

sportspopup

Nitish Kumar Reddy set to join Sunrisers Hyderabad after clearing fitness test

BENGALURU: All-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy is all set to join Sunrisers Hyderabad after recuperating from a side strain that kept him on the sidelines since January. PTI has learned that Nitish successfully completed all the fitness test routines, including the yo-yo test, at the BCCI Centre of Excellence here, and the physios have given him a go-ahead. The 21-year-old Andhra cricketer's last appearance for India was during the first T20I against England at the Eden Gardens on January 22, but he did not bat or bowl in that match. Nitish trained at nets ahead of the second T20I at Chennai, but was ruled out of that match and five-match series with a side strain. Nitish was retained by the Hyderabad outfit for Rs 6 crore ahead of last year's players' auction after he made 303 runs for them from 13 matches at a strike-rate of 145. He also impressed during India's tour to Australia, making some valuable contributions including a gutsy 114 in the fourth Test at Melbourne. Nitish will join the SRH squad soon as they will open their IPL 2025 campaign on March 23 against Rajasthan Royals at Hyderabad.

Sabalenka crushes Keys to reach Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS: World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka overwhelmed Madison Keys 6-0, 6-1 to reach the Indian Wells WTA 1000 final on Friday, avenging her loss to the fifth-ranked American in the Australian Open final. Sabalenka needed just 51 minutes to set up a title clash with Russian teen Mirra Andreeva, who beat defending champion Iga Swiatek 7-6 (7/1), 1-6, 6-3. The Belarusian admitted she was out for revenge after Keys denied her a third straight Australian Open crown and she was dialed in from the first ball, roaring through the first set in 23 minutes. Keys was riding a 16-match winning streak that included a victory in Adelaide before her maiden major in Melbourne, but the fifth-ranked American couldn't get a foot in the door.

Injured Neymar to miss World Cup qualifier against Argentina, Endrick returns

RIO DE JANEIRO: Neymar was ruled out by Brazil for the World Cup qualifiers against Colombia and Argentina this month. Neymar, goalkeeper Ederson and defender Danilo were not fit to play for unspecified reasons, coach Dorival Júnior said in a video published by the Brazil Football Confederation. The 33-year-old striker, who rejoined Santos in January, played his latest match on March 2 and was substituted for an apparent left thigh injury. He sat out the Sao Paulo state championship semifinal against Corinthians a few days later. Real Madrid striker Endrick replaced Neymar in the squad. Ederson's substitute was Lyon's Lucas Perri, while Flamengo defender Danilo was replaced by his club teammate Alex Sandro, also a Brazil veteran. Former captain Neymar was recalled by Brazil this month after an absence of almost 1 1/2 years. He injured an ACL in October 2023 while playing for Brazil against Uruguay and only recently returned to action. Brazil, fifth in South American qualifying, will host Colombia on March 20 and travel to lead Argentina five days later in Buenos Aires.



Kolkata Knight Riders' Captain Ajinkya Rahane stretches during a training session ahead of the Indian Premier League tournament, at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, West Bengal

Van Dijk won't 'panic' over Liverpool future

LONDON: Virgil van Dijk won't "panic" about his Liverpool future as the Reds captain admits he is willing to let his contract run down until the end of the season. Van Dijk's current deal expires in June and talks with Liverpool have yet to produce an extension. The 33-year-old defender's successful seven-year stay at Anfield will come to an end if no new contract is agreed. Van Dijk, who will lead Liverpool in the League Cup final against Newcastle at Wembley on Sunday, has made no secret of his desire to remain on Merseyside. But even with no resolution in sight it has not affected his performances or his focus. "Maybe I will run this fully down and then there is still no news, I don't know," he said. "But I don't want to create any anxiety or anything like that. I just keep my head down and focus on hopefully winning the next 10 games. I am sure by the end of the season there will be news. But what kind of news I am not sure." Liverpool have a 15-point lead in the Premier League title race as they chase a record-equalling 20th English crown.

Azteca Stadium will be renamed Banorte for third men's World Cup next year

MEXICO CITY: The Azteca Stadium has been renamed Banorte Stadium before it hosts its third men's World Cup next year. Latin America's largest soccer stadium — 87,500 seats — has taken the name of one of Mexico's leading banks, stadium owner Ollamania said on Friday. Naming rights to the stadium were part of Banorte's deal to loan 2.1 billion pesos (\$105 million) to be repaid over 12 years, according to Ollamania's filing with the Mexican Stock Exchange. "With them (Banorte), we will modernize this iconic stadium, respecting its essence and architectural designs recognized for decades," Emilio Azcárraga Jean, the owner of Ollamania, said. "It will be the most important venue to showcase Mexico to the world." Azteca Stadium has been closed for renovations since last May. Azcárraga Jean recently said he expected the work to be completed before the end of this year. Neither Ollamania nor Azcárraga Jean has released specific details about renovations to the stadium that was built in 1966. Azteca was the first stadium to host two World Cup finals, won by Pele's Brazil in 1970 and Diego Maradona's Argentina in 1986.

Harmanpreet powers Mumbai Indians to second Women's Premier League title



Mumbai Indians' players celebrate with the winning trophy at the end of the Women's Premier League (WPL) Twenty20 final match against Delhi Capitals at Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai on Saturday

PTI, MUMBAI: Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's panache powered Mumbai Indians to their second Women's Premier League title as Delhi Capitals choked for the third time in succession losing by 8 runs in what turned out to be an exciting finale, here, on Saturday.

Harmanpreet saved her best for the big day as her scintillating 44-ball 66 was instrumental in taking Mumbai Indians to a fighting 149 for 7 despite underwhelming effort from the other batters.

While it seemed that MI were at least 15 runs short of what was a par-score on a good batting track, Delhi Capitals batters put undue pressure on themselves to finish at 141 for 9 despite late surge from Marizanne Kapp and

teenager Niki Prasad.

Once MI's most impactful player through the tournament, NC Sciver-Brunt removed DC skipper Meg Lanning with an off-cutter and Shafali Verma, who has not shown any signs of improvement as far as his technique is concerned, was caught plumb in-front for shuffling to Shabnim Ismail, the chances for the visiting team were minimal.

Jemimah Rodrigues (30 off 21 balls) tried for a while and so did Marizanne Kapp (40 off 26 balls) but it didn't prove to be enough in the end.

Having batted like a champion, Harmanpreet's years of experience of being an international skipper of repute proved to be handy as she marshalled her re-

sources admirably, rotating the bowlers, not allowing the batters to get settled.

Whether it was Sciver-Brunt (3/30), Shabnim Ismail (1/15), Amelia Kerr (2/25 in 4 overs) or Indian youngster Saika Ishaque (1/33 in 4 overs), MI got wickets just when DC seemed ready for a pushback.

Earlier, Delhi Capitals did well enough to restrict Mumbai Indians to a fighting 149 for 7.

Harmanpreet effortlessly shifted gears from the on-set, starting with a short-arm swat pull off Annabel Sutherland and then three fours off left-arm spinner Jonassen.

Cut above the rest of Indian women cricketers in terms of sheer quality, the manner in which the Indian

skipper pierced the off-side field was a sight to behold.

She took on the opposition's most successful bowler of the tournament, Jonassen, who had to be taken off the attack by DC skipper Meg Lanning and the bowling changes suddenly didn't work.

At the other end, tournament's highest run-getter Sciver-Brunt (30 off 28 balls) completed her personal tally of 500 runs in this edition but for a change, played second fiddle, allowing Harmanpreet to enthrall the near-capacity Brabourne Stadium crowd that cheered her every stroke.

The duo added 89 in little over 10 overs but just when it looked that MI are setting themselves up for a big to-

tal, left-arm spinner Charani got Sciver-Brunt caught at square leg while trying to slog sweep.

From a safe 103 for 3, it became 118 for 6 in no time as Jonassen's twin blows in the 16th over increased pressure on Harmanpreet.

First it was Amelia Kerr, who had a torrid run with

the bat, caught at the edge of the circle and then Sajeevan Sajana's attempted slog sweep went haywire as she was trapped leg-before. Finally, it was Sutherland, who got the MI skipper, who went for one shot too many. MI ended at least 15 short of par score but it didn't hurt them one bit.

Slot eyes first Liverpool trophy

AFP, LONDON: Liverpool can win the first trophy of the Arne Slot era in Sunday's League Cup final against a Newcastle side desperate to end the club's 56-year wait for major silverware.

4-1 on penalties by PSG in the last 16 second leg at Anfield.

It was a rare blow in what has been a successful first season in charge for Slot, who arrived from Feyenoord to succeed Jurgen Klopp last year.

Sitting 15 points clear at the top of the Premier League, the Reds are within touching distance of a record-equalling 20th English title and their first since 2020.

That will be the culmination of Slot's seamless transition to life with Liverpool. But first the Dutchman has his sights set on putting yet another League Cup in the Anfield trophy cabinet.

LEAGUE CUP FINAL

In the first final of the English domestic season, runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool head to Wembley aiming to erase the bitter taste of their Champions League exit against Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday.

The Reds were beaten

Cuncolim Union blank Fr Agnelo YSC

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WILRED LEISURE CUP

RAIA: Cuncolim Union blanked Fr Agnelo YSC, Paroda, 2-0 to enter into the next round of the 14th Wilred Leisure Soccer Cup 2025 at the DSYA ground, Curtorim, on Saturday.

Cuncolim Union scored a goal each in the both ses-

sions of play. Vinod Velip scored in the 27th minute of play, while Wilson Fernandes in the 60+2 minute. Clifton Fernandes of Cuncolim Union was awarded the man-of-the-match.

GOA DIARY

Sarsangan Priority Veterans Cricket Series from today

PANJIM: Saraswat Sports Sangh Charitable Trust will organise 7th edition of Goa Sarsangan Priority Veterans Series Cricket Tournament starting from March 16, at the Arlem Cricket ground. Four teams namely Antruz Aviators of Gomakant Mahambrey and Adv Satish Pilgaonkar; Mapusa Dream Crushers of Rajesh Colvalcar, Delite Titans of Vinayak Nayak and Vallabh Pai and Ultracon Madgaon Royals of Ashesh Pai Duple and Nagnath Shanbhag will participate. The two-month long tournament will be played on Sundays and public holidays, consisting of 80 players picked at the auctions. Each of the teams will play the other teams three times each in round robin league format T20 cricket matches in A2 T20 leather and Everest Sports especially designed apparels by Desserts n More with the top two teams playing the final on May 4. Architect Bhaskar Khandeparkar will be the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony, while Police Inspector of Vasco Police Station Kapil Nayak will be the guest of honour. Each match will also feature trophies for Drogaria Colvalcar Man-of-the-Match award, Priority Constructions Best Batter award and Wakao Best Bowler award.

Man City stumble, Forest soar in Champions League chase

AFP, MANCHESTER: Manchester City failed to ease fears of missing out on the Champions League next season after twice blowing the lead to draw 2-2 against Brighton, while third-placed Nottingham Forest thrashed Ipswich 4-2 on Saturday.

Erling Haaland and Omar Marmoush put City in front, but high-flying Brighton extended their unbeaten run to seven games thanks to Pervis Estupinan's free-kick and an Abdulkodir Khusanov own goal.

City boss Pep Guardiola said on Friday that just reaching the Champions League next season would be a "big success" after a difficult season for a side used to lifting the league title.

The English champions' early exit from Europe's top competition to Real Madrid had at least ensured a full week's preparation for Guardiola's men to bounce back from last weekend's dismal 1-0 defeat at Forest.

Marmoush was restored to the starting line-up and proved to be City's brightest spark going forward.

The Egyptian won the penalty from which Haaland opened the scoring with his 29th goal of the season. City's lead lasted only 10 minutes as Estupinan curled a free-kick in off the post past the leaden-footed Stefan Ortega in the City goal.

Marmoush blasted City back in front from long range before half-time.

Brighton, though, took just three minutes into the second half to level again when Jack Hinshelwood's shot was turned into his



Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland (right) celebrates with Manchester City's Egyptian striker Omar Marmoush after scoring his team's first goal during the English Premier League match against Brighton and Hove Albion at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Everton 1 (O'Brien 90+1) West Ham 1 (Soucek 67), Ipswich 2 (Cajuste 82, Hirst 90+3) Nottingham Forest 4 (Milenkovic 35, Elanga 37, 41, Jota 87), Manchester City 2 (Haaland 11-pen, Marmoush 39) Brighton 2 (Estupinan 21, Khusanov 48-og), Southampton 1 (Onuachu 75) Wolves 2 (Strand Larsen 19, 47)

own net by Khusanov.

Nico Gonzalez hit the post as City pushed in vain for a winner. A top-five Premier League finish will almost certainly secure a Champions League place this season thanks to English clubs' strong performances in European competition.

A point leaves City still in

fifth, just one point ahead of Brighton in seventh.

Forest's charge towards Europe's top club competition for the first time since 1980 continued with a dominant display at Portman Road.

The visitors struck three times in six first-half minutes to close to within one