

Shardul under fire as India mull bowling changes for second Test

Kuldeep tipped to replace underwhelming all-rounder; Gambhir backs Gill's call

PTI, NEW DELHI: India head coach Gautam Gambhir defended captain Shubman Gill's decision to under bowl Shardul Thakur in the series opener against England but it would be tough to justify his selection in the second Test beginning on July 2.

In his first Test since December 2023, Shardul was under-utilised in the pace department and was rather underwhelming with the bat, totalling five off 20 balls across two innings.

Questions were raised about his presence in the playing eleven ahead of a specialist bowler when he rolled his arm over for six overs in the first innings before bowling 10 in the second.

Like he often does, Shardul did pick a couple of

wickets out of nowhere to raise hopes of an Indian comeback on day five but the bite in his bowling was missing. He alongside the likes of Prasidh Krishna offered too many loose balls, lacking consistency to test the opposition batters.

With India losing the game having controlled for a major part of five days, there is no need to ring the alarm bells but a few changes are certain in the playing eleven for the Edgbaston Test.

Experts cried out for Kuldeep Yadav's inclusion in the series opener and now he is most likely to replace Shardul with the surface expected to aid the spinners in Birmingham.



Kuldeep Yadav

"Kuldeep needs to be there. There is no point playing with four pacers. Either of Shardul or Prasidh can make way for him," former India

captain Dilip Vengsarkar told PTI.

There is a tendency to play with four pace options in England but with dry conditions expected for the majority of the English summer, there is a case of playing Kuldeep and Ravindra Jadeja in the same eleven.

Having said that, Jadeja too will under the scan-

ner having not gotten a lot out of the rough on day five at Headingley.

"Kuldeep Yadav has to come back. I'm sorry to say, but Shardul Thakur has to go out," former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar said on JioStar.

"That is one change India will have to make. As for Nitish Kumar Reddy -- I backed him for the first Test purely based on what he did in Australia."

Other changes in the bowling line-up are unlikely with pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah expected to play with a long enough gap between the first and the second Test.

Uncapped Arshdeep Singh is likely to warm the bench again with the management expected to persist with Prasidh, who bowled much better and fuller in the second essay and Mohammed Siraj, who is not able to extract a lot out of his stock wobbled seam delivery of late.

There're three more centuries: Gambhir when asked about Pant's twin hundreds

PTI, LEEDS: India head coach Gautam Gambhir seemed in no mood to laud individual brilliance like the twin hundreds by Rishabh Pant when asked about the positives from the opening Test loss to England, saying that everything boils down to results which his team could not achieve.

Hardly the one to mince his words or hide his disappointments, Gambhir offered a rather combative response to a question on how it felt watching vice captain Pant's sensational knocks

“There are three more centuries as well. Those are big positives as well. Thank you. I would have liked if you said there was a hundred from Yashasvi (Jaiswal), hundred from Shubman (Gill) on debut as captain Gautam Gambhir, India head coach

that ultimately could not tilt the game for India.

"There are three more centuries as well. Those are big positives as well. Thank you," was his one-line answer to a pointed question on Pant.

When pressed further on the overall positives, Gamb-

hir said, "I would have liked if you said there was a hundred from Yashasvi (Jaiswal), hundred from Shubman (Gill) on debut as captain.

"(There was a) hundred from KL (Rahul) and two centuries from Rishabh, so five centuries in a Test match is a great start to be

honest. And hopefully the question could have been better," he added.

However, the coach said individual performances count for little if the end result is a loss.

"But again these are great positives, we had a flier from Bumrah as well. Eventually everything boils down to the fact that we go out there to get the results," he said.



Bowlers sparkle for Lanka in 2nd Bangladesh Test

AFP, COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's bowlers reduced Bangladesh to 220 for eight at stumps on a rain-hit day one of the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground in Colombo.

On a track that offered little for the bowlers, it was debutant Sonal Dinusha who stole the spotlight.

The 24-year-old left-arm spinner, thrust into the big league following Angelo Mathews' retirement, returned figures of two for 22 in an impressive debut.

Dinusha's first scalp was Litton Das, ending a flourishing fifth-wicket partnership with Mushfiqur Rahim. He then accounted for the prized wicket of Mushfiqur, who had scored a century in the first Test.

Pacer Vishwa Fernando provided useful support to Dinusha.

Pant reaches career-high 7th



TEST RANKINGS

PTI, DUBAI: India's swash-buckling wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant reached a career-high seventh in the latest ICC Test rankings for batters on Wednesday, following his twin centuries in the series-opener against England in Leeds.

India's new Test captain Shubman Gill jumped five rungs to 20th overall following his century in the first innings of the match that his team lost

by five wickets despite setting England a stiff target of 371.

Pant, who became only the second wicketkeeper to hit two hundreds in the same match during the first Test of the five-match series, climbed one spot in the list.

Before the 27-year-old Pant joined him, Zimbabwe's Andy Flower remained the sole stumper with two centuries in the same Test match.

Pant struck 134 and 118 in the thrilling Leeds Test that England won by five wickets.

There was little change in the rankings for Test bowlers, with India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah maintaining his place at the top of charts following yet another five-wicket haul in the Headingley Test.

9-yr-old Indian prodigy holds Carlsen to a draw

PTI, NEW DELHI: Nine-year-old Aarit Kapil from Delhi came close to defeating world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen before settling for a draw in the 'Early Titled Tuesday' chess tournament held on a leading online platform.

Aarit, the runner-up at the recent Under-9 National Championship, matched the five-time world champion move for move and had Carlsen in a completely lost position.

But with time running out and only a few seconds left on his clock, the young Indian was unable to convert his advantage and eventually forced a draw in a rook versus two minor pieces endgame.

Meanwhile, India's V Pranav clinched the 'Early Titled Tuesday' title with an impressive 10 out of 11 points.

Lalit Babu wins Mumbai Int'l Grandmaster Chess Tournament title



PTI, MUMBAI: India's Lalit Babu clinched the Mumbai International Grandmaster Chess tournament title after pipping Mamikon Gharibyan of Armenia on the basis of higher tie-break score on Wednesday.

Grandmaster Babu won his ninth and final round match against top seeded Georgian GM Lavin Patsulaia to accumulate eight points. But, he had to spend some anxious moments as Gharibyan also tallied eight

points after winning his final match against Indian GM Neeloptal Das.

However, Babu's higher tie-break score of 54.5 as compared to Gharibyan's 54 ensured that the Indian laid his hands on the glittering trophy and took home the winner's purse of Rs 4 lakh.

Gharibyan's second-place finish was worth Rs 3 lakh. Another Indian, Deepan Chakravarthy, finished in fifth place, winning Rs 1.25 lakh.

In the juniors' section, India's Candidate Master Madhesh Kumar emerged champion after scoring a last-round win over Vyom Malhotra to collect eight points in total.

Teen prodigy Madhesh, who impressed with his calm and focused play, won the title outright and earned Rs 2 lakh.

Neymar extends Santos stay until end of 2025

AFP, SAO PAULO: Neymar on Tuesday extended his contract with Brazilian club Santos until the end of 2025, as he attempts to recapture his form in time for next year's World Cup.

"I made a decision and I followed my heart. Santos is not just my team, it's my home, my roots, my history, and my life," the 33-year-old forward said in a statement from the club.

Neymar started his career at Santos before moving to Barcelona and then Paris Saint-Germain. After an injury-hit spell in Saudi Arabia, he

returned to Santos in January on a contract that was due to expire on June 30.

The injury problems that restricted him to just seven matches in 17 months at Al-Hilal persisted.

He has played 12 matches in five months across all competitions for Santos, scoring three goals. In his last appearance in the domestic league, he was sent off for a second yellow card after scoring with his hand against Botafogo.

After 12 matches in Brazilian championship, Santos are only clear of the relegation places on goal difference.



Chelsea through to Club World Cup knockouts, Benfica beat Bayern

AFP, PHILADELPHIA (United States): Chelsea secured their place in the Club World Cup last-16 with a convincing 3-0 victory over Esperance of Tunisia in Philadelphia on Tuesday. Goals from Tosin Adarabioyo, new signing Liam Delap and teenager Tyrrique George ensured the Blues finished second in Group D and will now face Group C winners Benfica in Charlotte on Saturday.

Delap opened his Chelsea account just before half-time, moments after Adarabioyo's header broke the deadlock. George added the third deep into stoppage time with a low shot under goalkeeper Bechir Ben Said.

Benfica booked their knockout berth earlier in the day with a historic 1-0 win over Bayern Munich in searing heat in Charlotte. Andre-



Chelsea's forward Liam Delap celebrates after scoring his team's second goal with teammate Tosin Adarabioyo (right) at the Lincoln Financial Field stadium in Philadelphia

as Schjelderup netted in the 13th minute, converting Fredrik Aursnes' cutback. The German champions, resting Harry Kane and Michael Olise at kick-off, failed to recover despite their second-half introduction.

Leroy Sane was twice denied by Benfica keeper Anatoliy Trubin, and Joshua Kimmich had a goal ruled out for

offside. Kane also misjudged a late header. The result marked Benfica's first victory in 14 competitive matches against Bayern.

Bayern finished second and will now face Flamengo in Miami on Sunday, with a potential quarter-final against Paris Saint-Germain.

In Nashville, Boca Juniors were held 1-1 by Auckland

RESULTS

Group C: Benfica 1 (Schjelderup 13) **Bayern Munich 0; Auckland City 1** (Gray 52) **Boca Juniors 1** (Garrow 26-og)

Group D: Esperance 0 **Chelsea 3** (Adarabioyo 45+3, Delap 45+5, George 90+7); **Los Angeles FC 1** (Bouanga 84) **Flamengo 1** (Wallace Yan 86)

City, who had previously lost 10-0 to Bayern and 6-0 to Benfica. Lautaro Di Lollo's header deflected off goalkeeper Nathan Garrow for an own goal, but Christian Gray's second-half header earned the Oceania side a historic point. The match was suspended for nearly an hour due to a weather warning, though no rain followed.

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No change of plans for Bumrah after defeat: Gambhir

PTI, LEEDS: The Indian team management will not push lone warrior Jasprit Bumrah to play more than three Tests against England despite the loss in the series opener, head coach Gautam Gambhir has asserted.

Bumrah was the sole Indian bowler who consistently posed a challenge to the England batters at Headingley.

As part of workload management for the injury-prone star pacer, the management had decided to play him in three out of five Tests. That plan doesn't change with four games remaining.

"No, we won't change the plans. For us to manage his workload is more important because there's a lot of cricket going forward and we know what he brings on the table as well. Before he came on the show, it was already decided that he's going to play three Test matches," said Gambhir on Tuesday.

shorttakes

Indian junior men's hockey team beats Australia 2-1 to finish third

BERLIN: The Indian junior men's hockey team defeated Australia 2-1 in the battle for third place at the 4 Nations Tournament here on Wednesday. Rohit (45') provided the equaliser for India before Ajeet Yadav's (52') fourth-quarter goal sealed the win. Earlier, captain Toby Mallon had given Australia the lead in the second half. The win marks the end of India's campaign in the 4 Nations Tournament. In the pool stage, India began with a 1-7 loss to hosts Germany, bounced back with a 3-1 victory against Australia, and then endured a 1-5 defeat against Spain.

Scandal-hit judge in scrapped Maradona trial resigns

BUENOS AIRES (Argentina): The Argentine judge who caused the collapse of a trial over the 2020 death of football legend Diego Maradona resigned on Tuesday. Julieta Makintach's involvement in a clandestine documentary about the trial of Maradona's medical team led to the proceedings being scrapped in May after two months of hearings. Her fellow judges accused her of having "caused prejudice" to the proceedings which heard hours of painful, sometimes tearful, testimony from witnesses including Maradona's children. No date has yet been set for a new trial although a new three-judge bench has been designated to hear the case.

Germany soccer federation fined for tax evasion related to pre-2006 WC payment

BERLIN: The German soccer federation has been convicted of tax evasion related to the awarding of the World Cup hosted by the country in 2006. A regional court in Frankfurt fined the federation, known by its German acronym DFB, 110,000 euros (\$128,000) at the culmination of the nearly 16-month trial on Wednesday. Prosecutors had been pushing for a larger fine after accusing the DFB of failing to pay approximately 2.7 million euros (now \$3.1 million) in taxes related to its payment of 6.7 million euros (\$7.8 million) to FIFA, world soccer's governing body, in April 2005. That payment settled a loan that Germany great Franz Beckenbauer, the head of the World Cup organizing committee, had accepted three years earlier from Robert Louis-Dreyfus, a former Adidas executive and then part-owner of the Infront marketing agency.

FIFA investigates if Real Madrid's Rudiger was racially abused by opponent at Club WC

MIAMI: FIFA has opened a disciplinary case at the Club World Cup after Real Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger claimed he was racially abused by Pachuca captain Gustavo Cabral. Rudiger, who is Black, and Cabral clashed in the final minutes of Madrid's 3-1 win Sunday in Charlotte, North Carolina. After the German player spoke to referee Ramon Abatti, the Brazilian match official made the FIFA-approved signal with raised arms crossed to start an anti-discrimination protocol. FIFA confirmed late Tuesday it is formally investigating. "Following an assessment of the match reports, the FIFA disciplinary committee has opened proceedings against Pachuca player Gustavo Cabral in relation to the incident involving him and Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger," the soccer body said.

Khelo India University Games to be held in Jaipur in November

NEW DELHI: The fifth edition of the Khelo India University Games (KIUG) will be held in Jaipur in November with more than 4,000 students expected to take part in the competition, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya announced on Wednesday. Poornima University and Rajasthan University will jointly host the Under-25 multi-sport Games which will see participation of more than 200 Universities. Like previous editions, there will be at least 20 disciplines on the KIUG 2025 programme. "I am extremely happy to announce that the Khelo India University Games will take place in Rajasthan in November 2025. These Games are for under-25 athletes and will be coming after the under-18 Khelo India Youth Games that took place in Bihar in May this year," Mandaviya said in a sports ministry release. A total of 770 medals -- 240 gold, 240 silver and 290 bronze -- were on offer in the 2024 edition, held in North-east India for the first time. Over 200 universities competed for 11 days in the KIUG 2024 with around 4,500 athletes taking part in 20 sports.

Pakistan to play T20I series in Bangladesh next month

LAHORE: The Pakistan men's team will travel to Bangladesh next month to play three Twenty20 internationals as part of the build-up to next year's World Cup. Pakistan's tour will be a reciprocal one after they hosted Bangladesh for three T20Is in May-June this year, all won by the home team and played in Lahore. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it has arranged various series to build for the World Cup to be co-hosted in India and Sri Lanka next year. From Bangladesh, Pakistan team will fly to the West Indies to play three T20Is and as many one-day internationals the schedule of which will be announced later.