

Bravo is Chile's hero in Confed Cup shoot-out win



Chile's Claudio Bravo saves from Portugal's Joao Moutinho during the penalty shootout —REUTERS

KAZAN (RUSSIA), JUN 29 /- Claudio Bravo was Chile's hero on Wednesday as they beat Portugal 3-0 in a penalty shoot-out in the Confederations Cup semi-finals. The Manchester City goalkeeper saved all three penalties from Portugal's Ricardo Quaresma, Joao Moutinho and Nani, while Arturo Vidal, Charles Aranguiz and Alexis Sanchez nailed their spot-kicks for the South Americans. "We are satisfied with the result and how we played, but we have still not won anything," warned the 34-year-old Bravo. Chile progress to Sunday's final in St Petersburg to face either Mexico or Germany, who meet Thursday in Sochi in the other semi-final.



Chile's Gary Medel celebrates with Claudio Bravo after winning the penalty shootout —REUTERS

Losers Portugal will contest Sunday's third-place play-off in Moscow. Chile almost settled Wednesday's match in the dying stages of extra-time when both Vidal and substitute Martin Rodriguez hit the woodwork as Portugal hung on to take the game to a shoot-out. The defeat in Kazan will be bitterly disappointing for Portugal's superstar forward Cristiano Ronaldo. The Real Madrid star, who is facing doubts about his future in Spain as he prepares to answer allegations of tax evasion in a Madrid court next week, had won man-of-the-match awards in all three group matches. Before kick-off in Kazan, Manchester City's new signing Bernardo Silva shook off a foot injury he suffered in the 4-0 drubbing of New Zealand to make Portugal's starting line-up. With Pepe suspended, Jose Fonte partnered Bruno Alves at centre-back. Up front, AC Milan's 21-year-old striker Andre Silva partnered Ronaldo, but the pair endured a frustrating night at the hands of Chile's defence. Chile's coach Juan Antonio Pizzi named the same team which drew 1-1 with world champions Germany last Thursday. Centre-back Gary Medel and midfielder Aranguiz both shook off knocks. The game got off to a frantic start which demanded early saves from both goalkeepers. With just six

minutes gone, Sanchez put a superb pass in behind the defence which landed just in front of Eduardo Vargas, but Portugal's goalkeeper Rui Patrício blocked the shot. At the other end moments later, a low Ronaldo cross put Andre Silva in space, but Bravo smothered the effort at close range. Aranguiz twice went close with efforts on the Portugal goal in the opening half and it was end-to-end stuff again after the break. Chile's Vargas forced Patrício into another reflex save, while Ronaldo fired at Bravo when Portugal counter-attacked immediately. Then Vidal's long-range effort went screaming just high and wide of the Portugal

goal. Ronaldo sent a free-kick just over and had a shot blocked as both sides attacked relentlessly, but the scores remained goalless and the game went to extra time. There was no let-up in the pace as Portugal's Andre Gomes went close while Sanchez headed Mauricio Isla's cross from the left just wide of the post. Jose Moutinho came on for Adrien Silva, who had worked tirelessly in midfield for Portugal. In the first period of extra time, with time almost up, Chile had a penalty appeal turned down when substitute Francisco Silva appeared to be fouled by Fonte in the area before Vidal, then Rodriguez rattled Portugal's woodwork.

India eye unassailable lead in third ODI

NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA), JUN 29 /- A formidable India will fancy their chances of taking an unassailable 2-0 lead against a weakened West Indies when the two sides lock horns in the third game of the ongoing five-match ODI series, here tomorrow. India lead the rubber 1-0 after winning the second one-day international in Port of Spain by 105 runs. The opening match of the series was rained off after only 39 overs of play at the Queen's Park Oval. World number three India showed their might in the second game with a 105-run drubbing of the hosts, which highlighted the gulf between the two teams. In the second match, the bowlers stifled the home steam with their impeccable line and length after India's top three batsmen Ajinkya Rahane, Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli - delivered the goods as they recorded their biggest ever victory in the West Indies. Rahane smashed his third ODI hundred, while Kohli and Dhawan notched up fluent half centuries, as India produced a dominating batting display to pile on 310 for five. The trio would look to continue in sides even as veterans like Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh would hope for a good hit in the middle.



Bhuvneshwar Kumar during his training session

The presence of young all-rounders Hardik Pandya and Kedar Jadhav gives the visiting side's batting solidity, and off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's ability with the bat is well-documented. In the bowling department, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Umesh Yadav will again lead

the attack with Pandya coming in as first change, while the spin responsibility is likely to be shouldered by Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav. Yadav, a chinaman bowler, was impressive in the second ODI, returning figures of three for 50 in nine overs and earning accolades from skipper Kohli. For a change, Yuvraj too

rolled his arms over after a while, and it remains to be seen whether the team management opts for an extra slow bowler in Ravindra Jadeja. Seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar was miserly, claiming two wickets while giving away just nine runs in his five overs. Besides the usual practice sessions, the likes of Kohli, Yuvraj, Dhawan and

Pandya looked happy while sweating it out in the gym ahead of the match. Though they are playing a weak and inexperienced opposition, it is important from India's perspective to finish the series on a positive note ahead of the tougher tours to Sri Lanka and South Africa in the future. Trailing Association (SCA). "Personally I am not against the one-state one-vote. But how can you take away the voting rights of one of the oldest state associations in the country. The same applies for Mumbai cricket. They have done so much for Indian cricket. "We have no problems with voting rights given to a new member but voting rights of West Zone should stay as it is a major contributor," said Shah, who has ruled SCA for more than

have brought in two fresh faces - Kyle Hope and Sunil Ambris - for the remaining three ODIs. Hope and Ambris replaced Jonathan Carter and Kesrick Williams in the 13-man squad. Hope, brother of current West Indies wicketkeeper Shai Hope, leads Trinidad and Tobago in domestic cricket while Ambris plays a wicket-keeper-batsman for Windward Islands. The home team would hope the new additions bring about a change in fortunes. While the Indian batsmen looked comfortable in the 39.2 overs of play that was possible in the first ODI, the West Indies were no match for the visitors in the second match. Having failed for the first time to qualify for the ICC Champions Trophy, West Indies would be desperate to turn the tide at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.



Team India skipper Kohli takes a breather after a grueling batting session

Shikhar Dhawan 'stronger person, sportsman' after comeback to Team India

NEW DELHI, Jun 29 /- Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan has been in an exceptional form ever since he made a comeback to Team India. Dhawan scored total of 328 runs in the five matches of the recently concluded ICC Champions Trophy which included the best score of 125, while in the ongoing series against West Indies, he has smashed 87 and 63 in two appearances. The left-handed batsman said that he worked on himself before making a comeback to the Indian team. "Past months were quite unfortunate for me. That's why I was out of the team. I went back and worked on myself, and am a stronger person and sportsman now. I knew I have those skills and capabilities to perform at the international level. I have been working hard and I never lost hope," he said. "When I wasn't doing well, I knew I will get out of the team. I went back and started enjoying domestic cricket. There was less pressure as compared to the international. That's how I relaxed myself and stayed calm. But yes, at the back of my mind, I always knew I had to perform good and make a comeback and serve my country and achieve my goal," he added. Commenting on the ongoing controversy relating to Anil Kumble's stepping down as the head coach of Team India, Dhawan said, "I didn't play much under Anil Kumble, so cannot comment on that. Moreover, I just focus on the game. Everyone has their own individuality and character. Anil Bhai, Dhoni Bhai and Virat, of course all are different." Meanwhile, India, now with a 1-0 lead in the five-match series, will play their third ODI against the Caribbean side at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on June 30.

Mixed team would increase India's Olymedal chances: Karmakar

KOLKATA, JUN 29 /- Former Olympian Joydeep Karmakar is upset that his pet 50m rifle prone event has been dropped from 2020 Tokyo Games but said overall India's medal chances at Olympics would only increase with mixed team events. Tokyo Olympics will see four men's only shooting events such as the 50m Prone Rifle and Pistols competitions removed and replaced with mixed-gender events such as the 10m Air Pistol and Rifle. "Personally I feel very upset. The federation could not do much to retain the prone events but overall India's medal chances will definitely increase," the London 2012 Olympian who missed a bronze medal in the 50m prone event by less than two points said at the Calcutta Sports Journalists' Club. "We always dominate in the air weapon events so it's a good prospect for India," he added. The 37-year-old runs a shooting academy in his name, will be organising fourth West Bengal Inter-School Shooting Championships, a four-day event beginning tomorrow at the New Town School. Over 100 students from 40 schools across the state will compete in the competition which will be held in 13 events and three special events. (PTI)

If Indian President can be over 70, why can't we be in BCCI: Niranjan Shah

NEW DELHI, JUN 29 /- "If the Indian president can be well over 70 years of age, why can't the BCCI administrators work beyond that age limit," argued the "disqualified" board veteran Niranjan Shah after being controversially included in the panel formed to study Lodha recommendations. Shah will be a special invitee along with the seven members, providing his "inputs and suggestions" to help the other committee members. "I don't understand this hue and cry over the age limit of the BCCI office-bearers. If our president (Pranab Mukherjee, who is 81) can work beyond 70, what is so wrong about BCCI officials

working beyond that age limit. "As long as you are fit, you can work even till the time you are alive. I call this age discrimination (what is being proposed by the Lodha panel)," Shah said on Thursday. Saurashtra strongman Shah is in the Rajeev Shukla-led Special Panel even though the Lodha recommendations render him ineligible to be state or BCCI administrator on all counts. "I think my experience will come handy in the panel as we have discussed the recommendations at length during the BCCI SGM. Though all members will have a say," he said further with the panel's first meeting to study Lodha

reforms scheduled in New Delhi on Saturday. Shah not only has objection to the proposed 70-year age cap, his biggest issue is with one-state one vote which directly impacts his state body the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA). "Personally I am not against the one-state one-vote. But how can you take away the voting rights of one of the oldest state associations in the country. The same applies for Mumbai cricket. They have done so much for Indian cricket. "We have no problems with voting rights given to a new member but voting rights of West Zone should stay as it is a major contributor," said Shah, who has ruled SCA for more than

four decades and has served as a BCCI official in various capacities. Another contentious clause, according to Shah, is the three-year cooling off period between two terms and a cumulative period of nine years. "What is the point of having a cooling off period? If I am joint secretary for three years, I should be eligible to be secretary in the next term as it would ensure seamless transition and maintain continuity," he said. Shah is hopeful that Supreme Court will consider reviewing the reforms. "This are hopeful that the interim applications filed by 18 state associations can lead to a positive outcome," he added.

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