CYMK
THE ECHO OF INDIA
REGD. NO.KOL/RMS 318/2016-18
RNI No: WBENG/2004/13476
• KOLKATA
Thursday• November 23, 2017

No 6 is a flexible slot, says Wriddhiman

NAGPUR, NOV 22 /--/ At ease with the constant changes made to his batting position, Indian wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha today said the number six slot in the Indian batting line-up is a flexible one depending on the conditions. In the first Test against Sri Lanka, Saha, who has a 40 plus average in first-class and three Test hundreds, came in at No.7 and 8 in both innings. Asked if the balance is hampered, if he has to bat at those positions, Saha replied: "It's not that I always bat at No 7 (or No 8) as I have batted at No 6 also. We (along with Ashwin and Jadeja) are being rotated as batting position depends on the strength of the opposition bowlers." While the opening slot has been shared between Murali Vijay, KL Rahul and Shikhar Dhawan, Cheteshwar Pujara has been a steady one down with Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane making the next

two slots their own. However, post VVS Laxman's departure, the No 6 position, which requires someone to stem the rot in case of a collapse or face the second new ball with tail-enders, has not seen a permanent occupant. Saha himself has played at No 6 but in the Indian second innings at Kolkata, he came as low as No 8, not exactly common among the wicketkeeper-batsmen these days. "Favourable conditions determine the slots whether it is Nos 6, 7 or 8. It can be any position as per the team management's call," Saha made it clear that he has no fetish for any preferable slot. Like KL Rahul had said after the conclusion of the Test, Saha also felt that a few overs more could have ensured an Indian win. India had Sri Lanka on the mat at 76 for 7, chasing an improbable 231 before bad light ensured a draw. "The team morale was fantastic even though we couldn't bat as per expectation in the first innings. But we made a good comeback in the second innings. Shikhar, Rahul and Virat batted well and when you get them seven down for less than 100, it automatically boosts your morale. "May be with a bit more time at our disposal, we could have won," he lamented.

Sehwag vs Shoaib set for another showdown, this time on ice

Cricket needs to grow to be an Olympic sport: Virender

Crickter Mohd. Kaif and Cricketer Virender Sehwag announcing St Moritz Ice Cricket League which will held in St Moritz Switzerland, during a press confrence in New Delhi on Wednesday.

NEW DELHI, NOV 22 /--/ Come February, the longstanding rivalry between Virender Sehwag and Shoaib Akhtar will be renewed but this time it will play out on an ice field rather than on a cricket ground. The exotic location for the Sehwag-Akhtar showdown will be a frozen lake in St. Moritz, Switzerland with the spectacular Swiss Alps in the backdrop and cricket on ice has been played in St. Moritz by a bunch of amateurs since 1988 but it will be the first time that greats of the game will grace the Alpine resort. Twenty20 matches will be played on February 8 and 9 next year and besides Sehwag and Akhtar, lending star power will be Mohammad Kaif, Mahela Jayawardene, Lasith Malinga, Michael Hussey, Graeme Smith, Jacques Kallis, Daniel Vettori, Nathan Mcullum, Grant Elliot, Monty Panesar and Owais Shah. The event, called St. Moritz Ice Cricket has been launched with an aim to establish the sport in an unchartered territory like Switzerland. Organiser Vijay Singh of VJ Sports claims the pilot project has the approval of world body ICC. Sehwag, who was present at the launch alongside Kaif, said he took just two minutes to say yes to the offer. "I never thought playing cricket on ice was possible but now that it is happening, I wanted to experience it. It won't be serious cricket but it would still be a challenge to play on ice," said Sehwag. How much time did Kaif take to sign on the dotted line? "Five minutes to be honest. Cricket is not popular in Europe but with this initiative, we can make an impact. And playing on ice does sound very interesting," said the 36- year-old, who is still playing at the First-Class level. Sehwag is not new to playing exhibition games outside India. He played the MCL in Dubai and was also part of Cricket All Stars which was played in the USA two years ago. "I was still playing First-Class cricket in 2015 so it was not very difficult to play those matches. Now since I have stopped playing the game completely, it will be a challenge to get into the groove. "But there will be no pressure to win or lose. Also, now that I am retired I don't need to take anyone's permission including the BCCI," he quipped. It has been learnt the top stars will be paid in the range of $40,000-50,000 for two games while the others will get something between $20,000-30,000. Players will use the traditional cricketing gear including the red-ball but will wear sports shoes instead of spikes. The weather is expected to be nice and sunny during the day but the temperatures can dip to as low as -20 degree celsius. The matches will be played on matting pitch. Former India opener Virender Sehwag feels cricket needs to be played in more countries if the game has to make its way into the Olympics. The International Cricket Council (ICC) comprises 105 members but only 12 are full members. The world governing body is pushing for the game's inclusion in the 2024 Games. The only time cricket was part of Olympics was way back in 1990. "I think it is ICC's call. They need more nations to play cricket, then it can be part of Olympics. Twelve teams (full members) are not enough," said Sehwag on the launch of St. Moritz Ice Cricket on Wednesday. One way of spreading the game would be to take it to uncharted territories including Switzerland, where Sehwag will be playing in February alongside other former players such as Mahela Jayawardene, Shoaib Akhtar, Daniel Vettori, Mohammad Kaif and Graeme Smith. "It will be great if we can inspire somebody (to take up the game in Switzerland," said Sehwag. Switzerland is not a member of the ICC but St. Moritz, which has hosted Winter Olympics twice, will host Ice Cricket on February 8 and 9. The organisers claim that the event has been sanctioned by the ICC.

BCCI, Sports Ministry discuss NADA and Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Nov 22 /--/ At loggerheads with the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) on the testing of Indian cricketers, the BCCI discussed the matter with Sports Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and also sought the government's view on playing arch-foes Pakistan in the planned ICC Test Championship. NADA wants to bring Indian cricketers in its net but the cricket board has rejected the demand. BCCI has insisted that it is a WADA-compliant organisation so there was no need for it to come under NADA's supervision. The BCCI has its Special General Meeting (SGM) scheduled for December 9, where the NADA issue has been now added to the agenda after the meeting with Rathore. BCCI CEO Rahul Johri and General Manager (Administration and Game Development) Prof. Ratnakar Shetty, who is well-versed with the BCCI's anti-doping policy, met Rathore at his office for about 45 minutes. "The topic of discussion today was about NADA and WADA. During yesterday's meeting, it was decided that Rahul will be accompanied by Prof Shetty as he is aware about the anti-doping policy of BCCI. There were some other operational topics discussed but main was anti doping policy," a BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity. The ministry's view, which is not yet clear, will now be conveyed to officials and also discussed at the SGM. When CK Khanna, the acting BCCI President, was contacted, he confirmed that anti-doping policy has been added to the agenda. Another BCCI official said, "This meeting was a courtesy call and was planned long ago. Since Rathore took charge, they wanted to meet him. All issues, including cricketing ties with Pakistan, was discussed." "Anyway playing Pakistan or not, it is not only the decision of Sports Ministry but it lies mainly with PMO and the Home Ministry," the official said. Also discussed was the contentious issue of playing Pakistan. India has not played any bilateral series with Pakistan since the limited overs series featuring two T20Is and three ODIs in India in 2012-13. The Twenty20 series was drawn and Pakistan won the ODIs 2-1. As per the ICC Future Tours Program, each of its member countries is bound to play against each other at least once and if India do not play with Pakistan, they would lose points. As per the format, each team would play at least three home and away Test series respectively and members are free to negotiate more series (between 2019 to 2021) depending on availability. In 2014, BCCI and PCB had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to play six bilateral series between 2015 and 2023. However, after India refused to play Pakistan due to strained relations, the PCB sent a notice of dispute to the Indian Board, claiming losses due to the BCCI's refusal to tour Pakistan in 2015.

Robin hopes to make India comeback through ISL

KOLKATA, NOV 22 /--/ Out of favour India football forward Robin Singh is proud to represent two-time India Super League champions ATK and hopes to work harder to be back in the national team reckoning again. "I don't know what's in the mind of the coach (Stephen Constantine). This gives me another opportunity to work harder. I'm proud to play for my country, have been playing for a long time," Robin told reporters at a media interaction here today. "Hopefully if I work harder, I'll be back in the national team. I want to be back. Representing my country is the highest honour as a professional player. You want to represent your country. It's about keeping my head down and keep digging in, let my critics decide on how have I played," he added. Robin has played for three different franchises in three editions of the ISL. The 27-year-old said he would also back the I-League because his friends play there and they supported him often. "My friends play in the I-League. I would like to support them, they have backed me from time to time as well," Robin, who has represented Delhi Dynamos and FC Goa in ISL, said. "I wake up everyday, wanting to learn and give most in training. I'm nothing without the boys who play with me. I've been blessed enough to play three ISLs with three teams," he said. Having plied his trade with East Bengal, Robin went on to win I-League with Bengaluru FC. "I'm proud to have won the I-League. I'm honoured for the fact that I was part of a team that won the I-League. To sum it up, I've grown up. I will make sure to keep my professional standards high." "I will miss East Bengal. I have been a part of East Bengal and that was the club that gave me the chance to become a professional footballer. I have great memories with the club. Even six months back, I was with the club. So it will always have a special place," he said.

In the recently concluded 62nd All India Railway Golf Competition on 17th to 19th November 2017, held in Kapurthala, the golf players of Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) won First place. CLW Golf players have won this competition for the third time in a row. It is a matter of great pride for the CLW. V. P. Pathak, General Manager, has given heartfelt greetings to all the golf players today in a simple ceremony and announced a reward of ten thousand rupees as an appreciation and encouragement. Dr Alok Majumdar, President of CLW Sports Association was also present on the occasion ——EOI Piks

Saina, Sindhu, Prannoy enter second round of Hong Kong Open

KOWLOON, NOV 22 /--/ Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal, P V Sindhu and H S Prannoy made positive starts to their campaign, progressing to the second round of USD 400,000 Hong Kong Super Series here today. London Olympics bronze medallist Saina staved off a spirited challenge from World No. 44 Mette Poulsen of Denmark before emerging 21-19 23-21 winner in a 46-minute match. World No. 11 Saina, who won the bronze at the World Championship, will next face a tough opponent in eighth seeded Chinese Chen Yufei, who had clinched the other bronze at the Glasgow Worlds in August. Olympic silver medalist Sindhu, seeded second, disposed off Hong Kong's Leung Yuet Yee 21-18 21-10 to set up a clash with either Japan's Aya Ohori or Russia's Evgeniya Kosetskaya in the next round. In men's singles competition, Prannoy survived a scare against Hong Kong's Hu Yun to win 19-21 21-17 21-15 in a match that lasted a little over an hour. The World No. 10 Indian will face Japan's Kazumasa Sakai, who had defeated the Indian in the semifinals of Indonesia Open Super Series Premier. However, Commonwealth Games champion Parupalli Kashyap squandered an opening game advantage to go down narrowly 21-15 9-21 20-22 to Korean Lee Dong Keun, while Sourabh Verma failed to put up a fight against Indonesia's Tommy Sugiarto, losing 15-21 8-21 to bow out of the competition. Women's doubles pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy played their hearts out before going down 11-21 21-19 19-21 against the Chinese combo of Huang Dongping and Li Wenmei in a hard-fought contest. Prannoy lagged behind for most part of the opening game even though he did manage to turn the tables a few times, taking slender leads at 9-8, 13-12 and 16-15. But Hu Yun managed to keep his nose ahead to pocket the first game. The Indian, however, produced a better performance in the second as he fought back from 0-5 down to lead 11-8 at the break and then surged ahead, despite some tough fight from the local hero. In the decider, Hu Yun once again jumped to a 5-0 lead but Prannoy narrowed the deficit to 10-11 at the breath. Hu managed to grab a 14-12 advantage but the Indian reeled off eight straight points to move to the match point. Hu saved one before Prannoy sealed it without much ado. (PTI)

Spotlight falls on Steve Smith, Joe Root on Ashes stage

Steven Smith and Joe Root hold a replica Ashes urn

LONDON, NOV 22 /--/ Two of the world's best batsmen will be in opposition when Australia's Steve Smith and England's Joe Root both lead their countries for the first time in an Ashes Test at Brisbane on Thursday. Smith may be an unorthodox run-scorer but he is currently top of the Test batting rankings and Root, a more classical stylist, is second in that table. Shoring up a fallible top order is something both Smith, with assistance from David Warner, and Root, backed up by a left-handed opener of his own in Alastair Cook, have got used to in recent months.

If either star batsman struggles for runs, it is liable to damage their team's prospects and add to the pressure that confronts most captains in an Ashes series. At 28, Smith is two years older than Root and the more experienced captain, having led Australia in 26 Tests, whereas Root has just come off his first home season as skipper. After series wins over South Africa and the West Indies, the Ashes is the Yorkshireman's first overseas tour at the helm. Neither of the two captains is known for especially unusual tactics, while they've each shown it is possible to play aggressive cricket without resorting to over-the-top 'sledging', verbal abuse. When Smith was recalled to the Australia side during the 2010-2011 Ashes series, he said: "I've been told that I've got to come into the side and be fun." That led to mocking taunts of "Tell us a joke, Smithy" from England when he came out to bat. He was dropped soon afterwards but fought his way back into the Australia side during the 2013-2014 Ashes. At this stage, Smith had only gone beyond 50 six times in 29 Test innings, and averaged 33. But the third Test at Perth saw Smith compile his maiden Test hundred and he has not looked back since, with his ability to improvise shots on the legside now a familiar sight. It took Smith just 99 innings to score 20 Test hundreds, an achievement all the more impressive given he needed 23 knocks to get his first ton. "I probably didn't look back and reflect on much until my 50th Test match at the SCG (Sydney Cricket Ground) (this January against Pakistan) and after that game the team doctor, Peter Brukner, said I am one of three players to have played 50 Tests and averaged 60," Smith told Wisden Cricket Monthly magazine. "Now with 20 hundreds, and hopefully a lot more cricket in front of me, it would be nice to get up there." Root once had a reputation for being "cheeky", but that doesn't mean he has larked around as skipper. In August, his declaration left the West Indies needing to score 322 runs in just over a day to win the second Test at Root's Headingley home ground. Thanks to a brilliant unbeaten century by Shai Hope, the West Indies pulled off a remarkable win. If Root proved too reliant on James Anderson and Stuart Broad come the last day, there was hardly any criticism of his declaration when he made it. Since then occasional off-spinner Root has had to deal with losing vice-captain Ben Stokes after the all-rounder remained in England following a late night fracas outside a Bristol nightclub. Root has scored 1,059 runs in 10 Tests this year ahead of the Ashes, including three hundreds. He has arrived in Australia desperate to atone for a poor first tour Down Under in 2013-2014 when England were thrashed 5-0 and Root was dropped for the final Test. "I think one thing for me (this time) will be making sure the game is played at my pace, trying to be nice and calm and collected out in the middle — and feel really ready for that aspect of Test cricket, which you do experience here in Australia," said Root.

Printed and published by Romen Dutta, owned by Asish Laha and published from P11, CIT Road Scheme LV, Kolkata 700 014 and printed at Echo Printing Press, 81, Nilgunj Road, Kolkata-700 109.
Tel 033 2227-4547 (News) 033 2227-4528/48 (ADVT) Fax: 033 2227- 5765 E-mail news@echoofindia.com Associate Editor: Sabyasachi Bandopadhyay, **Editor : Rabindra Nath Sinha*** (*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act.)