June 11 in Chattogram and the second from June 19 in Dhaka. Both were part of the World Test Championship. The final of that tournament is scheduled for next June. Trying to find a new slot for the Tests will be a challenge. AP

**James hopeful of Lakers resuming revival**

LOS ANGELES
LeBron James says the abrupt shutdown of the NBA season has left the Los Angeles Lakers

feeling they still have something to prove. The Lakers were in the midst of a revival season, having made the playoffs for the first time in seven years. At the time of the postponement, the Lakers were in first place in the Western Conference and had the second-best record in the league behind Milwaukee. If the season doesn't resume, James says there will be a void. "I'll be able to look back and say we did something special in that small period of time." AFP

Sunrisers Hyderabad set to donate ₹10 crores

NEW DELHI
Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad on Thursday decided to donate ₹10 crore towards the nation's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. "Sun TV Group (SunRisers Hyderabad) is donating ₹10 crores towards Corona Covid-19 relief measures," the franchise said in its official twitter handle. Sunrisers' initiative drew praise from the team's skipper David Warner. "How good is this well done Sun TV Group @SunRisers," the Australian tweeted. PTI

Real players accept upto 20% pay cut

MADRID
Real Madrid players have agreed to cut their salaries by as much as a fifth, the LaLiga club announced on Wednesday, as Spanish football remains on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic. In a statement, Real Madrid said players and coaches from the side's football and basketball teams, as well as key directors, had voluntarily agreed to the reduction, of either 10 or 20%, "depending on the circumstances that may affect the closing of the current 2019/20 season". AFP

'Chance to revive national circuit'

We can have all the top players in the country competing, says Vishnu

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

In difficult times, it is natural to fall back on good memories.

Vishnu Vardhan competed in his maiden Grand Slam main draw in Wimbledon in 2018, and he cherishes it dearly.

Among best memories

"It was one of the best memories of my tennis career – playing my debut Grand Slam main draw in Wimbledon with Sriram Balaji, one of my closest friends, and winning a match with my family watching," recalled the 32-year-old Vishnu, who represented the country in the London Olympics with Leander Paes.

This season, Vishnu was playing his second professional tournament in Kolkata in March, before the tournament was cancelled midway by the International Tennis Federation (ITF).

"I actually was having a terrible cough at that time. That was when there were some initial cases of COVID-19 in India, just before the WHO called it a pandemic. The players in the tournament were very concerned about my cough. Luckily, it



Family man: Vishnu Vardhan is spending time with his son Siddhartha, and helping his wife Sonia. • FILE PHOTO

was a regular cough and I recovered soon. I was ready to get tested, but the doctor assured me that it was normal, as I did not have any other symptoms," recalled Vishnu. Vishnu is confident that India will control the virus soon, and suggests a national circuit to revive tennis.

"It will be a great opportunity to revive the national circuit. We can have all the

top-ranked players in the country competing in the tournaments," he said.

Now, he is happy spending time with his two-year-old son Siddhartha, and helping his wife Sonia bake some "amazing cakes".

"Being home has been fine for me. My dad (Jagadeesan) and Sonia are the designated people to go out and buy the essentials. So, I

have been completely home," said Vishnu.

"We have breakfast together. When Siddhartha goes to my parents' place [on a different floor], I get a workout. We both enjoy our long afternoon naps, which was never in my schedule. In the evening, we go to the terrace, watch the sunset and water the plants," said Vishnu.

India doesn't need money, can't have cricket now, says Kapil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The legendary Kapil Dev, on Thursday slammed Shoaib Akhtar's idea of a made-for-television three-match ODI series between India and Pakistan to raise funds for the COVID-19 pandemic, saying "India doesn't need the money" and it is not worth risking lives for a

cricket match.

Akhtar, on Wednesday, proposed a closed-door series to jointly raise funds to fight the deadly virus both in India and Pakistan.

Not feasible

Kapil said the proposal is not feasible. "He is entitled to his opinion but we don't need to

raise the money.

"We have enough. For us, what is important right now is that how our authorities work together to deal with this crisis," Kapil said.

"The situation is unlikely to get normal anytime soon and organising a cricket game means putting our cricketers at risk which we don't need to," he said.

Australia first, IPL contracts secondary: Tim Paine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HOBART

The Australian cricket team didn't want to unnecessarily provoke Virat Kohli but his predecessor Michael Clarke's claims of players being scared to sledge the India captain in order to protect their IPL deals is far from truth, says current Test skipper Tim Paine.

"I certainly didn't notice too many people being that nice to Virat or not trying to get him out or anything like that," Paine told *ESPNCricinfo*.

"I thought everyone who had the ball in their hand or when we were batting were trying their absolute best to win the game for Australia. "I'm not sure who was go-

ing 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," Paine said.

India is scheduled to tour Australia from October, 2020 to January, 2021 to play four Tests, three One-Day Internationals and three Twenty20 Internationals.

Was willing to die on the field: Richards

Always aware of the risks but it didn't bother him, says the legend



Vivian Richards. • FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

The legendary Viv Richards, one of the greatest batsmen to have ever played the game, says such was his passion for the game he didn't mind dying on the cricket field while representing the West Indies.

Known for his aggressive batting, Richards dominated some of the fiercest fast bowlers of world cricket without

donning a helmet. Richards, 68 now, was always aware of the risks but it didn't bother him.

"My passion for the game was such I didn't mind dying on the field playing something I loved," Richards told former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson in a podcast.

Richards said he had always looked up to other athletes, who risked their lives, for inspiration. "I have

looked at other sportsmen and women who I have a lot of respect for doing it to an extreme level," said Richards, who amassed 8,540 and 6,721 runs in 121 Tests and 187 ODIs respectively.

"I see a guy driving a Formula 1 racing car, what could be more dangerous than that?" said Richards, to which Watson quipped: "Facing 150kmph without a helmet?"

Boxing, drawing keep Simranjit occupied

She is incorporating the inputs received from coaches to finetune her game

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Olympics qualified boxer Simranjit Kaur is making the best use of the lockdown by training with her brothers and pursuing hobbies like drawing and sewing.

Simranjit is fortunate that her brothers – Kamalpreet Singh and Arshdeep Singh (the current National silver medallist in 81kg) – are also boxers, who spar with her at home in Chakar village of Ludhiana district in Punjab during her daily training.

Help from brothers

"Since I don't stay at home for long periods, I never really had such an opportunity. My brothers' familiarity with boxing is an advantage. Both of them are helping me with padding," Simranjit told *The Hindu*.

The 24-year-old is incorporating the inputs received from National coaches through video conferencing to fine-tune her game.

Simranjit, who won a 64kg World championships bronze medal in Delhi in 2018, had lost the 60kg trials for 2019 World to the seasoned Sarita Devi. However, she improved her game to beat Sarita in the Olympic qualifier trial and secured a quota place by claiming a sil-



Support: Simranjit Kaur training with her brother Arshdeep Singh at her home. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ver medal in the Asia/Oceania qualifying event in Amman, Jordan.

"I kept my focus on winning the trial for the Olympic qualifier. I didn't have to bother much about my new weight as my natural weight stayed around 60kg. I had some solid punches, but I had to make some technical changes.

"I have been in touch with B.I. Fernandez (former India's foreign coach). Whenever I find time I go to his centre in Mohali. He sends me videos and tells me to try out different techniques," said the boxer backed by

Lakshya Sports.

According to National coach Mohammed Ali Qamar, Simranjit has immense potential. "She is an attacking boxer who can fluster the best of opponents with her punches. Only, she has to work on some technical and tactical aspects," said Qamar.

Simranjit, who gave a power-packed performance to claim her maiden National title and bag the Best Boxer award in Haridwar in 2016, is happy to get some attention.

"People in my village knew about me after I got Asian and World champion-

ship medals. Following my Olympic qualification, more people recognise me."

Amid expectations, Simranjit looks forward to the Olympics. "Good that we have one year to prepare. I am focusing on physical fitness. After the lockdown, we will focus on other areas."

Simranjit keeps herself engaged with some creative work. "Drawing is one of my passions. I learnt it on my own. I had learnt sewing from my mother (Rajpal Kaur) when I was young. Since there is a lot of time in hand, I do some drawing and sewing," she said.

F1 could be held behind closed doors: Brawn

Says a July date now looks likely

IANS
LONDON

Formula One motorsport managing director Ross Brawn has said that in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 season could potentially be held behind closed doors.

So far, nine races have been affected by the outbreak, with the March 15 season-opening Australian Grand Prix cancelled along with May's showcase Monaco Grand Prix.

"Travel for the teams and travel for everyone involved is going to be one of the big issues. You could argue once we get there, we could become fairly self-contained. Our view is probably a European start will be favourable and that could even be a closed event," Brawn told *Sky Sports*.

Better than no racing

"We have a race with no spectators. That's not great, but it's better than no racing at all," he added.

Although the French GP is currently scheduled for



Ross Brawn. • GETTY IMAGES

If we were to start at the beginning of July, we could do a 19-race season

June 28, Brawn explained a July start now looks more likely.

"If we were to start at the beginning of July, we could do a 19-race season," he said. "It's tough, three races on, weekend off, three races on, weekend off – but we've looked at all the logistics."

F1 is already working with promoters on a revised 2020 calendar with the actual sequence and schedule dates for races likely to differ significantly from the original calendar.

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