

## Short Takes

## India's Sharath loses in Asian TT pre-quarters

**Wuxi (China), April 15** : Veteran paddler Achanta Sharath Kamal bowed out in the men's singles pre-quarter-finals to end Indian campaign at the Asian Championships here on Saturday.

The 34-year-old Indian lost to Lam Siu Hang of Hong Kong 2-3 (6-11, 11-9, 9-11, 14-12, 10-12) after waging a spirited fight.

Though Sharath began on a bad note losing his first game rather quickly, the Indian made amends and came back strongly against the Hong Kong paddler, who exacted revenge in a similar fashion winning the third game with minimal points to go 2-1 up.

A more determined Sharath was attacking well on his backhand and almost cornered his opponent by saving two matches to level the score 2-2 with a 14-12 win in the fourth game.

Rattled as he was, the Hong Kong paddler kept a slender lead in the decider and in spite of Sharath managing to duce at 10-10, Lam took the next two crucial points, one each on his own serve and once breaking Sharath's to enter the quarter-finals.

## Xavi says Barcelona miss right-back Dani Alves

**Madrid, April 15** : FC Barcelona legend Xavi Hernandez believes the Catalan football giants should not have let veteran right-back Dani Alves leave for Juventus last season.

Alves departed on a free transfer after eight seasons at Barcelona in which he won three UEFA Champions League trophies and six La Liga titles, reports Xinhua news agency.

"Obviously I would bring back Dani Alves," Xavi was quoted as saying by goal.com on Friday. "He decided to leave, but for me he is the best right-back in the world at the moment. Barca miss him a lot." Alves faced his old team for the first time since leaving the club last week, helping to subdue fellow Brazilian Neymar as the Italian giants won 3-0 in Turin.

In an interview leading up to the match, Alves said he decided to leave the Camp Nou after growing tired of being made a scapegoat for the team's shortcomings.

Xavi, who won eight La Liga and four Champions League titles in a trophy-laden one-club football career, also said that Barcelona would do well to pursue Juventus' Argentine forward Paulo Dybala and Paris Saint-Germain's Italian midfielder Marco Verratti this summer. On Dybala, 2010 World Cup winner Xavi said said the 23-year-old "would be a good option" for Barcelona in the future. Dybala on Thursday signed a new contract with Juventus that will keep him at the Turin giants till 2022. Several European giants, including Real Madrid and Barcelona want to sign the highly-rated attacker. Verratti "would be ideal" for Barcelona, according to the former captain of the Catalan club. "He has the ability to play at Barcelona, no doubt. I think he has a lot of the qualities that I have as a player," Xavi said of the 24-year-old Italian, who reportedly has a price tag of at least \$75 million in the transfer market.

## Corruption sent price tag of Brazil's World Cup stadiums soaring: Reports

**Rio de Janeiro, April 15** : Half of the 12 stadiums built or renovated with taxpayers' money to host the 2014 football World Cup in Brazil saw funds being pocketed by government officials and construction company executives, local media reported. In the case of at least four of those stadiums, there is testimony from some involved in the scheme that reveals construction firms and officials conspired to inflate the price of the project in order to split the profits, news network Globo said on its website on Friday.

The stadium projects under review include the landmark Maracana in Rio de Janeiro, Mane Garrincha in Brasilia, Arena Pernambuco in Recife, Arena Castelao in Fortaleza, Arena da Amazonia in Manaus and Arena Corinthians in Sao Paulo, reports Xinhua news agency.

According to government figures, Rio's Maracana ended up costing some 75 per cent more to renovate than originally planned, requiring \$383 million, despite having been remodelled in 2007 for the Pan American Games.

## Badminton: Srikanth faces Praneeth in Singapore Open final

**Singapore, April 15** : Men's singles shuttlers Kidambi Srikanth and B. Sai Praneeth on Saturday registered easy wins in the semi-finals of the \$350,000 Singapore Open, marking the first instance of an all-India final in a Superseries event to be fought here on Sunday.

World No.29 Srikanth registered a thumping 21-13, 21-14 win over No.26 Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia in 42 minutes at the Singapore Indoor

Stadium.

In the other semi-final, world No.30 Praneeth smashed past South Korean 35th-ranked Lee Dong Keun 21-6, 21-8 in 38 minutes to sail into the final.

Though Srikanth is a bigger name than Praneeth, having won the 2014 China Superseries Premier and 2015 India Superseries and a quarter-final appearance at the Rio Olympics, the latter has a 4-1 head-to-head record.

## Flamengo midfielder Diego out for 6 weeks with injury

**Rio de Janeiro, April 15** : Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has confirmed that midfielder Juan Mata will not play for the rest of the football season following a groin surgery.

Mata, 28, underwent surgery last month but the club hoped he could return to the field before the end of the English Premier League on May 21, reports Efe. However, Mourinho on Friday revealed in the press conference prior to Sunday's duel with Chelsea that the Spanish international will not be available "until the end of May". In addition, Mourinho reported that goalkeeper David De Gea is available to face Chelsea at the Old Trafford stadium here, while defenders Chris Smalling and Phil Jones will not return "until mid-May". Flamengo will be without former Atletico Madrid midfielder Diego for up to six weeks due to a knee injury, the Rio de Janeiro football club's medical staff has confirmed. The 32-year-old suffered medial ligament damage to his right knee during Flamengo's 2-1 victory over their Brazilian rivals Atletico Paranaense in the Copa Libertadores on Wednesday, reports Xinhua news agency. Flamengo team doctor Marcio Tanure told ESPN Brasil that Diego will undergo surgery on Saturday. Flamengo currently lead their Copa Libertadores group with two wins from as many matches as they aim to win South America's top club competition for a second time.

## Athletic Bilbao crush Las Palmas 5-1 in La Liga

**Bilbao (Spain), April 15** : Iker Muniain and Ariz Aduriz fired a brace each as Athletic Club Bilbao routed UD Las Palmas 5-1 to take a provisional hold on sixth place in the La Liga football championship here.

The hosts on Friday could have scored more goals against a visiting side that seemed lacking in competitive fire. Four of the six goals were scored in the first 18 minutes, reports Efe.

A perfect header by San Jose put Athletic ahead in the seventh minute and Muniain doubled the lead just two minutes later on a direct free kick.

Pedro Bigas clawed one

## RCB, Pune aim to get back to winning ways

**Bengaluru, April 15** : The last time Virat Kohli and Steve Smith clashed with each other was the recently-concluded India-Australia Test series, and now both will be aiming for the rest of the season following a groin surgery. Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) take on Smith's Rising Pune Supergiant (RPS) in an Indian Premier League (IPL) tie here on Sunday.

Both the franchises have lost three out of their four games and would be eager to plug the holes as momentum can quickly shift in a high-paced T20 cricket tournament like the IPL.

Despite Kohli's return from injury with a stylish half century and a hat-trick from leg-spinner Samuel Badree, RCB went down to Mumbai Indians in a low-scoring affair on Friday while Pune were simply outplayed by Gujarat Lions on the same day.

Kohli's 62 off 47 balls is also an indicator of the bigger and better things that can be expected from the India captain.

The 28-year-old had also stitched together the highest opening stand of 63 runs with out-of-touch Chris Gayle (22), followed by a 47-run stand with AB de Villiers (19), who also came in after recovering from an injury.

The hosts may however, rethink on their strategy of playing Gayle, who was seen struggling during his 27-ball knock and



may go in with Shane Watson, who can also be handy with his medium pace.

The middle order comprising Kedar Jadhav, Madeep Singh and Pawan Negi can also be expected to step on the gas in the slog overs, specially against a weaker bowling line-up like Pune.

In the bowling department, Badree will be keen to replicate his superb show along side fellow leggie Yuzvendra Chahal and pace duo of Tymal Mills and Sreenath Aravind.

On the other hand, Pune will be expecting

former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni to get his vintage touch back, specially after getting out with another single digit score on Friday.

If Pune are to win the contest, the top order -- Ajinkya Rahane, Smith, Rahul

Tripathi and million dollar boy Ben Stokes -- will need to shoulder the responsibility of getting the side a good total.

While Rahane failed in the previous match, Smith and Rahul looked good during their 64-run second wicket stand before the team fell apart against Gujarat Lions'

pacer Andrew Tye's magical spell of 5/17, including a hat-trick in the final over.

Pune's fate also lies on South African leg-spinner Imran Tahir, who was clobbered all around the park by the Gujarat duo of Brendon McCullum and Dwayne Smith. Before Friday's match,

Tahir successfully delivered whenever the ball was thrown to him by Smith. Veteran all-rounder Rajat Bhatia with his cutters, can return a handful on Sunday, considering the slowish nature of the wicket here.

## I-League: East Bengal aim to get their house in order against Shivajians

**Barasat (West Bengal), April 15** : Smarting from a 1-2 defeat at the hands of arch-rivals Mohun Bagan which more or less ended their I-League football title hopes, East Bengal will look to get their house in order when they take on DSK Shivajians here on Sunday.

Sony Norde and Azharuddin Mallick scored first half goals for Bagan on Sunday to deflate East Bengal after

thus miss their engagement with Shivajians.

A spate of underwhelming displays spilled over on Friday morning at East Bengal's training where supporters protested vehemently asking for coach Trevor Morgan's resignation.

Following the sacking of assistant coach Warren Hackett and goalkeeping coach Avijit Mondal, Morgan was left in the lurch about his future and faithfuls of the club let



Bengaluru FC halted surprise league leaders Aizawl FC's surge with a solitary goal win earlier that day. That meant the title race was wide open.

But a poor display on the field by East Bengal meant their aspirations of ending a barren run stretching over a decade in search of league glory virtually went up in smoke.

Bagan are now top of the table with a draw against Shillong Lajong in a rescheduled match with 30 points from 15 matches while Aizawl are second having 30 in their kitty as well but being inferior on head-to-head count against Bagan. East Bengal are third with 27 points from 15 games.

Their case was compounded further as Trinidad & Tobago forward Willis Plaza was given marching orders in the second half for a needless challenge on Bagan centre-back Anas Edathodika. Plaza will

their emotions reach boiling point with slogans of 'Go Back Morgan' and 'Go Back Rehenesh' being heard. Goalkeeper T.P. Rehenesh has had a lean patch too.

Coming to Shivajians, the Pune based side did not restart its campaign after the break on a high, losing 2-3 to Shillong Lajong at home.

The eighth-placed side has been patchy all season winning just three games and facing defeat in seven.

The last time the two sides met in Pune, East Bengal won 2-1 with goals from Wedson Anselme and Willis Plaza.

## Tottenham moved to within four points of Premier League

**Madrid, April 15** : Tottenham completed a run of seven consecutive top-flight victories for the first time in 50 years by beating Bournemouth 4-0 at White Hart Lane.

Mauricio Pochettino's side put on a consummate attacking performance as they bettered their 2015-16 points total and equalled the previous streak set by the likes of Jimmy Greaves, Terry Venables and Dave Mackay in the Spurs team of 1967.

The victory, which came courtesy of first-half goals from Moussa Dembele and Son Heung-min and second-half strikes by Harry Kane and Vincent Janssen, moved Spurs within four points of Premier League leaders Chelsea, who travel to Manchester United on Sunday.

Dembele had not scored since January 2016 but he hit the net with aplomb after 16 minutes, before Kane's flick set up Son to double Spurs' lead, and the England striker scored his 20th league goal of the season early in the second half.

Janssen then rounded off the win in stoppage time.

Defeat left Bournemouth and their leaky defence in danger of being dragged back into the relegation scrap, while Spurs maintained the imperious form that is forcing their London rivals to keep looking over their shoulder in the title run-in. Kane was caught offside when an early chance fell to him at close range after six minutes, before Kyle Walker broke to tee up Dembele, whose sweetly struck low drive from outside the box was well saved by Artur Boruc.

The Bournemouth goalkeeper was helpless to prevent Dembele from scoring his first goal of the season three minutes later, when Christian Eriksen's corner was allowed to bounce through the box and the Belgian rattled the ball through Boruc's legs and into the far corner of the net. The visitors barely had time to react before Jack Wilshere's loose ball fell to Harry Kane and the striker played a neat back-heeled pass into the path of Son, who burst into the box and nutmegged Boruc for his 19th goal of the season.

Spurs' football was fluent and their attacking incessant, rendering Bournemouth virtual spectators in a first half that would have ended with the hosts three goals to the good had Eriksen aimed a little lower when he lashed a shot over the bar five minutes before the break.

The second half was two minutes old when Kane collected Dele Alli's cross and shook off Simon Francis before firing the ball low into the corner of the net from the middle of the penalty area, taking his goal tally for the season to 25 in all competitions.

Tottenham's football was worthy of their best run of form in half a century, and Kane played a neat one-two with Son before curling a shot that lacked the power to beat Boruc.

Bournemouth finally managed a shot on target in the 74th minute but Harry Arter's attempt failed to trouble Hugo Lloris, before Ben Davies' dipping low drive forced a good save by Boruc.



**Mumbai, April 15** : Mumbai Indians will look to register their fourth consecutive win, while Gujarat Lions will look to boost their campaign with a second win when they

face each other in an Indian Premier League (IPL) contest here on Sunday.

Mumbai are on a roll, getting the better of Kolkata Knight Riders,

Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore since their loss in the opening match to Rising Pune Supergiant.

Their batsmen have been contributing, barring captain Rohit Sharma, who has only nine runs in four matches. Parthiv Patel, Jos Buttler, Nitish Rana, Kieran Pandya have been consistent, along with all-rounders Kieran Pollard, Hardik Pandya and Krunal Pandya.

But Rohit's form has been a worry. The right-hander has not played in the last six months prior to the IPL due to a couple of injuries and coming straight into the T20 cricket tournament is not easy.

In their last match, they plunged to 7/4 chasing 143 against RCB, who

were boosted by leg-spinner Samuel Badree's hat-trick. But MI have a long batting line-up and it was proved as Pollard and Krunal bailed them out from a hopeless situation.

In the bowling department, there are doubts over their pace spearhead Lasith Malinga, who skipped the RCB match in Bengaluru. His return to fitness will add more teeth to the bowling line-up that boasts the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Mitchell McClenaghan, Hardik, Harbhajan Singh and Pollard.

It should be an interesting contest when these bowlers will be up against Gujarat's destructive batsmen Dwayne Smith, Brendon McCullum, Suresh Raina, Aaron

## Today's Match

**Indians Vs Lions**  
time 4:00 PM  
**Royal Challengers Vs Supergiant**  
Time 8:00 PM