

Looking forward to exciting PSL in Pakistan: Ronchi



KARACHI: Former New Zealand cricketer and Islamabad United's player and coach Luke Ronchi has said that he's looking forward to exciting PSL matches in Pakistan. Talking to private.tv in Karachi, Ronchi said that his side has got a good core group of players and their goal is to go as far in the tournament as they possibly can. "Well, haven't played the game yet, so wait and see," he said when asked how Islamabad United were going to do in the fifth edition of PSL. "But obviously the goal is to go as far as possible. We have got a good squad and good core group of players," he said. After two years in the role of a player, Ronchi has now the additional responsibility of assistant coach and mentor of the side. He was named Misbah's deputy earlier by the management of the franchise in addition to his playing role. The New Zealander was the top scorer in 2018 PSL with 435 runs in 11 innings. "There's not much change, I think. Normally it's a playing sort of role and then at the backstage just helping guys out where you can, mentoring them. It is like talking more than actions, I guess," he said when asked how he's going to manage two different roles. Replying to a question, Luke Ronchi said that it's exciting to hold the competition in Pakistan and he's really looking forward to going to Rawalpindi to play home games in front of the home crowd. "The support we get from all the crowd and the supporters around the whole nation, it would be exciting to play in front of a big crowd, so guys are really looking forward to it," he said. Talking about Shadab Khan, the former New Zealand cricketer said that it is good to see someone emerging from the same system has now got the captain's role in the team. He added that the role will help Shadab grow his game. "It is good for him. It is going to help him grow his game as well. Having that leadership on the field, he has done a little bit in the past but now the full-time captain and it's going to be exciting," Ronchi concluded. —*The Business Report*

I was mentally prepared to lead Lahore Qalandars: Sohail



LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars decision to appoint Sohail Akhtar as their captain for this year's edition of Pakistan Super League (PSL) may have left many people confused, but for the opening batsman it was anything but that. In a conversation with private.tv, Akhtar stated that he had a feeling that he would be appointed the skipper of the Lahore based franchise. He shared that the management of the franchise had been grooming him for the role for the last two years. The skipper felt confident that he would live up to the trust that the management has shown in him. Qalandar's decision to appoint Akhtar as their skipper for this years season had left many people confused as the franchise boasts many experienced players which could fill the role. However, Akhtar who emerged from the franchise's player development programme was being groomed for the role for quite some time now. "I am with franchise for three years and the management backed me up," said Akhtar. He shared that he has captained the development team in Australia and also in the Abu Dhabi Cup. He added that he realised that the franchise was grooming him for captaincy after winning the tournament in Abu Dhabi. "I was groomed for two years and I said yes at once when the management told me that they wanted to appoint me as the captain of the franchise," the 33-year-old added. The explosive opener added that he under no pressure. "The presence of senior players will benefit me," Akhtar said. He added that senior players Mohammad Hafeez, Salman Butt and Fakhar Zaman will be with him throughout the tournament. The Qalandars skipper shared that the captaincy of the franchise was a big honour for him, adding that he now only needs to live up to the expectations. —*The Business Report*

HBL PSL, the most successful cricket event for bowlers

LAHORE: Since its start in 2016, the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) has made a place for itself amongst the top T20 leagues in the world because of high quality on-field action. With the opening match of the fifth edition only three days away, the build-up continues for what promises to be another exciting season which will keep fans and followers glued to the cricketing-action. Statistician Mazher Arshad takes a look at the various records and interesting stats from the last four seasons.

MOST SUCCESSFUL TEAM: With a win percentage of 61.90, reigning champions Quetta Gladiators are the most successful team in the history of HBL PSL, followed by Peshawar Zalmi (58.69). Gladiators have won 26 out of 42 completed matches. They became the most successful team last year, replacing Islamabad United, who until the start of the previous season had the highest win percentage (59.67). In terms of title wins, however, United are still the best team, winning the tournament twice in 2016 and 2018. Zalmi (2017) and Gladiators (2019) have won the tournament once.

HIGHEST AND LOWEST TOTALS: In 20 overs, 238 for three is the highest total in HBL PSL which was recorded by Islamabad United against Lahore Qalandars in Karachi in 2019. The previous season also saw Peshawar Zalmi scoring 214 for five against Islamabad United in Karachi and Lahore Qalandars registering 204 for four against Multan Sultans in Sharjah. That means the three highest totals of PSL were scored in the 2019 edition. Qalandars' 59 all-out against Zalmi in the 2017 edition remains the lowest total in HBL PSL.

HIGHEST POWERPLAY SCORE: Two teams scored 78 in the first six overs of an innings in the 2019 edition. Karachi Kings did it with the loss of one wicket against Islamabad United, while Multan Sultans scored 78 for two against Lahore Qalandars. Before the last edition, the highest Powerplay total was 77 for one by Gladiators which came in their famous 203-run chase against Qalandars in Dubai in the inaugural edition.

Runs per wicket in HBL PSL: The HBL PSL has the lowest runs per wicket ratio (23.54) for any active T20 league in the world which means that bowlers have enjoyed plying their trade in the tournament. In 116 games across four editions, 1,443 wickets have fallen for 33,978 runs (average 23.54).

Run Rates in HBL PSL: In the 2019 edition, the run-rate in 34 matches was 7.98 – the highest for any edition of the HBL PSL. The previous two seasons in 2018 and 2017 had a scoring rate of 7.74, while the inaugural tournament in 2016 was 7.62. The run-rate is expected to go further high this season as National Stadium Karachi, a venue known for runs, is set to host nine games. The run-rate in HBL PSL in Karachi is 8.94.

The winning streak: The team with the biggest winning streak in the tournament is Islamabad United. They won six matches in a row between 2016 and 2017. They also won five games on the trot in 2018. No other team in the HBL PSL has won five consecutive matches. —*APP*



SYDNEY: The captains of the competing teams in the Twenty20 women's World Cup in Australia, (L to R) Thailand's Sornnarin Tippoch, West Indies's Stafanie Taylor, India's Harmanpreet Kaur, New Zealand's Sophie Devine, Australia's Meg Lanning, England's Heather Knight, Bangladesh's Salma Khatun, Sri Lanka's Chamari Atapattu, Pakistan's Bismah Maroof and South Africa's Dane van Niekerk pose with the women's Twenty20 World Cup trophy at Taronga Zoo.

PSL 2020: 350 artists to perform at opening ceremony

KARACHI: As many as 350 artists will perform at the opening ceremony of PSL 2020, which will be held at Karachi's National Stadium on Thursday.

The metropolitan city is expected to be set aflame as artists from different music genres – Sufi, pop, rock, bhanga and folk – will come together to perform at what will be the biggest opening ceremony in the history of PSL. Thousands of fans in the stadium will be on the edge of their seats and millions around the globe will be glued to their television sets as world renowned artists like Abrar-ul-Haq, Aima Baig, Abu

Mohammad, Fareed Ayaz, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Sajjad Ali, Sanam Marvi and rock band Soch embellish the ceremony with their breath-taking performances.

Ali Azmat, Arif Lohar, Haroon and Asim Azhar will perform PSL 2020's anthem "Tayyar Hain". The glittery ceremony, which will be held before the opening match of the tournament between defending champions Quetta Gladiators and two-time champion Islamabad United, will also include riveting acts and a spectacular fireworks show. "It is only befitting that a grand and glamorous opening ceremony is

held to welcome Pakistan's very own PSL in the country. We have brought together all the top artists in the country to set the tone of what will be an epic tournament," PCB Director Commercial, Babar Hamid, said. The ceremony, which will be approximately an hour long, will kick-off at 6.45pm. The toss for the first match will be held at 8.30pm, while the much-anticipated first ball of PSL 2020 will be delivered at 9pm.

Jahangir Khan to bring trophy to stadium: For what will be the first-ever trophy unveiling ceremony on the Pakistani soil, squash legend Jahangir Khan will bring the PSL 2020 trophy at the National Stadium, Karachi, on Wednesday, 19 February, for its unveiling. Jahangir, in an international-styled ceremony, will carry the silverware to the field of play and hand it over to the defending captain Sarfaraz Ahmed – of Quetta Gladiators – after which the brand new trophy will be unveiled by PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani in the presence of six franchise owners and captains. For his extraordinary achievements in squash courts all over the world, Jahangir's name has become synonymous to the game. The great Pakistani athlete holds a record for the longest winning streak for any sportsman with 555 consecutive wins over almost six years. —*APP*



Morgan takes England to series win in high-scoring T20 final

CENTURION: England captain Eoin Morgan went on a six-hitting spree to take his side to a series win in a high-scoring third and final Twenty20 international against South Africa at SuperSport Park.

Morgan slammed seven sixes in an innings of 57 not out off 22 balls as England chased down South Africa's 222 for six with five wickets and five balls to spare.

"It's a nice note to leave this tour on," said Morgan. But Morgan had sympathy for the bowlers on a day when a capacity crowd were peppered with 28 sixes as the batsmen took advantage of a true pitch and the thin air of the South African highveld.

"It was a helluva game," said Morgan. "You have to commend both sides' bowlers. It's not the easiest ground to bowl on, especially with a wicket like this."

Heinrich Klaasen, playing in his first match of the South African home international season, hit 66 off 33 balls for the hosts after Temba Bavuma (49) and captain Quinton de Kock (35) hammered 84 for the first wicket off 46 balls.

"When any side posts 220 it's a tough ask but going back to the 2016 World Cup with this group of players we chased down 230 against South Africa in Mumbai. So we always had this belief," added Morgan. Jason Roy was out early but Jos Buttler (57) and Jonny Bairstow (64) put on 91 off 50 balls for the second wicket to put England in a strong position. But 78 runs were still needed off 38 balls when Dawid Malan was fourth out with the total on 145.

Ben Stokes joined Morgan and the pair added 61 off 27 balls before Stokes was

caught on the boundary with 17 still needed off 11 balls. Morgan hit two sixes off successive balls from Lungi Ngidi in the same over and the contest was effectively ended. Morgan was named man of the match and man of the series after pipping opposite number De Kock as the leading run-scorer in the series. "We knew it would be a high-scoring game but we're a bit disappointed not to get over the line," said De Kock. "We had mixed emotions (after the first innings), the guys were confident but we knew it was a great wicket." South Africa won the first game by one run before England levelled the series with a two-run victory. It was the last match for England after a tour in which they won a four-match Test series and shared a one-day series. —*APP*

Du Plessis steps down as South Africa skipper



JOHANNESBURG: Faf du Plessis announced on Monday that he was stepping down as South Africa's cricket captain with immediate effect. Du Plessis, 35, said he needed to take "a step back" from the captaincy in order to help the emergence of the next generation of leaders under Quinton de Kock.

De Kock led the team in recent one-day and Twenty20 internationals against England while Du Plessis was being rested. It was announced last month that De Kock would be South Africa's long-term one-day captain but in Monday's statement, Du Plessis said he was also relinquishing the Test and T20 captaincy. The announcement clears the way for De Kock to lead South Africa at the T20 World Cup in Australia in October and November and possibly to lead the Test team in a two-match series in the West Indies in July and August. In a statement issued by Cricket South Africa, Du Plessis said he wanted to concentrate on contributing to the team as a batsman and senior player. Du Plessis captained South Africa in 112 matches across all formats, including 36 Tests. He said his time away from cricket since the end of the Test series against England last month had given him "a lot of perspective". "After the 2019 ICC World Cup, I made the decision to continue in my role as captain while the team went through a rebuilding phase following the retirement of some key senior players and a complete overhaul of the coaching staff that we had worked with until then," he said. "It was important to me that I stayed to help the team find its feet and plot a new way forward while assisting in identifying the next generation of leaders during a time of turbulence in SA cricket. The last season of my captaincy has been the most challenging to date as I had a lot of off-field issues that I devoted my energy towards." Du Plessis took over as limited overs captain in 2012 and became Test captain in 2016. He built up a reputation as one of the country's outstanding leaders with his achievements including home-and-away series wins against Australia in both Tests and one-day internationals. But South Africa lost eight of their most recent nine Tests under his leadership and had a poor

Pakistan wrestling team granted visas for Asian Championship in India

CHENNAI: Four freestyle wrestlers from Pakistan will reach New Delhi on February 18 to compete in the Asian Championship.

After a delay, the Pakistani contingent were issued visas for the event slated for February 18 to 23.

"It is a big relief for us, as uncertainty over our participation had started taking a toll on the preparation of our wrestlers. Farid Ali, the operational manager of Pakistan Wrestling Federation said. "It is an important event ahead of the Asian Olympic qualifiers (lined up for March) and we certainly do not want to miss the opportunity." Ali added, according to reports in foreign media. The Pakistani wrestling contingent will be the first team from across the Wagah border to travel to India for a sporting event after the Pulwama attack in February last year.

Muhammad Bilal (57kg), Abdul Rehman (74kg), Tayab Raza (97kg) and Zaman Anwar (125kg) will be representing the



country in the continent's showcase wrestling event. They will be accompanied by two officials from the country.

"The Pakistani wrestlers will compete only in the freestyle category. Due to that, they can afford to arrive in India a couple of days late. Countries which have sent entries in all three categories (men's and women's

freestyle and Greco Roman) will start arriving from Sunday," Ali said. Vinod Tomar, assistant secretary of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), also confirmed that the Pakistan team would be arriving on February 18. "Greco-Roman bouts will be held on the first two days, followed by women's wrestling over the next two days," he said.

Competition in the men's freestyle category will be held on the last two days. Though Pakistani wrestlers have been issued visas, participation of the Chinese contingent in the competition remains in doubt. The Indian federation claims that the issue of Chinese participation is pending with the central government. China has sent a 40-member list, comprising 30 wrestlers, 10 in each category, for the event. However, the coronavirus outbreak in China has cast serious doubts over their wrestlers' participation in the Delhi event. "They (officials of the Chinese wrestling federation) are in touch with us but nothing concrete can be said at the moment. Let us wait till Monday before we can arrive at any conclusion," Tomar added. Meanwhile, after North Korea, wrestlers from Turkmenistan have also decided to skip the event due to the outbreak of the deadly virus. "The Turkmenistan federation confirmed its withdrawal. They do not want to risk their wrestlers," informed the WFI official. —*The Business Report*