

Kohli eyeing comeback against MI on April 14

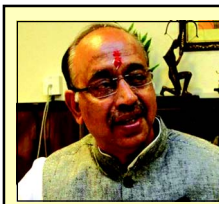


NEW DELHI, APR 11 /- India captain Virat Kohli dropped hints that he may just make a return from injury in Royal Challengers Bangalore's IPL encounter against Mumbai Indians on April 14. Kohli posted a video on his Instagram account of his gym session. He was seen doing a weightlifting clean and jerk drill. The effortlessly that he was seen lifting weights is an indicator that he is slowly and surely regaining full strength in his shoulders. "Can't wait to get back onto the field. Almost there now ?????? 14th April?", his post although had a question mark which means that his return is still not 100 percent confirmed. Kohli injured his shoulder while fielding during the third Test against Australia at Ranchi. He subsequently missed the fourth Test in Dharamsala. Kohli has time and again said that Indian cricket is his primary focus and he would only be back when he is 120 percent fit. (PTI)

Oltmans eager to test new style in Azlan Shah Cup

BENGALURU, APR 11 /- India's chief coach Koelant Oltmans today said the upcoming Sultan Azlan Shah Cup men's hockey tournament will be a platform for the team to test its new methods ahead of this year's big ticket events. Oltmans said India will be using the Azlan Shah Cup in Ipoh, Malaysia to test its bench strength and style of play ahead of this year's important tournaments like the Hockey World League (HWL) Semi-Final in London, HWL Final in Bhubaneswar and Asia Cup in Dhaka. "This (Azlan Shah Cup) is not the most important tournaments for us. The most important thing for us in this tournament will be to showcase (our potential). We are trying to introduce a new style of play before we embark on big tournaments, including the Hockey World League and Asia Cup," the Dutchman told reporters after announcing the squad at the Sports Authority of India here today. India today named an experimental 18-member squad for the Azlan Shah Cup to be held in Ipoh from April 27 to May 6. The squad to be led by ace goalkeeper PR Sreejesh includes six players from last year's Junior World Cup-winning side out of which four will make their senior debut in Azlan Shah Cup. Defender Gurinder Singh, midfielders Sunil and Manpreet will make their senior debut in the tournament, while dragflicker Harmanpreet Singh, Harjeet Singh and Mandeep Singh were other members of the World Cup-winning junior team who have already played for the senior side. Goalkeeper Saraj Karkera, who represented the junior side at the England Tour, Eur Asia Cup 2016 and four-nation tournament in Valencia last year, is another player who will make his senior debut in Azlan Shah Cup. Oltmans said India will focus more on its forward line in the Azlan Shah Cup. "We are practising very hard. We want to score more and more goals. Winning a medal for the country is all about scoring goals and to execute this plan we need more goal-scoring players like Affan Yousuf," he said. Asked, who he considers to be the underdogs in the tournament, Oltmans said, "Japan has not played any international matches and it is difficult to know who are the underdogs. Also, there is England who did not have very good outing last year. They will be eager to perform better. So, let us wait and watch. (PTI)

Will meet Paes-Bhupathi and sort their differences: Goel



I will meet the Australian PM tomorrow and sign the India-Australia sports partnership under which there will be exchange of coaches. We will tie up with Canberra and Victoria university and take their help for the National Sports University that we are constructing at Manipur. So there will be an exchange of technical knowhow



NEW DELHI, APR 11 /- Sports Minister Vijay Goel today said he would try to meet Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes and sort their difference in the wake of the ugly public spat that took place during the Davis Cup tie against Uzbekistan. Paes and Bhupathi were being disrespectful to him by not categorically telling him that he would not be in the playing squad for the tie against Uzbekistan, while Bhupathi asserted that he had never promised a certain spot to Paes. "I

think it is captain's prerogative how he selects the team. But as far as the spat between the two players, I will meet the players and if there were any differences, I will try to sort them," Goel told reporters. Asked if the acrimonious episode had taken them out of the 4-1 win over Uzbekistan, Goel said, "I don't think so but I would want to meet them and know why there is this public spat. There is something wrong between the two and I would try to sort it. But as far as the sport

is concerned, I don't think I should interfere because it is the decision of the captain to do what he feels is good for the game." Goel said India will sign a sports partnership deal with Australia tomorrow. "I will meet the Australian PM tomorrow and sign the India-Australia sports partnership under which there will be exchange of coaches. We will tie up with Canberra and Victoria university and take their help for the National Sports University that we are constructing at Manipur. So there

will be an exchange of technical knowhow," Goel said. Former India tennis player Vijay Amritraj today called on the Sports Minister to discuss the roadmap for the development of tennis in the country. "I have been meeting a lot of former players after Rio Olympics to understand their views and seek their help in the development of sports. So I met Vijay Amritraj, he is a great tennis player and we discussed how we can help tennis grow in the country," he said. (PTI)

Upbeat Mumbai Indians take on formidable Sunrisers Hyderabad

MUMBAI, APR 11 /- Confidence bolstered after an inspirational run chase against Kolkata Knight Riders, a confident Mumbai Indians is ready to lock horns with defending champions Sunrisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League encounter, here tomorrow. It will be a battle of youngsters with the likes of Nitish Rana, Hardik Pandya on one side and the new star in the horizon Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan with his variations on the other side. Known for their sluggish



starts in previous editions, Mumbai Indians have logged home full points in their very second match thanks to Rana's half-century and brilliant cameo from Hardik Pandya. This was after Hardik's elder brother Krunal put up an impressive performance with the ball grabbing three wickets. However the third game of the tournament will be the toughest one for Mumbai as they face an in-form Sunrisers squaring off after a couple of comprehensive victories in their previous encounters. What must have pleased the Mumbai team management is the fact that the win against KKR was achieved with contribution from team's younger lot.

It was a special knock by Hardik Pandya who had suffered a setback recently during the domestic season when he was sent back home by former Mumbai coach and selector's insistence after three failures in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Ironically it was the same selector's insistence that led to the team's defeat against Gautam Gambhir's team as it was the former India opener who had vehemently protested in the manner in which the youngster was axed from the squad. On his part, Rana showed enormous maturity after departure of senior players like Kieron Pollard and Rohit Sharma. Hardik's 11-ball 29 showed why Indian team management rates him so highly in limited overs format. Earlier, his brother Krunal put brakes on KKR with two quick wickets during the early part of the innings. Mumbai would be hoping that their regulars - Rohit, Pollard and Harbhajan - 7 also hit the straps at the earliest. Kohli will like to get a good score under the belt since he is coming back from injury and got a harsh decision against KKR. His show of dissent earned him a reprimand also. With Lasith Malinga improving in his latter spell after being off the ball in his first over, and Jasprit Bumrah around to bowl into the block-hole, Mumbai's death bowling looks sorted for now. The one change Mumbai could make is to bring in Tim Latham for the second over. Compatriot Mitchell McClenaghan, who leaked plenty of runs against KKR. However, he is a combination, it will but will have to confront a superb finisher like Yuvraj Singh. The swashbuckler will get to bat in the second game against Gujarat Lions, with captain David Warner and his brother Manoj Kumar Moises Henriques finishing the job of chasing a small total with aplomb. David Warner's form will also keep Mumbai worried. The X-factor in the attack is Afghanistan leggie Rashid, who has been the star in both matches and has already five scalps in his kitty.

Argentina sack coach Edgardo Bauza, line up Sevilla's Jorge Sampaoli

Bauza fired as Argentina coach: AFA



BUENOS AIRES, APR 11 /- Argentina sacked coach Edgardo Bauza on Monday after a string of poor results in South American qualifying left them struggling to reach the 2018 finals in Russia. Media reports suggest Sevilla's Argentine coach Jorge Sampaoli, who has never disguised his ambition to take charge of the national team and steered neighbouring Chile to the Copa America title in 2015, will step into the vacancy. "We've reached an agreement, we've told Bauza he's ceased to be the national team coach," the Argentine FA's recently elected president Claudio Tapia told reporters after a meeting at the organisation's Buenos Aires headquarters. Argentina, whose captain Lionel Messi has been banned for four matches for insulting a match official, are fifth in the South American group with four qualifiers remaining.

The top four in the 10-nation group go through to the 2018 finals in Russia, while the fifth-placed country qualifies for a playoff against a team from Oceania. Bauza presided over eight matches, all three wins, two draws and three defeats. If the AFA succeed in hiring Sampaoli away from Sevilla at the end of the season, he would have until August 31 to prepare for Argentina's next qualifier, a tricky trip to play Uruguay in Montevideo. Tapia has announced a news conference for Tuesday to give details of Bauza's departure and his possible successor. The new AFA leadership made the decision to dispense with Bauza after Argentina were lucky to beat Chile 1-0 at home with a Messi penalty then lost 2-0 away to Bolivia at high altitude in La Paz last month. Argentina, who had Messi suspended before the Bolivia game, could be without their talisman in Uruguay and at home to Peru and Venezuela later this year unless they manage to get the ban reduced on appeal. If the appeal fails, Messi would only come back for the final, potentially decisive qualifier away

to Ecuador at high altitude in Quito in October. Bauza was appointed last July by Armando Perez, who headed a FIFA committee that administered the AFA and prepared it for the presidential election that Tapia won last month. Messi had quit international football after Argentina's second successive Copa America defeat on penalties by Chile in the United States in June, having missed the opening spot kick in the shootout. Bauza persuaded Messi to return in August and the captain responded with a goal in a 1-0 home win over Uruguay on Sept. 1. The 39-year-old's team were unconvincing, though, with draws away to Venezuela and Peru, losses to Paraguay and Brazil and a win over Colombia between September and November. Messi missed all but the Brazil and Colombia matches through injury. Sampaoli quit as Chile coach after lifting the 2015 Copa America but had just taken charge at Sevilla when the Argentina job became vacant last July after Gerardo Martino

resigned. The AFA would have to pay a buyout clause to trigger Sampaoli's release from Sevilla. Argentina's football association fired Edgardo Bauza as coach of the crisis-hit national team as it struggles to qualify for next year's World Cup, the head of the body said Monday. It was the first big move by the Argentine Football Association (AFA) since last month picked new executives tasked with ending three years of turmoil in the Argentine game. "I told him that he is no longer the coach of Argentina," the AFA's new president Claudio Tapia told reporters after meeting with Bauza at the association's headquarters. The world number two-ranked football nation risks failing to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 1970. Star striker Lionel Messi will miss the country's three remaining qualifying matches due to suspension. After a defeat to Bolivia last month, Argentina dropped to fifth place in the regional table - out of the top four automatic qualifying positions. (AFP)

Bayern Munich vs Real Madrid: Friends become foes to renew rivalry at Champions League quarter final



Real Madrid players Marcelo (C) and Cristiano Ronaldo (L) attend a training session—Reuters

MADRID, APR 11 /- The last time Real Madrid met Bayern Munich in a long and storied rivalry three years ago, Zinedine Zidane and Carlo Ancelotti sat side-by-side celebrating one of their finest European nights. Back then Zidane was Ancelotti's assistant as together they ended a 12-year wait for Madrid's 10th European Cup. Now, discarded by Real, Ancelotti is aiming to end Madrid's reign as European champions. Zidane, meanwhile, is tasked with plotting the downfall of his old boss and mentor in Wednesday's Champions League quarter-final. "It will be master against pupil for sure," Zidane said after the draw was made. "I was his assistant, I learned a lot from him. He is someone that I appreciate a lot and who was appreciated here in Madrid a lot." That appreciation wasn't enough for Real president Florentino Perez, who sacked Ancelotti just a year after winning the Champions League in 2015. His replacement Rafael Benitez lasted barely seven months in charge before also being dismissed, handing Zidane his first senior managerial role. The move appears to have been a masterstroke as Zidane too won the Champions League last season. However, remembering Ancelotti's downfall, he has insisted in recent days that no Real coach is safe without success under Perez. The Frenchman may need to win La Liga and the Champions League again to be assured of remaining in the job next season. "You know the importance of this club, I know what the role entails for good and bad for me and I am prepared for anything," he said ahead of Saturday's 1-1 derby draw with Atletico Madrid. Zidane also played under

Ancelotti at Juventus and certain traits of his managerial style have clearly been influenced by the affable Italian. The often combustible Real dressing room has been calmed during Zidane's tenure by his laid-back approach and respect for his achievements as a player. As two of only seven men to win the competition as a player and a coach, Zidane and Ancelotti are already synonymous with the history of the Champions League. More records await Ancelotti if he can succeed where Pep Guardiola failed in delivering Bayern the Champions League. Having also won the competition twice with AC Milan, Ancelotti would become the first man to win it in charge of three different clubs. Should Bayern knock Real off their perch, revenge may surely have been a motivating factor. Madrid's 4-0 win in Real's 2014 was Bayern's heaviest ever European home defeat. Ancelotti, meanwhile, has scores of his own to settle with the Spanish giants. "He has been thinking about this game for some time," said Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "He wants to win at any cost." For Madrid, motivation comes from the chance to become the first side to retain the competition in the Champions League era. Yet, despite being friends and former colleagues, it is so south-of-the-border as Zidane and Ancelotti have in common that will divide them on Wednesday - a love of winning. "With all due respect, when the match comes round it is one I will want to win and he too will want to win," added Zidane. "There is nothing more that will come into account."



Bayern Munich's Thomas Muller, Philipp Lahm and coach Carlo Ancelotti during training—Reuters