

FIFA Friendly : China vs India

Hope floats as India take on Chinese dragon

OCTOBER 11, 2018: India's record against China has been abysmal. The two countries have played each other 17 times with India yet to taste success. All matches have been played here in India, yet as India make the trip to the first time away from home, there is hope.

"India can have a good game against China. They (China) are in a bit of transition with players retiring and new ones coming in. I feel India needs to play against them before the Asian Cup because they are going to be up against this type of opposition in UAE next year," said Bengaluru FC midfielder

Erik Paartalu. Paartalu is no stranger to domestic football in China and India, having played his trade for Chinese Super League outfit Tianjin TEDA in 2013. The Australian is now among the more influential players in Indian football and has seen the sport make quite some progress.

"I feel Indian football has come a long way. Certainly, that's the case in the last five years. Everyone's talking about their fast rise through the ranking table. I see them like China has been in the last 20 years," said the 32-year-old said.

World Cup winning coach

Marcelo Lippi at the helm of affairs, has attracted wide attention with high-profile signings in the Chinese Super League. The national team is ranked 76, 21 places above India, but former India captain Jo Paul Ancheri is among those who believe the visitors can give their hosts a run for their money.

"It will be a good experience for the Indian team as they are playing away in China. It is a friendly but they should give their all as they are preparing for the Asian Cup. India is in a good position and can put up a fight against any team. It will give us a good opportunity to assess our

weaknesses as we are playing a stronger team," said Ancheri.

The expectations have risen, according to Paartalu, largely due to sustained efforts in the last five years that has seen a steady rise in the stature of Indian football.

"The CSL has been around a lot longer than ISL. I think the CSL, the sort of money on offer there is crazy. You always wonder if they will be able to sustain that. The ISL started with a lot of money too but now they are a bit smarter. They have realised that paying crazy money on players who are at the end of their career is not going to benefit Indian

football in the long term.

"If you see CSL's approach, it hasn't really helped the local players in the national team set up. But there are a lot of academies set up and probably a golden generation will come up in the future," said the Australian midfielder.

The Sydney-born feels Indian football is on the right track and the results will be seen, sooner rather than later.

"The ISL has been taking a somewhat slower approach (compared to CSL) but realistic approach for success. Indian football will be better off if it keeps going like this," said Paartalu.

KARACHI, OCT 11/--/ Birds were released over fairways and ceremonial drives were struck as international golf returned to Pakistan Thursday after an 11-year absence.

A full field of 132 players from around the globe were teeing up in the Asian Tour's UMA CNS Open Championship at Karachi Golf Club, the latest thawing of relations with the militancy-hit country that has spent years in the sporting wilderness.

"Coming back to Pakistan is a fantastic opportunity for us," Robert Andrew, event director of the Asian Tour told AFP, brushing off any security concerns. "This is the starting point for future years after the success of this event." No major golf tour has visited Pakistan since 2007. The last scheduled tournament, in 2006, was cancelled after a wave of insurgent attacks.

"It is always good to be here as people are very lovely and friendly," said Australian golfer Marcus

Both. "I came here 10 years ago. Here we seeing the same faces not different to us,"

But successful military operations in the country's northwest near the Afghan border and crackdowns in urban centres, including the restive port city of Karachi, have improved the situation.

The country has twice hosted the Pakistan Super League cricket finals featuring international plus successful limited-over series against Zimbabwe, a World XI and Sri Lanka in the past 18 months. They cleared the way for more sports with squash, tennis and now golf having returned.

Walls come down: Former Asian Tour winner and Indian national Digvijay Singh said arriving in Pakistan felt like home, suggesting a new road for better relations between Islamabad and Delhi. "I am really feeling home here and we are so overwhelmed by the welcome here. We're seeing the same faces not different to us,"

Singh told reporters. "Sports should bring the invisible walls down between the two countries," he added.

India-Pakistan ties, including sports and cultural contacts, plummeted after deadly 2008 attacks in Mumbai, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistani militants. While cricket remains the undisputed number one sport in Pakistan, golf is popular with the country's powerfamilies, with military areas where the top brass reside frequently home to some of Pakistan's best courses.

Pakistan's Navy are hosting this week's Asian Tour event, which has a 300,000 prize fund. "There is a very overwhelming response by foreign players and that surprised us," said Naval Commodore Mushtaq Ahmed.

Pakistan hosted its first Asian Tour event in 1989, which was won by Filipino Frankie Minozza.

The country's only Asian Tour winner remains Tajim Hussain, who triumphed at an event in Myanmar in 1998. (AFP)



Tennis - Shanghai Masters - Shanghai, China - October 11, 2018 - Roger Federer of Switzerland in action against Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain. REUTERS

Russian internationals face action

MOSCOW, OCT 11/--/ Russia's internationals Aleksandr Kokorin and Pavel Mamaev face action from their clubs and the country's interior ministry after they attacked a man with a chair during an altercation at a Moscow cafe on Monday.

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Zenit St Petersburg forward Kokorin and Krasnodar midfielder Mamaev were arrested on Tuesday after they struck ministry of industry and trade official Denis Pak with a chair, according to Russian media reports.

The incident was captured by CCTV cameras. "We absolutely condemn the actions of those involved, it has caused outrage within our club and we are waiting for a legal assessment from the relevant authorities, but from a personal point of view, such behaviour is truly shocking," Zenit. "We are now considering what punishment the club will take against the player... the club and supporters are disappointed that one of the country's most talented footballers has behaved in such a manner."

Krasnodar condemned Mamaev's behaviour and said they were exploring ways to terminate his contract.

The BBC quoted the Russian Premier League as calling the players 'hoooligans' and said they were being investigated by Russia's interior ministry.

Kokorin has 48 caps for Russia but missed this year's World Cup with a knee injury. Mamaev has represented the national team 16 times. Zenit beat Krasnodar 2-1 in the league on Sunday.

HYDERABAD, OCT 11/--/ India's ruthless home run is unlikely to be challenged when the team takes on a below-par West Indies in the second Test Friday in what threatens to be another one-sided affair.

After the hosts won the first Test by a record 272 runs, there are hardly any signs that there will be a change in the script as the second Test promises to be another run-fest.

Add to it, skipper Jason Holder is still not 100 per cent fit and their only fast bowler of repute Shannon Gabriel is a doubtful starter for the encounter. India, on the other hand, have not made any changes to the squad that won the first Test in three days in Rajkot. The lop-sided matches are hardly the kind of preparation the Indian team would have wanted before the big-ticket series against Australia starting December.

In fact, Virat Kohli's team might not be able to escape a sense of deja vu as it goes into the second Test. In 2011, India dominated West Indies 2-0 in a one-sided series before crashing to a 4-0 defeat against Australia Down Under. Similarly, in 2013 when India won both Test matches well inside three days, the next tour of South Africa didn't pan out well as they lost the series.

It is just an indicator that the West Indies Test teams over the years have not been competitive enough to challenge the Indian team, which is anyway formidable on home turf. In contests like these, the focus is on challenging one's own self which skipper Virat Kohli did in the first Test where he scored 139 off 200 balls.

While 18-year-old Prithvi Shaw expectedly hogged the limelight with a smashing ton on debut, Kohli's innings was a master-class of how to set a different challenge for oneself as a batsman.

The West Indies bowling, which at best can be compared to a lower rung first-class side in India, could have been taken to the cleaners but the Indian skipper hit only 10 fours in his knock - significantly less than Shaw's 19 boundaries and Cheteshwar Pujara's 14 hits. The bulk of the runs 89 of them came in singles and doubles. Perhaps, he was trying to check if he curbs certain strokes, how his game will shape up. He showed a different facet to his batsmanship during the 24th Test hundred.

2nd Test: India aim to be ruthless

***WI seek redemption**

The only area of concern for India will be vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane's form, who was touted as the best player in overseas conditions back in 2013-14 season, when he scored 98 at Durban, 116 at Wellington, 103 at the Lord's and 145 at Melbourne.

Rahane has gone without a Test hundred for nearly 14 months (last hundred came against Sri Lanka in August 2017). His career has tapered off a bit in the last couple of years. After the second Test would be last shot to get back into a good frame of mind before the Australia series, which could be make or break for him. Bowling coach Bharath Arun put up a strong argument for the out-of-form KL Rahul (41 failures in 16 knocks this year). The decision to play him for this Test is a fair enough indication that India will be looking at the Rahul-Shaw combination going into that first Test against Australia in Adelaide on December 6. Shardul Thakur continues to be the 12th man as a 2-0 series win is paramount for the home team at this point of time. Mohammed Shami and Umesh Yadav will also like to use this opportunity well as they are unlikely to feature in the ODI series. For West Indies, the aim will be to at least put up some fight unlike the Rajkot game where they didn't even last 100 overs across both innings. Kieran Powell's 83 and Roston Chase's 53 were the only notable contributions from the Caribbean batting line-up in the first game. In the second innings, it looked as if the batsmen were in a tearing hurry to hit every ball where the need of the hour was to show patience. The West Indies' slide in Test is a combination of both lack of application and technique needed to compete at the highest level. They would love to redeem themselves, which looks highly unlikely as of now.

Teams:

India Final 12: Virat Kohli (captain), Prithvi Shaw, KL Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Shardul Thakur West Indies Squad: Jason Holder (c), Sunil Ambris, Devendra Bishoo, Kraigg Brathwaite, Roston Chase, Shanon Dowrich, Shannon Gabriel, Jahmar Hamilton, Shimron Hetmyer, Shah Hope, Alzarri Joseph, Keemo Paul, Kieran Powell, Kemar Roach, and Jomeal Warrican. (PTI)

Asian Para Games: Silver for javelin thrower Gurjar at

JAKARTA, OCT 11/--/ Indian javelin thrower Sunder Singh Gurjar won a silver medal in the men's F46 category of the Asian Para Games where two-time Paralympic gold medalist Devendra Jhajar finished fourth, here Thursday.

In the same event, Rinku picked up a bronze medal to make it an Indian silver podium. The F46 category of disability covers upper limb deficiency, impaired muscle

power or impaired range of movement.

India also logged a bronze in the men's 400m T13 category with Avnil Kumar claiming the third position. The T13 classification deals with visual impairment.

In javelin throw, Gurjar notched up his silver with an effort of 61.33m in his fifth attempt. Gurjar trained for 22 days in Finland before the Games, an exercise that was backed by the Sports

Authority of India (SAI). Rinku recorded a personal best of 60.92m for the bronze, while the gold went to Sri Lanka's Dinesh Herath who smashed the Games as well as the Asian record with a throw of 61.84m. However, it was disappointment for Jhajar, a silver-winner in the last Asian Para Games in Incheon.

The veteran Indian, a Khel Ratna awardee and the

greatest Paralympian from India, produced his season's best throw of 59.17m but finished well outside the medal bracket.

In the men's 400m, Avnil Kumar clocked 53sec to fetch a bronze. The gold in this event was won by Iran's Omid Zarifsanayei, who took 51.4sec to complete the race, while Thailand's Songwatt Lamson, Kumar lost silver to Lamson by a fraction of a second. (PTI)

Give Prithvi space to grow as cricketer: Kohli

HYDERABAD, OCT 11/--/ Stop the comparisons and let Prithvi Shaw be - Indian captain Virat Kohli Thursday demanded "some space" for the teenage sensation, whose batting has drawn parallels with the likes of Sachin Tendulkar and Virender Sehwag.

Failed as a child prodigy, Shaw had a cracking Test debut against the West Indies team, hitting 134 off 154 balls in the first Test against Rajkot. The knock led to a media frenzy and a series of comments on how he is destined for greatness.

On the eve of the second Test here, the skipper, who tasted stardom quite early himself, took queries on the 18-year-old and called for some space. "I don't think he should be rushed into anything yet because you need to give a youngster a space to grow, in his own abilities. This guy is supremely talented and he has got great ability as everyone saw," the skipper said at the pre-match press conference. "We definitely think he (Shaw) has it in him to play at the highest level and he can repeat what he did in the first game. He is a very keen learner, a sharp guy. He understands situations well. We are all very happy for him," he added.

Kohli echoed India opener Gautam Gambhir, who Wednesday said that people should stop comparing him to the great Virender Sehwag. "We shouldn't compare him to anyone yet. We shouldn't put him in a space where he



feels pressure of any kind and he should be left in a space where he enjoys his cricket and slowly grows into a player we all believe in."

"Tournaments like the IPL, the A tours, live coverage of the U-19 tournaments put youngsters under instant spotlight and Kohli agreed that they are more equipped to handle pressure situations. "Definitely it could be one of the reasons (early exposure) because they are already exposed to the environment that the international game would replicate. But there's always pressure of playing for the country."

"When you get that cap in the morning of the game, there's always butterflies in the stomach and I am sure everyone feels that pressure. "But I am sure it is not as intense as 10-15 years back, when you would have any

(the ranks)."

The skipper scored his 24th hundred in Rajkot where he ran nearly 100 runs (99) in singles and doubles.

The master batsman believes that he has now reached a stage where he can bat for two days piling up runs in singles and doubles. "You also have to realise that by the time the middle-order walked in at that game, the ball was soft. The pitch was not as quick, the harder ball comes onto the bat, so you have more boundary opportunities."

That said, the skipper is still ready to punish the loose balls. "You can run your way to a hundred as well. There's no harm in that. I think with that mindset you understand your game you can bat all day, you can bat for two days and just score in singles and doubles."

However this strategy comes with a rider according to Kohli's clarity of mind. "You don't necessarily need to hit a boundary and if you are convinced about that in your own head then the bowler gets to chase as well and then the battle of patience starts."

"So I think you have to be convinced first that you can play all day with singles and doubles and not necessarily wanting to hit the big shots but given an opportunity, obviously you'll cash in on the loose balls. I think defence and understanding your off stump and being happy with that set up is the most basic in Test match batting," the skipper added. (PTI)

practices with the national team 16 times. Zenit beat Krasnodar 2-1 in the league on Sunday.



Darja Trubnikova RUS of Team Simon Biles in action during the Rhythmic Gymnastics Ribbon Routine in the Mixed Multi-Discipline Team Event Final in the Europa Pavilion, Youth Olympic Park during the Youth Olympic Games, Buenos Aires, Argentina - REUTERS