

Short Takes

Govindaraj becomes member of FIBA Competitions Commission

Bengaluru, Dec 6 : K. Govindaraj has become the first Basketball Federation of India (BFI) President to be appointed as a member of the sport's world governing body FIBA's Competitions Commission effective from January 1, 2018, it was announced on Wednesday.

Govindaraj was appointed to the commission after the FIBA Executive Committee meeting held on November 18, BFI said in a statement.

"I'm humbled by the honour of being bestowed this position. This is not just an achievement for myself but for all the BFI who have worked tirelessly for the last three years to showcase the true potential of Indian Basketball," Govindaraj said.

In the last one year, India has successfully hosted three International Championships namely FIBA Asia Women's Cup in July 2017, FIBA U16 Women's Asian Championship in October 2017 and FIBA 2019 World Cup Asian Qualifiers in November 2017.

Fast bowlers will do the damage in South Africa: Pujara

New Delhi, Dec 6 : Test specialist Cheteshwar Pujara on Wednesday said India will bank on fast bowlers to do the damage during the South Africa tour next month.

India will tour South Africa for three Tests, six One-day Internationals (ODI) and three Twenty20 Internationals (T20I), starting with the first Test from January 5 in Cape Town.

"I think we (India) will be very well prepared before heading to South Africa," the Saurashtra batsman told reporters during the post-match press conference.

"We are already talking about the things that we want before heading to South Africa, some of the guys have enough time to prepare for the tour. We have enough experience being in South Africa, that will help us."

"The fast bowling unit has been much better now and I think our fast bowlers will do the damage," Pujara added.

India have picked five fast bowlers -- Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and preferred Jasprit Bumrah over chinaman Kuldeep Yadav for the tour. The 29-year-old also heaped praise on spin duo Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja saying they can put any opposition under pressure.

"I won't say they are just spinners, if you look at their wickets they have done a remarkable job. They are the most difficult bowlers for any opposition to face," Pujara added.

Bayern beat Paris Saint-Germain in Champions League

Berlin, Dec 6 : Bayern Munich overcame Paris Saint-Germain 3-1 on the brace from Corentin Tolisso at the last game in Group B of Champions League. The German giants needed a four-goal margin victory to snatch the top spot in Group B. Despite a powerful performance against the visitors from Paris, the Bundesliga champions were unable to establish a four-goal advantage on home soil on Tuesday, reports Xinhua news agency. However, the Bundesliga record champions grabbed a fairy tale start as Robert Lewandowski capitalised on a cross from James Rodriguez and a flicked on header from Kingsley Coman to slot home from very close range with only three minutes into the game. The visitors needed some time to recover from the setback as Neymar unleashed the first dangerous shot on target following a build up play from Kylian Mbappe in the 33rd minute. Nevertheless, Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich was on guard and tipped Neymar's effort around the far post. Bayern continued on the front foot and doubled the lead before the break when James Rodriguez' pinpoint cross into the box met Corentin Tolisso, who nodded the ball past custodian Alphonse Areola with 37 minutes played.

The hosts needed another two goals to oust the French outfit from the top spot, but the visitors showed a vital sign after the restart as Edinson Cavani's cross allowed Kylian Mbappe to reduce the arrears inside the box in the 50th minute. It looked like the "PSG" goal would take the wind out of Bayern's sails but the hosts were not done with the scoring. Corentin Tolisso wrapped up his brace in the 69th minute after tapping home Kingsley Coman's square pass.

The "Bavarians" pressed frenetically for another goal whereas Paris Saint-Germain remained dangerous on fast break yet both sides lacked in accuracy in the closing period. Despite the defeat, "PSG" complete the group stage atop Group B followed by Bayern Munich, Celtic and RSC Anderlecht.

New Delhi, Dec 6 : India registered a record ninth straight series win after drawing the pollution-marred third and final Test against Sri Lanka at the Ferozeshah Kotla here on Wednesday.

Chasing an improbable 410, a defiant Sri Lanka rode on Dhananjaya de Silva's third Test century and debutant Roshen Silva's unbeaten half century to score 299/5, before both the captains decided to shake hands with seven overs to go before the mandatory close of play.

Roshen remained unbeaten on 74 while stumper Niroshan Dickwella was on 44 when the match ended.

With this, India clinched the three-Test rubber against the islanders 1-0 and also equalled Australia's record of nine consecutive Test series wins from 2005-2008. India drew the first Test in Kolkata before thrashing the visitors by an innings and 239 runs in the second game at Nagpur.

The first four days of the Kotla Test also witnessed a few disruptions with the Sri Lankan players wearing anti-pollution masks to protect them-



selves against the high pollution level in the national capital.

Resuming from Tuesday's score of 31/3, the visitors lost the wicket of Angelo Mathews in the sixth over of the day before skipper Dinesh Chandimal (36) and de Silva took the team to a comfortable 119/4 at lunch.

Mathews, whose 111 played a big part in Sri Lanka's first innings total

of 373, perished to a thick edge off Jadeja as Ajinkya Rahane completed an excellent catch at slip. The right-handed duo of de Silva and Chandimal continued to frustrate the Indian bowlers as the fifth wicket partnership flourished to 112 runs before off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin packed back the visiting captain with a beauty.

Chandimal, who con-

sumed 90 deliveries and struck two boundaries, attempted to whip Ashwin's tossed up delivery through mid-wicket but the ball sneaked through the gap between bat and pad to hit the stumps. Despite losing his partners, the 26-year-old de Silva battled a glute muscle injury to complete his career's third Test century from 188 balls and later added an unbeaten 58-run stand

for the sixth wicket in the company of Roshen.

The centurion was however, forced to walk off just before the tea break which saw stumper Niroshan Dickwella joining Roshen in the middle.

Roshen, who got a duck in the first innings made up for his flop show, showing great maturity to bring up his maiden half century off 105 balls.

Dickwella, at the other

end played his aggressive natural game, slamming six boundaries in his 66-ball unbeaten knock.

India, meanwhile had their slices of bad luck in the middle when Ashwin missed a tough caught and bowled chance from de Silva and wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha missed a regulation stumping of Dickwella off left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja.

For the hosts, Jadeja emerged the pick of the bowlers with figures of 3/83 while Ashwin and pacer Mohammed Shami picked up one wicket apiece. The Indian captain was adjudged the Man-of-the-Match as well as the Player-of-the-Series for his excellent run with the willow.

Kohli emerged the highest run-getter in the series with 615 runs, which saw him scoring three centuries, including two back-to-back double tons. His 243 had powered India to 536/7 declared in the first innings here.

The teams will now head to Dharamsala for the limited overs leg of the tour, with the first One-day International to be played on December 10.

Easy ties for Atletico and Real, but tougher for Barcelona

Madrid, Dec 6 : Real and Atletico Madrid were both given relatively straightforward ties in the draw for the last 16 of the Spanish King's Cup knockout football tournament, while reigning Cup holders FC Barcelona have a more complicated task.

Atletico Madrid were on Tuesday drawn to face third tier (Segunda B) side, Lleida. Although Lleida came back from 3-0 down on aggregate to qualify on away goals (3-3) against Real Sociedad in the previous round, Diego Simeone's side are clear favourites to progress, reports Xinhua news agency.

The return leg of that tie could also see striker Diego Costa return to action for Atletico Madrid as the club will be able to include him in their squad as of January 1.

Real Madrid will be pleased with their tie against Liga 123 side Numancia and although



the side from the city of Soria left Malaga by the wayside in the last 32, they should present on paper few problems for Real Madrid.

Barcelona meanwhile have been drawn against Celta Vigo, who on Saturday drew 2-2 in the Camp Nou Stadium in the La Liga.

Celta reached the semi-

finals of the Cup last season and are now coached by former Barcelona goalkeeper, goalkeeping coach and assistant coach, Juan Carlos Unzué, who knows the Catalan squad and players very well.

In the other ties, Formentera, who caused a sensation by knocking out Athletic Club Bilbao

in the last round, have been rewarded with a tie against last season's beaten finalists Alaves.

Leganes meet Villarreal (who they beat 3-1 at the weekend), Cadiz are at home against Sevilla in an attractive Andalusian derby, Espanyol will play Levante and Las Palmas take on Valencia.

Dhoni may return as CSK skipper after new IPL rule

New Delhi, Dec 6 : In a decision that could see the return of Mahendra Singh Dhoni as the skipper of Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and some of its top players, the IPL Governing Council has allowed the returning franchises CSK and Rajasthan Royals to secure the players who represented them in the 2015 edition and were part of Rising Pune Supergiant and Gujarat Lions squads in 2017.

It also decided that an Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise can retain or secure through the Right to Match (RTM) clause a combined total of five players for the 2018 edition of the Twenty20 cricket tournament, it was announced on Wednesday.

An IPL franchise is eligible to secure up to five players by virtue of

a combination of player retention (pre player auction) and Right to Match (during the auction), BCCI secretary Amitabh Chaudhary said in a statement.

The decision was taken during the IPL Governing Council's meeting with the Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA) here. The decision means CSK can call upon the likes of Dhoni, Suresh Raina and veteran New Zealand star Brendan McCullum. They may also recall West Indies star Dwayne Bravo.

Rajasthan Royals meanwhile, can secure the services of Australian all-rounders James Faulkner and Shane Watson, opener Aaron Finch and India star Ajinkya Rahane.

CSK and Rajasthan were suspended for two IPL seasons after the tournament was hit by a spot-fixing controversy in 2013.

They were replaced by Rising Pune Supergiants -- who employed Dhoni as captain -- and the Gujarat Lions.

The IPL Governing Council had allowed a maximum of either three retentions or three Right To Match (RTM) at the discretion of the franchisees. If there is no retention before player auction then the franchisees can have up to three ATM.

A franchise can secure a maximum of three capped Indian players and a maximum of two overseas players. A franchise can secure a maximum of two uncapped Indian players. Meanwhile, the salary cap for teams for the 2018 edition is Rs. 80 crore. It will grow by Rs 2 crore and Rs 3 crore for the next two editions respectively.

"The minimum spend will be 75 per cent of the salary cap for each season," the statement read.

ISL: Chennaiyin favourites against lowly ATK

Chennai, Dec 6 : A confident Chennaiyin FC will start as favourites when they take on ATK in a fourth round Indian Super League clash (ISL) clash at the Jawaharlal Stadium here on Thursday.

The 2015 champions started their campaign with a 2-3 defeat at home at the hands of FC Goa whom they had incidentally downed in the final two years ago to win the crown.

But since then, John Gregory's side have stitched together two successive wins starting with a 3-0 thrashing of NorthEast United FC here followed by a solitary goal triumph away to Pune.

Brazilian central midfielder Raphael Augusto has netted two goals for the hosts so far and has been in fine form. What might worry Gregory a bit is that his strikers haven't got goals but the Englishman said the other day that he was happy with Jeje Lalpekhlua's performance against Pune.

"In all honesty, that was his best game for us so far. He



was on his own a lot up there. The goals will come if he continues to work like that," the 63-year old former England midfielder had said after the game.

Gregory though, was not happy with the way his team played and that would be something the former Queens Park Rangers player would like to work on.

Against Pune, two former ATK players played their part in the only goal of the match. Captain Henrique Sereno scored while Jaime Gavilan set it up for him.

Defending champions ATK, on the other hand, are winless after three games and have been dogged by a spate of injuries to key players.

Teddy Sheringham's charges started off with a goalless draw on the road against Kerala Blasters, a result they repeated against newcomers Jamshedpur FC in their third outing, and lost 1-4 at home to FC Pune City.

The Kolkata-based franchise did not get the services of marquee signing Robbie Keane who was injured for the first three games.

While Keane has an outside chance of starting on Thursday, midfield mainstay Eugeneson Lyngdoh is doubtful for not only the next game but the rest of the season. The former Bengaluru FC man picked up a knee injury during the club's round three match against Jamshedpur FC last Friday and was seen limping out of the ground at the stroke of half time. Jayesh Rane is still injured while English midfielder Carl Becker has also been ruled out for the season.

ATK lack the cutting edge

in the final third with Finnish striker Njazi Kuqi not being able to deliver the goods up front.

Against Chennai, they will have to work harder as they showed great resolve at the back halting the likes of inform Pune frontmen Emiliano Alfaro and last season's top scorer Marcelino.

Chennaiyin and ATK have a rivalry that started in 2015 when the two sides met in the semifinal.

Chennaiyin thrashed the inaugural champions 3-0 here but succumbed to a 1-2 reversal in Kolkata to go through on away goals and set up a final date with Goa.

Overall, in the eight meetings so far between the two sides, ATK have won three to Chennaiyin's one victory. Four matches have ended in draws.

Chennaiyin currently sit second in the points table with six points from three games. ATK have only two points to show for from three outings, remaining last in the 10-team points table.

Each franchise can secure 5 cricketers for IPL 2018

New Delhi, Dec 6 : An Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise can retain or secure through the Right to Match (RTM) clause a combined total of five players for the 2018 edition of the Twenty20 cricket tournament, it was announced on Wednesday.

In another decision, returning franchises Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals can retain or use the RTM clause to secure the players who played for them respectively in IPL 2015 and who were part of Rising Pune Supergiant and Gujarat Lions squads in IPL 2017.

An IPL franchise is eligible to secure up to 5 players by virtue of a combination of player retention (pre player auction) and Right to Match (during the auction), BCCI secretary Amitabh Chaudhary said in a statement.

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