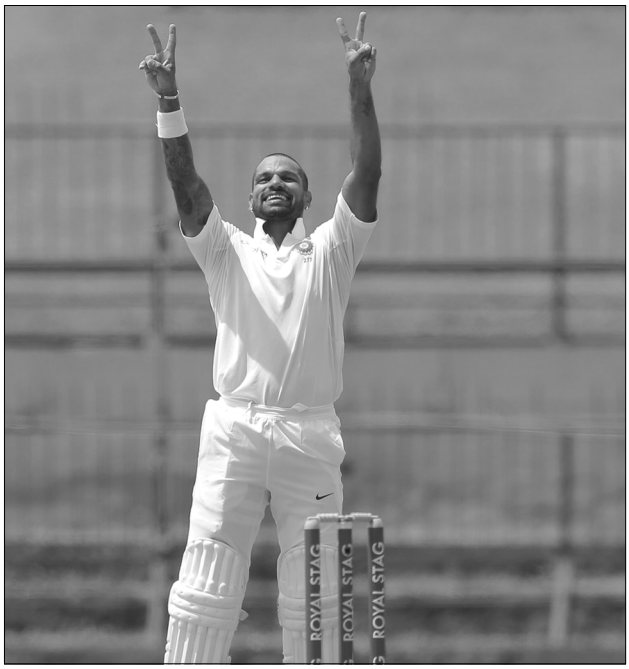
Middle order falters after Dhawan ton as India reach 329/6



Shikhar Dhawan celebrated his sixth Test hundred with a peace out (or victory?) gesture at the Indian team dressing room

PALLEKELE, AUG 12 /--/ Shikhar Dhawan continued his golden run but a rare flop show from the famed middle-order saw Sri Lanka restrict India to 329 for 6 here on the first day of third cricket Test.

Courtesy Dhawan's (119) sixth Test hundred and a record 18-run opening stand with KL Rahul (85), India looked good for a score close to 400 after opting to bat. However, some fine bowling in the final two sessions by left-arm spinner Malinda Pushpakumara (3/40 in 18 overs) and chinaman Lakshan Sandakan (2/84 in 25 overs) helped Sri Lanka gain some foothold when stumps were drawn on the opening day. The in-form Cheteshwar Pujara (8), last Test's centurion Ajinkya Rahane (17) were dismissed cheaply while skipper Virat Kohli (42) was dismissed after getting set. However, Kohli had been reaching out to play the spinners from his crease and ended up edging the ball to first slip off Sandakan in the 79th over. Ravichandran Ashwin (31) looked compact but became left- arm seamer Vishwa Fernando's scalp at the fag end of the day. Ashwin and Wriddhiman Saha (13 batting), who survived a DRS appeal for caught behind, then brought up India's 300 in the 81st over even as the visitors were in dire need of a partnership to make their morning advantage count. The duo added 26 runs for the 6th wicket and negotiated the second new ball properly as well. But Ashwin was caught behind off Fernando, two overs before stumps leaving India with more work to do on the second day. Earlier, it was yet another solid start from Dhawan and Rahul as they bettered the highest opening stand against Sri Lanka in away Tests, going past the 173-run stand between Manoj Prabhakar and Navjot Sidhu during the 1993 series. Rahul missed out on another Test hundred, miscuing one straight to Dimuth Karunaratne at mid-on off left-arm spinner Pushpakumara in the 40th over. His 135-ball knock had eight fours. Dhawan though stayed and scored his second hundred of this series off 107 balls. He added 31 runs with Cheteshwar Pujara (8) but the latter did not look very comfortable despite good batting conditions. Dhawan was caught at square leg, thanks to a leaping effort from skipper Dinesh Chandimal, a second dismissal against the run of play as he was just looking to cut loose with a flurry of boundaries. Dhawan faced 123 balls in his knock and punished the home bowlers with 17 boundaries. "When you work hard and it pays dividends, it gives you a lot of satisfaction. Even when I was not in the Indian team, I was still enjoying my game at the domestic level and following the process that is needed at this level," Dhawan said after his innings. Dhawan said that being happy has always helped him remain positive even during tough times. "I always try to remain happy and that reflects in my game. Even though people perceive me as happy go lucky, when I am out there batting, I know what my job is. I have matured over the years. Even when I made my Test debut, I had a good 8 years of first-class cricket behind me," said Dhawan. The ever dependable Pujara's discomfort at the crease came to an end as he was caught at first slip off Sandakan in the 51st over. He put on only 10 runs with Kohli as India were left to rebuild their innings despite being in a comfortable position. Earlier, Dhawan, who scored at a brisk pace, and Rahul settled down quickly on an easy-paced wicket with true bounce. Paceman Lahiru Kumara was very expensive in his first six overs, leaking 41 runs while Fernando also could not keep the batsmen in check. So much so that Karunaratne had to be introduced early into the attack and was the best Lankan bowler on display in the morning session. The opening duo brought up its 50-partnership off just 55 balls in the 10th over and kept up this pace of scoring to reach 100 off 107 balls in the 18th over. They remained in control even when the hosts introduced spin into the attack in the form of Dilruwan Perera. For Rahul, it was his seventh successive fifty in Test cricket overtaking Gundapppa Viswanath and Rahul Dravid (both with six half-centuries each). With Yadav and Sandakan featuring in the match, it is only the second time since 2004 when two chinaman bowlers are playing in the same game after Dave Mohammed (West Indies) and Paul Adams (South Africa) at Cape Town. (PTI)

Tri-series good build-up to Asian Cup qualifiers: Constantine

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ National football coach Stephen Constantine feels the upcoming tri-series against Mauritius and St. Kitts will handy practice for the team ahead of its crucial AFC Asian Cup Qualifying match against Macau on September 5. "The two matches would immensely benefit our quest to maintain an all-win record in the Asian Cup Qualifiers," Constantine said. India will play the tri-series between August 19 and 24 in Mumbai. India are on top of AFC Asian Cup qualifying Group A at the moment, courtesy back to back victories over Myanmar and the Kyrgyz Republic. "Qualification to the 2019 Asian Cup stays the priority. It will be nice to work with the boys again. They will be coming after a long break. "And we need to work hard for them to attain the fitness levels which are required for an International match," Constantine said. "The boys needs to play matches to understand each other better." India are currently placed 97th in the FIFA rankings after 13 victories in the last 15 matches (including the unofficial match against Bhutan). The team has actually moved up 76 places since March 2015. India were ranked 171 when Constantine took over as the for the second time in February 2015 and slipped further to 173 in March 2015.

Bolt wins relay heats in his penultimate race

LONDON, AUG 12 /--/ Usain Bolt began the countdown to his final race by anchoring Jamaica to the 4x100m relay finals with an easy win in the heats here on Saturday.

Running in his penultimate race of his illustrious career, Bolt eased past the finishing line as he helped the defending champions Jamaica win the second heat in 37.95 seconds, their season's best, to enter the final round with third best time. The Jamaican quartet of Tyquendo Tracey, Julian Forte, Micheal Campbell and Bolt led the eight-team second heat from beginning to the end.

Experienced Yohan Blake, who finished fourth in the men's 100m final and failed to qualify for the final round in 200m, did not start in the heats but Bolt later said that he will return in the final race. In his trademark style, Bolt grabbed the baton from Campbell, who ran the third leg, and blasted ahead of all his rivals and slowed down while approaching the finish line to conserve energy for the finals. The top three from each of the two heats and next two fastest finishers from the remaining qualify for the final round. The United States team of Mike Rodgers, Justin Gatlin, Bee Jay Lee and Christian Coleman won the first heat in 37.70 seconds, the world leading time this season, to clock the overall best time going into the final round. Great Britain clocked the second best time of 37.76, while France were fourth with their season's best of 38.03. China (38.20), who had finished second in the 2015 edition at home, Japan (37.21), who took a surprise silver in the Rio Olympics, Turkey (38.44) and Canada (38.48) -- third in both 2015 World Championships and Rio Olympics -- completed the eight-team final round which will run later tonight. Bolt, who has anchored the gold-winning Jamaican team in both 2015 World Championships and Rio Games, will be seeking his 20th global title and would want to hang up his boots with a yellow metal in his final race of his glittering career. He lost the 100m dash last Saturday in his final individual race, settling for a bronze.

His long-time American rival Gatlin, who has twice served bans for doping, won the gold while Coleman took the silver as the London Olympic stadium and the global television audience were stunned at the turn of events. Widely considered as the greatest sprinter of all time, Bolt has won eight Olympic and 11 World Championships gold medals beginning with a 100m and 200m double at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Since then he has dominated the shorter two sprint events like none in athletics history. His Jamaican team had also won the 4x100m relay gold in Beijing but it had to return the medal after one member of the quartet -- Nesta Carter -- tested positive for a prohibited substance. On the last day of his international career, fans jostled for space to have a glimpse of Bolt at the warm-up arena, adjacent to the stadium and television cameras were fixed at him to have a shot of the towering Jamaican. Whenever the giant screen inside the stadium showed him doing the baton exchange practice with his Jamaican team-mates in preparation for the 4x100m relay race at the warm-up arena, the capacity crowd cheered loudly.

The showman, as usual, entertained the crowd as he acknowledged the cheers as he entered the stadium for the relay heats. He did his routine marking of his starting position and did a few rundowns imitating baton exchange. After easing past the finish line, Bolt ran down the track as he usually does and clapped towards the crowd. "There are no words to describe how I am feeling. I get so much support from the crowd. I appreciate that a lot. All the energy I am getting from the crowd. It is brilliant," Bolt said after the race. "The young runners in our team -- it is just about executing and coming through the race for them. We have been training that relay, there were some camps. Still there were some mistakes. Yohan Blake is coming in for the final is definitely good." In the women's 4x100m relay, all the medal contenders -- United States, Great Britain, Germany and defending champions Jamaica -- progressed to the final round without much trouble, while the Bahamas quartet failed to finish in the second heat due to a poor second baton change. Olympic champions United States won the first heat in a world leading time of 41.84 seconds, even in the absence of individual 100m champion Torie Bowie. (PTI)

LalitModiresigns fromRCA,says 'goodbyeto cricketadmin'

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ Lalit Modi today resigned as President of the Nagaur District Association, marking an end to his presence in the Rajasthan Cricket body, which was banned by the BCCI for allowing the tainted administrator in its fold. The 50-year-old Modi, who left India after being charged with money laundering, sent is resignation to both the RCA as well as BCCI CEO Rahul Johri. "...I feel that the time is now ripe to pass on the baton to the next generation. Thus, today I want to bid goodbye to cricket administration for now," Modi wrote in his resignation letter. Modi, credited for creating the cash-rich and glitzy Indian Premier League in 2008, was expelled from the BCCI in 2010, which accused him of rigging bids and money laundering among other charges. He has been living in exile in London while facing an Enforcement Directorate inquiry for financial violations. He, however, refused to let go of his position in the RCA, prompting the BCCI to altogether ban the association. Modi suffered a setback when his 22-year-old son Ruchir lost the RCA presidential elections earlier this year. "I honestly believe a system is more important than any individual. Indian cricket is truly an example of my belief. I will always be a loyal fan of Indian cricket," he said. Modi requested the BCCI to release the funds meant for the RCA after his resignation. "...for Rajasthan to aim higher, we need funds from the BCCI which is our rightful share. I have done my part for the betterment of Rajasthan cricket, and now it is your turn to honour your part of the promise! I repose my faith in you and the BCCI to do the right thing," he said. "I would, therefore, request you to release the funds due to RCA as soon as possible. I believe it was blocked precisely because of my presence. With my exit from all forms of cricket, at all levels, forever, I think RCA deserves to reclaim their share and presence on the Indian cricket map," he added.

Federer punches ticket to Montreal semis

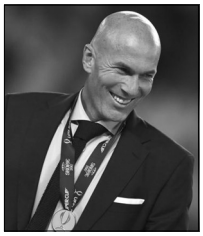
MONTREAL, AUG 12 /--/ Swiss star Roger Federer outclassed Roberto Bautista Agut as he inched closer to his sixth title of the season with a 6-4, 6-4 win in the quarter-finals of the Montreal Masters. Federer hammered five aces, made just two double faults and won 81 percent of his first serve points in the 68-minute centre court match. He dominated at the net, winning 21 of 25 points. "It pays off playing aggressively here in Montreal, plus I feel comfortable at net, so why not spend some time there instead of slugging it out from the baseline," Federer said. "I think I did a good job again, even though it was tough to control the ball. I got some decent rhythm going." Federer advances to the semi-finals where he will face Robin Haase of the Netherlands, who defeated Diego Schwartzman 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 earlier in the day. Bautista Agut struggled on his serve as he was broken three times and won just 65 percent of his first serve points. "Today, I felt that I didn't get into the rhythm of the match and I didn't feel the ball well," he said. "Roger plays very fast and he didn't want to rally with me, so he went for his shots." Federer posted his seventh consecutive win over the Spaniard and improved his season record to 34-2. He has a ATP Tour high five titles in 2017. He will face Dutchman Haas in just the second career meeting between the two. The pair met in a Davis Cup World Group play-off in 2012 with Federer winning 6-1, 6-4, 6-4. Federer's chances of winning another title this season were given a boost when top seed Rafael Nadal was upset by world No. 143 Denis Shapovalov of Canada on Thursday night. Shapovalov, who needed a wild card to gain entry into the tournament, continued his cinderella run Friday by rallying to beat Frenchman Adrian Mannarino 2-6, 6-3, 6-4. Mannarino became the fourth established ATP player this week to fall at the hands of the 18-year-old lefthanded Canadian. Shapovalov's win over Mannarino came just 24 hours after he defeated 10-time French Open champion Nadal to get into the quarters. Shapovalov also upset former US Open winner Juan Martin Del Potro in the second round. Shapovalov started slowly by dropping the first set before settling into the match in the second. After a rain delay, Shapovalov broke Mannarino to take a 4-2 lead in the second set. Her served out the set in the ninth game. "It's tough to come out and serve after a 12-minute rain delay. I knew that was a very big turning point," Shapovalov said. "When I broke him I got that little bit of confidence, and I started believing in my shots again." Haase rallied after losing the opening set to improve to 5-0 all-time against Schwartzman. Haase has had to overcome several injuries in his career but says he is finally in a good place. "I wasn't the player I was before my injury," Haase said. "I was not as fast. I was insecure. I had a lot of problems with other injuries after. Then this kind of eats you up inside mentally. It drains you because you know you can do better. "I've been working on it a lot in the past few years. I started to believe more and more again. My game is better." Fourth seeded Alexander Zverev defeated South Africa's Kevin Anderson in straight sets 7-5, 6-4 to set up a clash of rising stars with Shapovalov. Zverev, 20, is the youngest player ranked in the top 20 in the world and Shapovalov is the youngest since 1990 to reach a Masters 1000 quarter-final. (AFP)

B.D.M. International student becomes a chess wizard

Utsab Chatterjee with the Principal Vijaya Chaudhuri--EOI Piks

KOLKATA, AUG 12/--/Utsab Chatterjee, a student of Class - IX, B.D.M. International has achieved National Jersey in the Commonwealth Chess Championship 2017 that concluded recently in New Delhi. He had also secured 4th position in the 45th West Bengal State Junior Chess Championship 2017 held at Jalpaiguri and has been selected to participate in the National Under - 17 and Under - 19 Chess championship . The Principal of B.D.M. International, Vijaya Chaudhuri expressed her happiness on Utsab's success, wishing him the very best for the upcoming Junior National Chess Championship. All students, staff and teachers of the school hope that he would make everyone in the school more proud with his achievements in the future. (EOIC)

Zinedine Zidane to extend Real Madrid contract



MADRID, Aug 12 /--/ Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane confirmed on Saturday he will sign a contract extension in the near future with the club he has guided to back-to-back Champions League titles. "I'm happy because it's a sign of confidence, that we have done good work," Zidane told a pre-match press conference ahead of Real's Spanish Super Cup showdown with Barcelona when quizzed on reports over his future.

Madrid sports daily AS reported the Frenchman will be rewarded with a three-year deal for his feats in not only delivering two Champions Leagues in just 20 months in charge, but also Real's first La Liga title for five years. "I enjoy every day here," added Zidane, who also ended his illustrious playing career at the Santiago Bernabeu. "I'm lucky enough to have this extraordinary squad and I am very happy with it." Zidane added a sixth trophy to his burgeoning collection as a coach when Madrid saw off Manchester United 2-1 to retain the UEFA Super Cup on Tuesday. However, he acknowledged that even his future will depend on maintaining his winning streak given the high demands placed on coaches at Madrid. "You could sign a contract for 10 or 20 years, but I know where I am and what I have to do," he continued. "Within a year you could be gone." Zidane also warned the European champions against a Barcelona backlash at the Camp Nou on Sunday (kick off 2000GMT). Barca are still reeling from the loss of Neymar to Paris Saint-Germain for a world record 222 million euros ($262 million) with their attempts to land a replacement in Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho and Ousmane Dembele of Borussia Dortmund so far falling short. Zidane admitted "there aren't many players" with Neymar's individual qualities, but claimed his absence wouldn't give Madrid the upper hand over two El Clasico clashes in four days with the second leg of the Super cup to come at the Bernabeu on Wednesday.