

Sports

Kohli's 166 helps India crush Sri Lanka by record 317 runs

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Virat Kohli smashed an unbeaten 166 to help India beat Sri Lanka by 317 runs and record the highest ever victory margin in a one-day international as they swept the series 3-0 on Sunday. Kohli's third century in his last four matches and a 116 by opener Shubman Gill powered India to 390-5 in Thiruvananthapuram.

Fast bowler Mohammed Siraj then returned impressive figures of 4-32 as India bowled out the tourists for 72 in 22 overs as India went past New Zealand's 290-run thrashing of Ireland in 2008. A 131-run second-wicket stand between Gill and Kohli stood out after India elected to bat first.

Gill put on 95 runs for the opening wicket with skipper Rohit Sharma, who made 42, to set the tone for the team's batting domination. Rohit missed out on a fifty after he fell to Chamika Karunaratne but Gill kept up the attack with Kohli and raised his second ODI hundred, celebrating it with a fist bump.

Gill smashed Jeffrey Vandersay for four fours in the over after the ton, but was soon bowled off a slower delivery from Kasun Rajitha. "King Kohli" put on another century partnership with Shreyas Iyer, who hit 38, and went on to record

the ton with his arms and bat raised to an applauding crowd.

The ball before Kohli got his hundred saw a nasty collision at the square-leg boundary between Vandersay and Ashen Bandara, with both fielders stretched off. Dunith Wellalage came in as a concussion substitute for Vandersay and batted for the tourists at number eight. Kohli changed gears after his 46th ODI century—three behind Sachin Tendulkar's all-time record of 49 — as he smashed Karunaratne for two successive sixes.

Kohli, who surpassed Sri Lankan great Mahela Jayawardene's 12,650 ODI runs to enter the top five all-time run getters, reached his 150 in 106 balls and finished off with 13 fours and eight sixes. Sri Lanka were never in the chase after Mohammed Siraj struck thrice in his first five overs including the wickets of Avishka Fernando, for one, and Kusal Mendis, bowled on four.

The tourists kept losing wickets to Siraj's pace and swing and the quick also ran out Karunaratne with a direct throw that caught the batsman off guard and out of his crease at the striker's end. Mohammed Shami and Kuldeep Yadav picked two wickets each to flatten Sri Lanka's batting with 28 overs to spare, with the tourists losing nine wickets and injured Bandara not batting. — AFP



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: India's Shubman Gill celebrates after scoring a century (100 runs) during the third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the Greenfield International Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram on January 15, 2023. — AFP

News in brief

Leeds sign Rutter

LONDON: Leeds have splashed out "a club record transfer fee" to sign Hoffenheim striker Georginio Rutter, the English Premier League side announced on Saturday. Rutter, who has scored 11 goals and added 11 assists in 64 appearances since joining German Bundesliga side Hoffenheim in February 2021, has signed a five-and-a-half year deal at Elland Road, subject to international clearance. The French youth international is Leeds' second signing of the January window after Max Wober. "Leeds United are delighted to announce the signing of striker Georginio Rutter for a club record transfer fee," a statement on the club's website stated. While they have not revealed the fee reports have indicated it could rise to £32million (36 million euros) for the 20-year-old who made his breakthrough with French Ligue 1 side Rennes in 2020. Rutter will not be available for Wednesday's FA Cup third round replay against Cardiff but will come into contention for next weekend's Premier League match against Brentford. Jesse Marsch's side lost 2-1 to Aston Villa on Friday to leave them struggling two points above the relegation zone.

Former cyclist Westra dies

THE HAGUE: Former Dutch cyclist Lieuwe Westra, runner-up to Bradley Wiggins in the 2012 Paris-Nice, has died aged 40 after a lifelong battle with depression, his biographer and Dutch media announced on Sunday. Westra was part of the Astana team that helped lift Vincenzo Nibali to victory in the Tour de France in 2014. That season he picked up stage wins in the Tour of Catalonia and the Criterium du Dauphine. Nicknamed 'the Beast' for his unrelenting riding style Westra's body was found at his business premises on Saturday near the northwest Dutch city of Enkhuizen, local broadcaster Omrop Fryslan said, quoting family sources. "Lieuwe Westra, 40, died on Saturday afternoon," his biographer Thomas Sijtsma tweeted. "Over the last few years the former rider fought a battle with himself and lost," Sijtsma said, adding "Rest softly, Beast". Born in Friesland in 1982, Westra in 2009 turned professional, joining the Vacansoleil team. The former road worker in his first year won the Tour de Picardie and was earmarked to have the potential to become one of the great riders from the Netherlands.

Stosur to retire after Australian Open

MELBOURNE: Veteran Sam Stosur said Sunday that the Australian Open would be her final tournament, ending a 23-year career in which she won a singles Grand Slam title and seven others in doubles. The 38-year-old Australian's greatest moment came when she defeated Serena Williams to win the singles crown at the 2011 US Open, which she described as "the pinnacle" of her career. This week will mark her 21st Australian Open. "That was certainly a dream of mine to achieve that, and I did," she told reporters of her Flushing Meadows triumph. "That's a moment I'll never forget. I'm very fortunate that I have so many great memories, yeah, from the sport, winning, losing, travelling, on and off the court," she added at Melbourne Park, where she will play in the doubles with France's Alize Cornet. Stosur reached a career-high ranking of four in the world in singles and one in doubles after making her Grand Slam debut at the 2002 Australian Open. She won four Grand Slam women's doubles titles, most recently at the 2021 US Open alongside China's Zhang Shuai, and three mixed doubles titles. — AFP

Burl knock wins T20 series for Zimbabwe

HARARE: A whirlwind unbeaten 30 by Ryan Burl, better known as a leg spinner than a brisk batsman, lifted Zimbabwe to a 2-1 Twenty20 series victory over Ireland in Harare on Sunday. Ireland were put in to bat and made 141-9 with Harry Tector top scoring on 47 as they sought to buck a trend in this series of the side fielding first winning.

Captain Craig Ervine scored 54 to lift Zimbabwe to 116-5 with three overs remaining and Burl then became the unlikely hero, hammering two sixes and three fours off 11 deliveries. Another bowler, Luke Jongwe, won the match and the series, hitting a four off the last ball of the penultimate over to take Zimbabwe to 144-6, and a four-wicket triumph.

It was a dramatic end to a series that began

with a five-wicket win for Zimbabwe on Thursday, followed by a six-wicket victory for the tourists two days later. After the cheap loss of opener Tadiwanashe Marumani (5), Ervine took charge, with his 65-minute stand including six fours.

His knock ended when caught by Chris Campher attempting a cover drive off a short-pitched ball from Mark Adair. Spinner Ben White (2-26) and fast medium pacer Barry McCarthy (2-32) were the most successful Irish bowlers.

Batting at No. 4, Tector rescued the tourists, who had slumped to 19-3 having faced just 23 deliveries. He put on 70 runs before being separated from Campher, the second highest Irish scorer with 27, including two fours.

Tector departed next, adding a further six runs before his middle stump was uprooted by off spinner Wesley Madhevere, the most successful Zimbabwe bowler with two wickets for eight runs. The batter faced 38 deliveries and struck three fours. Mark Adair was the only lower-order Irish batsman to reach double figures with his 14 off 10 balls contributing to a 31-run seventh-wicket stand. — AFP



HARARE: Zimbabwe's Clive Madande (L) watches the ball after playing a shot as Ireland's wicketkeeper Stephen Doherty (R) looks on during the T20 international cricket match between Zimbabwe and Ireland at the Harare Sports Club in Harare. — AFP

Badminton king Axelsen secures Malaysian title

KUALA LUMPUR: Danish ace Viktor Axelsen stormed to victory in the final of badminton's Malaysia Open on Sunday, successfully defending his title by outgunning Japan's Kodai Naraoka. The world number one only needed 40 minutes in Kuala Lumpur to secure his first trophy of the year, displaying top form to walk away with the match 21-6, 21-15.

Wasting no time in the first game, Axelsen immediately went on the offensive, raining his signature pinpoint smashes on a defenceless Naraoka. He then kept up the pressure in the second game against a visibly exhausted opponent to clinch the win.

Axelsen conceded fatigue may have been a factor in the match, with Naraoka having played a mammoth

113-minute semi-final just a day earlier. "He looked stiff-legged due to the long matches he's played. For me, that was a good thing," Axelsen told reporters.

"I just tried to play consistently at a high pace, and not give him many chances. If he wanted to win, he had to work really hard." The reigning Olympic champion has been badminton's standout performer over the last year, winning eight titles in 2022 including the All-England and World Championships.

But he said Sunday there were many strong players capable of overtaking him, though he declined to give names. "You cannot predict who will do well. For me it's just about minding my own business, trying to do what works for me and keep improving," he said.

Naraoka, who played 362 minutes in the tournament before his showdown with Axelsen, said the run had taken a toll on his body. "I did feel tired coming into this game, but I still did my best. But he used his height well, and his smashes were too powerful for me," said the world



KUALA LUMPUR: Denmark's Viktor Axelsen poses on the podium after winning against Japan's Kodai Naraoka during their men's singles final match at the Malaysia Open badminton tournament in Kuala Lumpur on January 15, 2023. — AFP

number seven.

Their match-up followed a hard-fought semi-final between the two at the World Tour Finals last month. In

the women's final, Japanese player Akane Yamaguchi took the title by beating South Korea's An Se-young 12-21, 21-19, 21-11. — AFP

Two eagles lift Buckley to Sony Open lead

LOS ANGELES: Hayden Buckley had two eagles in a six-under-par 64 on Saturday to grab a two-shot lead after three rounds of the Sony Open, where he's chasing a first US PGA Tour title. The 26-year-old American holed out from the fairway for an eagle at the 10th, then broke free atop the leaderboard with another eagle at the par-five 18th, where his approach from the fairway settled two feet from the pin.

He was two strokes clear of overnight leader Chris Kirk, David Lipsky and Ben Taylor. England's Taylor carded a five-under-par 65 to join the group on 13-under 197 while Lipsky fired a second straight 66 and Kirk posted a 68.

Andrew Putnam charged up the leaderboard with an eight-under 62 that featured 10 birdies, and was joined on 198 by South Korean Kim Si-woo, who signed for a 64. Buckley, who finished tied for fifth at the Zozo championship in October,

said his round was "a testament to being patient."

"I missed a three-, four-footer for birdie kind of early on and I just stuck with it," he said, adding that he didn't feel as in control as he had on Friday. "I hit a lot of greens, obviously, but I hit them in some tougher spots today—a lot of shots pin-high, with a lot more break and a little bit quicker putts," he said. I feel like I just played smart."

On a day when a dozen players held at least a share of the lead at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu, Hawaii, Buckley's eagles made the difference. The first came after he "chucked" his tee shot at the 10th, then hit his 50-degree wedge second shot "a hair thin."

Buckley admitted he thought it might miss the green, but instead it hit the putting surface and rolled in. At 18 he said he was "just trying to play to the front edge. "Luckily I had a great number and hit a five-iron in close."

Buckley will be playing in the final group of the final round for the first time in a US PGA Tour event. Taylor and Lipsky are also chasing maiden US tour wins, although Lipsky's three international titles include an Asian Tour victory in 2012 and European Tour wins in 2014 and 2018.

Taylor rebounded from an opening



HONOLULU: Hayden Buckley of the United States plays a second shot on the 14th hole during the third round of the Sony Open in Hawaii at Waialae Country Club on January 14, 2023 in Honolulu, Hawaii. — AFP

bogey with six birdies, rolling in a six-footer at the 18th. "Solid round," he said. "I had a little bit of a hiccup on the first with an early bogey ... but we had level shoulders on us today."

Lipsky opened with back-to-back bogeys, but had seven birdies the rest

of the way. After a bogey at 17 he rolled in an 11-foot birdie at the last. Kirk kept himself in the hunt despite a nightmare start. His overnight lead evaporated instantly when he hit it out of bounds off the first tee on the way to a double bogey. — AFP