

Hosts Bengaluru eye top spot against ATK



BENGALURU, JAN 6 /-/- Having regained form with a convincing win in their last game, Bengaluru FC would look to continue the momentum when they lock horns with struggling ATK in an Indian Super League (ISL) match on Sunday.

Bengaluru FC beat Kerala Blasters FC in their last outing. The hosts

are placed third on the standings with 15 points from five wins in eight games, while ATK are seventh with nine points following two wins. Bengaluru FC manager Roberto Roca would like to have a win before playing two games on the road - against Kerala Blasters FC and Goa. Roca would be hoping

for some fireworks from skipper Sunil Chhetri and prolific Miku, who bulged the Blasters' net twice. ATK would like to forget the 1-1 draw against FC Goa after a day-long ordeal of playing a delayed match, which finished well past midnight at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata. The Goa team had arrived at the

airport after its chartered flight got delayed following a technical snag and later due to a crash of a fighter jet at Dabolim airport, which forced the runway to be closed. After a poor start in two-time defending champions sprung back into thereckoning with win over Mumbai City and Delhi Dynamos.

Aizawl standin wayas Mohun Bagan eye revival

KOLKATA, JAN 6 /-/- Mohun Bagan will seek a revival of fortunes under new coach Shankar Chakraborty when they face reigning champions Aizawl FC in an I-League fixture at the Salt Lake Stadium here tomorrow.

Having kicked off their campaign in style that included a 1-0 win over bitter foes East Bengal in the Kolkata derby, Mohun Bagan's title aspiration has dwindled as they slipped to fifth place in the table after seven matches. Mohun Bagan last won against Churchill Brothers on December 10 and dropped points for three consecutive matches before suffering their first-ever home defeat. The Mariners succumbed to a 1-2 defeat to 10-man Chennai City FC, their first defeat of the season that came at their home ground, and moments later in their 2014-15 I-League winning coach Sanjoy Sen stepped down. Sen's understudy, Chakraborty, was elevated to the chief coach's position and his first priority would be to help the players regain self-confidence.

Khawaja leads the way as Australia take lead against England

SYDNEY, JAN 6 /-/- Usman Khawaja plundered a big century as Australia roared England's bowlers on Saturday to open up a 133-run lead with two days to play in the final Ashes Test in Sydney.

Khawaja top scored with 171 while Shaun Marsh finished unbeaten on 88 after Steve Smith's efforts as Australia built a substantial lead with more runs to come and intense 40 minutes of rain. Australia led by 133 runs at the close of play on a dispiriting third day for the tourists, who took just two wickets. Shaun and Mitchell Marsh were making merry in an unbroken batting partnership as Australia cruised to 479 for four. Mitchell Marsh clubbed Moen Ali for two sixes in three balls to be 63 not out off 87 balls at stumps after surviving a leg before wicket review in the final overs. Khawaja batted for 515 minutes off 381 balls with 18 fours and six for his maiden Ashes Test hundred. "You don't get to celebrate Test centuries too much unless you're Steve Smith. You've got to enjoy them when they come," Khawaja said. It was the Pakistan-born Khawaja's sixth Test hundred and first in Sydney and came at a time when some former players were calling for his dismissal despite scoring two half-centuries earlier in the series. "It's disappointing," Khawaja said of the criticism. When an scoring runs. Molegant when I'm not scoring runs I'm lazy. Can't seem to win, when things aren't going well.



Usman Khawaja took his innings past 150

Root after the "Snicko" and "Hot Spot" technology could not find supporting evidence. England earlier claimed Smith's prized wicket before lunch when Ali caught and bowled the Australian skipper when he seemed set to make his fourth century of the series. Smith, who looked untroubled batting patiently through the morning session, left the field shaking his head after batting for 253 minutes and facing 158 balls. Smith and Khawaja seized the momentum for Australia with a 138-run stand as England chased a face-saving win after surrendering the Ashes after just three matches. The skipper has been one of the key differences between the two sides in the series, amassing 67 runs at an average of 137.40 with a top score of 239, his Test best. There was drama in the final over before lunch when Khawaja survived a review for leg before wicket but only after Crane had been found to have just overstepped for a no-ball.

Thiago rescues Mumbai City; JFC remain winless at home

JAMSHEDPUR, JAN 6 /-/- Thiago Santos rescued a point for Mumbai City FC with a 71st minute strike against hosts Jamshedpur FC as the two teams settled for an entertaining draw in the Hero Indian Super League at JRD Tata Sports Complex in Jamshedpur on Friday.

Thiago put the visitors ahead in the 20th minute while Nigerian striker Izu Azuka scored two late goals in the first-half to give the hosts a 2-1 lead going into the break. It was Thiago again, who struck back in the second half and helped them leave the Steel City with a point but there was no denying the class of his first goal. Thiago scored what can be best described as a stunning goal for Mumbai City FC in the 34th minute. After a throw in, Balwant Singh found

Everton Santos who simply rolled the ball into the path of Thiago. The Brazilian was surrounded by Jamshedpur players all around, but he was still determined to push his way through. He cut past one player, then second, and another one. To top it all, he finished the move with a sensational flick that found the top corner of the net.

It was a stunning effort from Thiago and the hosts were momentarily stunned. Their famous defence had crumbled, thanks to a goal in the 34th minute. They fought back in style with two quick goals in the 43rd and 45th minute to take a 2-1 lead. The Nigerian Jamshepur had not scored from open play this season and they finally got that goal in the 59th minute. Jerry Mawhingthang found himself some space

near the rival danger zone and drilled in a low cross in the path of Kervees Belfort. His attempt was blocked by a Mumbai defender but the rebound fell nicely for Izu Azuka, who didn't miss from such close range. Two minutes later, Jamshepur struck again. It was Azuka, this time, though with a much difficult goal. It was Jerry who moved dangerously on the right and essayed a cross inside the box where the Nigerian finished with a classy effort.

In the second half, Jamshepur were comfortable even though Mumbai City were asking questions but the hosts didn't hold on to their lead. Their citadel crumbled for the second time as Thiago was on target in the 71st minute, thanks to an inch-perfect pass from Everton.

Chennaiyin FC may heap more misery on Delhi Dynamos



CHENNAI, JAN 6 /-/- After having suffered a run of five consecutive defeats in the Hero Indian Super League, Delhi Dynamos will hope for better things in the new year.

Up next for the bottom-placed side is Chennaiyin FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Chennai, on Sunday, and the visitors will hope their season has not ended at the half-way stage. Delhi Dynamos opened their ISL campaign with a win over FC Pune City but since then it has gone horribly wrong for them. I think we have been playing good. But we have problems in two key areas - defence and attack. We have conceded too many cheap goals. Our set piece defending has failed us a number of times," coach Miguel

Chennaiyin FC coachesuspended for 3 matches; fined INR 4 lakh

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /-/- Chennaiyin FC head coach John Gregory has been suspended for three matches and fined INR 4 lakh with immediate effect in the Hero Indian Super League. All India Football Federation (AIFF) Disciplinary Committee found Chennaiyin coach Gregory in breach of Article 58 (offensive behaviour and fair play) for his offensive remarks to referee during Match # 33 of JFC Vs Chennaiyin FC at JRD Tata Sports Complex on 28th December 2018.

Dynamos' Matias & Mumbai's Sehaj suspended; fined

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /-/- Claudio Matias (AIFF No. 10) of Delhi Dynamos FC and Sehaj Singh (Jersey No. 28) of Mumbai City FC were suspended for four and two matches respectively for their club's upcoming games in the Hero Indian Super League. Claudio Matias has also been fined INR 3 Lakhs and Sehaj Singh INR 2 Lakhs. All India Football Federation (AIFF) Disciplinary Committee found Dynamos' Matias and Mumbai City's Singh in violation of Article 58 (serious infringement) and Article 49 (misconduct against opponents or persons other than official) during Match # 34 between Mumbai City FC and Delhi Dynamos at Mumbai Football Arena on 29th December 2017.

Pandya's fighting 93 lifts India



CAPE TOWN, JAN 6 /-/- India allrounder Hardik Pandya struck his second Test fifty off just 46 balls but missed out a well-deserved ton on Day 2 of the first Test against South Africa. Pandya, who got out on 93, was well on course to his second Test ton but was unlucky to miss it after he edged a Kagiso Rabada delivery behind the stumps. Pandya struck 14 boundaries in the match, including a stroke-filled knock that came off 95 balls. India were in dire straits when Pandya came to bat but he took the attack to the opposition in the first Test at Cape Town with a fighting knock on Saturday. India were bowled out for 209, handing South Africa a crucial 77-run first innings lead. Pandya was circumspect to start with and was a beneficiary of a dropped chance in the gully when batting on 15 as Dean Elgar failed to hold on to a fairly easy chance. Pandya, however, did not change his approach as he took inspiration from the counterattacking knocks from AB de Villiers and De Kock on Day 1. Pandya made his intent clear when he thumped three fours in an over of Vernon Philander. Morne Morkel tested him with short stuff and Pandya played his signature overhead ramp for his sixth four. His second fifty came via a four through mid-off and the Indian dressing room stood up to clap in appreciation. Even Rabada, who looked like picking up wicket almost every delivery wasn't spared either with a guide to third man region for four.

That he was able to play his attacking game was thanks to Bhuvneshwar Kumar who was rock solid despite the ball beating his bat on several occasions. He scored his first run off the 34th delivery and then cover drove Rabada for his first boundary. With the duo settling in, Faruq Plessis introduced spin in Keshav Maharaj but he leaked 12 runs in it with Pandya clubbing a six and four in it.

New Zealand beat Pakistan by 61 runs in 1st ODI



WELLINGTON, JAN 6 /-/- New Zealand overtook Pakistan in their one-day internationals when they beat the Champions Trophy holders by 61 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system to open the two-match series.

Captain Kane Williamson made 115 to lead New Zealand to 215.7 as they batted first after losing the toss. Pakistan were 166-6 after 30.1 overs when rain brought the match to an early end. Opener Fakhar Zaman was 82 not out and Faheem Ashraf 17 was not out but Pakistan were well short of the 227 runs it needed to win the match under the Duckworth-Lewis system when rain finally set in. New Zealand swing bowler Tim Southee captured two wickets in the first over of the Pakistan innings to place the tourists under immediate pressure in reply. Southee trapped both Azhar Ali (6) and Babar Azam (0) lbw within his opening over, then took a catch from Trent Boult's bowling to dismiss Mohammad Hafeez (1) to leave Pakistan's innings in disarray at 13.3. Fakhar batted superbly to recover the innings, reaching his half-century from 63 balls and putting on 78 for the sixth wicket with Shadab Khan. But Pakistan never approached the run-rate they needed to win the match whether or not rain intervened. New Zealand were on top from the start as Williamson, currently the No. 4-ranked batsman in ODI cricket, reached his 10th ODI century from 106 balls to lead his team to a record total at the Basin Reserve. Opener Colin Munro also enhanced his reputation as one of the world's leading ODI batsmen, hitting his New Zealand centenary with foundation with his fifth ODI half century. Munro, the top-ranked batsman in Twenty20 internationals, hit 58 from 35 balls to give the hosts a rapid beginning in conditions in which scoring generally required careful application. "Obviously, we've been playing a lot of cricket recently against the West Indies and we've got a different competition against Pakistan," Williamson said. "The way we batted with Colin and Martin (Guptill) at the top of the order set the tone coming into a new series and getting past the 300 mark on that surface was an above-par effort." Despite being covered during two days of rain - the reason Pakistan captain Sarfarz Ahmed chose to bowl on winning the toss - the pitch at the Basin Reserve was hard and provided good pace and carry, even a little seam movement. Undeterred by those conditions, Munro reached his 50 off just 33 balls with five fours and two sixes. He went to his half-century with a six from the bowling of Hasan Ali and added one more boundary before he was out to end an 83-run opening partnership with Martin Guppitt (48). Williamson then added 73 with Guppitt for the second wicket and 90 with Henry Nicholls for the fifth before finally falling in the 48th over. Nicholls again played a strong hand near the end, hitting 50 from 53 balls. The Pakistan seamers, who found a little assistance from the pitch, used shorter balls and slower deliveries to try and limit the scoring options of the New Zealand batsmen. Munro was the only batsman who was able to launch an all-out attack on the bowlers and Williamson notably achieved his century by quiet accumulation. His innings contained only eight fours and one six and, in total, New Zealand hit only 25 fours and five sixes. Hasan Ali, ranked the best bowler in the world in ODIs, was again Pakistan's best on Saturday, taking 3-41. "Obviously it was very tough conditions for us," Sarfarz said of the wet, windy and cold weather. "Credit to the New Zealand batsmen, they batted very well. Hopefully we will sit together, talk about it and do better in the next match. (AP)

India is a land of opportunity, says Manchester City CEO



JAMSHEDPUR, JAN 6 /-/- Manchester City FC CEO Ferran Soriano has termed India as a "land of opportunity" and remains keen to tap into the growing football market. Soriano is also the CEO for City Football Group that owns six football clubs across continents, witnessed live action in the Hero Indian Super League during Jamshepur FC's home encounter against Mumbai City FC on Friday and was pleased with what he saw. Soriano is accompanied by three of Man City officials for a three day visit to India. Sounding optimistic on the rapid development of Indian football and the growth of India as a football market, the 50-year-old Spanish CEO said he is "very positive on Indian football."

"We think India is a major opportunity for football because there is talent and passion and we are very positive about the development of football in the country. That's why we are here. We want to watch some ISL games, meet people and want to see players," said Soriano whose company has bought the M's New York City FC, A League's Melbourne City and Premier League's Manchester City. C. Invited by Tata Steel, owners of Jamshepur FC, Soriano was in Jamshepur with the atmosphere at the JRD Tata Stadium in Jamshepur. "This is spectacular. Atmosphere is great and we saw some very good football. I am very impressed." I think this is a land of opportunity. There is enough evidence that India has talent and they can be coached to get to the top. For Indian talent to grow, coaching is very important. You need good coaches to come to India who can also coach other coaches here," he said.



Portugal told reporters during the pre-match press conference. The Delhi coach also confirmed that star striker Kaku Uche will not be available to start the game on Sunday. "It is not fit for a start. He is not fit yet. Maybe we will give him some game time but he will not start," said the coach. The visitors will also have the privilege of attacking midfielder Claudio Matias Miralbare after being suspended for four games after a clash with Mumbai City FC midfielder Sehaj Singh in the previous game. On paper, Chennaiyin FC look clear favourites to take all three points from the game and return to the top of the table. They will not have any suspended coach John Gregory on the sidelines to guide them and should be aware of their past record against Dynamos. In the last six encounters between the two sides, Delhi have won four times while Chennaiyin have taken full points just once. Assistant coach Syed Sabir Pasha, who filled in for Gregory at the pre-match press conference, felt the absence of the coach will not have much bearing on how they approach the game. "Delhi will be a great test for us. We have defended as a team so far and we know they will come at us looking for a win. And we have to counter that," said Pasha. A win for Gregory's side will see them take over as league leaders. At the other end, a win for Delhi Dynamos will lift them off the foot of the table.