

Sports

Photo of the Day



Johnny Collinson prepares to ski in Alaska. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Pandya powers India to thrilling T20 series victory over Australia

Hardik Pandya smashes two sixes in three balls

SYDNEY: Hardik Pandya smashed two sixes in three balls in the final over to power India to a thrilling six-wicket series T20 victory over Australia in Sydney yesterday. Chasing 25 runs in the final two overs in pursuit of Australia's target of 195, Pandya was India's hero with a series of powerful strikes - including the winning six off debutant Daniel Sams with two balls to spare. Pandya finished with 42 off 22 balls after Shikhar Dhawan clubbed 52 from 36 and skipper Virat Kohli 40 off 24 in India's 195 for four. The victory gave India the T20 series with a game to play in Sydney on Tuesday after they lost the preceding 50-over ODI series 2-1.

"I have been in these situations many times and I learnt from my mistakes in the past," Pandya said. "My game is always around the confidence which I carry; it has that fine line where I back myself." Kohli was proud of his team's effort to take the series in such dynamic fashion. "The fact that two of our established players are not playing, and to win like this, makes me very proud of this team," he said. "Pandya now realizes that this is the time to establish in the finishing role and play match-winning knocks for us. "He plays with all his heart and he certainly got that competitive nature about him, and also has the skill to execute that at the highest level."

Shikhar Dhawan and KL Rahul gave India a flying start and had 56 runs on the board in five overs before Rahul was caught in the deep for 30 off 22. Suresh Raina then took a safe skied catch off Dhawan who tucked into leg-spinner Adam Zampa on 52 in his 36-ball stint with four fours and two sixes. Newcomer Daniel Sams got the prized wicket of



CANBERRA: India's Hardik Pandya dives to take a catch to dismiss Australia's captain Aaron Finch during the T20 cricket match between India and Australia at Manuka Oval in Canberra. — AFP

Kohli. He bowled a wide delivery, and Kohli chased it - getting a thin nick behind to Wade just when the India skipper was looking dangerous, with two fours and two sixes off 24 balls.

Earlier, new skipper Matthew Wade and Steve Smith hit half-centuries to lift Australia to 194 for five. Wade - who was promoted to the captaincy instead of an injured Aaron Finch - smacked 58, while Smith chipped in with a breezy 46 after India

won the toss and opted to bowl. "Maybe we were a little bit short with the bat," said Wade. "Unfortunately we didn't execute well towards the end with the ball." Wade was run out in farcical conditions when he was dropped at the third attempt by Kohli, but turned his back and failed to make his ground from the throw to wicketkeeper Rahul. It was a big wicket for India after Wade had belted 10 fours and a six off 32 balls. — AFP



HAMILTON: West Indies Jermaine Blackwood plays a shot on the fourth day of the first Test cricket match between New Zealand and West Indies at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

New Zealand extend unbeaten home Test streak with a big win

HAMILTON: New Zealand stretched their unbeaten run at home to 14 matches with a comprehensive win in the first Test against the West Indies in Hamilton yesterday after ending a battling rearguard century by Jermaine Blackwood. The West Indies were all out before lunch on day four for 247 after making only 138 in their first innings in reply to New Zealand's 519 for seven. Blackwood was the penultimate wicket to fall, for 104, after a 155-run stand with Alzarri Joseph who made 86.

The victory, set up over the first two days when New Zealand captain Kane Williamson crafted a majestic 251, highlighted the difficulty overseas teams have on New Zealand wickets. The latest victory extended New Zealand's unbeaten home streak to an impressive 14 Tests, a statistic which took Williamson by surprise. "To be honest, I didn't know that was the case, but it's great. It was a really good performance

for us to put together collectively," said Williamson, who deflected all credit away from himself.

"But we're not getting ahead of ourselves. It was nice we were able to put in a strong performance and for us it's about trying to improve little bits at a time in each game." Although much has been made of New Zealand's green wickets, and in Hamilton it was a lush emerald, Williamson believed it was fair to both sides and the West Indies had first advantage when they won the toss.

'We need a little bit more fight'

But their strike bowlers Kumar Roach and Shannon Gabriel did not bowl full enough to put pressure on the Black Caps, while the West Indies batsmen appeared uneasy trying to reply to the home team's colossal first innings. "We obviously didn't bat well," captain Jason Holder said. "In the initial stages of our innings we just need a little bit more fight in those tough periods and get through. "Kane showed us exactly how it's supposed to be done, that was a proper Test innings, being patient, buying time." The West Indies lost 15 wickets on day three as Tim Southee led a masterclass of New Zealand swing bowling. It left the tourists going into the fourth day on the ropes at 196 for six in their second innings. — AFP

'Dumb errors' cap poor year for ill-disciplined Wallabies

SYDNEY: Frustrated Wallabies coach Dave Rennie blasted his team's "dumb errors" after another erratic and ill-disciplined performance against Argentina left Australia with just one win from six this year and the Tri Nations wooden spoon. They rallied from 13-6 down at the break in pouring rain at Sydney on Saturday to salvage a 16-16 draw, but sloppy ball handling and poor execution again blighted their game.

It followed a 15-15 stalemate against the Pumas a fortnight ago, when they threw away a 15-6 advantage. "We're a work in progress. We're good men who have worked hard and come together well, but, as I've said, we need to see that reflected in performance," said Rennie. "There's no lack of heart and no lack of effort, but we've got to be way more clinical. Discipline was disappointing and we made some dumb errors."

Ill-discipline has been a recurring problem with too many silly penalties handed to the opposition. On Saturday, skipper Michael Hooper was sent to the sin-bin for a high tackle in the first half, with the Pumas scoring 10 of their points while he was off the field. Then Lukhan Salakaia-Loto was red-carded with 20 minutes left for dangerous play. Despite being down to 14 men, the Wallabies managed to claw their way back into the game and could have won had Reece Hodge converted a late penalty.

It was the third time this year he has missed long-range kicks to clinch games, and the stalemate didn't go down well with the Australian media. Broadsheet The Australian said it sent the team "almost back to where it started from" while the Sydney Morning Herald bemoaned a "depressing and sour" end to the year. Sydney's Daily Telegraph was even more brutal. "The Wallabies have been in camp together for months now but were so out of sorts they looked like they were meeting on a Tinder date for the first time," it blasted. New Zealander Rennie was recruited after Michael Cheika - now working with Argentina - was axed after a poor showing at the World Cup last year and his reign began on a promising note with an unexpected 16-16 draw against the All Blacks in Wellington in October. — AFP

News in brief

World Athletes of the Year

PARIS: World record-breakers Mondo Duplantis of Sweden and Venezuela's Yulimar Rojas were on Saturday named the male and female World Athletes of the Year. In a season to remember, not least for the coronavirus-hit scheduling, Duplantis broke the world record in the men's pole vault twice. The 21-year-old cleared 6.17m and 6.18m on back-to-back weekends in February, just weeks before the Covid-19 pandemic brought track and field to a grounding halt. When competition finally resumed, Duplantis capped his season by producing the highest outdoor vault of all time (6.15m) and finished the year undefeated in 16 competitions. "It was a really strange season, for me and everybody, but I was able to put it together and get some pretty good results," said Duplantis. — AFP

Wales beat Italy to finish fifth

LLANELLI: Wales beat Italy 38-18 in Llanelli on Saturday to finish fifth in the inaugural Autumn Nations Cup. Wales looked set for a comfortable victory as they surged into an early 14-0 lead thanks to converted tries by Kieran Hardy and Sam Parry. But Italy hit back to lead 18-17 early in the second period following tries either side of half-time by centre Marco Zanon and flanker Johan Meyer. Replacement scrum-half Gareth Davies settled home nerves, however, with a well-taken converted try before George North and Justin Tipuric scored the last of Wales' five tries. It was just a third win in 10 Tests for Wales since head coach Wayne Pivac succeeded his fellow New Zealander Warren Gatland after the 2019 World Cup, following previous victories over Italy and Georgia. — AFP

Croatia's Zubcic wins giant slalom

SANTA CATERINA DI VALFURVA: Filip Zubcic produced a storming second descent to win the World Cup giant slalom race in the Italian Alps on Saturday after placing just sixth in the first run. Slovenia's Zan Kranjec, the first-run leader, finished second with in-form Swiss racer Marco Odermatt in third. Odermatt is now the giant slalom leader after his second-place finish at Soelden. "It wasn't bad weather. It was just snowing and the organisers did a good job shifting the fresh snow," Zubcic said after his second career win. "I never complain about the weather, I prefer just to find a solution," added the 27-year-old. The race took place in sub-zero temperatures and set off from 2100m altitude, dropping 300m to the finish gate with the soft snow slowing progress around the 48 tight gates. Runner-up Kranjec felt differently to Zubcic. — AFP

Evans crashes out in Monza

MONZA: Elfyn Evans' quest for a first ever world rally championship title looks all but over after the Welsh driver crashed out in treacherous conditions in Monza on Saturday. Evans slithered off a snow-covered road on stage 11 in the hills above Monza, putting him out of contention for the rest of the day and leaving Sebastien Ogier in pole position to clinch a seventh world crown. "We came around a flat right corner with a short braking and the surface of the tarmac had changed," Evans told wrcc.com. "When I braked on that, it was just like glass and there was no chance of us slowing down at all. It completely caught me by surprise." Evans arrived at this seventh and concluding leg of the coronavirus-disrupted season 14 points clear of Ogier. With the title favorite now realistically out of contention for a top-10 finish, barring a miracle the title is Ogier's to lose. — AFP

Thomas clinches Racing win

PARIS: France winger Teddy Thomas scored a crucial late try as he made his return to the Racing 92 lineup and clinched a 17-12 win at Bordeaux-Begles in the French Top 14. Thomas, 27, was able to play for his club and not against England yesterday because he has already featured in the maximum of three team sheets during the ongoing Autumn Nations Cup. "Honestly when you have Teddy (Thomas) beside you, you just have to give him the ball and he does the rest," scrum-half Teddy Iribaren, who set up the try, told Canal. "It was a difficult game, against a good team in unique conditions. We lifted our play at the end." Thomas was joined by fellow Test players Virimi Vakatawa and Camille Chat in the Parisians' matchday squad but they were without prop Hassane Kolingar who will start against England in Sunday's Autumn Nations final. Christophe Urios' hosts made seven changes from last weekend's last-minute win at Montpellier as Tonga prop Ben Tameifuna started against his former side. — AFP

Spence returns from horrific crash

WASHINGTON: Errol Spence overpowered challenger Danny Garcia in his first fight since surviving a near-fatal rollover car accident to retain his World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation welterweight titles on Saturday. The 30-year-old Spence put on a virtuoso performance winning almost every round in a 147-pound homecoming fight at AT&T Stadium in Dallas, Texas. The undefeated Spence, who suffered serious injuries after being thrown from his car in the drunk-driving smash, won by a unanimous decision proving he is still the same boxer as before the accident in October 2019. "The moment is surreal especially coming back from my accident year ago," Spence said. "Be patient with me. — AFP