

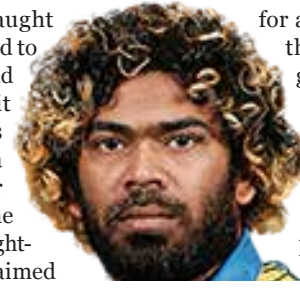


Lasith Malinga in a surprisingly new role. Find out what

MUMBAI: Usually known for his tow-crushing yorkers that choke batsmen from scoring runs at the death or send them back to the pavilion, Lasith Malinga tried his hand at off-spin in a recent domestic game back in Sri Lanka. And he just didn't fare well, he picked up as many as three wickets!

Playing for Teejay Lanka against LB Finance in the final of the MCA knockout tournament, Malinga signed off, taking three wickets in his four overs while giving away just 24 runs in the process. His wickets included that of Lakshan Rodrigo, Chathuranga Kumara and Anushka Perera. Rodrigo was the first of his

wickets and was caught behind while he tried to go for a slog-sweep and ended up edging it behind. Kumara's wicket should be a memorable one for Malinga given that he cleaned bowled the right-hand batsman as he aimed



for a big heave towards the cow corner of the ground. Instead, he missed and the ball hit the middle stump. Malinga's final wicket came a couple of overs later when Perera tried

to hit him straight down the ground but only holed it to the fielder at long-off. This isn't the first time fast bowlers have opted to bowl spin. Manoj Prabhakar, Gurinder Sandhu, Sohail Tanvir and Colin Miller have all tried their hand at such antics, that too in international games.

Pick and stick with keeper: Gilchrist

SYDNEY: Wicket-keeping great Adam Gilchrist has called on Australian selectors to pick and stick when they decide who will be behind the stumps for the Ashes series.

Three players are seen as being in the mix to take the gloves head of the first Test against England on Nov 23. They include the current incumbent Matthew Wade, who has struggled with the bat, his predecessor Peter Nevill, who was axed 12 months ago, and the fast-improving Alex Carey.

Whoever gets the nod should be given an extended run, said Gilchrist, who played 96 Tests, making more than 400 dismissals and scoring over 5,500 runs.

"Whoever they pick, they just need to give them a good run at it," he said. "Like they've done with [Matthew] Renshaw."

Virender Sehwag believes tough one-day culture sets Delhi cricket apart

NEW DELHI: New Delhi has a penchant for producing mentally hardened players and former India opener Virender Sehwag today attributed this to a tough club level one-day cricket, played day in and out, through a long summer.

The Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA) today named Gate 2 of the Ferozeshah Kotla Stadium as the 'Virender Sehwag Gate'. There was a goof-up though by the DDCA, which called Sehwag the only Indian to score a triple century in Test cricket. The association forgot that Karnataka's Karun Nair also has a triple ton to his credit. Nair scored a triple century against England in Chennai earlier this year. Asked what sets apart Delhi cricket, Sehwag said, "In Delhi a lot of one-day cricket is played in clubs. And by the time these players come to Ranji Trophy they become very tough mentally and they don't

find it difficult to get used to the grind." The 39-year-old Sehwag said he was honoured. "It is a great honour and today we have a gate named after a cricketer but later we can have dressing room, stands, restaurants and dressing rooms and other things named after cricketers. It's a good thing and positive move from DDCA. I had a wish that whenever such a function happens, we should call all the cricketers who have represented Delhi and India," Sehwag said. Sehwag thanked the DDCA and said this will motivate younger players. "Any young cricketer will get motivated reading the name. Virender Sehwag played here as a kid and when he left there is a gate named after him so if I can also play for U19, U16, U23 or Ranji for Delhi and then represent India, then a gate, stand or something will be after my name," he said. Asked to single out that one moment he wished he was

part of in Delhi cricket, Sehwag said it was the Ranji Trophy triumph in 2007-08 when they beat Uttar Pradesh in the final. "One moment I missed was that I was not part of that Ranji Trophy triumphant team. I was playing for the Indian team then. Full credit to Gautam Gambhir, who was leading the team, and Pradeep Sangwan also played really well I remember." Sehwag recalled a must-win match against Gujarat at the Kotla during his U-19 days. "We played one U-19 match here -- Delhi versus Gujarat -- and we had to win and qualify. Ashish Nehra and Amit Bhandari played really well in that game, picking up five and four wickets, and though I scored only 50 or 60 runs I still fondly remember that game as we managed to qualify for the knockouts." Sehwag said he got lots of tips and motivation from former players Bishan Singh Bedi and Mohinder Amarnath.

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova adds to Angelique Kerber's woes at WTA Elite Trophy



AGENCY: Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova inflicted yet another defeat on Angelique Kerber on day one of the WTA Elite Trophy after CoCo Vandeweghe and Julia Goerges made winning starts in Zhuhai.

Kerber spoke of her desire to finish a miserable year on a high note in China, but fourth seed Pavlyuchenkova beat the former world number one 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 in the Rose Group on Tuesday.

After the highs of winning her first two grand-slam titles in 2016, the 29-year-old has plummeted from the top of the rankings as recently as March to 19th coming into the tournament.

This was her third loss of the year to the Russian world number 14, each meeting having come down to a final set.

Eighth-seed Kerber has won only one of her last six matches and made a disappointing start to her final attempt to win a first title in 2017, Pavlyuchenkova making only 20 unforced errors to the German's 26 and breaking five times to seal victory. Vandeweghe came out on top in the first match of the event, coming from a set down to defeat wildcard Peng Shuai 3-6-6-3-6-2 in the Bougainville Group.

Second-seed Vandeweghe had managed only a solitary victory in her previous four events in China and that record looked unlikely to improve when she was broken twice to lose the first set.

But the US Open and Australian Open semi-finalist raised her game from there and Peng was unable to pull off a victory in her homeland.

Goerges, meanwhile, is the early leader of the Azalea Group as a result of her 6-1-7-6 (7-5) success over Magdalena Rybarikova.

Ashish Nehra vs Martin Guptill: 5 key clashes in India vs New Zealand 1st T20 at Feroz Shah Kotla

NEW DELHI: After winning the ODI series 2-1, the Indian cricket team will take New Zealand in a three-match T20 series, starting November 1. Here is a look at five key battles which could shape the destiny of this series:

Ashish Nehra vs Martin Guptill Ashish Nehra will end his 18-year international career with the opening T20 at his home ground, the Feroz Shah Kotla.

He'll look to sign off on a high but will face a stiff challenge from Martin Guptill, who has taken his hitting ability to another level in the past few years.

Hailed as New Zealand's best white ball cricketer currently, Guptill will look to attack from the word go. Yuzvendra Chahal vs Tom Latham Tom Latham was New Zealand's highest run-getter (206) in the three-ODI series vs India and will hope to

build on the momentum in the T20s.

However, Yuzvendra Chahal -- who bounced back in the last two ODIs after a poor show in Mumbai -- will look to make visitors' job tough and his duel with Latham will be interesting to watch out for.

If Chahal can get his wicket early, New Zealand could be in serious trouble. Virat Kohli vs Ish Sodhi On Indian wickets, New Zealand will be heavily reliant on leg-spinner Ish Sodhi. The Ludhiana-born New Zealand player will hope to take full advantage of the favourable tracks.

Virat Kohli, on the other hand, has been in stupendous form this year. He even scored two centuries in the ODIs and was adjudged the Man-of-the-Series. However, the Indian skipper will be aware of the challenge he'll face against Sodhi, who could prove to be a tricky customer on turning pitches.



This will be an interesting battle between two players who are in contrasting stages of their career. Sodhi will be eager to put on a solid show in this series, and the prospect of getting the better of one of the best batsmen of this generation will certainly be a big thing.

Rohit Sharma vs Trent Boult Recently, Rohit Sharma has had issues against left-arm fast bowlers and his dismissals have been almost similar -- Mohammad Amir in the Champions Trophy final, Jason Behrendorff in Guwahati, and Trent Boult at the Wankhede. It's the incoming deliveries that have accounted for Rohit on all three occasions.

Old putter adds new vigour to golfer Ajeetesh Sandhu's game

NEW DELHI: Ajeetesh Sandhu can afford a laugh now that he has won on a global tour, but the talk of unfulfilled promise used to hurt. "Never thought about it much," he declared ahead of this week's \$400,000 Panasonic Open at the Delhi Golf Club (DGC), and immersed himself in the sport he had come to love. Still, there were moments that "set him back". The world didn't matter; it was those near him and their unflinching belief that made him think despite the "distraction" called golf. A self-proclaimed nerd who relies on no one but himself for all golfing needs, equipment in particular as that's a neglected area among players, Ajeetesh was aware a similar approach was required if he had to cross the (winner's) threshold.

Parents by the side, and "looking forward" in the darkest of times, the 29-year-old relied on some time-tested methods to justify the spark he had shown as a junior golfer.

Even after the breakthrough win on the Asian Tour in October, there is some regret a lot more could have been done had he "got comfortable with the game" earlier, but not for long. "Every week is a fresh start and in golf we have a long career (fitness permitting) so that took the pressure off peaking early on," said the Chandigarh player. Then, there was confidence his time would come. Ajeetesh calls it "belief in destiny", and after the win at the Yeangder TPC, runner-up spot at the Macao Open two weeks ago and a win on the



Japanese feeder tour in between, he stands vindicated. The stage had started to be set early last year while playing the domestic tour. And it was again a "stroke of luck", according to Ajeetesh. After a poor week, Ajeetesh arrived for the Golconda Masters in Hyderabad, the confidence not high. "I was always a consistent ball striker; it was putting that was letting me down." A conversation with 2009 Indian Open winner C Muniyappa led Ajeetesh to a putter he had used as a junior. It had gone off production long ago, but Muniyappa had it as he liked the feel. He had one to spare, and with it Ajeetesh won wire-to-wire to end a three-year drought on the Professional Golf Tour of India. Even if Muniyappa wants it back, Ajeetesh is in no mood to return it, and the Odyssey White Hot will be in his bag when he tees off at DGC on Thursday. Bent and with multiple scratches, the putter's isn't a pretty sight, but that means little to Ajeetesh. It's the comfort level with his craft and gear that matters as he looks to extend the current run.

State Football League 2017: AG's XI beats SFA 1-0 in Premier Div match

SRINAGAR: Accountant General's (AG's) XI defeated State Football Academy (SFA) by a solitary goal in a Premier Division match of ongoing State Football League at Synthetic Turf TRC on Tuesday (Oct 31).

In the closely contested match, both the teams missed several scoring opportunities. However, compared to SFA team, the AG's XI made lesser mistakes and were the eventual winners. Throughout the first half, the defence lines of both the teams had to keep the forward lines at bay. When it seemed that the first half will end goal less, Amanjeet Singh of AG's XI managed to breach the defence lines of the opposite team and score a goal in the last minutes of the half. Immediately after AG's XI took the lead, the referee blew the whistle to mark the end of the first half.

In the second half, SFA team looked desperate to score an equaliser and came closer several times only to fail at the final moment. The AG's XI defence lines failed all the attacks made by the SFA forwards. In the last 10 minutes of the match, both the teams looked desperate with SFA trying to score an equaliser and AG's team try-



ing to double the lead. However, none of them succeeded in their effort and when the referee blew the final whistle the score line read 1-0 in favour of AG's team. Shoban from SFA was declared player of the match.

Meanwhile, the State Football League, a mega event first of its kind in the history of J&K football, is going on at different venues of the state with full swing drawing huge crowds to

the football venues. More than 500 football teams and clubs with over 12000 players and over 1500 team officials are participating in the mega event, the aim of which is to unearth the hidden talent across the State.

The event is being held across the 22 districts of the state these days and is being organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Football Association (JKFA) under the auspices of State

Sports Council and on the directions of All India Football Federation (AIFF).

While B-Division League of State Football League is already completed with IFC Nowgam winning the title, the A-Division League has reached to the final stage with Fort View FC and Novelty FC qualifying for final. In Super and Premier Division leagues, more than 75 percent matches have been completed.