

BCCI ramps up pressure on foreign Boards for player availability

Cummins likely to return but Buttler doubtful

PTI, NEW DELHI: The BCCI and IPL franchises have ramped up pressure on foreign Boards to ensure that their players return for the league's resumption on May 17 despite some lingering safety concerns in the wake of India-Pakistan military hostilities.

The BCCI top brass has instructed IPL COO Hemang Amin to individually speak to the likes of Cricket Australia (CA) and England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to allay the concerns that the players may have about returning to India.

All the 10 teams are involved in a lot of back and forth with their overseas recruits over their arrival plans in India a day after the IPL announced the revised schedule following necessary security clearances from the government.

The world's biggest T20 league was suspended on May 9 due to an India-Pakistan military showdown, triggered by the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, south Kashmir. A day after its suspension, a ceasefire between the two

countries was announced, paving the way for IPL's resumption.

"We have been speaking to the foreign boards individually while teams are directly dealing with their players. We expect majority of them to return," a BCCI official told PTI on Tuesday.

CA has left it on the players to decide on their participation and in matters like these, the players' association has a role to play as well.

Team officials, on the other hand, told PTI that some of the foreign players remain anxious to return but majority of them should come back before the tournament resumes.

"The revised schedule was announced last night. We have just started contacting our foreign players over their availability. We will have a clearer picture by tomorrow morning. Anyway our game is on May 20. We have enough time," said CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan.

CSK's foreign players include Devon Conway, Rachin Ravindra, Sam Curran, Jamie Overton, Noor Ahmad

and Matheesha Pathirana. Afghanistan's Ahmad and Pathirana from Sri Lanka are set to join the team while there are doubts over the availability of their New Zealand players.

Cummins, Head set to return; Buttler caught in IPL vs country conundrum

Jos Buttler, who has contributed immensely to Gujarat Titans' campaign at number three this season, will now need to choose between IPL and his England commitments after being named in the ODI squad for the series against West Indies beginning at home on May 29.

England players had been given NOCs for the entirety of the IPL but now with the tournament extended till June 3 instead of the final originally scheduled for May 25, those need to be reviewed.

As per the revised IPL schedule, the league stage ends on May 27.

Also included in the England ODI squad are Jacob Bethell and Will Jacks, who

are part of RCB and Mumbai Indians respectively. Like GT, both RCB and Mumbai Indians are in race for the play-offs.

"We're keen to support the IPL and the BCCI in getting the schedule up and running, and to facilitate players' return should they choose to go back," an ECB spokesperson told PTI on Tuesday.

"No Objection Certificates have been granted based on the original IPL dates, so we'll need to review any potential extensions, particularly in relation to any clash with the final white-ball squad," the spokesperson added.

Stoinis unlikely to fly back to India

At Punjab Kings, Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis and compatriot Josh Inglis may not return to India, though head coach Ricky Ponting is trying his best to convince them.

Fellow Aussies Xavier Bartlett and Aaron Hardie along with Afghanistan's Azmatullah Omarzai and

South African Marco Jansen are expected to return. The team is on course to reach its first play-offs since 2014.

Ponting has already walked the talk by de-boarding from a home-bound plane after the ceasefire announcement last week. The team's support staff, including Brad Haddin and James Hopes, never left India.

The players of Punjab Kings and Delhi Capitals made a rather anxious road and train journey from Dharamsala to Delhi after the May 8 game in the picturesque town was called off midway due to the air raid alerts in neighbouring border areas.

"The foreign players were scared at that time and understandably so. The BCCI showed the safety of the players is paramount by ensuring they all got back home safely."

"Now the situation has got better, the players should return. However, some of them still remain on the edge," said an IPL official.

Like CSK, SunRisers Hy-

derabad are also eliminated from the competition but the franchise is expecting captain Pat Cummins and batter Travis Head to return for the remaining three league games.

"We are confident that majority of foreign players will return including the captain," said a team official.

Delhi Capitals, who remain in contention for a top-four spot, contacted their overseas players on Tuesday morning and are waiting to hear back from them. Australian pacer Mitchell Starc is among DC's key players.

"We hope that all of them return. We will know more by tomorrow," said a team official.

The IPL final originally scheduled for May 25 has been pushed back to June 3.

The World Test Championship (WTC) final between Australia and South Africa is scheduled from June 11 at the Lord's, leaving very little turnaround time for their players who decide to take part in the IPL play-offs.

Konstas, Green in Australia squad for WTC final

PTI, MELBOURNE: Flamboyant opener Sam Konstas and fit-again all-rounder Cameron Green found a place in Australia's 15-man squad for next month's World Test Championship final against South Africa in London, where Pat Cummins and his men would be aiming to retain the coveted mace.

There aren't many surprises in the squad, which is more or less the same that competed against India and later Sri Lanka earlier this year.

"The team finished the WTC cycle with an impressive series victory in Sri Lanka following an equally strong summer in defeating India for the first time in a decade," chairman of selectors George Bailey said by 'cricket.com.au'.

"Those series capped a consistent performance across the two-year cycle

and now presents us with the incredibly exciting opportunity to defend the World Test Championship (from June 11 to 15 at the Lord's).

Konstas was sent home from the tour of Sri Lanka after failing to make the squad and was playing for New South Wales. He made an exciting debut against India in the fourth Test in Melbourne but could not continue the momentum

SQUAD

Pat Cummins (c), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Sam Konstas, Matt Kuhnemann, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Beau Webster. Travelling reserve: Brendan Doggett

subsequently.

Green was laid low by a back injury that needed surgery last year.

Spinner Matt Kuhnemann has been included as the backup for regular Nathan Lyon, while Brendan Doggett has been named as a travelling reserve.

The same squad will then head to the West Indies for a three-Test series in Barbados, Grenada and Jamaica from June 25.

Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, both of who sat out of the Test series against Sri Lanka and the subsequent Champions Trophy due to injuries, are back in the squad after successfully returning to action during the Indian Premier League.

Mitchell Starc, and Scott Boland make up the rest of the pace attack. South Australia's Doggett will be the back-up pacer in case of an injury breakdown.

Ngidi returns as SA name squad for WTC final

PTI, JOHANNESBURG: Fast bowler Lungi Ngidi returned to the squad for the first time since October last year as South Africa named a 15-member squad for the World Test Championship final against Australia, beginning at Lord's on June 11.

Kagiso Rabada, who has recently returned from one-month suspension from recreational drug use, is one of the six fast bowlers in the side which also includes two spinners in Keshav Maharaj and Senuran Muthusamy.

The Proteas bowling attack also includes bowling all-rounders Marco Jansen, Wiaan Mulder and Corbin Bosch.

Temba Bavuma will continue as the skipper.

"There is a strong feel and overall balance to the top order where batters Aiden Markram, Tony



SQUAD

Temba Bavuma (c), David Bedingham, Corbin Bosch, Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Lungi Ngidi, Dane Paterson, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Tristan Stubbs, Kyle Verreynne (wk)

de Zorzi, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs and David Bedingham all feature, while one of the key players in helping the Proteas reach the final, Kyle Verreynne, is named as wicketkeeper," Cricket South Africa said in a release.

"Over the past 18 months, we've worked hard to build a competitive red-ball unit, and this achievement reflects that progress," said head coach Shukri Conrad.

"A key part of our success has been consistency in selection, and we've stuck with the core group of players who have been part of this WTC cycle. We've selected a balanced squad for the conditions we expect at Lord's."

The Proteas squad will assemble in Arundel on May 31 and will play a warm-up match against Zimbabwe from June 3-6.

Can next gen stars emulate India's batting luminaries?

PTI, BENGALURU: Virat Kohli sounded almost desolate while talking about his struggles against Fidel Edwards during his debut Test against the West Indies in 2011. It was not the beginning of an ambitious young man desired.

Instead of glory, there was anxiety and confusion. He ended that nearly 20 minutes of conversation at a Kingston restaurant with a plain yet powerful message: "Lekin mein chorunga nahi (I will not leave it)".

He did not leave the fight, hitting peaks between 2014 and 2019 that not many modern day cricketers have climbed. Runs and centuries flowed as the cricketer world marvelled at the transformation into a batting virtuoso who propelled India to some dizzying heights and memorable wins in Test cricket.

However, it's also a blueprint for some of the young batters who have been tasked to helm the Indian cricket in the post-Kohli and Rohit Sharma era.

Here's a detailed glance at a few of them:

SHUBMAN GILL

Among the 'Next Generation' stars, none holds more significance than Shubman Gill, potentially India's premier batsman and Test skipper in the coming days.



Shubman Gill



Yashasvi Jaiswal



Dhruv Jurel



B Sai Sudharsan

Perhaps, it's a coincidence but Gill finds himself in the same space as Kohli when he was at 25 with a middling Test record.

The Punjab man has played 32 Tests for 1893 runs at an average of 35.

But Gill will now go to England where he has a modest record 88 runs from three Tests at an average of 14.66. Can the Punjab man emulate his illustrious senior in turning around his fortunes at Old Blighty?

Even without James Anderson and Stuart Broad, England have a capable pace unit and some handy spinners, suiting the home conditions.

Like Kohli, Gill will have to bring in that iron-hearted discipline into his batting along with developing the tendency to bat closer to his body to cover the swing.

YASHASVI JAISWAL

Jaiswal is certain to open



Sarfaraz Khan

the innings in England and he has already done that job in the West Indies, South Africa, Australia and India. But the task will be different and tougher on his maiden trip to England.

Jaiswal showed his technique and patience while notching up big runs in Australia and the West Indies at an average in excess of 44 and 80.

But as a batter who loves the ball coming onto his bat, Jaiswal will face a sterner challenge in late swing in England.

He will have to check his booming drives and rasping cuts, focusing more on leaves and selecting the right occasion to attack.

It's not much of a technical change, but a mental shift and he can tear a page

out of Kohli's playbook.

After a struggle in 2014, Kohli learned how to negate the late swing of Anderson and Broad in 2018, and he made 593 runs from five matches at an average of 59.

They can also refer to the clippings of Sanjay Bangar and Rahul Dravid negating the pronounced swing at Leeds against Andrew Caddick and Matthew Hoggard in 2002.

DHRUV JUREL

At 24, Jurel stands a good back-up option behind Rishabh Pant as the second wicket-keeper batter. He was impressive in the debut series against England but could not make much impact against Australia.

Jurel has the requisite

guts and skill level to be a long-term servant in Test cricket. He showed his prowess both in attack and defence while making two fifties against Australia in an unofficial Test ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy last year.

He is also the kind of cricketer head coach Gautam Gambhir likes, one who never shies away from a fight in the middle.

But sustaining it for a longer duration will be his main challenge.

B SAI SUDHARSAN

Orthodoxy is his strength. There is a bright chance of him making it to the touring squad to England, and his copybook batting could come handy in England, making him a calm yin to the more aggressive yang of Jaiswal.

The 23-year-old Sudharsan prefers to play down the ground on either side with a straight bat, a quality

that gives immense chance to succeed in England.

The grainy footage of West Indian greats Viv Richards and Desmond Haynes driving England pacers like Ian Botham and John Snow down the ground for boundaries is still available on YouTube, and that could be his reference material.

He also has the experience of playing for Surrey in County cricket.

SARFARAZ KHAN

The 27-year-old can pilage an attack like he did against New Zealand in Bengaluru last year with a belligerent 150. But since then, ordinary form and a rib injury have pulled him back. The Mumbai man might also be asked to work on his fitness.

There is no doubting the skills of Sarfaraz. But if he can take some cues from Kohli's almost manic chase of fitness to keep his skills sharp, then Sarfaraz can revive his Test fortunes.

THE COLLECTIVE TASK

Now, there is no Kohli or Rohit Sharma to guide them, pep them, cajole them or scold them. So, can the boys survive battles and grow into men all alone?

It will determine the brightness of their own and India's cricket's future.

sportspopup

India sealed spot at the top of Group B of SAFF U-19 Championship

YUPIA (Arunachal Pradesh): India sealed their spot at the top of Group B of the SAFF U-19 Championship after a comprehensive 4-0 victory against Nepal at the Golden Jubilee Stadium, here, on Tuesday. The hosts scored two goals in each half. Rohen Singh Chaphamayum (28', 76') scored two goals, while local boy Omang Dodum (29') and Danny Meitei (84') netted one each. India, with this win, finished Group B with a perfect six points from two matches, with a goal difference of 12. Nepal finish second with three points from their two matches. The hosts will face Maldives, Group A runners-ups on May 16, at 7.30 pm, while Group A winners Bangladesh will play Nepal at 3.30 pm in the semi-finals on the same day. Result: India 4 (Rohen Singh 28', 76', Omang Dodum 29', Danny Meitei 84') Nepal 0

Mannepalli, Ira qualify for Thailand Open main draw

BANGKOK: Indian shuttlers Tharun Mannepalli and Ira Sharma on Tuesday qualified for the main draw of the Thailand Open even as stalwart Kidambi Srikanth bowed out of the Super 500 badminton tournament, here. Mannepalli, 23, defeated Chinese-Taipei's Kuo Kuan Lin 17-21, 21-19, 21-17 in the men's singles round-of-16 before overcoming Srikanth 21-6, 21-19 in 40 minutes in the quarterfinals in the Qualifiers. Ayush Shetty, 20, ranked 40th in the world, thrashed lower-ranked Finland shuttler Joakim Oldorff 21-10, 21-11 in just 29 minutes in the round-of-16 before going down to Malaysia's Justin Hoh, ranked 45th, 21-14, 22-20 in 39 minutes.

R Praggnanandhaa maintains joint lead in Superbet Classic

BUCHAREST (Romania): Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Poland's Duda Jan-Krzysztof to maintain joint lead with 3.5 points after the sixth round of Superbet Chess Classics, a part of the grand chess tour. Playing the black side of an English opening, Pragnanandhaa was subjected to some initial tactics by Duda but the Indian was quite up to task in not giving any free-way to the Polish opponent. Results (round 6): Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol, 2.5) drew with R Pragnanandhaa (Ind, 3.5); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2); Levon Aronian (Usa, 3) drew with Wesley So (Usa, 3); Firouzja Alireza (Usa, 2.5) playing D Gukesh (Ind, 2); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 3) playing Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 2.5).

Asian chess: Srija Seshadri in joint lead

AL AIN (UAE): Overnight sole leader Woman Grandmaster Srija Seshadri made sure she did not slip too much as she earned a hard-fought draw against the highest-ranked Indian woman player Vantika Agrawal to remain in joint lead after the seventh round of the Asian continental women's chess championship here on Tuesday. With her second draw in seven games, Srija took her tally to six points and is now sharing the lead with Mongolian Mungunzul Bat-Erdene, who put it across P V Nandhidhaa. Results (Round 7) Open (Indians unless stated): Ivan Zemlyanski (Fid, 5.5) drew with Bardiya Daneshvar (Iri, 6); Murali Karthikeyan (5) drew with Sergei Lobanov (Fid, 5); Yang Zilong (Chn, 4.5) lost to Shamsiddin Vokhidov (Uzb, 5.5); M Pranesh (5) drew with GB Harshvardhan (5); Nihal Sarin (5) beat Rinat Jumabayev (Kaz, 4); Amin Tabatabaee (Iri, 4.5) drew with Raja Rithvik (4.5); Dai Changren (Chn, 4.5) drew with Nodirbek Yakubov (Uzb, 4.5); Denis Makhnev (Kaz, 4.5) drew with A R Saleh Salem (UAE, 4.5); Abhimanyu Puranik (5) beat Sina Movahed (Iri, 4); S Aswath (4.5) drew with Xu Xianguyu (Chn, 4); Lev Zverev (Fid, 4.5) drew with P Niyan (4.5).

Bopanna-Pavleseck pair crashes out of Rome Masters

ROME: India's Rohan Bopanna and his Czech partner Adam Pavleseck bowed out of the men's doubles event at the Rome Masters with a straight-set defeat against the British team of Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski, here Tuesday. Bopanna and Pavleseck lost the pre-quarterfinal 3-6 3-6 in one hour and eight minutes. With Bopanna's defeat, India's challenge has ended in the elite clay-court tournament. Another Indian in the fray, Yuki Bhambri had exited the ATP 1000 event with American partner Robert Galloway after losing in the opening round 1-6 2-6 to fourth seeds Marcel Granollers of Spain and Argentina's Horacio Zeballos.

Mandhana moves to 2nd spot in ICC ODI batting rankings

DUBAI: Stylish opener Smriti Mandhana inched closer to reclaiming the world number one spot in the ICC Women's ODI batting rankings, rising one place to second after playing a pivotal role in India's triumph in the recent Tri-Nation tournament in Sri Lanka. Mandhana, who last achieved the top ranking for ODI batters in 2019, was in excellent touch during the recent matches against Sri Lanka and South Africa, amassing 264 runs across five innings to finish as the second leading run-scorer in the tournament. Mandhana, who had slammed a 101-ball 116 in the final against Sri Lanka, is just 11 rating points away from top-ranked South African skipper Laura Wolvaardt, who managed just 86 runs during the Tri-Series.

Novak Djokovic ends coaching partnership with Andy Murray

LONDON: Novak Djokovic is splitting with coach Andy Murray, just two weeks ahead of the French Open. Murray's representatives said in a statement Tuesday that the two former No. 1-ranked players will "no longer be working together." "Thanks to Novak for the unbelievable opportunity to work together and thanks to his team for all their hard work over the past six months," Murray was quoted as saying. "I wish Novak all the best for the rest of the season." Djokovic thanked Murray in a post on social media "for all the hard work, fun & support over last six months on & off the court." "I really enjoyed deepening our friendship together," Djokovic wrote. Djokovic and Murray joined forces ahead of the Australian Open in what initially was seen as an unlikely pairing. After Murray retired last year, Djokovic reached out with the coaching proposition.

Mike Hesson appointed Pakistan's white-ball head coach

LAHORE: New Zealand's Mike Hesson was on Tuesday named as Pakistan's new white-ball head coach. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced that Hesson will join the side on May 26, a day after the conclusion of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Hesson, who earned a name as head coach of New Zealand, was tipped to be the new coach after PCB advertised the post following the disastrous tour to New Zealand after the disappointing Champions Trophy early this year. Apparently a total of seven candidates had submitted applications for the position including four foreigners. Hesson is currently serving as head coach of Islamabad United.