



World T20: It's KL Rahul vs Sanju Samson; Hardik form continues to be worry

NEW DELHI, APR 25: KL Rahul is believed to be slightly ahead of Sanju Samson in the race for second wicketkeeper's slot even as Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya's indifferent batting form remains a worry for the national selection panel which is expected to announce the 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup in Americas by the end of this month.

The other bone of contention in drafting the final squad could be the choice of an extra bowler.

It remains to be seen whether an extra pace bowler in Avesh Khan will be accommodated or whether the choice would be between Lucknow Super Giants leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi and Delhi Capitals all-rounder Axar Patel considering the low and slow tracks in the West Indies.

It is understood that skipper Rohit Sharma is likely to have a meeting with chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar to discuss the outline of the team.

With the ICC setting a May 1 deadline for the announcement of 15-member squads, the BCCI is ex-



pected to reveal the names anytime between the end of this week or the beginning of next week.

Pandya has so far bowled 17 overs out of a possible 32 in eight games for MI.

As a designated finisher, he has hit only seven sixes in these games, which is below par by every measure. The free-flowing batting is completely missing in the 150 odd runs that he has scored in the tournament so far at a strike-rate of 142.

However, Pandya can be called a 'TINA' option (There Is No Alternative) for the selectors as Shivam Dube, who is also expected to board the New York bound flight, isn't bowling either.

Also in terms of skill and pace, Dube the bowler isn't anywhere close to

Pandya but his current batting form (22 sixes in eight games) can't be ignored either.

It can be safely concluded that Rishabh Pant, who is now third among the top run-getters in the competition with 342 at a strike rate of 161, has sealed his place as the team's No. 1 keeper-batter and also as a designated finisher.

The fight is pretty intense for the second keeper's slot and despite KL Rahul (302 at 141 SR) not batting in the middle-order, his range of strokes might just help him pip Samson (314 at SR 152).

Samson might again have to be content with being a stand-by inclusion like last year's 50 over World Cup.

The five bowlers, who have all but sealed their

places are Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav.

However save Bumrah and Kuldeep, the other Indian bowlers haven't been in great form during IPL and hence the choice of an extra bowler becomes very important.

It will be a three-way fight between Rajasthan Royals' pacer Avesh, Delhi Capitals' left-arm spin bowling all-rounder Axar and Lucknow Super Giants leg-spinner Bishnoi.

Avesh, who has improved a lot as far as his death bowling is concerned, has eight wickets from as many matches with an economy rate of 9.41 while Bishnoi has only taken five wickets but on flat tracks, his economy of 8.47 can be considered impressive.

Axar, who has seven scalps from nine games but is bowling at a rate of just above 7, would be a brilliant choice too taking the conditions into consideration.

Add to it, his batting prowess, scoring runs at a strike of 132, and also the fact that he is a very good all-round fielder.

Arjun Babuta breaches finals world record en route to commanding victory

NEW DELHI, APR 25: Arjun Babuta breached the existing finals world record (FWR) in men's 10m air rifle on way to a commanding win in the ongoing Olympic Selection Trials (OST) 1&2 for Rifle and Pistol at the Karni Singh Range in New Delhi on Thursday.

Babuta, the 25-year-old Paris Olympics quota winner, shone with a sensational tally of 254.0 in the OST T1 final. The score was 0.3 above the mark set by fellow finalist and India teammate Divyansh Singh Panwar at the Cairo World Cup earlier this year.

Also registering wins in their respective OST T1 final matches were Nancy (women's 10m air rifle), Varun Tomar (men's 100m air pistol) and Rhythm Sangwan (women's 10m air pistol).

Babuta's score-sheet had two perfect 10.9s, besides 13 shots which were 10.6 and above.

His lowest score of 10.0 came on the 21st shot, by which time he had already



established a huge lead over the field, winning by 2.8 points in the end over 2022 world champion Rudranksh Patil (251.2). Sri Karthik Sabari Raj (229.6) was third.

Nancy too excelled in the women's 10m air rifle, securing a comfortable win in OST T1 final.

Her tally of 253.4, missed the world mark by 0.6, but it was sufficient to ward off quota holder Mehuli Ghosh by 0.7 points (252.7). Olympian Elavelin Valarivan (230.5) was third.

The men's 10m air pistol final saw Paris quota holder Varun Tomar secure yet another comfortable victory, with a score of

available. Her score of 243.5 was a massive 5.7 points better than second-placed Manu Bhaker (237.8). Reigning Asian Games champion Palak (217.5) finished third.

In the men's and women's 50m rifle 3-positions OST T2 qualification round, Olympians Aishwarya Pratap Singh Tomar and Anjum Moudgil topped the scoring charts.

Aishwarya was especially sensational, posting a superb 595 to take an eight-point lead against his nearest rival Swapnil Kusale (587).

Niraj Kumar (587), Chain Singh (585) and Akhil Sheoran (584) were placed third, fourth and fifth respectively after the qualification round.

In women's 50m rifle 3-positions OST T2 qualification round, Olympian Anjum Moudgil shot 589, followed by Asian Games gold medalist Sift Kaur Samra (587), Shriyanka Sadangi (587), Nischal Singh (587) and Ashi Chouksey (585).

After topping the qualification round on Wednesday with a score of 578, she led from start to finish in the finals to collect the highest podium points

Royal Challengers Bengaluru thumps Sunrisers Hyderabad to end losing streak

NEW DELHI, APR 25: Royal Challengers Bengaluru came up with a stunning all-round display to shock crowd favourite Sunrisers Hyderabad and record a 35-run win in an IPL league match at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium here on Thursday.

RCB's bowling performance served as a reminder that the SRH batting line-up can be brittle in the face of accurate, if not unplayable, bowling, raising hopes for other teams as the championship heads for the business end.

The home team was straight away under pressure in the chase, needing 207 for victory, with off-spinner Will Jacks inducing a poor stroke to remove the dangerous Travis Head of the sixth ball of the innings.

Soon, southpaw Abhishek Sharma's cameo ended, after he mistimed



a pull off Yash Dayal to be caught behind. Then, left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh dismissed Aiden Markram, trapping him LBW with a full-toss.

RCB was back on top again as Heinrich Klaasen, who hit the previous ball from Swapnil for a six over long-on, perished trying to repeat the stroke.

Later, leg-spinner Karn Sharma had Nitish Kumar Reddy bowled, missing a reverse sweep and then took a smart return catch to send back the dangerous Abdul Samad to reduce SRH to 85 for six in 9.1 overs.

The rest was a formality as RCB notched up a much-awaited win.

Earlier, Rajat Patidar's brilliance at the top of the order, a not-so-fluent half-century by Virat Kohli and a cameo by Cameron Green helped RCB, electing to bat, post a challenging total.

Strangely, after the power-play, Kohli struggled to find his desired form and failed to score a boundary.

However, Patidar was just brilliant at the other end, with a 20-ball half-century, hitting leg-spinner Mayank Markande for

four huge sixes in the 11th over of the innings.

Jaydev Unadkat was the pick of the bowlers with his three-wicket haul, including the prize scalps of Patidar and Kohli, slowing down the pace of the game. RCB scored 64 runs from the last five overs, losing three wickets thanks mainly to some lusty blows by Green.

Shahbaz Ahmed (40 not out), opener Abhishek Sharma (31) and Pat Cummins (31) tried their best for SRH. Swapnil Singh (2/40), Karn Sharma (2/29) and Cameron Green (2/12) claimed two wickets each for RCB.

BRIEF SCORES: Royal Challengers Bengaluru: 206 for 7 in 20 overs (Rajat Patidar 50, Virat Kohli 51; Jaydev Unadkat 3/30).

Sunrisers Hyderabad: 171 for 8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 31, Pat Cummins 31; Karn Sharma 2/29).

highest level while being a mother."

The head of the Pakistan women's cricket wing, Tania Mallik, said that the Board was always indebted to Bismah for her immense contributions to Pakistan women's cricket.

Bismah was part of the women's team that won the gold medal twice in the Asian Games, in 2010 and 2014, besides captaining her country in 96 international matches.

She competed in four editions of the ICC Women's 50-over World Cup (2009, 2013, 2017, and 2022), captaining the team in the 2022 edition held in New Zealand.

In T20Is, Bismah featured in eight editions of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup between 2009 and 2023 and led the side in the 2020 and 2023 editions.



most by any Pakistan woman cricketer.

She had made her T20I debut against Ireland in 2009. She has scored 6,262 international runs, including 33 half-centuries, and has taken 80 international wickets with her leg-spin.

"I have decided to retire from the game I love the most. It has been an incredible journey, filled with challenges, victories, and unforgettable memories," Bismah said in a statement.

"I want to express my gratitude to my family, who has supported me throughout my cricketering journey, from the very beginning until now. I also want to extend my thanks to the Pakistan Cricket Board for believing in me and providing the platform to showcase my talent. The support from the PCB has been invaluable, particularly in implementing the first-ever parental policy for me, which enabled me to represent my country at the

Kolkata Knight Riders hopes to maintain winning run against struggling Punjab Kings

NEW DELHI, APR 25: Kolkata Knight Riders will be looking for another positive result at home to strengthen its position in the league table when it meets Punjab Kings at the Eden Gardens here on Friday.

Currently placed second in the points table with 10 points, KKR has performed with a fairly good success rate having won five of its seven matches. This has happened largely owing to the efficiency of its batting department, which has been amassing 200 plus scores regularly.

KKR will be playing its



fourth consecutive game at home, where it has won two and lost one in the three previous appearances. The previous match saw a total of 443 runs where the host edged out visiting Royal Challengers Bengaluru by the slenderest of margins – one run.

KKR top order has been in good form which can be judged by the runs amassed by the likes of Sunil Narine (286), Phil Salt (249), skipper Shreyas Iyer (190) and Andre Russell (155).

Despite a huge investment in the bowling de-

partment, KKR bowling has not been able to reach the expected level which was assumed to happen with the purchase of Mitchell Starc with a record amount of Rs. 24.75 crore.

For the ninth-placed Punjab Kings, the journey so far has been far from satisfactory.

The team lost the last four of its outings in a total of six defeats in eight matches to be one of the most underperforming sides. It will be seriously hoping to turn things around by outshining the prowess of the home side's arsenal.

Dharamshala Himalayan trekking begins

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, APR 25

Dharamshala Himalayan Trekking Programme, a flagship event of Tawi Trekkers J&K, commenced today with 75 students of Padma Sachdev Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar, here leaving for Dharamshala.

The group is being led by general secretary of Tawi Trekkers, Sonam Sidharth and Sourav Deep Singh, both seasoned trekkers and mountaineers. The group leaders include Suksham Verma and Vikas Singh, both senior members as also Sanjeevani Bhardwaj, a student leader and an executive member of Tawi Trekkers J&K.



During their sojourn in Dharamshala area, the trekkers would visit Mcleodganj,

Chamunda, Dalai Lama Temple, the headquarters of Tibetan Government in exile; Bhagshunag, Water fall, Dharamkot, popularly called mini Israel; Gallu temple, the beautiful

Dharamshala stadium, Norbulinga Monastery and Tapovan besides Nagini Devi enroute their return journey to Jammu, a handout issued here today informed.

However, the special attraction of the programme remains a visit to a sprawling tea garden and a tea

manufacturing company where the students shall learn the complete process of production of tea.

Students taking part in this Trekking Programme besides being explained the benefits of such venture in the personality development of a person shall also be taught to respect nature and environment and not create a clutter of left over in the jungles enroute.

Earlier, the group was flagged off by Prof. Lalit Magotra, a prominent scientist and president Dogri Sanstha, Jammu in the presence of Ram Khajuria, Advisor, Shawetica Khajuria, president of the Club and parents of participating students.

Chennai Blitz sponsors uniform, balls for Poonch Club

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, APR 25

In a goodwill gesture to promote sports in rural pockets of the country, Chennai Blitz sponsored uniform for entire lot of trainees and 24 balls for Shaheed DySP Manjit Singh Memorial Volleyball Club, here.

This was disclosed by chairman of the Club, Mohd Tariq, on receiving the articles today, in a thanks giving statement.

Soon the sports uniform presented to the young trainees amidst gratitude to the owners of one of the top volleyball clubs of the country, Chennai Blitz, Vikranth Reddy, Hanimi



Reddy and Tulsi Reddy.

"The gesture of the Chennai based Club would go a long way in encouraging volleyball in district Poonch. The

young trainees were in a happy mood on getting the fresh playing kit and balls for the practice session," said Mohd Tariq.