

Under-19 World Cup: An opportunity like never before



India captain Prithvi Shaw, centre, with teammates at the ICC U-19 World Cup

CHRISTCHURCH, JAN 12 /-- It's considered the stepping stone for the stars of the future and 16 teams, including three-time champions India, would be aiming to discover their Virat Kohlis and Steve Smiths when the ICC Under-19 World Cup starts off on Saturday. From Kohli to Smith, most modern-day greats have learned the ropes in the biennial event, which has gained significance with every passing edition. The boys not only become men here, they also become household names with millions following the live broadcast of the competition. The event begins on Saturday with Pakistan taking on Afghanistan, and hosts New Zealand facing reigning champions West Indies. India, eager to prove themselves after their disastrous showing in the Asia Cup, open their campaign against Australia at Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui. The tournament's stature has risen to such an extent that a great like Rahul Dravid, the current India U-19 coach, would love to have been part of it back in the day. "We never played this tournament in my day. After 1988 they didn't hold the tournament for 10 years, so I've no exposure of playing and being part of this tournament. It is a lot of these boys that I think it's a terrific opportunity for them to be a part of this tournament," Dravid had said in the lead up to the event. Countless number of U-19 players have gone on to represent their countries at the highest level. Each edition uncovers oodles of talent and makes them overnight stars, be it Rishabh Pant or Alzarri Joseph from the previous edition in 2016 when three-time champions India lost the final to the West Indies. This edition too has created high expectations with a selected bunch already proving themselves at the international level. The likes of India captain Prithvi Shaw, teammate Shubham Gill, Australia

captain Jason Sangha, Pakistan pacer Shaheen Afridi, Afghanistan batting sensation Baheer Shah, they all go into the event after making a mark on the domestic circuit back home. Shaw Gill, Sangha and Shah already have a first-class hundred to their name while left-arm pacer Afridi hogged the limelight by taking eight for 39 in the Quad-e-Azam Trophy, the best figures by a Pakistani on first-class debut. The sensational performances of Baheer Shah too has created a buzz. The 17-year-old averages a staggering 22.77 in his seven match first-class career, beating even the legendary Donald Bradman (95.14). He has the highest average in the list of players with at least 1000 first-class runs, leaving behind not just Bradman but also Vijay Merchant (71.64) and George Headley (69.86). The exploits of India captain and opener Shaw too are well-documented. After grabbing headlines with his performance in junior cricket, Shaw has graduated to the higher-level so seamlessly that he always belonged there. Therefore, it was not a surprise that he hit a match-winning hundred on Ranji Trophy debut 12 months ago. Adding to the tournament flavor will be the sons of Steve Waugh and Makhya Ntini - Austin and Thando - who will be turning up for Australia and South Africa respectively. Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland's son Will is also in the national squad. With the IPL around the corner, there is every possibility that a millionaire could from the U-19 World Cup, just like Pant had a bagged Rs 1.9 crore deal with Delhi Daredevils after showing in Bangladesh. The 22-day tournament, featuring 16 teams and being played across seven venues in the cities of Christchurch, Queenstown, Tauranga and Whangarei, will see 20 matches being broadcast live.

Guardiola and Kane win Dec Premier League awards

LONDON, JAN 12 /-- Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola was named December's Premier League manager of the month for a record fourth consecutive time, while Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane equaled Steven Gerrard's tally with his sixth player of the month award. Guardiola's team remain unbeaten and 15 points clear at the top of the league standings. Chelsea boss Antonio Conte had been the only previous coach to win the award three times in a row during Chelsea's title-winning campaign last season. To win the December prize, Guardiola topped a six-man shortlist that also included Conte, Everton's Sam Allardyce, Roy Hodgson of Crystal Palace, Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp and Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino. Kane scored eight goals in six matches last month, including back-to-back hat-tricks against Burnley and Southampton, to finish 2017 with a record tally of 39 Premier League goals.

Pant fires as Delhi crush & K by 8 wickets

NEW DELHI, JAN 12 /-- Former captain Rishabh Pant made short work of a below-par Jammu & Kashmir with a 33-ball 51 as Delhi won their second Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 match by eight wickets. Delhi outclassed the wooden spoons of the zone in the departments, never taking their foot off the pedal while chasing a paltry target of 101 in 11.3 overs. Among the Delhi bowlers, left-arm spinner Pawan Negi (3/27 in 4 overs) was the most successful. Negi hit a couple of straight sixes, including one of opposite number Parvez Rasool, which landed on the top-most tier of the Feroz Shah Kotla stand. He also pulled the medium pacers with disdain, hitting seven boundaries while conceding 84 runs in the first-class. Sarthak Ranjan, who got a reprieve before making 31 off 20 balls. Interestingly, Ranjan was sent to open against the weakest team in the zonal leg, replacing last match's half-century man Dhruv Shetty, who reportedly had an ankle injury. Senior opener Gautam Gambhir, for only the sixth time in his 276-match T20 career, did not come to open the innings as Ranjan was given that opportunity. He did hit three boundaries apart from sixes. The first of the two sixes was a catch that was taken by the fielder at long-on but he crossed the boundary ropes after losing his balance. Meanwhile, in the other match of the day, Haryana won by a comfortable margin, beating Punjab by five wickets. Batting first, Punjab scored 134/9 in 20 overs with Mandeep Singh contributing 30 off 18 balls, while Yuvraj Singh was dismissed by India discard Jayant Yadav. In reply, Haryana reached the target in 17.5 overs despite a tight spell by skipper Harbhajan Singh (2/16 in 4 overs).
Brief Scores:
Jammu & Kashmir 100/9 in 20 overs (Parvez Rasool 37, Pawan Negi 3/27 in 4 overs)
Delhi 101/2 in 11.3 overs (Rishabh Pant 51 off 33 balls, Sarthak Ranjan 31 off 20 balls). Delhi won by 8 wickets.
Punjab 134/9 in 20 overs (Mandeep Singh 30, Amit Mishra 3/23 in 4 overs)
Haryana 134/5 in 17.5 overs (Harshad Patel 31 off 19 balls, Rohit Tewatia 37 off 22 balls, Harbhajan Singh 2/16 in 4 overs). Haryana won by 5 wickets.

SQUADS

- **India:** Prithvi Shaw (C), Shubman Gill, Aryan Juyal, Abhishek Sharma, Arshdeep Singh, Harvik Desai, Manoj Katra, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Pankaj Yadav, Riyan Parag, Ishan Porel, Himanshu Rana, Anukul Roy, Shivam Mavi, Shiva Singh.
- **Pakistan:** Hasan Khan (C), Rohail Nazir, Mohammad Ali Khan, Ali Zaryab, Ammad Alam, Arshad Iqbal, Imran Shah, Mohammad Taha, Muhammad Mohsin Khan, Muhammad Muz, Muhammad Zaid, Munir Rizq, Saad Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Suleman Shaheqat.
- **Bangladesh:** Saif Hassan (C), Afif Hossain, Aminul Islam, Hasan Mahmud, Mahidul Islam Ankon, Mohammad Naim, Mohammad Rakib, Nayeem Hasan, Pinak Ghosh, Akai Onik, Rabul Haque, Roni Hossen, Shakil Hossain, Tipu Sultan, Towhid Hridoy.
- **Sri Lanka:** Kamindu Mendis (C), Jehan Daniel, Krishan Sanjula, Ashen Bandara, Hareen Buddha, Hasitha Bogayada, Nipun Dananjaya, Thisaru Rashmika, Nawandith Fernando, Sanithush Gunathilaka, Praveen Jayawickrama, Dhnanajaya Lakshan, Nishan Madushka, Nipun Malinga, Kalana Perera.
- **Afghanistan:** Naveen-ul-Haq (C), Azmatullah Omarzai, Baheer Shah, Darwish Rasooli, Ikram Ali Khil, Mohammad Ibrahim, Mujeeb Zadran, Nisar Wahdati, Gais Ahmad, Rahmanullah, Tariq Stanikzai, Wafadar, Waqarullah Ishaq, Yousof Zazai, Zahir Khan.
- **Australia:** Jason Sangha (C), Will Sutherland, Xavier Bartlett, Max Bryant, Jack Edwards, Zak Evans, Jarrod Freeman, Ryan Hadley, Baxter Holt, Nathan McSweeney, Jonathan Merlo, Lloyd Pope, Jason Ralston, Parray Uppal, Austin Waugh.
- **New Zealand:** Kaylum Boshier (C), Finn Allen, Jakob Bhula, Max Chu, Katene Clarke, Matthew Fisher, Luke Georgeson, Ben Lockrose, Callum McCachlan, Felix Murphy, Dale Phillips, Rachee Ravindra, Sandeep Patel, Connor Sullivan, Todd Watson.
- **Canada:** Arslan Khan (C), Akash Gill, Ashtan Desamsmy, Emanuel Khokhar, Kavran Naress, Kevin Singh, Pranav Sharma, Randhir Sandhu, Krishen Samuel, Faisal Jamkhandi, Arshdeep Dhaliwal, Rishiv Joshi, Aran Pathmanathan, Pieter Pretorius, Rommel Shazad.
- **England:** Harry Brook (C), Ethan Bamber, Liam Banks, Tom Banton, Jack Davies, Adam Finch, Luke Hollman, Will Jacks, Tom Lammonby, Dillon Pennington, Savin Perera, Tom Scriven, Prem Sisodiya, Fin Trenoull, Roman Walker.
- **Ireland:** Harry Tector (C), Ian Anders, Aaron Cawley, Varun Chopra, Mark Donegan, JJ Garth, Jamie Grassi, Reece Kelly, Graham Kennedy, Joshua Little, Sam Murphy, Max Neville, Neil Rock, Morgan Topping, Andrew Vincent.
- **Kenya:** Sachin Bhudia (C), Maxwell Ager, Abhishek Chidambaram, Avel Desai, Jay Doshi, Aman Gandhi, Ankit Hirani, Jasraj Kundu, Jayant Mepezi, Gerard Mwendwa, Dennis Musyoka, Thomas Ochieng, Sukhdeep Singh, Siddharth Vasudev, Rene Were.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Sema Kamea (C), Eisa Eka, James Tau, Tau Tou Nou, Nou Rarua, Igo Mahuru, Simon Atai, Leke Moga, Vagi Karaho, Kevau Tau, Heagi Toua, Daure Aiga, Ovia Sam, Sinaka Arua, Boge Arua.
- **Namibia:** Lohan Louwrens (C), Henry Brink, Petrus Burger, Janzok de Villiers, Shaun Fouche, Jurgen Lend, Nicol Loffie-Eaton, Gerhard Lottering, Erich van Mollendoff, Dewald Nell, Maurifius Ngupita, Ben Shikongo, Floris Steenkamp, Ramon Wilmot, Eben van Wyk.
- **South Africa:** Raynard van Tonder (C), Matthew Breetzke, Gerald Coetzee, Jade de Klerk, Jean du Plessis, Fraser Jones, Wandile Makwela, Akhona Mnyaka, Andile Mkgakane, Kgauliso Mofosi, Jason Niemand, Thando Nini, Jiveshan Pillay, Herman Rolles, Kenan Smith.
- **West Indies:** Emmanuel Stewart (C), Kirstan Kalicharan, Ronaldo Alimohamed, Alick Athanaze, Cephas Cooper, Jarion Healy, Kimani Melius, Ashmed Noddy, Kian Pemberton, Raymond Pepez, Joshua Persaud, Jeavor Royal, Keagan Simmons, Bhaskar Yadram, Nyeem Young.
- **Zimbabwe:** Liam Roche (C), Robert Chimhinya, Jonathan Connolly, Gregory Dolla, Alistair Frost, Taun Harrison, Wesley Madhevere, Tanunurwa Makoni, Donald Mbiambi, Dion Myers, Tinashe Nhenzhu, Nkosilatu Nunu, Kieran Robinson, Jayden Schodendorff, Milton Shumba.

GAME NOTES

BCCI invites expressions of interest for IPL partner rights

MUMBAI, JAN 12 /-- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has invited 'expressions of interest' for the Indian Premier League (IPL) partner rights. The BCCI invites third parties to indicate their interest in acquiring any of the following rights: IPL Official Partner Rights, IPL Strategic Time Out Partner Rights and IPL 'Umpire Partner Rights', a media release said on Friday. The rights are available for a minimum three-year term. "No more than one third party will be granted rights in relation to each Product Category," it said.

Yuki inches closer to Australian Open main draw

MELBOURNE, JAN 12 /-- Putting up a dominating show, Yuki Bhambri ousted Spanish Carlos Taberner to reach the third and final qualifying round of the Australian Open, here today. Bhambri, who is in good nick, routed the world number 183-6-6-2 in the second round of the men's singles qualifiers. The 25-year-old Indian, ranked 122, won 54 points in the 37-minute contest, breaking his rival six times in the match. Bhambri will now fight it out with Canadian Peter Polansky for a place in the main draw. If Bhambri clears the final hurdle, it will be his third appearance in the Australian men's singles main draw.

Chennaiyin, Pune grapple with coach suspension

CHENNAI, JAN 12 /-- FC Pune City got four points from their last two matches while coach Ranko Popovic was serving a four-match ban. However the visitors will now have to overcome the absence of not just their coach at the touchline but also their talisman Marcelinho for a crucial Hero Indian Super League encounter against Chennaiyin FC at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium, Chennai, on Saturday. The Brazilian is Pune City's leading goal-scorer with six strikes, including a hat-trick, and has four assists to his name. He will, however, remain suspended for the next clash after accumulating four bookings. He has missed another before - against Bengaluru FC - when he was not fully fit and was left on the bench, and it showed as Bengaluru FC walked away with full points. "Marcelinho is one of the best players in the league. We miss him surely but I know our team has quality. If a team cannot play without one player, it's no team. We know his importance, he is a strong player but we know how good is our team," Pune City Assistant Coach Vaidya Grupta said during the pre-match media interaction. With 16 points from nine matches, Pune City are placed third, just below Chennaiyin FC who have an extra point. This puts them in a good position to push for a play-off place, though the assistant coach warned that they still have plenty to do. "We have lucked out very much because you can be first, fourth or last. Now it's time to try to win points to come as close as possible to first. This is our added goal to be in the first four teams," he said. Chennaiyin FC are among the more impressive teams in the edition of ISL and are second in the table. Bengaluru FC, the home team, however, must shake off the absence of their coach John Gregory, who curiously also remains suspended, just like their rivals. "Both of them are really good coaches and they are working here for the betterment of the

game. I hope to see both of them back in the dugout soon," said Grupta. Gregory's absence should not impact Chennaiyin FC on the field and they should be encouraged with the return of their captain Henrique Soreno who completed serving a one-match suspension of his own. "We know Pune is strong in attack. They look threatening. We know they are a good attacking side and will come hard at us. We are lucky that our best player, captain (Soreno) is behind. It will be a good contest," said Assistant Coach Syed Sahir Pasha, who has been in Chennai since the start of the season. "We have conceded goals at the death in their last two matches at home against Delhi Dynamos FC (2-2) and Kerala Blasters FC (1-1). That has cost them dearly and I have called for focus till the final whistle. "It hurts us, hurts the players. It's just lack of focus. We have to play as a team in those last moments. Players also understand that. It will not happen in the matches to come," assures Pasha.

Kerala celebrates 50 years of Special Olympics programme

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 12 /-- Organised by the Special Olympics Bharat Kerala Chapter in collaboration with the National Charitable Trust, 15000 athletes and 5000 coaches from 14 districts have come together to celebrate 50 years of the Special Olympics programme worldwide. Titled 'Ekata', the mega event brought together 15000 athletes and 5000 coaches and escorts at the Lakshmi Bai National College of Physical Education (LNCPE) Greenfield Stadium in different sporting and non-sporting activities. The three-day programme was inaugurated yesterday in the presence of the Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor, who was the chief guest. The state ignited the Special Olympics torch of hope on January 1, celebrating 50 years of Special Olympics to kickstart the state athletic meet. The torch was lit in Kassaragod and travelled through all the 14 districts, reaching Thiruvandrum on January 10. Close to 20,000 athletes, coaches, professionals, govt officials, law enforcers etc. participated in the event.

MCG gets official ICC warning for 'poor' Ashes pitch

MELBOURNE, JAN 12 /-- The Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) received an official warning after the pitch for the fourth Ashes Test was rated as 'poor' by the International Cricket Council (ICC) earlier this month. The track drew criticism from both teams after the draw clash between Australia and England saw only 24 wickets fall over five days, the only stalemate in a series dominated 4-0 by the hosts as they regained the urn. Australia scored 327 and 283 for four declared, while England scored 491 in their only innings, with match referee Ranjan Madugalle saying in his report that the surface did not allow for an even contest between bat and ball. Cricket Australia (CA) did not contest the rating given by Madugalle, the governing body said in a statement. "Cricket Australia... highlighted that the ground is a frequently used venue that has no history of preparing poor pitches for international cricket," the ICC said. The ICC said there was a commitment by both the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) and Cricket Australia to improve the pitches prepared for international cricket at the MCG in the future. The Melbourne Test was the last to be rated under the ICC's on and outfield monitoring process, with a revision of the system coming into effect from Jan. 4.

- India seek 'intent' to combat South Africa speed kings
 - We can't afford to take India lightly : Far du Plessis
 - Messi double helps Barcelona reach King's Cup quarter-finals
- See page-12

AMWAY DARJEELING POLICE MARATHON



(From right) Anesh Thapa, 1st prize winner in male category and Kanchi Maya Kazzo, 1st prize winner in female category of Amway Darjeeling Police Marathon-EOI Pkts

Darjeeling Police & Amway (I) present 5th edition

EOI CORRESPONDENT
SILIGURI, JAN 12 /-- Darjeeling Police and Amway India presented the fifth edition of Amway Darjeeling Police Marathon 2018 today. The marathon was held in Darjeeling in collaboration with GTA, to celebrate the 55th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The objective behind organizing the Amway Darjeeling Police Marathon was to spread awareness about health and fitness amongst people in Darjeeling and North Bengal. The sporting event was also dedicated to establish peace and harmony between people of Hills and plains. Anju Bobby George, noted athlete, flagged off the Amway Darjeeling Police Marathon at Sukhika Pokhri at 7.30 am. Chandra Chakraborty, Regional Manager, Eastern Region, Amway India, Siddh Nath Gupta, IPS, ADG - North Bengal, Manoj Kumar Verma, IPS, IG - Darjeeling, Ajay KR. Nandi, IPS, IG - C/P, D. Humayun Kabir, IPS, DIG - Darjeeling, Akhilesh Chaturvedi, IPS, SP - Darjeeling and Amarnath K. IPS, Superintendent of Police (Operations), Darjeeling will also be present on the occasion. Darjeeling Police also facilitated 10 sports personalities from the hills, including former Indian Hockey team captain Bhrat Chetri. Speaking on the occasion Mr Chaturvedi said, "Amway Darjeeling Police Marathon has become immensely popular among sports and fitness enthusiasts. We hope this marathon will become an international marathon in the years to come."

Mr Chakraborty said, "The event has become bigger with each passing year. We hope that this marathon will inspire more people to live and adopt a healthy lifestyle." The top rankers in all the categories were rewarded with a cash prize, a medal and a certificate. There was a cash prize of Rs 1.5 lakh for the winner, Rs. 75,000 for the first runner-up and Rs 50,000 for second runners up. In addition, there were more prizes as well as special gift hampers sponsored by Amway India for the top finishers.