

Ashwin finishes years as No.1 Test bowler and all-rounder



DUBAI, DEC 31 /- The Indian spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja held on to the top two positions in the ICC Test bowlers rankings, while the national team ended the year as the numero uno side in the latest list issued here.

Ashwin also continued to lead the all-rounders' table with no change among the top five in the list. Hence, Jadeja remained at third spot. This is just the second time the top two spots in the bowlers' chart is occupied by Indian players, with the pair emulating left-arm spinner Bishan Singh Bedi and leg-spinner Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, who were ranked one and two in 1974. In the Test batsmen's ranking, India skipper Virat Kohli topped the list as he ended the year at second position with Australia's Steve Smith heading the chart. Pakistan opener Azhar Ali has moved up 10 places to reach a career-high sixth rank, riding on his scores of 205 not out and 43 in the second Test against Australia in Melbourne. Meanwhile, Team India has ended the year as the No.1 ranked Test side with 120 ranking points, 15 points clear of second placed Australia (105 points). (PTI)

Jharkhand to face gutsy Gujarat in Ranji Trophy semi-final

NAGPUR, DEC 31 /- In what promises to be an enthralling contest full of interesting sub-plots, Gujarat boasting of Ranji Trophy's highest run-getter Priyank Panchal will be pitted against Jharkhand that has top wicket-taker Shahbaz Nadeem in their ranks in the semi-final, starting tomorrow.

While both teams are not exactly 'tradition' heavyweights but they have performed consistently on neutral venues riding on some talented bats but unheralded name in domestic cricket. Gujarat has some powerhouse batting performers like Panchal who has scored more than 1100 runs this season. Not to forget opener Samit Gohil, who has scored over a world record in first class cricket for an opener who carried his bat through. And about the 'towering presence' of pocket sized dynamo in their skipper Parthiv Patel, who needs less than 1000 runs to complete 10,000 runs in first class cricket. With his new found confidence having led to half centuries against England on his Test comeback, Parthiv would be eager to teach Jharkhand

Yuvraj, Raina to play at DY Patil T20 tourney in January

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /- Two of India's most famous cricketers in the limited over format, Yuvraj Singh and Suresh Raina, have been out of Indian ODI team for quite a while. But the good news for their fans and indeed the Indian cricket fans is that they are among some leading cricketers scheduled to play in the 31st DY Patil T20 tournament to be held at the D Y Patil Sports Academy in Nerul from January 4 to 15, 2017. The tournament, carrying a prize fund of Rs 16 lakh, would feature 16 teams in total with 31 matches being staged in all, including seven knockout games, a media release said. A few days back, Yuv had released a statement about his plans of making a comeback in the Indian national team. "I am training hard and have the confidence of getting the runs. I feel I still have a lot to offer, and I will do my best to regain my place in the side. I will do all that I can to get the call from the selectors, and take it from there. I still feel I have a few more years of cricket left in

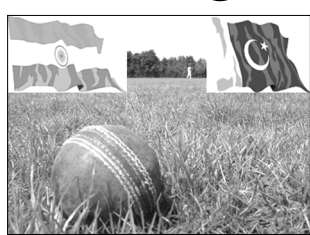
PCB gets green light for legal action against BCCI

KARACHI, DEC 31 /- The Board of Governors of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday gave approval for adopting legal recourse against the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for not honouring

the meeting of the BOG that the members had given approval for using legal channels to seek compensation for the financial losses suffered by the PCB due to India not honouring the MoU.

We will start legal

honouring the MOU we have suffered losses," Sethi, who signed the MOU when he was chairman of the board, said. India has not played a Test series with Pakistan since 2007 when Pakistan toured India for a full Test series. The PCB has since 2007 been patient with the Indian board



Pakistan they should have thought about it before signing the MOU. "We will now take up this matter with the ICC because the Indian board claims it has been stopped by its government from playing us. We have the

MOU to back us and want to see the instructions from their government in writing," he added. He said it was unfortunate that the BCCI had not honoured a written agreement. Khan also announced that the board had decided to leave the decision of retirement to senior players Misbah-ul-Haq, Younis Khan and Shahid Afridi. "We will not take any decision they will have to decide themselves when they feel it is the right time to retire. All three have given me a service to Pakistan cricket and we respect this and want to ensure they are the ones taking this decision," he said.

Indo-Pak bilateral cricket

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two boards in 2014 to play bilateral series.

PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan and Najam Sethi, who heads the executive committee, told the media here after the

meeting of the BOG that the members had given approval for using legal channels to seek compensation for the financial losses suffered by the PCB due to India not honouring the MoU.

We will start legal

Williamson, Broom sweep series for New Zealand

Neil replaces injured Martin Gupitll T20 squad

NELSON, DEC 31 /- Fill-in batsman Neil Broom and skipper Kane Williamson produced a match-winning 179-run stand for New Zealand to crush Bangladesh in their final one-day match in Nelson on Saturday.

Williamson was left unbeaten on 95 while Broom fell just before the hour for 97 as the hosts overhauled Bangladesh's 226 for the loss of only two wickets to sweep the series 3-0. For the 33-year-old Broom, battling to prove his worth to the national squad, it was his second consecutive match-winning performance after his unbeaten 106 in New Zealand won the second match by 67 runs. Broom, who scored 22 in the first match, which New Zealand won by 77 runs, was recalled for the Bangladesh series after nearly seven years in the wilderness. He is the number four batting slot while Ross Taylor recovers from eye surgery. He has since been the home side's stand-out performer, notably with his prolific scoring, but also his magic touch on the field with some athletic catches. Williamson was full of praise for his batting partner and his contribution to the win.



Neil Broom and Kane Williamson's 179-run second-wicket stand defeated Bangladesh

improve lots," he said. "We had a good partnership in opening and we lost the game. There were some good individual performances but as a team we couldn't go through." After Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bat in Nelson, Imrul Kayes and Tamim Iqbal produced a century opening stand in 21 overs to set the tourists up for a big finish. But when Imrul went in the second over, Martin Gupitll retired hurt on six and Broom edged Mashefhorza's straight ball to Imrul at first slip before getting off the mark. But Imrul dropped a regulation offering allowing Broom and Williams to embark on

their 179-run stand for the second wicket. Broom's 97 was at a run-a-ball rate and included one six and 12 fours, while Williamson faced 116 deliveries for his 95, which included one six and nine fours. He was left five runs short of the century but had been his ninth ODI century when Jimmy Neesham came in at the fall of Broom's wicket to hit a rapid 20 to end the match. In the final few overs, Neesham toned down his lusty hitting in an attempt to help Williamsson reach his milestone. But after a mid-wicket conversation with his captain, Neesham was evidently told to finish the match, which he did with a boundary off the next ball. The series now moves on to two Tests. New Zealand opener Martin Gupitll will miss the Twenty20 series against Bangladesh with a hamstring injury and will be replaced by in-form batsman Neil Broom, the country's cricket board said on Saturday. Gupitll will be sidelined for up to two weeks after he sustained the injury while running between the wickets in the third one-day international against Bangladesh on Saturday. Broom was in fine form during the Bangladesh series against Bangladesh, scoring 89 (out) and 97 runs in his last two innings as the hosts completed a 3-0 sweep. "I was in a good mood, an attacking opening batsman and with Neil's experience opening in the form that made him a must-see replacement," coach Mike Hesson said in a news release. "Martin leads our fielding in white ball cricket and so we're expecting Neil to be a big contributor in that area as well." New Zealand will begin their three-match Twenty20 series against Bangladesh at McLean Park on Tuesday.

Bindrabacks IOA suspension, lauds ministry decision

NEW DELHI, DEC 31 /- Olympic champion Abhinav Bindra today backed the Sports Ministry's decision to suspend the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a 'good step' following the sports body's move to honour two scam-tainted administrators. The IOA named its former president Suresh Kalmadi and Abhay Singh Chautala as life presidents on Tuesday, a decision that has been heavily criticised as both are facing allegations of corruption in the Taj Group hotel ministry yesterday suspended the IOA.

"The @olympics movement and specially the movement in India can no longer hide behind autonomy. It's the age of good governance and ethics," Bindra wrote on his twitter handle. The 2008 Beijing Olympics gold medalist - India's lone gold medal winner in individual sport at the Games - added, "Change in Indian sport will only happen if mandated. A law is necessary in India. A good step by @IndiaSports & @govtindia." "Cracking the whip, the Sports Ministry yesterday suspended the Olympic body till the time it reverses the decision to make the tainted duo of Kalmadi and Chautala its life presidents.

The government took the firm decision after IOA failed to reply to its showcause notice within the deadline.

Kalmadi spent nine months in jail after allegations, stemming from the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. He was released on bail pending an appeal to Delhi High Court and has denied any wrongdoing. Chautala is also facing unrelated corruption charges in an ongoing court case. He has also denied the allegations. (PTI)

Kohli named captain of Australia's T20 Team of the Year

bowling a lesson with his left-arm spin. The only player who would be missed is left arm spinner Axar Patel due to a finger injury. But they have a yorker specialist in Jasprit Bumrah in their ranks. His recent inclusion in Cricket Australia's One-day team of the year ahead of Steve Smith.

Kohli is joined in the side by his Royal Challengers Bangalore teammate AB de Villiers and compatriot Jasprit Bumrah. Earlier, the International Cricket Council had named India's young Test captain as the skipper of the team of the year 2016. Australian batsman David Warner, who led Sunrisers Hyderabad to their first IPL title in 2016, was selected to partner England's Jason Roy as an opener. England's explosive wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler was handed over the

Shahid Afridi also included

MELBOURNE, DEC 31 /- Accolades continue to pour for in for India's dynamic Test captain Virat Kohli, who has been named as captain of Cricket Australia's One-day team of the year ahead of Steve Smith.



Virat Kohli is named as captain of Australia's T20 Team of the Year

Pakistan first Test team member Imtiaz dies

LAHORE, DEC 31 /- A member of Pakistan's first-ever Test team, died in a Lahore hospital today after a brief illness, his family said. The 88-year-old Ahmed featured in Pakistan's first Test played in Delhi against India in October 1952 and went on to play 41 matches as a wicketkeeper-batsman. Ahmed's family confirmed his death.

"He (Imtiaz) was suffering from chest infection and died early Saturday," a member of the family told local media. Ahmed was known as an aggressive batsman who had a variety of strokes, most notably the hook and the pull shot. He scored 2,079 Test runs for Pakistan with a career best of 209 against New Zealand in Lahore in 1955. He put on 152 for the first wicket with the legendary batsman Mohammad in the book and the pull shot. West Indies in 1958, scoring 91. Mohammad, who died in August this year, was Pakistan's first Test captain. He scored 337 in 970 minutes - still the longest innings in Test cricket history. Ahmed's death means that middle-order batsman Waqar Hasan is now the oldest surviving member of Pakistan's first Test team. (AFP)

Darren Lehmann backs Ashton Agar's all-rounder claims for Test recall

VICTORIA, DEC 31 /- Coach Darren Lehmann views Ashton Agar as a "genuine all-rounder" putting him in line to be part of Australia's spin tandem in Tuesday's final Test against Pakistan in Sydney.



Ashton Agar is a genuine all-rounder, says Darren Lehmann

Agar, 23, is on track to play his first Test since his unheralded debut in the 2013 Ashes series in England, where he scored 98 in his first Test at Trent Bridge batting at No.11. But the West Australian left-hander is now being assessed as a "genuine" all-rounder, impressing selectors Greg Chappell and Mark Waugh and has a first-class batting average of 26. Agar was added to a 13-man Australia squad Friday along with fellow spinner Steve O'Keefe with one of them likely to partner Nathan Lyon on a spin-friendly SCG pitch for the "dead" third Test. Lehmann said after Friday's innings and 18-run second Test series-clinching win over Pakistan in Melbourne that if Australia went into the final Test with two spinners the team would either way. "We wanted a left arm spinner to go away from all their right-handers as well to give us options. He also got 10 wickets in a Sheffield Shield game in Sydney. He's improved, we get feedback from (WA coach) Justin Langer and the guys

Tiger turns 41 with comeback plans for 2017

MIAM, DEC 31 /- Tiger Woods celebrated his 41st birthday, the 14-time major winner having already made a comeback from a 466-day surgery layoff with hopes of recapturing success. Woods was inconsistent over 2 holes at the Hero World Challenge, an 18-man Bahamas event in early December to benefit and honor the foundation, and fan interest remains high even though he has only shown glimpses of the form that made him a must-see attraction for years. While saying he still has designs on the record 18 majors won by Jack Nicklaus, Woods would be backing the odds to catch his boyhood idol. Old Tom Morris won three British Opens at 41 or older in the 1860s and remains the longest three major winner beyond his 41st birthday. Nicklaus became the oldest Masters winner by taking his last green jacket in 1986, while Julius Boros is the oldest major winner, taking the 1968 PGA Championship at age 48. Boros, Harry Vardon and Woods' pal Mark O'Meara have won two majors after turning 41. British Opens have produced three champions in the past six years who were 41 or older with Woods being the oldest to do when he took the Claret Jug in 2016. Woods has said he will play at Riviera in February at another event hosted by his foundation, although he did not rule out another appearance earlier in 2017 or give any hint about other touring plans for the Masters in April. Woods won the 2010 title at the 2008 US Open and last won any title at the 2013 WGC event in Akron, Ohio as he has lost to win three more career PGA titles. He has the record 82 won by Sam Snead.